

The Paris Commune in Shanghai:
the Masses, the State, and Dynamics of “Continuous Revolution”

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

In 1871, during the Franco-Prussian War, the Parisian workers revolted against the bourgeois government and established the Paris Commune. Extolling it as the first workers' government, classical Marxist writers took it as an exemplary—though embryonic— model of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The principles of the Paris Commune, according to Marx, lay in that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.” General elections and the abolishment of a standing army were regarded by classical Marxist writers as defining features of the organ of power established in the Paris Commune. After the defeat of the Paris Commune, the Marxist interpretation of the Commune was widely propagated throughout the world, including in China.

20th century China has been rich with experiences of Commune-type theories and practices. At the end of 1966 and the beginning of 1967, inspired by the Maoist theory of continuous revolution and the vision of a Commune-type state structure, the rebel workers in Shanghai, together with rebellious students and revolutionary party cadres and leaders, took the bold initiative to overthrow the old power structure from below. On Feb.5, 1967, the Shanghai workers established the Shanghai Commune modeled upon the Paris Commune. This became known as the January Storm. After Mao's death in 1976, the communist party and government in China has rewritten history, attacking the Cultural Revolution. And the Shanghai Commune has barely been mentioned in China, let alone careful evaluation and in-depth study. This

dissertation attempts to recover this lost yet crucial history by exploring in historical detail the origin, development and supersession of the Shanghai Commune.

Examining the role of different mass organizations during the January Storm in Shanghai, I attempt to offer a full picture of the Maoist mass movement based on the theory of continuous revolution. Disagreeing with some critics' arguments that the Shanghai Commune was a negation of the party-state, I argue that it neither negated the party nor the state. Instead, the Shanghai Commune embodied the seeds of a novel state structure that empowers the masses by relegating some of the state power to mass representatives and mass organs. Differing from the common narrative and most scholarship in the post-Mao era, I argue that the commune movement in the beginning of 1967 facilitated revolutionary changes in Chinese society and state structure. The Shanghai Commune and the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee developed as ruling bodies that did not hold general elections or abolish the standing army and in this way did not replicate the Paris Commune. But in contrast to the old Shanghai organs of power, they were largely in conformity with the principles of the Paris Commune by smashing the Old and establishing the New. Some of their creative measures, "socialist new things", anticipated the features of a communal state—a state that does not eradicate class struggle yet begins to initiate the long process of the withering away of the state itself.

Dedication

To my father Jiang Ronghua, a champion of People's Communes and a devotee and practitioner of people's education in rural China during the Mao Era, who died in his middle fifties during the Deng Xiaoping Era, when all the People's Communes were dismantled, and people's education was replaced by elite education.

To the Shanghai Communards in 1967, who dared to rebel against imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries.

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Abbreviations

(Used in the Text and the Notes)

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCRG	Central Cultural Revolutionary Group
CR	Cultural Revolution
MECW	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RC	Revolutionary Committee
SPC	Shanghai Party Committee
WGH	The Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters

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Introduction

Recovering a Lost History: Unraveling the Shanghai Commune in 1967

On September 9, 1976, the Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong passed away. Within one month, a coup d'état took place on October 6, 1976, plotted by the acting prime minister Hua Guofeng, Marshal Ye Jianying, General Wang Dongxing, deputy prime minister Li Xiannian, and other high Party and army officials. Four party leaders who were followers of Mao – Jiang Qing (Madame Mao, member of the CCP Politburo), Zhang Chunqiao (deputy prime minister), Wang Hongwen (vice-chairman of the CCP), and Yao Wenyuan (member of the CCP Politburo) – were called to an alleged Politburo meeting and then arrested when they arrived. These four high party leaders were later denounced as the “Gang of Four.” After this coup, the new Hua Guofeng regime claimed allegiance to the Maoist revolutionary line in order to legitimize the new administration. But at the same time, it relentlessly persecuted Cultural Revolution activists. But this contradictory policy of the Hua Guofeng regime actually undermined its legitimacy and paved way to its self-destruction. At the time, no strong political force in Chinese society, either leftists or rightists, truly supported this regime. And the rightist Deng Xiaoping and his followers were therefore able to easily take over state power.

Eventually, while launching a large-scale campaign to “thoroughly negate the Cultural Revolution”, Deng Xiaoping forcefully dismantled all rural Peoples’ Communes, as he, together with Liu Shaoqi, had intended to in the wake of the Great Leap Forward. The slight rise of the grain yield in the post-Mao Era was attributed to

the restoration of small-scale peasant farming which had lasted for more than one thousand years and caused countless famines in Chinese history – not the the achievements during the Cultural Revolution such as the water conservancy works, the basic farmland construction drives and projects (*nongtian jiben jianshe*), the building of numerous fertilizer and pesticide plants, and the introduction of hybrid rice crop (*zajiao shuidao*). Deng Xiaoping used state funds that had been accumulated for years during the Mao Era, to raise the workers' salaries. And then simultaneously, Deng publicly denounced the so-called “persecution” of the intellectuals by the “Gang of Four” and promised to rapidly raise their wages and social status. In order to cater to the intellectuals, the Deng regime purposely set up a “Teacher’s Day” on September 10th, a day after Mao’s death. One could say that, in a sense, this was a festival to celebrate Mao’s death. For several years, it seemed that everybody loved Deng Xiaoping. Consequently, Mao and the Cultural Revolution were disregarded by many Chinese people, including quite a number of peasants and workers. The true history of the Cultural Revolution was meanwhile considerably blurred, distorted and covered up.

This recalls how today the French workers have ceased to commemorate the Paris Commune. As Alain Badiou deplures, “little is remembered [about the Paris Commune]... Does the working class have a heart?” For about ten years after the Cultural Revolution, similar questions were posed in post-Mao China as well. But the bourgeoisie has never been reluctant to grow their own gravediggers. Due to the division of land and individual farming (*fen tian dan gan*) promoted by the Deng regime, Chinese agriculture was soon mired in great difficulties. This resulted in burning and lasting “*sannong*” issues, namely, rural problems pertaining to agriculture, the villages, and the peasants. The need to address these rural issues is in part behind

why at the end of 2009 the Chinese regime legalized and promoted the mass-scale growth of genetically engineered rice, corn and soybeans offered by the US based chemical company Monsanto—regardless of its uncertainty to human health. The Chinese netizens’ resistance to genetically engineered crops was powerful. And the final outcome of this resistance is still to come. Compared with the peasants, the Chinese workers’ fate was even worse after 1992 when many of them were laid off by state-run enterprises. As the urban workers’ plight has increasingly deteriorated, there have been many so-called “collective incidents” (*qunti shijian*) among working people. For instance, on July 22, 2009, thousands of angry steelworkers of the Tonghua Steel Factory in Jilin Province, who faced the prospect of being fired, rushed to the general manager, Chen Guojun, and beat him to death. This could be seen as a watershed event for the Chinese workers’ struggle. And rounds of “Mao Zedong fever”, like the waves of an endlessly rising tide, have surged through the streets and villages in China in the first years of the 21st century. Many workers and peasants are looking forward to a new Cultural Revolution to get rid of corrupt officials. Consequently, in recent years, there has been a powerful trend among the grass-roots people and non-mainstream, namely, non-neo-liberal intellectuals to re-evaluate the Cultural Revolution by challenging the official verdict of the CR, and recovering the lost history of the CR.

In doing research on the Cultural Revolution one has to confront the dire reality in China over the past 30 years. And a number of important questions come up: What really was the experience of the masses of Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution? How do the common people who experienced the CR—not the elite—look back and reflect upon this historical period? Why and to what degree are the interpretations of the CR meaningful in understanding contemporary Chinese

reality and reenvisioning the future of China? In some sense, the process of answering these questions about the CR is a process of recovering a lost, or, a suppressed history. The increasingly intensified struggle of the Chinese working people has made me focus my study of the CR on the mass movements, especially workers' movements. And the most important, yet least explored workers' movements during the CR took place in Shanghai. Therefore, written from a political and historical point of view, my dissertation is a close examination of the CR in Shanghai from 1966 and 1967. I explore this eventful period against the backdrop of the masses' collective activities, including those of the workers, students, intellectuals, and peasants, both conservatives and rebels. The rise and supersession of the Shanghai Commune during the CR, a unique local state power organ created by the Shanghai masses modeled upon the Paris Commune, will be my central focus. So far, mainstream scholarship on the CR has mainly focused on either political power struggles among top leaders in Beijing, or the student movements (existing studies are mainly on Red Guards in Beijing, Guangzhou and Wuhan). Different from these studies, my project focuses on the workers' movement and the role of mass political participation in the shaping and formation of the Shanghai Commune. I will explore the political activism of leaders of mass organizations as well as of ordinary workers and citizens, many of whom in fact held different political viewpoints while declaring allegiance to the same banner of Mao Zedong Thought.

The short-lived Shanghai Commune lasted only 20 days, and was then replaced by a Three-in-One Combination leadership. Yet for several important thinkers such as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Zizek, and some scholars such as Henry C.

Topper,¹ it represents the political apogee of the CR. How should we evaluate and interpret this seminal event? Also, although there have been some studies on the CR in Shanghai, there have been few in-depth studies on the Shanghai Commune itself. The climax of the CR, whether acclaimed or condemned, has still been kept silent in the dark shadow of history. As the product of grass-roots workers' mass movements aimed at promoting democratic participation and exercising proletarian leadership, the Shanghai Commune contributed greatly to the political practice and theory of the working class. In order to bring to light the voices, passions, and dreams of the silenced masses, my project endeavors to provide a much fuller picture of the Shanghai Commune, so that an alternative understanding of the CR can be effected.

Marx claimed that “after every [previous bourgeois] revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief,”² “All revolutions thus only perfected the State machinery instead of throwing off this deadening incubus.”³ But Marx and Engels saw in the Paris Commune the seeds of developing a novel form of society, that is, the gradual “withering of the state”. The Commune was “the political form of the social emancipation, of the liberation of labor from the usurpations (slaveholding) of the monopolists of the means of labor, created by the laborers themselves or forming the gift of nature.”⁴ The Commune, therefore, is a tool for liberating labor from capital, for liberating the society from the oppressive state. Marx and Engels’

¹ I will discuss Alain Badiou and Slavoj Zizek's such evaluation of the Shanghai Commune in the first chapter. Also see Henry C. Topper's dissertation, *From the Commune to the Cultural Revolution: A Discussion of Party Leadership and Democracy in Lenin and Mao*, Baltimore:the John Hopkins University, 1990, p.265.

² Marx, First Draft of The Civil War in France, in *MECW*, Volume 22.p.329.

³ *Ibid.*p.484.

⁴ *Ibid.*p.490.

evaluation may be partially applicable to the Shanghai Commune, and its substitutive Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. On the one hand, the new Shanghai power organ that emerged from the CR did exert controlling measures toward dissents and oppositions among the masses, thus keeping distance from the prototype structure of the Paris Commune. On the other hand, greatly inspired by the Paris Commune, it adopted many measures to expand mass democracy, to further advance the continuous revolution, and to some significant extent, to usher in the beginning of the withering away of the oppressive characters of state power. My dissertation examines the precious experiences and lessons of Shanghai Commune and its substitutive Shanghai Revolutionary Committee in comparison with those of the Paris Commune.

The first chapter, “The Paris Commune Goes to China: Historical Contour and Scholarship of the Shanghai Commune”, sets the historical stage of the Shanghai Commune in a long-term perspective. I briefly reiterate the history of the Paris Commune through the account of a Chinese eye-witness. I then trace the obliteration of the Paris Commune by the French state machinery and the commemoration of the Paris Commune by various revolutionary forces. I touch on the introduction of the Paris Commune into China, first mainly from France, then largely through the events in Russia. It was the Russian Bolshevik Revolution that enabled the Chinese revolutionaries to look toward the model of the Paris Commune and set out to practice Commune power organs in China. In 1927, Chinese revolutionaries twice set up Commune power organs in two major cities—Shanghai and Guangzhou, though, unfortunately, they were brutally demolished by the bourgeois Nationalist troops. The

third urban Commune power organ, the focus of my project, appeared in Shanghai in the heat of the Cultural Revolution. In this chapter, I will mainly cover the Chinese and Western scholarship on the Shanghai Commune and thinking on the concept of communes in the Mao Era. I will first introduce two memoirs written by foreign observers: Neal Hunter's *Shanghai Journal*, and Sophia Knight's *Window on Shanghai: Letters from China*. What they saw and heard before or during the Shanghai January Revolution provided us with precious materials on the Shanghai Commune. Then I will comment on the early Western scholarship on the Shanghai commune. In 1971, to commemorate the centennial of the Paris Commune, two China specialists in the U.S., Maurice Meisner and John Bryan Starr, reflected on the relationship between the Paris Commune and the thinking and practice of the Commune in China, especially the Shanghai Commune. Although their path-breaking work is inspiring, I argue that some of their viewpoints warrant further scrutiny. After that, I will examine the post-Mao Chinese scholarships aiming at negating the Shanghai commune. Specifically, I will examine works of Gao Fang, Jin Chunming, Yan Jiaqi and Wang Nianyi, which serve the ideological aims of the pro-capitalist Chinese regime to demonize the CR and the Shanghai Commune. And then I will deal with the Marxist elegies to the Shanghai Commune in the West after the 1976 coup d'état. Their representative evaluations, namely, those of Charles Bettelheim, Sam Marcy and the Progressive Labor Party, will be explored. Furthermore, I will probe into the works of two China scholars in the West—Andrew Walder and Elizabeth Perry after the CR. In addition, I will discuss Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek's

rethinking of the meaning of revolution in relationship to the lessons of the Shanghai Commune. Finally, I will deal with the recent Chinese reappraisals of the Shanghai Commune, from both anti-CR and pro-CR parties.

As the Marxist theories of the state are crucial in understanding Maoists' imagination and construction of “a wholly new form of state structure” in the storm of the CR, the second chapter “Lessons of the Paris Commune: Classical Marxist Writers on the State” proceeds to examine the classical Marxist thinking about the Paris Commune by Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Focusing on their theories of the state summarized from the lessons of the Paris Commune, I will explore why in the Marxist tradition the Paris Commune was seen as a form of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”. I will argue that this kind of dictatorship of the Proletariat of the Paris Commune should be considered an embryonic one. Furthermore, I will argue that in the Marxist tradition the Paris Commune was usually treated as a negation of the previous states, especially the feudal and the bourgeois states, but an upholding of the proletarian state. The Paris Commune endeavored to construct a communal state based on a communal constitution. As it discarded the major evils of previous state forms, such as the standing army and the military bureaucracy, the communal state would be just a semi-state and an anti-state state, namely, a state of initiating the withering away of the state itself. Then I proceed to an analysis of why Marx claimed that the commune [state] would not do away with class struggle. The class struggle would not be completed even with the establishment of the Commune state. I will discuss the possible elements contributing to the class struggle and forms of class

struggle in a commune state. The destiny of a communal state, I argue, would hinge on the class struggle between the global proletariat and the global bourgeoisie. In this sense, the communal state is oriented toward the future and toward a world revolution. This may be regarded as the Marxist theoretical foundation of the Maoist theory of continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The third chapter “Envisioning a Wholly New Form of State Structure” deals with the ideological preparations of the Maoist thinkers for the formation of the Shanghai Commune. I start by tracing the formation of Mao’s theory of continuous revolution by following the two-line struggle within the CCP, with a focus on the communization movement and the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s. The resistance against the collectivization of agriculture within the CCP, I will argue, was an important factor that led to Mao advocating continuous revolution. I will then examine the debate around “bourgeois right” from 1958 to 1962, in which Zhang Chunqiao, who became one of Mao’s closest associates, drew on the lessons of the Paris Commune to envision a future society. Furthermore, I will examine Zhang Zhiyi’s article in commemoration of the 95th anniversary of the Paris Commune in 1966. In this editorial, Zheng Zhiyi explained why the Paris Commune was still relevant and worthy of commemoration. After the launch of the CR, Mao hailed a wall poster at Beijing University as “the declaration of the Chinese Paris Commune”. With a close reading of this poster, I discuss the relationship between the mass movement and the theory of continuous revolution. The dynamics of the continuous revolution lay in the staging of mass movements, which were seen by Mao as an ideal

way of waging class struggle against the bourgeoisie in and outside the Party. I then discuss the vital document of the CR, *The Sixteen Points*, in which the Party officially called for looking to the Paris Commune as a model in creating a wholly new form of state structure. At the end of this chapter, I discuss another crucial editorial of the *Redflag*, in which the Paris Commune-type general election was considered a key measure to restore and defend the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to create a wholly new form of state structure.

The fourth chapter “The Road to Shanghai Revolutionary Revolution” and the fifth chapter “The Rise of the Shanghai Commune” trace the brief yet complex, course of events leading to the formation of the Shanghai Commune. Under the banner of “All power to the Shanghai Commune”, it was a product of unprecedented mass initiatives driven by discontent over the pre-CR order and the old power holders’ suppression of the rebel movement in the early stage of the CR. The Commune was also inspired by a call from the Maoist leadership and by the ideals of revolution and democracy modeled after the Paris Commune. This movement involved fierce struggles, both physically and ideologically, and constant negotiations and compromises among various mass organizations and their leaders. Focusing on the seizure of power by the rebels, I discuss how the rebel workers in Shanghai understood the Paris Commune model and the organizational forms they created in the January Storm. I also discuss the problems and difficulties encountered by the Shanghai Commune by looking at the formation of rival workers’ organizations, the spate of economism, the democratic experiment of self-governance of workers in the

factory, the dual power in the January storm, and the internecine struggles. The fifth chapter ends with a discussion of whether or not the Shanghai Commune, as some critics such as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek have argued, was an antithesis to the state. I argue that it did involve a utopian moment that kept a distance from the state, but this was mainly put forward by a minority of rebels. And almost nobody in the Shanghai Commune proposed to abolish the standing army, the police, and the Party. Nevertheless, the Shanghai Commune valued the basic principles of the Paris Commune and followed its spirit.

Chapter Six “Revolutionary Committee is Good”: The Supersession of the Shanghai Commune” examines the considerations that led the Maoist leadership to replace the Shanghai Commune with the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. I provide evidence that there were strong, hostile opposition forces in the rebel ranks to the Shanghai Commune. One of the most important reasons, I argue, came from the mighty resistance of the high ranking leaders in the Party and the army. Another major reason for replacing the Commune was that Mao believed that the Party should not be abolished at that time. The Maoists thought that the failure of Paris Commune was mainly due to the lack of strong party leadership. One of the actual products of the CR is that the Party lost its control over the masses, who were then offered multiple opportunities for political emancipation. But should the party be abolished? Mao’s answer would be no. In this chapter, I offer Mao’s own explanations for replacing the Shanghai Commune. I end this chapter with an examination of the staging of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, delving into whether there were marked

differences between the Shanghai Commune and the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. During the period of forming RCs throughout China, there was strong opposition from the ultra-leftist Red Guards, represented by Yang Xiaokai, to the replacement of the Shanghai Commune. These forces, who hated the Revolutionary Committees favored by Mao, envisioned a People's Commune of China. It is tempting to discuss their position. But given the limitations of this disseration, I will leave the ultra-leftists' roadmap to a communal state for later exploration.

In the Conclusion, I reaffirm that the Chinese Commune movement in 1967 was an unprecedented and far-reaching revolution that changed the face of China, not a farce as some people have depicted. I also outline the fate of the major players in the Shanghai Commune after the coup d'état in 1976. More attention is given to the issue of how to prevent a socialist society from capitalist restoration and whether there is a future for the Paris Commune in China. If there exists a possibility for the revival of the commune spirit/ model in China, what should the revolutionaries learn from the lessons of the Paris Commune and the Shanghai Commune? Following this vein, I discuss a possible Maoist roadmap to extensive democracy within the philosophical framework of the dialectics of party and mass organizations. Having drawn the lessons of the Shanghai Commune and the CR, I propose a tentative model: the mass organizations, instead of being weakened, should be consolidated as necessary complements to the party, while the two should maintain a dialectical relationship. That is to say, the pro-communist mass organizations are politically, not organizationally, under the leadership of the revolutionary party, yet maintain their

own initiatives and substantial autonomy. Therefore, the mass organizations function as the supervision over the party, while the party can get rid of the stale and take in the fresh from the mass organizations, thus always sustaining new dynamics and continuing the revolution. I argue that one of the main things that contributed to the failure of mass organizations is the dissolution of strong organizational structures and the loss of clear organizational identities. But I reaffirm that no organizational forms and institutional forms can guarantee that a society will move toward socialism and communism. Nevertheless, a valuable lesson drawn from the failure of the first wave of the socialist and communist experiments is that after a successful working people's power seizure of the state, as long as there is no major threat from the enemies of the working people, the proletariat should immediately initiate the long, difficult and complicated process of the "withering away of the state". Any advocates of the working people's revolution in the future should have a clear sense about the imminent oppressive characters of the state, especially its worst aspects, as Engels suggests, "the victorious proletariat, just like the Commune, cannot avoid having to top off at once as much as possible until such time as a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap heap."⁵ I conclude this dissertation by stating that as long as labor is not completely liberated from capital, as long as the big differences between the privileged and the underprivileged are not largely leveled, the Commune could be an enduring point of reference and an eternal return for the working people's emancipation.

⁵ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.34.

The Suppression of Cultural Revolution Activists and Burning of Cultural Revolution Books: Difficulties of Studying the Cultural Revolution

Immediately after the 1976 coup, a large-scale movement to uncover, criticize and investigate the “crimes” of the “Gang of Four” and their followers (*jiépicha yundong*) swept across China from 1976 to 1977. The leaders of the coup instigated the people to strike against the supporters of the “Gang of Four” just as they had struck against the Japanese devils (intruders) (*riben guizi*) and Guomindang troops. A wave of terror reigned throughout China. Almost all Maoist rebels, possibly reaching tens of millions, were apprehended and ruthlessly persecuted. Take Zhejiang province for example. Between 1976 and 1980, all the representatives at various leadership levels, no matter from the masses, the army, or the veteran Party cadre rank, as well as the grassroots activists in the production teams of villages, were under harsh examination and targeted. Altogether, persecuted CR activists in Zhejiang reached more than four million. In Taizhou region, just within the governmental agencies, 2 people were shot, 11 committed suicide, 23 were condemned to various terms of imprisonment, 50 were expelled from the CCP, and 3,200 teachers were dismissed from their teaching positions. As for other forms of persecutions, there is no way to count the victims. In Linhai County, 20 CR activists committed suicide, and 40 were

condemned to various terms of imprisonment. In Huangyan County, 20 CR activists committed suicide, 37 were condemned to various terms of imprisonment, and 1 was sentenced to death with a reprieve. In Xianju County, 22 CR activists committed suicide, and 38 were convicted for crimes of “counter-revolution”. And even in the small island of Yuhuan County, 4 CR activists committed suicide, 39 were condemned to various terms of imprisonment, and 44 were held in custody for a period of time and then expelled from the Party and their jobs. From 1976 to 1979, in the Jinhua region of Zhejiang, 662 CR activists were convicted for “crimes” of “counter-revolution”, more than 190 activists committed suicide, and 4 people were sentenced to death. In the Hangzhou Machine Tool Factory, of less than 2,000 people, three committed suicide, one person was driven to insane, 3 were condemned to various terms of imprisonment, and 38 were held in private prisons.⁶

After the coup, in the remote border province, Yunnan, 1.5 million CR activists were struggled against, one hundred fifty thousand were subjected to Party and political disciplinary sanctions, and more than fifty thousand were arrested and condemned to various terms of imprisonment or “re-education” through labor. Among them there were 7,594 upper-middle Party or army cadres, whose administrative ranks were equivalent to, or above, a county administration, or a regiment in the military.⁷

⁶ Li Xiantong, *A Report Concerning the Construction of Harmonious Society and Calling for Reversals of Grievances, Falsifications, and Mistakes (Guanyu goujian hexie shehui pingfan yuanjiacuo'an de baogao)*. This is a former rebel leader Li Xiantong's letter to Zhejiang Party secretary Zhao Hongzhu to call for redress of his case of grievance, and naturally, Li got no positive response from the current power holders. See <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=12317>, cited on Dec. 25, 2009.

⁷ In the Jingdong county of Yun'nan Province, more than 3,100 activists were struggled against, more than 1,000 were injured or maimed from beatings, more than 1,000 cadres were dismissed, 125 cadres were arrested, 53 persons were officially condemned to various terms of imprisonment, 4 were beaten to death on the spot at the mass struggle rallies, and 9 were barbarously tortured to death. At the Simao town with a population of less than 20 thousand, 103 residents were apprehended, 52 were condemned to various terms of imprisonment, and 8 were forced to commit suicide. Yang Xiujie, a veteran PLA officer, who made great contributions in the War of Liberation, was shot in September 19, 1978 for his “crimes of counter-revolution” during the CR. After his

To achieve dramatic impact in the movement to suppress the CR rebels, cases were brought against many so-called “little Gang of Four” groups, symbolically consisting of three local male rebel leaders and one female leader. This was done to mimic the “Gang of Four” in Beijing that consisted of three men, Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyan, and one woman, Jiang Qing.⁸ In numerous cases, after mass rallies, some “little Gang of Four” groups were paraded around under military escort to the execution grounds and shot. The propaganda machine controlled by those who held power after Mao’s death depicted the Chinese economy under the influence of “Gang of Four” and Mao during the CR as disastrous and as on the brink of collapse. And it claimed that the masses hated the “Gang of Four” so much that when they heard that the “Gang of Four” had been smashed, they were so excited as to purchase crabs in the markets to cook a dish called the “Gang of Four”, in which there were four crabs, three males and one female.⁹ There is great irony here because obviously, crabs were an expensive and luxurious food for the common Chinese people. So if the Chinese economy under Mao was really on the brink of collapse,

execution, the local authority even forbade anybody to collect his corpse, resulting in the loss of his remains. Liu Shaozu, another veteran PLA officer and later a cadre of the Kunming Railway Bureau, after being released after 7 years’ imprisonment due to his rebel activity during the CR, starved to death at home due to unemployment. It was only because of the bad smell from his dead body that his neighbors discovered his body and were shocked to find that he had been dead for more than a week. And most of his face and feet had already been eaten up by mice. All statistics about the Yunnan case are from Zhou Jingchang et al, *The Super Case of Injustice in Yunnan’s Jiepitcha Movement (Yunnan jiepitcha yundong zhong de teda yuan’an)*, see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=3341>, and

Zhou Jinchang, *When Will the Case of Injustice Lasting for 28 Years be Resolved? (Ershiba nian de yuan’an heshi liao)*, see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=2623>, Cited on 25 September 2009.

⁸ Zhou Jinchang, *When Will the Case of Injustice Lasting for 28 Years be Resolved? (Ershiba nian de yuan’an heshi liao)*, see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=2623>, Cited on 25 September 2009. See also, Beijing Xiaoxi: sirenbang gongshen youjie (Beijing News: The “Gang of Four” Groups were Under Public Trials and Paraded through the Streets), in *Zhanwang (horizon)*, Jan. 1, 1978, Hong Kong.

⁹ Yu, Jiyang, *Gongheguo da zhuanzhe: gaige kaifang ershinian jishi (The Great Turn of the Republic: The Record of 20 years of Reform and Openness)*, Neimenggu: neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 1988, p.26; Ye Yonglie, *Deng Xiaoping gaibian zhongguo (Deng Xiaoping changed China)*, Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2008. p.66; Xiao Di Zhu, *Thirty Years in a Red House: A Memoir of Childhood And Youth in Communist China*, Univ of Massachusetts Press, 1999, p.170; Roderick MacFarquhar, Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s last revolution*, Harvard University Press, 2006, p.449; James Rodman Ross, *Caught in a Tornado: A Chinese American Woman Survives The Cultural Revolution*, Northeastern University Press, 1994, p.156.

how could common people afford to buy crabs? Further, are we to believe that the economy was on the brink of collapse during the late days of the Mao Era when in fact there was virtually no unemployment, no factories closing down, no financial bankruptcy, no internal and international debts, and steady and rapid agricultural and industrial growth?

Putting activists from the Cultural Revolution on trial, in effect meant putting all things related to the CR, and the CR itself, on trial as well. Thousands of Mao statues erected during the CR were demolished or buried underground, usually secretly late at night, without any public discussion. Model operas and films produced during the CR were banned.¹⁰ CR books and materials suffered a similar fate. On January 6, 1977, the Hua Guofeng regime issued an order to burn all books associated with the so-called "Gang of Four" and their followers.¹¹ Aiming to erase the historical traces of that era, this order detailed various restrictions about publications related to the CR. Almost all important theoretical, historical, political books and model opera publications during the CR, as a result, fell into the category of things that were to be destroyed.¹² A wave of burning CR books and materials surged across China. Shanghai, the so-called "severely afflicted area" (*zhongzaiqu*) of the CR, bore

¹⁰ In recent years, only a few selected model operas have been allowed to be performed due to their de facto tremendous commercial value.

¹¹ *Approved by the State Council: Proposal By The State Publications Bureau Leading Group About The Handling of Books Involving the "Gang Of Four" Anti-Party Clique*(*guowuyuan pizhun guojia hubanju lingdao xiaozu guanyu sheji "sirenbang" fandang jituan tushu chuli gongzuo de qingshi baogao*), Publications Bureau Leading Group Character [*chulingzi*] No. 007. See Liu Gao and Shi Feng ed., *Chronicle of Publication in the 50 Years of New China (Xinzhongguo wushinian chuban jishi)*, Xinhua chubanshe, 1999, p.164.

¹² For instance, all books that included articles composed by the writing groups who were supposedly "controlled" by the "Gang of Four", such as Liao Xiao (the Mass Criticism Groups of Peking and Tsinghua Universities), Qing Huaiwen, Chi Heng, Cheng Yue, Chu Lan, Jiang Tian, Luo Siding, each of which consisted of a few radical intellectuals, were ordered banned from circulation. Furthermore, the articles written by these authors, but under other pen names, were to be carefully identified and obliterated. What's more, the circulation of all books that included articles and images of the supposed followers of the so-called "Gang of Four", such as model opera actors Hao Liang and Liu Qingtang, and senior diplomat Qiao Guanhua, was to be ceased as well.

the brunt of this campaign of destruction. A librarian at Fudan University in Shanghai vividly recalled:

In the spring of 1977, there was an order to dispose of all CR materials. Common work-units had to turn in and destroy their collection...On that day the trucks from the paper factory parked outside the Fudan library building. From 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, bag by bag, we were busy with throwing CR books and materials out of the building's windows. When two thirds of the library's collection of the CR materials were finished, we felt hungry.... we were really unwilling to do it as we felt that these materials were of value and deserved to be kept. Then, I waved my hands downward to the people outside to show that all materials were finished. In this way, we kept one third of Fudan's CR collection. I should say that two thirds of the library's CR materials were thrown out through my hands. The day before yesterday I met my old colleague of Fudan library and mentioned this. He said that "on that day you threw the materials from above, and I collected what you threw down below. After the trucks of the paper factory drove away, on the ground there was scattered a pile of CR materials and we had to burn them ourselves. [The remaining papers were so thick and heavy that] in order to keep the fire burning, we had to constantly stir the paper pile with iron bars."¹³

In addition to CR books and materials, the institutions created during the CR, especially the revolutionary committees, also fell into the category of things to be smashed. Although the name of the revolutionary committee was retained for a while after the CR, its substance totally changed as rebel representatives were expelled, jailed, or even shot. The Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, as the successor of the Shanghai Commune, was finally dismantled in 1979. The Chinese dream of the Paris Commune that had inspired the Chinese imagination for nearly 100 years, was considerably dimmed in "a foul wind and a rain of blood" and exiled to the murky

¹³ Jing Dalu, *Where is Fudan's CR Materials? –An Interview with Cao Chong and Qing Banglian (Fudan de wenge ziliao dao nali qu le—Cao Chong Qing Banglian fangtan ji)*, *Historical Review (Shilin)*, Supplement No.1, 2006, p.108.

margins, as Mao himself predicted at his sickbed during his last year.¹⁴

In the early 1980s, the Deng Xiaoping regime went much further than the Hua Guofeng regime by launching a big campaign to “thoroughly negate the Cultural Revolution”, successfully demonizing the CR and its’ leaders, including Mao Zedong. Deng Xiaoping himself evaluated the whole life of Mao as meriting only “*san qi kai*” (a thirty-seventy split, meaning thirty percent failure or shortcomings and seventy percent success). But the state propaganda machine controlled by the elite officials and intellectuals actually went much further than that, hinting that Mao was actually seventy percent bad and merely thirty percent good (*qi san kai*, or *dao san qi kai*). Excluding Mao’s military achievements in founding the PRC, almost all of Mao’s accomplishments were depicted as disasters, especially in the years after 1956 when the agricultural collectivization movement was carried out. Through manipulating population statistics and distorting the history of the Great Leap Forward, Deng Xiaoping and his heirs successfully denigrated Mao in “academic” publications – claiming an astonishing death toll of at least several dozen million in the so-called Great Leap Forward famine. Rumors about Maoist rebels and a barrage of “scar literature” that exaggerated the sufferings of mainly officials and intellectuals, were disseminated through tabloids, Party newspapers, films, books, among other venues. All this effectively portrayed the CR as an unprecedented criminal holocaust of

¹⁴ Mao had a conversation with Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing, Hua Guofeng, Wu De, and Wang Hairong on 15 June (possibly 13 January) 1976, in which he said: "The Great Cultural Revolution is something that has not yet been concluded. Thus I am passing the task on to the next generation. I may not be able to pass it on peacefully, in which case I may have to pass it on in turmoil. What will happen to the next generation if it all fails? There may be a foul wind and a rain of blood. How will you cope? Heaven only knows!" See Mao Zedong, "Seal the Coffin and Pass the Final Verdict", in Schoenhals, Michael ed., *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not A Dinner Party*, M.E. Sharpe, 1996, p.293.

economic disruption, irrational violence, mass killings, the destruction of tradition, insanity, and so forth. Liberal intellectuals and officials in the mass media even hinted at – or openly put forward – a portrayal of Mao as a “Hitler in the East”.

Correspondingly, the rural People’s Communes were demonized by a popular liberal historian in Qinghua University as Auschwitz-style “concentration camps”.¹⁵ During the past 30 years, people have been ceaselessly bombarded through various venues by the warning that one should never allow the “tragedy” of the CR to reappear in the future.

My Use of Materials

Due to strict censorship, academic studies of the Cultural Revolution in China can only follow the official verdict of the CR set by Deng Xiaoping. In fact, up until now, research on the CR for scholars outside the party establishment was still considered a “forbidden city”. For more than 30 years, only scholars authorized by the government such as Yan Jiaqi, Jin Chunming, Wang Nianyi, Jin Chongji, and Pang Xianzhi could publish their writings. And these writings of course, do not contradict the official verdict on the CR and Mao. The publication of writings about the CR that diverge from the official propaganda has not been allowed. And even if someone managed to get past strict government censorship or self censorship imposed by editors and journalists, they would encounter fierce attacks by the mainstream

¹⁵ Qin Hui, *The Reform of Chinese Land System at the Crossroad (Shizilukou de zhongguo tudi zhidu gaige)*, in *Nanfang dushibao (Southern Metro Daily)*, October 7, 2008.

Chinese academia.¹⁶ Due to the regime's hostility, many crucial historical materials about the CR have been out of public reach – though now, more and more documents have become available through various channels. Even vendors of the CR tabloids in the flea markets are often harassed and punished with arbitrary fines. Furthermore, almost all internet websites in Chinese dedicated to the study of the CR, regardless of their political views, have been blocked or shut down by the Chinese government. For scholars outside China, even though they have more freedom to study the CR, one of the biggest difficulties is still the lack of materials, especially firsthand historical documents and personal narratives. These resources are either locked up, or have been destroyed by the regime. And it has also been very hard to interview key figures who experienced and witnessed the CR, or to investigate sites of key events during the CR. I visited Shanghai in 2006 in the hope of investigating some historical sites of the CR. When I took some photographs of the old city hall, I was immediately held by the security guards, threatened and subjected to interrogation. They destroyed the film in my camera and recorded my identity card. When I tried to arrange interviews with some key CR figures there, I was told that they were under close governmental supervision. Even if I managed to interview them, the interviewees had to tell the government who they had met with.

As a result of these difficulties, I had to base my research of the Shanghai Commune mainly on currently available resources written during and after the CR.

¹⁶ For example, in 2001, when a famous intellectual journal – “Reading” (*dushu*) published an article praising the CR at the village level by Gao Mobo (an Australian Chinese scholar), the author Gao and the chief editor of *dushu* Wang Hui suffered fierce attacks from Chinese liberals. See Gao Mobo, *Writing History: Gao Village*, in *dushu*, 2001, No.1. For an example of the liberal criticism of Gao's article, see Xu Youyu, Dang Guoying and Jiao Guobiao's comments on *Nanfang Weekend* (*nanfang zhoumo*), March, 29,2001.

Though there were many books and materials on the general studies of the CR, it was not easy to get useful information on the Shanghai Commune. In order to reconstruct the history of the Shanghai Commune, I tried my best to gather every single piece of historical evidence related to this topic. This process took me several years. The primary sources of this dissertation can roughly be divided into the following categories:

First: official publications during the CR. I used a lot of information taken from the *People's Daily (renmin ribao)*, *Red Flag (hongqi)*, *New China News Agency (Xinhuashe)*, and the CCP's English weekly journal *Peking Review*. To use the Central organs' articles was of crucial importance in exploring the official policies and attitudes toward the contemporary issues during the CR. For example, some scholars took the view that during the whole process of the Shanghai Commune, before it was replaced by the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, the CCP had never officially acknowledged the Shanghai rebel's provisional government. But in fact, the *People's Daily* released an article on February 17 1967 covering and praising the "All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels", though it did not mention the name of the Shanghai Commune. This piece of news from the government effectively showed Maoist leadership's acknowledgment of the legitimacy and authority of the Shanghai Commune, even though it did not apparently agree with the Commune's title.

The second group of materials that I utilized in my project was the Chinese publications after the CR. As we know, books and articles that deviated too much

from the CCP's official verdicts about the CR were not published in the People's Republic of China. Therefore, authorized publications about the CR were naturally one-sided, sometimes nothing more than the footnote of the Chinese regimes' official verdicts. Nevertheless, some of them still contain many historical facts. For example, in reconstructing the history of the Shanghai CR, I draw on some historical details from the first Party secretary of the SPC Chen Pixian's book, *At the Center of the January Storm* (*Chen Pixian huiyilu: zai yiyue fengbao de zhongxin*), even though some of Chen's recollections are fictitious. Due to the harsh restrictions imposed by the Chinese regime on the publication of the CR related books in China, after the CR, some CR memoirs were published in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Most of them, such as *Wang Li fansi lu* (*Wang Li's Reflections*) and *Chen Boda zuihou koushu huiyi* (*Final Oral Memoirs of Chen Boda*), take an anti-CR stance, but contain some useful information. Similarly, the memoir by the Shanghai literati rebel leader Xu Jingxian, *Ten Years A Dream* (*Shi nian yi meng*), published in Hong Kong in 2003, helped me to reiterate the story of the Shanghai Commune.

The third and the most pertinent materials that I frequently used were the actual CR Red Guard and rebel tabloids and newspapers, leaflets, and pamphlets, which I have personally collected for years. In this dissertation, I mainly made use of the following Red Guard and rebel materials: *Workers' Rebel News* (*gongren zaofan bao*), *The January Storm* (*yiyue fengbao*) et al. produced by the WGH; *Jiefang ribao* (*Liberation Daily*), *Wenhui Bao* (*Wenhui Daily*), *Shanghai Wanbao* (*Shanghai Evening News*), and *Zhibu Shenghuo* (*Life in Party Branches*) in Shanghai rebels'

control; *The Chronicle of the Shanghai January Revolution (Shanghai yiyue geming dashiji)* compiled by the Writing Group of Revolutionary Mass Criticism in Shanghai; the rebel pamphlet *Annals of Opposing the Economism in Shanghai During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Nov. 1966- March 15, 1967 (Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming zhong Shanghai fandui jingji zhuyi dashiji, 1966.11-1967.3.15)* compiled by the Liaison General Headquarters of Opposing the Economism; numerous rebel pamphlets compiled by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, and materials compiled by various Beijing Red Guard factions stationed in Shanghai and local Shanghai Red Guard groups, such as “*Frontline News*” (*huoxian bao*), edited by the Revolutionary Rebels’ Committee of Shanghai Institute of Machinery. However, it is very hard to obtain publications of the conservative factions and the anti-WGH, anti-Shanghai Commune rebel dissents’ factions. This is a big problem. In order to make up for such a shortcoming, I tried to incorporate some materials that came out after the CR from the perspectives of former conservatives or rebel dissents, such as Geng Jinzhang’s interview, An Wenjiang’s recollection, and some former members of the Scarlet Guards’ memoirs.

Because of the government’s ruthless restriction of memoirs by former rebels, many rebels have posted their recollections online. This is the fourth and an important primary source used to write this dissertation. To some extent, they partly offset my lack of first-hand interviews of the ex-activists of the Shanghai CR. In the first, fourth and fifth chapters of my dissertation, I used the recollections of Cao Weiping, who is a former Red Guard of the Fudan University and now a famous internet activist. In

addition, I made use of many interviews available online, such as those of Pan Guoping, the first commander of the WGH. In fact, many of the online sources I managed to find were originally posted on the Chinese Cultural Revolution Research Net (*zhongguo wenge yanjiu wan*. The URL is <http://www.wengewang.org>). This is a professional Chinese/English bilingual website devoted to studies of the CR.

It is not surprising that I quote a great deal of Mao's works in order to illustrate his views of continuous revolution, his imagination of a wholly new form of state structure, and his justification of the nominal shift of the Shanghai Commune, and so forth. Unfortunately, *The Complete Collected Works of Mao Zedong* was never published. After the coup d'état in 1976, in order to show its "loyalty" to Mao's line, but disregarding Mao's own wish to be cremated after death, the Hua Guofeng regime constructed a Mao mausoleum in the Tian'anmen Square. In addition, the Hua regime announced a plan to compile and publish *The Complete Collected Works of Mao Zedong*. But the Hua regime was soon toppled by Deng Xiaoping and his lieutenants, who launched a sweeping anti-Mao movement, ideologically, institutionally and organizationally. Therefore, the compilation and release of *the Complete Collected Works of Mao Zedong* was permanently postponed. Instead, the Deng and post-Deng Chinese regimes, which insisted on Deng's line without Deng, only published some selected works of Mao, which included several articles written by Mao during the CR. Among them, the most important project was the *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (*The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong since the Foundation of the PRC*) published between 1987 and 1998. But the CR materials of Mao only constituted 2, out of 13

volumes, in this project. This was one of the primary sources of Mao that I used in this dissertation. Nonetheless, many important articles and speeches by Mao during the CR, or parts of these, were deliberately obliterated in this collection. Therefore, scholars have had to resort to other versions of Mao's collected works, such as *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, published during the CR by various Red Guard and rebel factions. There were hundreds of versions of *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought*, which were compiled and printed by various mass organizations during the CR. I used the five-volume *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought*, printed in Wuhan between 1967 and 1968. According to Lao Tian's study, with more than fifteen hundreds pages, this five-volume set was in fact edited by Wang Chaoxing, a teacher in the Philosophy Department in Wuhan University. This is probably the most comprehensive edition.¹⁷ Some of the English translations of Mao's works from Red Guard publications I used in my dissertation were from the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad.¹⁸

I utilized whatever English sources I could find about the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai. Neal Hunter's *Shanghai Journal*, an eye-witness of the Shanghai Commune, was a primary source that I used extensively. And I also quote a great deal from Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun's important work, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in*

¹⁷ See Lao Tian, A note for the 1968 Wuhan edition of Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (liuba nian han ban Mao Zedong sixiang wansui banci shuoming), from <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=1818&page=1&toread=1>, cited July 10th, 2009.)

¹⁸ Available online at

http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm
cited on Jan. 10, 2010.

the Cultural Revolution. In the first chapter of my dissertation I list other major English researches I used and quoted. As for the primary CR documents in English, I mainly used *Peking Review*, a weekly magazine of Chinese news and views published by the CCP, *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* edited by Stuart R. Schram, *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1967* edited by the Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, *Chinese Politics, Documents and Analysis* edited by James T. Myers, Jurgen Domes and Erik Von Groeling, and *The People's Republic of China: 1949-1979, A Documentary Survey* edited by Harold C. Hinton. Unless specified, all translations from Chinese to English in this dissertation are my own.

The Shanghai Commune lasted for twenty days. The Shanghai Revolution Committee lasted for around 10 years. However, the historical experiences and lessons learned in these days, though blurred and covered, should not be silenced and consigned to the darkness of history. The socialist revolution in China inspired by an almost 100 year legacy from the West, was rooted in the initiatives and struggles of the Chinese working people. The extensive democracy this socialist experiment practiced, the paths it explored, and the limits and boundaries it delineated, will continue to shine and reverberate. The true history of the Shanghai Commune must be recovered. Every piece of historical material related to the Shanghai Commune was produced from irresistible rebellious passion for creating a better world and fulfilling the enduring Chinese dream of the Commune. If my work here can serve to continue this dream, then, I am very pleased and gratified.

Chapter One: The Paris Commune Goes To China: Historical Contour and Scholarship of the Shanghai Commune

A Chinese Eye-witness of the Paris Commune

On January 25, 1871, in order to deal with the Tianjing Mission Incident which had erupted the previous year,¹ a diplomatic delegation of the Qing Dynasty, headed by Chonghou (a veteran of the Foreign Affairs Yamen in the Qing court), landed on Marseille, France. One of the interpreters in the delegation, the young Zhang Deyi, began to write a journal on the Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent rise and fall of the Paris Commune. On the first night, he noticed a contingent of French soldiers passing by his hotel.

All of sudden, I heard music rising outside my hotel. I walked out, seeing that more than one hundred soldiers were disorderly passing by,

¹ The Qing Dynasty, founded after the Manchu people's conquest of China, was the last ruling dynasty of China from 1644 to 1912. In 1840, the British Empire invaded China on the pretext of free trade on opium. After that, China entered into the late Qing period (1840-1912). In June 1870, ten years after the splendid imperial Summer Palace in Beijing was burned down by allied troops of Britain and France, Tianjing, the only port city in Northern China at the time, witnessed another Sino-France conflict. It began with the gathering and baptizing of Chinese orphans by the orphanage attached to a Catholic church. This church was built on the site of a razed Buddhist temple in accordance with a treaty signed under the pressure of the French military presence. The French church offered payments to those who brought children to the orphanage and this increasingly resulted in the large-scale kidnapping of local children. When the French church deserted 34 dead children who had allegedly died from an epidemic, Tianjing residents were outraged and petitioned for an investigation of the church. Chinese official Liu Jie confronted the French consul Henri Fontanier demanding an investigation. Fontanier drew his pistol and fired on Liu, missing him but killing his servant. Upon learning of this murder, thousands of angry local residents rushed to the spot and killed Fontanier and his assistant. After that, within three hours, several foreign churches, including a French one were set on fire, and more than ten French nationals were killed. This event came to be known as the Tianjing Mission Incident. On the demand of the French government and fearing the possibility of military revenge, the Qing court chopped off the heads of 18 Tianjing residents who were held responsible and sent a Chonghou delegation to France to "offer an apology". See Tang Ruiyu, *Tianjing jiao'an yanjiu (A Study on the Tianjing Mission Incident)*, Taibei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1993.

some singing, some crying, some walking fast and some walking slowly...²

What Zhang Deyi witnessed were French troops disheartened due to the decisive blows by the Prussian army during the Franco-Prussian War. Three days later, an armistice treaty was signed between the two warring states – the republican France, which replaced the Second Empire, namely, the Imperial Bonapartist regime of Napoleon III from 1852 to 1870, and the kingdom of Prussia. At the time, France’s capital city, Paris, had finally surrendered to the Prussians. The standing army of the French government in Paris had been disbanded. But the National Guard, consisting of common Parisian workers and citizens, took the initiative to deter the Prussian army from occupying most of the Paris territory.

To make things clear for readers of his journal, Zhang Deyi explained the origin, development and result of the Franco-Prussian War in great detail – basing this on his deep study of historical and current events. In addition to meticulously narrating day-to-day battles, Zhang Deyi expended great efforts to describe and explain the struggles of the Parisian people, though not always entirely accurately according to strict historiography. One of the earliest attempts of the armed uprising of the Paris people, related by Zhang Deyi, took place on October 9, 1870. “One hundred thousand militias, referred to as ‘red heads’ (*hongtou*) for wearing red hats, rushed to the suburb of Paris on the pretext of fighting against the Prussian army, but then actually tried to stage an insurrection after the formation of the French republic.

² Zhang Deyi, *Notes on Following the Mission to France (Suishi faguo ji)*, Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe 1982, p.87.

The government then dispatched forces and fought them back.”³ On October 18, when five thousand Prussian troops arrived at the Stone Cave Village⁴, the villagers rose to fight and injured more than 1,800 Prussians. In retaliation, the enemy fired cannons, destroying all the village buildings and wounding several hundreds of villagers. After this battle, the French government honored the villagers with a great deal of money. At this critical moment, Paris’ citizens donated 500 cannons by saving on food and family expense. Meanwhile, all the copper and iron utensils in the churches were collected to cast cannons. On October 31, when the Government of National Defense started negotiations with the Prussians to try to reach a truce, thousands of “*hongtou*” (national guards) surrounded the city hall and proclaimed the formation of a Commune (*hongtou minzheng*), but this quickly failed.⁵ On January 7, 1871, before the official signing of the armistice treaty, some rebel “*hongtou*” demonstrated in the streets of Paris. One street security guard who tried to stop them was tied to a wood board and thrown into a river. In sharp contrast to the patriotism of the Parisian people, the ruling class of France showed that they did not care about the future of the state. Zhang Deyi reported that an army officer paid a visit to him in Marseilles. This officer was supposed to purchase shoes and socks for the troops, yet to Zhang’s surprise, he was busy with walking around and watching plays, not tending to his government assignments. Further, “when Paris had been under siege [by the Prussian army] and the emperor was captured, the streets and markets of Marseilles

³ Ibid. p.93. “Red heads” (*hongtou*) was a derogatory term for the Chinese rebel peasants in Qing dynasty. Here Zhang Deyi appropriated it to call the national guards and the ensuing communards in Paris as they carried red flags.

⁴ The placename is literally translated from *Shitoudong cun* in Zhang Deyi’s journal. I am not sure where it is.

⁵ Ibid. pp.93-95.

were full of festivity -- with strains of music accompanied by drumbeats and the rumblings of carriages.”⁶ On March 1, thirty thousand Prussian troops, singing triumphant songs, marched into Paris while armed French soldiers vigilantly guarded roads to prevent the common French citizens from watching the Prussian ceremony.⁷

On March 17, 1871, Zhang Deyi arrived in Paris from Bordeaux. On March 18, the government sent regular troops to Montmartre and other places hoping to disarm the city and seize the National Guard’s cannons. But the troops that were sent out rebelled and shot two of their commanders, General Claude Lecomte and General Clement Thomas. The next day, Zhang Deyi recounted that thousands of rebels flooded into Paris and gathered at the Vendome square. They jubilantly proclaimed the formation of their new organ of power – the Paris Commune. Since almost all governmental officials fled to Versailles, the rebels controlled the city. Furthermore, all the government soldiers turned their guns upside down to show their unwillingness to fight against the rebels. After the insurrection of March 18, Zhang Deyi fled to Bordeaux, and then went to Versailles. En route to Versailles, Zhang saw a great number of navy soldiers with blue jackets and straw hats. Zhang was told that “the regular troops did not want to fight with the rebels, so the navy troops were called in to fight.”⁸ After the formation of the Paris Commune, Zhang Deyi stayed in Versailles. But he was still able to obtain information from Paris. He learned, for instance, that the Paris Commune had lost a large amount of gun powder when a gunpowder storehouse caught fire. This incident caused more than 500 deaths and

⁶ Ibid. p.103.

⁷ Ibid.pp. 126-127

⁸ Ibid.pp.137-138

injuries to female communards who had been in charge of making gun powder. After the March 18 rebellion, Zhang noted that not only were all the qualified men required to serve in the national guards, but Paris women also played a vital role. “Some of them took part in making powder, some made cloth bags and filled them with sands and stones to build fortresses and batteries, and those good at literature and writing volunteered to draft official notices and announcements.” With an exclamation of surprise, Zhang Deyi found that some of the Paris women even fought in the battle fields and behaved even more courageously than the men.⁹

On May 21, Versailles troops entered Paris. The destiny of the Paris Commune was doomed. On May 23, Zhang recounted what he saw in Versailles that afternoon,

Accompanied with drumbeats and music, more than ten thousand [government] soldiers have returned to Versailles...there are twenty thousand or so captured rebels. Among them, all the women were locked in carriages, and all the men walked hand in hand. Some lowered their heads crying, and some raised their heads laughing. All [prisoners] were unkempt and pitiful...¹⁰

At this moment, the communard resistance continued. At night, “viewed northwards [from Versailles], a big fire erupted in Paris. The thunder of cannons has been roaring ceaselessly,” Zhang explained, “even though Paris was captured, the *hongtou* (communards) still hold some batteries outside the city. Thus the cannons and firearms fire every now and then.” A curious deputy diplomat from Italy died from a stray bullet as he was observing the capture of Paris.¹¹ In the afternoon of June 2,

⁹ Ibid.p.166.

¹⁰ Ibid.p.168

¹¹ Ibid.p.168.

Zhang observed that about 1,200 rebel prisoners passed by his hotel.

Among them there are two lines of female prisoners. Although their clothes and shoes are broken and their faces are stained with dust, their foreheads show a brave spirit... Now several hundred female fighters are captured. According to their confessions in court, most the actions, like arson and resisting of arrest, were taken on the women's initiative. Yesterday, the court ordered those major female culprits to be shot while the rest of them are to be exiled to New Caledonia.¹²

The next day, in the evening, again, some 2,500 communards who were being taken under armed escort passed by Zhang's hotel. "Some are smoking, and some are singing. Though captured, they expressed their intrepidity by smoking and singing."¹³ On June 6, another 1,800 captured rebels passed by Zhang's hotel, including more than one hundred women. "Though wearing dark clothes, all the women presented a dignified appearance. None of them looked weak and cowed."¹⁴

As a young diplomat from a feudal society of the East, Zhang Deyi could not grasp the great significance of the rise and fall of the Paris Commune, though he kept day-by-day records in his journal. Instead, by using the derogatory term *hongtou* to describe the communards Zhang distanced himself from those brave communards and identified himself with the French ruling elite class, to which Zhang and his delegation were sent to deliver an apology for the Tianjing Church Incident. In sharp contrast, the aborigines of New Caledonia, who were harshly treated by the French guards of the deported communards, attacked not the prisoners, but the guards. These guards were the common enemy of both the communards and the aborigines. At the

¹² Ibid. pp 171-172

¹³ Ibid. p.173

¹⁴ Ibid. p.174

time, Louise Michel, a famous female communard who had been exiled, took the aborigines' side in their revolt. When the tribal chief, who organized the attacks on the French guards, died, he was draped in the red flag of a Paris arrondissement by the exiled communards. The aborigines in the Pacific and the proletariat of Europe hence joined together in their common struggle.¹⁵ Nonetheless, judging from his touching descriptions of the captured communards, the young Chinese diplomat Zhang Deyi did show some sympathy, respect and even admiration toward the valiant fighters of the Paris Commune. This sympathetic feeling, which might have come from his discontent about the role of French imperialism in China, complicated his identification with the French ruling class.

Zhang Deyi's *Notes on Following the Mission to France (Suishi faguo ji)*, with its detailed descriptions of the Paris Commune, was not openly published until its rediscovery in 1982, so its influence remained very limited. Zhang Deyi did not realize that what he had witnessed could have a significant impact on human history, including the course of history in his own country. In fact, as an illuminating and appealing vision and revelation, the Paris Commune greatly inspired the Chinese people. The Commune imagination reemerged again and again in the Chinese quest for the (re-) construction of a new state structure. Although Zhang's account was silenced for more than one hundred years, it offers tangible traces of the beginning of the complex connections and interactions between the Paris Commune and subsequent events in Chinese history. My dissertation, in this regard, attempts to offer

¹⁵ Duvignaud, Jules, *Le Language Perdu*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973, pp. 52-53. Translated in *The Paris Commune in Communist China: An Anthropological Perspective*, in *Dialectical Anthropology*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1975, pp. 384-385

an in-depth study of one of the historical moments and conjunctures that was inspired by the Paris Commune, the Shanghai Commune during the heyday of the Cultural Revolution.

Obliteration and Commemoration of the Paris Commune in the West

The rise and fall of the Paris Commune in 1871 was a major historical event in the modern world. It was a heaven-storming effort to set up a government of proletarian rule. Though it only lasted 72 days – from March 18 to May 28 – the Paris Commune attempted to expropriate the expropriators. This was, of course, absolutely intolerable for the ruling exploiting class. After the defeat of the Paris Commune, the communards suffered tremendous brutality, torture, executions and many were exiled. In *La Semaine Sanglante* (Bloody Week), Benedict Anderson estimates that the Versailles “executed roughly 20,000 Communards or suspected sympathizers, a number higher than those killed in the recent war or during Robespierre’s ‘Terror’ of 1793–94. More than 7,500 were jailed or deported to places like New Caledonia.”¹⁶ In sum, among some 300,000 communards, 30,000 were slaughtered by the French bourgeois troops, 50,000 were later executed or incarcerated and 7,000 were exiled.¹⁷ According to Jacques Rougerie, Paris lost approximately 100,000 of its workers—one-seventh of its adult working men. After the defeat of the Paris Commune the electoral registers recorded a loss of some 90,000 voters, all male since

¹⁶ Anderson, Benedict, *In the World-Shadow of Bismarck and Nobel*, *New Left Review* 28, July-August 2004.

¹⁷ From Alfred Cobban’s estimation, in *A History of Modern France. Vol 3: 1871–1962*, London: Penguin books, 1965. p. 23,

women did not have the right to vote.¹⁸

The bourgeois ruling class not only physically crushed the Paris Commune. It also tried to erase the glorious (to the masses) or horrifying (to the ruling class) memory and lessons of the Paris Commune. When Leon Gambetta, a bourgeois republican leader, granted all ex-Communards amnesty, he said, “You must close the book on these last ten years... You must place the tombstone of oblivion over the crimes and vestiges of the Commune.”¹⁹

Still today, the story of the Paris Commune continues to be distorted and this has roots in the way the bourgeoisie reacted right after the final Bloody Week. The bourgeois class immediately began to launch a concerted campaign to obliterate the memory of the Commune.²⁰ First of all, after defeating the Paris Commune, the bourgeoisie set out to restore the city to the way it was before the conflict. On June 21, 1871, the young Chinese diplomat Zhang Deyi passed by the demolished Column Vendome, which had been erected between 1806 and 1810 in Paris in honor of the victories of Napoleonic France. The Communards demolished it because they regarded it as a symbol of the bourgeois state. Zhang wrote in his journal that “more than fifty thousand workers were hired²¹, going in for large scale construction” to restore the Column Vendome. The repair work would be “finished on a set date” and the Column would appear brand new then. On June 24, Zhang reported that even as the Communards were still being hunted down, “all the crucial points and the bustling

¹⁸ Wilson, Colette E., *Paris and the Commune, 1871-78: The Politics of Forgetting*, Manchester University Press, 2008. p.1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.1.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p.1.

²¹ This number could be exaggerated.

and flourishing places were neatly fixed and decorated.” In June and July, Paris saw a plethora of cafes, entertainment venues, circuses, parks and markets open to the public. On July 27, Zhang Deyi accompanied his superior Chonghou to the grand opening of a park. He was shocked at what he saw: “On entering the park, stars shine in the sky while thousands of lights illuminate the park. At the center of the park there is a dance pavilion, from which music rings loudly. It is really pleasant to the ear....Groups of prostitutes, walking leisurely and gracefully, look like fairies dropping down into this world. Flocks of flâneurs are busy pursuing these ladies. The whole country seems to be enchanted.” Amidst the light dancing music of the Paris bourgeoisie right after the Bloody Week, the bodies of tens of thousands of Paris workers were buried deep in the catacombs of history. A Paris of the proletariat was replaced by a Paris of the bourgeoisie.

In addition, as Colette E. Wilson argued, the governments of the early Third Republic of France tried to erase the memory of the Paris Commune in two major ways. The first was to enforce strict censorship of all matters concerning the Commune. The other was through the reinvention of Paris as a modern, healthy, hygienic and regenerated metropolis during the 1878 *Exposition universelle* (World Fair) and *the Fête du 30 juin* (Festival of 30 June). Furthermore, the mainstream bourgeois writers, artists, and photographers “were often apparently willing to conform to the officially promoted view of the city.”²² They actively participated in the demonization of the Commune and its fighters. For instance, the female

²² Wilson, Colette E., 2008, p.2

Communards were depicted in the mainstream narrative as incendiaries and degenerate prostitutes. After the collapse of the Commune, some photographers even made fake photographs to distort what had actually happened. They even invited actors and actresses to act out certain scenarios of the Commune and pose for photographs. One such “photo”, for example, portrayed the execution of hostages taken from the churches. Another one showed the shooting of two generals—General Claude Lecomte and General Clement Thomas.²³ In reality these two generals were brutal butchers of the working masses. But in the manufactured photographs, these two generals appeared heroic and brave in the face of the firing squad of the rebels. The defaming of the Paris Commune by the state and its supportive intellectual elites from 1871 onwards has been so effective that up to today “the Commune, no less than the Algerian war of independence, continues to be marginalized in the French education system and there remains much ignorance both in France and elsewhere about this ‘other French revolution’ and the terrible retribution meted out by the state to its own people.”²⁴

But the history of the Paris Commune could not be so easily and totally erased. Some people distorted, demonized, effaced and forgot, while others unfolded, uncovered, glorified and commemorated. History could not come and go without any traces. Even though many intellectuals who were contemporaries of the Paris Commune such as Nietzsche, were hostile to the Commune, more than a few writers and artists, such as Arthur Rimbaud and Edouard Manet, expressed their sympathy to

²³ See the cover story of the book *The Paris Commune From the Right (The English Historical Review: Supplement)*, by Roberts, J. M., Longman, 1973.

²⁴ Wilson, Colette E., 2008. p.210.

the Commune. More importantly, after fleeing the Third Republic of France and scattering to various countries, a great number of ex-Communards, such as Prosper Olivier Lissagaray, Jules Valles, Gustave Courbet, used their pens and paintbrushes to reclaim the memory of the Commune. For the ex-Communards, the love for the Commune and the trauma inflicted by the oppressive bourgeois state machinery were so deep-rooted that their memories of the Commune could never fade away. Many of these authors spared no ink in glorifying the Commune and condemning its antithesis, the Versailles authority. For example, speaking of the nature of the Commune and its antithesis, Pierre Vesinier (who was elected into Commune in the April 16th by-elections and helped to create a Jacobin-inspired Committee of Public Safety), wrote the following words after he fled to England following the defeat of the Commune,

The armed people of Paris were fighting then, above all for the abolition of the exploitation of man by man; for the destruction of all privileges, monopolies, despotism, and economical, political and religious tyrannies; for the suppression of the proletariat, of misery and pauperism; in a word, for the complete, radical, and absolute emancipation of all the working classes.²⁵

...Versailles, or the majority of the Assembly, represented feudalism, the middle ages, the old royalist and Catholic society, with all its prejudices and antiquated privileges, anti-revolutionists for whom the years 1789, 1792, 1830, 1848, 1870, 1871, and the whole nineteenth century, had no existence; Paris, or the Commune personified the aspirations and hopes of the travailleurs-proletaires for a new and better world by the complete transformation of society; it was the negation, the destruction, the absolute overthrow of present institutions, and the radical abolition of all exploitation. This was how

²⁵ Vésinier, Pierre, *History of the commune of Paris*, Published first in English, translated by J. V. Weber (Chapman and Hall, London, 1872), pp. 187-188.

the question stood from the first sitting of the Commune.²⁶

One of the earliest and strongest apologists and supporters of the Commune was Karl Marx, “a German doctor of philosophy with a German breadth of knowledge derived from observation of the living world and from books.”²⁷ Marx closely observed the Paris Commune and spoke highly of the first working-men’s government in the world. When the Communal troops were heroically fighting against the Versailles armies, on April 12, 1871, Marx wrote to his doctor friend Ludwig Kugelmann in Hanover, exuberantly hailing the communards’ historical initiative, elasticity, and great capacity for sacrifice. “After six months of hunger and ruin, caused rather by internal treachery than by the external enemy, they rise, beneath Prussian bayonets, as if there had never been a war between France and Germany and the enemy were not at the gates of Paris. History has no like example of a like greatness. If they are defeated only their ‘good nature’ will be to blame.”²⁸ In a historical moment that Marx’s close friend Engels depicted as “if the proletariat was not yet able to rule, the bourgeoisie could no longer do so,”²⁹ these Parisian working people, without the least hesitation, took the historical initiative to revolt against the old world. Marx realized that a proletarian insurrection in the besieged city of Paris, in the face of the dominant bourgeois military forces of both French and Prussia, would be an act of desperate folly. But when the revolt took place, Marx wanted to march

²⁶ Ibid. pp. 174-175.

²⁷ John Hicks & Robert Tucker Eds., *Revolution and Reaction: The Paris Commune 1871*, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1973, p.73.

²⁸ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.284.

²⁹ Ibid. p.24.

with them. Marx recognized that it would be too easy and absurd to think that historical struggles could only be made in condition of infallibly favorable chances; “accidents” would play their parts as well in any struggles. In such a critical historical moment, of political crisis and war, if “accidents” compelled the working class to act, then they should take up the fight. In another letter to Kugelmann on April 17, Marx expressed his view that if the working class succumbed without any struggle, “the demoralization of the working class would have been a far greater misfortune than the succumbing of any number of ‘leaders’ ”.³⁰ However, Marx underestimated how cruel the bourgeoisie would be in their revenge when “the proletariat dares to take its own interests and demands.” As Marx put it, “1848 was only child’s play compared with the frenzy of the bourgeoisie in 1871.”³¹ In the struggle against “the nefarious civilization based upon the enslavement of labor”, not just numerous leaders, but also hundreds of thousands of courageous common men, women and children were sacrificed for the grand cause of the first proletarian government. Even after the capture of the city by the bourgeois armies, with the spirit of heroic self-sacrifice, the Parisian laborers fought fearlessly for eight days! “The Paris people die enthusiastically for the Commune in numbers unequalled in any battle known to history.” As the young Chinese diplomat Zhang Deyi heard and witnessed, the working women of Paris actively participated in the cause of the Commune, acting with even braver than the men. These working women would “joyfully give up their

³⁰ Ibid. p.285.

³¹ Ibid. p.24.

lives at the barricades and on the place of execution.”³²

But the blood of the Communards was not shed in vain. During the 72 days of its short-lived existence, the Paris Commune, for the first time in the human history, provided the model for future struggles for emancipation by the working class. “The great social measure of the Commune was its own existence.” And its special measures “could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people.”³³ Politically, the historical creations of the Commune included the separation of Church from the State; the abolition of a regular army; the abolition of the old military bureaucracy; the institution of general elections for all officials, whose payment could not go beyond a skilled worker’s salary; the incorporation of foreigners into the Commune; and the introduction of free tuitions. Economic measures taken by the Commune included the abolition of night work in the bakeries; the prohibition of monetary fines under various pretexts in the factories; the confiscation of closed factories and workshops which were then turned over to workers’ associations; the halt to foreclosures of mortgages and determent of payments of rent; the provision that a man took responsibility to support his female partner; and pensions to all widows whose husbands died for the Commune’s cause. These historical measures were not derived from the principles of Proudhonism and Blanquism, which were prevalent among the Communards, but were simply based on the “practical elasticity of demands”. As Marx put it,³⁴

The red banner of the Paris Commune –which was jointly erected and defended

³² Ibid.p.92.

³³ Ibid.p.80.

³⁴ *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels Collected Works*, International Publishers, 1987. Vol.23, p.370.

to the end by the French working people as well as the fighters from other European countries, such as Russia, Poland, Italy, Belgium, etc.,--has a decidedly international character. Even though the Paris Commune was brutally suppressed by the French bourgeoisie, as the greatest workers' uprising in the 19th century, it exerted tremendous influence on subsequent proletarian struggles, first in Europe, then throughout the world. As Lenin expounded, "The sacrifices of the Commune, heavy as they were, are made up for by its significance for the general struggle of the proletariat: it stirred up the socialist movement throughout Europe, it demonstrated the strength of civil war, it dispelled patriotic illusions, and destroyed the naive belief in any efforts of the bourgeoisie for common national aims. The Commune taught the European proletariat to pose concretely the tasks of the socialist revolution."³⁵ After the Paris Commune, like bamboo shoots after a spring rain, a great number of workers' parties and organizations in other countries were established. This resulted in countless strikes in the following years in different parts of the world. The workers' movement in Europe was spurred on by the model of the Paris Commune, as it proved that the workers could master their own destinies and form their own organ of political, free from expropriators and elite control. Especially, among the Russian revolutionaries during the last thirty years of the 19th century, the principles and spirit of the Paris Commune were widely invoked. 1905 saw a series of worker strikes, peasant protests, terrorist attacks, and revolts across the imperial Russia partly due to the defeat of the Russian army in the Russian-Japanese war. Amid political turbulence,

³⁵ *Lenin on the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970. p.22.

in around 50 different towns, Russian revolutionaries set up Soviets of Workers Deputies, which, Lenin later recognized as a form of a new state apparatus similar to the Paris Commune. Yet in the eyes of Lenin, the Soviets in 1905 and those in the 1917 revolution were still only in embryo before seizing the whole state power. “The Soviets will be able to develop properly, to display their potentialities and capabilities to the full only by taking over full state power; for otherwise they have nothing to do...”³⁶ At last, with the October Revolution of 1917, the Soviets gained full control of the Russian state machinery. Following the example of the Paris Commune, a new type of state power organ was established under the name of the Russian Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies, which was hailed by Lenin as a “state apparatus” of the same type as the Paris Commune.³⁷

The Commune Practice in China

The Paris Commune also deeply influenced Chinese politics in the 20th century. As mentioned earlier, in the beginning of 1871, the late Qing government had to send a diplomatic mission to Paris to deliver an apology for the Tianjing Mission Incident. And the Franco-Prussian War was recorded by a few diplomats in this mission, including the young Chinese interpreter Zhang Deyi, who wrote *Notes on Following the Mission to France (Suishi faguo ji)*.³⁸ But these diplomats’ accounts of the Paris

³⁶ Ibid. p.95.

³⁷ Ibid. p.93.

³⁸ In addition to Zhang Deyi, Chonghou and Gao Congwang, who were in the same diplomatic delegation, wrote eye-witness accounts of the Paris Commune as well, but their records of the Paris Commune were never published. See Li Changlin, *Lueyi liangbu guoren bali gongshe mujiji (A Brief Comment on Two Chinese Witnesses of the*

Commune did not have much influence upon the Chinese people for they were not openly published at the time. But during the Franco-Prussian War, an American missionary in Shanghai put out *China Church News* (*zhongguo jiaohui xinbao*) in Chinese which covered news in and outside of China. From August 1870, it began to cover the Prussian-Franco War. In the next year, Chinese people were able to read lengthy reports on the Paris Commune in this newspaper. Later on, Wang Tao, one of the contributors to *China Church News*, wrote two books—*A Concise history of the France* (*faguo zhilue*) and *Account of the Prusso-France War* (*pufa zhanji*) that amply discussed the Paris Commune – though, understandably, from the point of view of the ruling elite, similar to Zhang Deyi’s accounts. Shortly after the above writings, some contemporary bourgeois revolutionaries, such as Song Jiaoren, commented on the Paris Commune sympathetically. In 1907, another favorable comment on the Paris Commune, entitled “The Revolution in the New Century” (*xin shiji zhi geming*), was offered by some Chinese anarchists living in Paris. It tried to depict the Paris Commune as an anarchist socialist revolution, and argued that the defeat of the Commune was due to the fact that revolutionary thought was not popular in France, and that the Commune did not use iron-fist force to suppress counterrevolutionaries. But generally speaking, knowledge of the Paris Commune in China was very sporadic and its influence was to a great extent limited until the Russian Bolshevik revolution in 1917.

The victory of the Russian revolution invigorated the revolutionary spirit of the

Paris Commune), in *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxueyuan xuebao* (*Journal of School of Chinese Language and Culture in Nanjing Normal University*), No.3, 2003. Gao Congwang's manuscript, which is kept in Nanjing Library now, entitled *suiyao biji* (*A diplomat's Diary*).

Chinese significantly. “It was through the Russian Revolution that the Chinese found Marxism,” the Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong wrote, “Before the October Revolution, the Chinese were not only ignorant of Lenin and Stalin, they did not even know of Marx and Engels. The salvos of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism.”³⁹ When the Chinese revolutionaries learned that the Russian Soviets were actually inspired by the Paris Commune, they began to assiduously study its principles and significance. During World War 1, due to the labor shortage in France, as many as 150,000 Chinese workers went there between 1916-1920. Among them there were about 28,000 Chinese intellectuals and quite a few communist sympathizers.⁴⁰ Some of them, including Nie Rongzhen, Deng Xiaoping, Li Fuchun, Cai Chang, inspired by the victory of the Russian revolution, went to the “*Mur des Fédérés*” in 1921 and pledged to fight for Communism.⁴¹ Thereafter, increasing efforts were devoted by the early Chinese communist intellectuals, such as Qu Qiubai, Zhou Enlai, Li Da, and Li Dazhao, to introduce the Paris Commune into China – which became a good example and model for the Chinese proletariat. In 1926 and 1927, great ceremonies were held in Guangzhou, Wuhan, and other cities in the commemoration of the 55th and 56th anniversaries of the Paris commune. These were led by the Guomindang regime which was still revolutionary, with the enthusiastic participation of Chinese communists. In 1927 alone, more than one million

³⁹ *Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. IV*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1969, p. 413.

⁴⁰ Xianyu Hao, *Liufa qingong jianxue yundong shigao (The History of Chinese Practice of Working While Studying in France)*, Chendu: Bashu shushe, 1994, p.212. And Perry, Elisabeth, *From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back: Workers As Citizens in Modern Shanghai*, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1999), p. 352.

⁴¹ Xie, Xiaonai, *Jianding de xinnian zhuanglu de zhengcheng: Nie Rongzhen huiyilu duhou (Firm Conviction, Splendid Journey: After Thoughts on Reading Reminiscences of Nie Rongzhen)*, in *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, May 25, 1986.

revolutionaries took part in the commemoration of the Paris Commune; rallies, lectures, and parties were held everywhere.⁴² Among them two major communist leaders, Zhang Tailei and Mao Zedong gave special lectures on the Paris Commune. Mao's lecture "*Some Points for Attention in Commemorating the Paris Commune*" was delivered to the Guomindang Political Training Group on March 18, 1926 at the commemoration of the 55th anniversary of the Paris Commune. "The Paris Commune," Mao pointed out in this lecture, clearly "saw the opening of a bright flower, while the Russian Revolution represents the happy fruit. The Russian Revolution is the continuation of the Paris Commune." Mao further explained why it took so long—fifty-five years— for Chinese to initiate the first commemoration of the Paris Commune,

Today, for the first time, the Chinese popular masses are commemorating the Paris Commune. It is now already fifty-five years since the event known as the Paris Commune took place, so why is it only now that we know we should commemorate it and are carrying out this commemoration? Because previously the Chinese revolution was the undertaking of a minority, and only now that the tide of revolution is rising ever higher has the revolutionary movement been broadened from a minority of people to the majority of the people. Now a majority of the popular masses of peasants and workers are already participating in it, and it is moreover led by Guomindang members of the left. There is the state of the workers' dictatorship, Soviet Russia, to serve as a model. For all of these reasons, the Chinese popular masses have only now become aware of today's date for commemoration and are only now able to carry out today's commemoration.

Mao went on to underline some important points and the significance of the

⁴² This number is from Chen Shuping, *Bali gongshe yu zhongguo (The Paris Commune and China)*, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1988, p. 99. According to Chen Shuping's study, on March 18, 1927, in Wuhan alone, more than 800,000 people participated in the commemoration of the Paris Commune. Quote from the same book, p.94.

commemoration of the Commune. Firstly, Mao believed that the Commune was a result of the maturing of objective conditions that included the mighty French workers' movement and the development of capitalism into imperialism in the European countries. Secondly, bourgeois wars, domestic or international, are meaningless (not wars that the proletariat should take sides in). In contrast, what the masses need to wage are class wars, in which the oppressed classes rise up and overthrow the classes of the oppressors, domestic and international. Thirdly, Mao reaffirmed Marx's view that "the history of humanity is a history of class struggle." And the Paris Commune was the first political and economic revolution in which the working class arose to overthrow the ruling class. Fourthly, it was necessary to take lessons from the defeat of the Paris Commune, and he argued that the primary cause of the Commune's defeat was the lack of a united, centralized, and disciplined party to lead the Commune. The second reason lay in the conciliatory and merciful attitudes of the Commune toward its enemy.⁴³

In 1927, inspired by the "bright flower" of the Paris Commune and the "happy fruit" of the Russian Revolution, the Chinese working people set up their own communes in two major cities—Shanghai and Guangzhou, though they did not call these new organs of power communes. When the Nationalist troops (who were still revolutionary at that time) approached Shanghai, the workers, led by Zhou Enlai, Luo Yinong and other communists, carried out three insurrections between 1926 and 1927, against the warlords who controlled the city. During the secret preparations for the

⁴³ Mao Zedong, "Some Points for Attention in Commemorating the Paris Commune", in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949 Vol.2: National Revolution and Social Revolution December 1920-June 1927*, ed. by Stuart R. Schram, and Nancy Jane Hodes, M.E. Sharpe, December 1994, pp.365-368.

second uprising of Shanghai in 1927, Luo Yinong, then secretary of the Shanghai district committee of the Communist Party, remarked: "First there must be a general strike. All the masses will immediately rise up to make speeches and hold meetings in preparation for creating a Shanghai Paris Commune."⁴⁴ The third insurrection on March 21, 1927, just three days after big commemorations of the 56th anniversary of the Paris commune in various Chinese cities, turned out to be successful. As a result, the first Chinese Commune regime was established in 1927.⁴⁵ Elisabeth Perry describes the similarities between the Paris Commune and the Shanghai Uprisings: in both cases, the workers fought alongside other citizens for the shared goal of municipal autonomy; both were sparked by resentment on the part of urban residents toward the occupation of their city by unwelcome intruders—whether Prussians or Chinese warlords; the new government after the Shanghai Uprisings modeled on the Paris Commune, established provisions for direct popular election of (and, if necessary, the recall of) representatives; the Shanghai workers assumed dominant positions in the new power organ; similar to the Paris Commune, every Shanghai factory, craft union, shopkeepers' federation, peasant association, merchant guild, military barracks, school, and professional organization held mass meetings for the direct election of both district and all-city delegates; by abolishing the standing army,

⁴⁴ *Shanghai gongren sancu wuzhuang qiyi (Shanghai's Three Workers' Armed Uprisings)*, Shanghai Municipal Archives, ed. (Shanghai: 1983), p.70. Quoted from Perry, Elisabeth, *From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back: Workers As Citizens in Modern Shanghai*, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1999), p. 353.

⁴⁵ The power organ established after the third workers' uprising in Shanghai was the Shanghai Provisional Municipal Government, which was elected by the Shanghai Provisional Congress of Citizen Representatives. The name "Shanghai Commune" was usually used by foreigners, not the participants of the Shanghai Provisional Municipal Government. For example, Trotsky mentioned that the party organ of the French Communist Party *L'Humanité* once sent a telegram greeting the butcher Jiang Jieshi as the hero of the Shanghai Commune. This was ironic since it was Jiang Jieshi who quickly crushed the Shanghai Commune. See Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China*, Monad Press: distributed by Pathfinder Press, 1976, p.273.

the new Shanghai regime organized a workers' armed militia as well. The victory of Shanghai uprising and the formation of a workers' regime created extensive enthusiasm around the world. "In Paris, the French Communist Party convened a meeting attended by more than 6,000 people to express opposition to imperialist interference in the Chinese revolution. When the Chinese representatives entered the meeting hall, they were greeted with thunderous applause." Celebratory assemblies, parades and lectures spread from Paris to London, Berlin, Brussels, and the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the first Shanghai Commune was soon suppressed by General Jiang Jieshi, a representative of the Chinese bourgeoisie and landlords. Later this same year, in a southern city, Guangzhou, Zhang Tailei and Ye Jianying, among others, led another communist military uprising against the Nationalist troops and established a second local Commune regime, the "Canton Commune." But sharing the same destiny with the Shanghai Commune earlier that year, the Canton Commune was ruthlessly crushed by Nationalist troops.⁴⁷

The third Commune regime in China, the focal point of this dissertation, was the Shanghai People's Commune in 1967 at the height of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Right before the official launch of the CR on May 16, 1966, Mao Zedong, in his famous *May 7 Directive*, already depicted some of the characteristics of a new type of political structure that would be sharply different from the republic's

⁴⁶ Perry, Elisabeth, *From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back: Workers As Citizens in Modern Shanghai*, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 348-373.

⁴⁷ For details about the introduction of the Paris Commune into China, see Chen Shuping, *Bali gongshe yu zhongguo (The Paris Commune and China)*, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1988. Commentators later usually referred to the Canton Commune that was established in the Guangzhou Uprising as the "Guangzhou Soviet Government." But the power organ of the Guangzhou Uprising did not adopt the name of "Canton commune" as such at the time. For analysis of this issue, please see Chen Shuping, 1988, pp.102-111.

old state machinery. Among other things, Mao stated in the *May 7 Directive* that the army should be made a great school in which the troops should study politics, military affairs, and culture, and engage in agricultural production and side-occupations, and build up its own middle-sized and small factories to produce goods for its own needs, as well as making equal exchanges with the state. The army should take part in mass work, factory work, rural socialist education and the revolutionary struggle against capitalist culture. Likewise, the workers, peasants, students, and people in commerce, service trades, and party and government offices – in addition to their main assigned works such as industrial or agricultural works – should learn military affairs, politics, and culture, take part in the socialist educational movement to criticize the capitalist class, and do work other than their assigned main tasks.⁴⁸ And the army should not only be a big school of revolution, but fields such as industry and agriculture, among others, should be made into big revolutionary schools as well. The whole society, under such a vision, would be turned into a school of revolutionary learning and doing. When commenting on the Paris Commune’s provision of abolishing the standing army, Marx ardently praised how the Commune made every adult citizen in Paris a member of the militia. That is, every citizen, no matter what job he or she occupied, was simultaneously a soldier. Marx believed that with the Paris Commune, as “the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of Labour,” every man is “a working man”, and “productive labour

⁴⁸ Mao Zedong, *Notes on the Report of Further Improving the Army’s Agricultural Work By the Rear Service Department of the Military Commission*, May 7, 1966, in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_57.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

ceases to be a class attribute.”⁴⁹ Mao did not name the new state organ of power in the *May 7 Directive*. But in envisioning the new society as a “great school”, within which the three major disparities (*sanda chabie*) in socialist China – between manual and mental labor, between industry and agriculture, and between workers and peasants – were to be gradually abolished, he delineated the contours of a Commune state. Two months later, in the early stage of the CR, Mao coined the term “Chinese Paris Commune” (*zhongguo bali gongshe*) in remarking about the first big character poster at Beijing University.

In the official statement as to the goal of Cultural Revolution, the *16-Point Decision*, which was issued on Aug 8, 1966, Point 9 that was titled “Cultural Revolutionary Groups, Committees and Congresses” directly called for looking to the Paris Commune as a model. Before the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese proletariat and other masses were dissatisfied with the bureaucracy and gradual degeneration of at least parts of the Chinese Communist Party. Before the CR, even a word of criticism directed at Party leaders could lead to an accusation of “counter-revolution”. Many cadres in the party, represented by the Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping factions, were not willing to continue the revolution, even overtly or covertly opposing Mao’s theory and practice of continuous revolutions in building socialism and achieving communism. The increasingly-intensified two-line struggle within the party between the Maoists and the Liu-Dengists made the CR inevitable.⁵⁰ During the CR, there was

⁴⁹ The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (hereafter *MECW*). General Works 1844-1895. New York: International Publishers, Volume 22. 1987, pp.334-335.

⁵⁰ Since the theories and practices of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping are similar, the two top leaders in the CCP are closely related. Both of them tend to adopt capitalist policies in the state management, basically support the Pre-CR order and try their best to protect the hierarchical bureaucratic structure during the CR. In my narrative, I

real hope for the working people that they could seize back power from those in the bureaucracy of the party who had degenerated into revisionists. The call for a commune became a genuine aspiration for the masses in Shanghai, who took Mao's *May 7 Directive* and *the 16-Point Decision* as their political and ideological weapons. In the last days of 1966, in the heat of the CR, the party bureaucracy in Shanghai secretly ordered their conservative supporters to abandon their jobs – hoping that this would paralyze whole Shanghai port, and put a brake on the momentum of the CR. But rebel workers in Shanghai, led by Wang Hongwen and his fellow rebel leaders, recognized this as a great and rare chance and initiated a mass movement on their own initiative. In the beginning of 1967, the rebel workers, together with the rebel students, launched the powerful "January Storm" which turned the city life upside down. By the middle of the month, the rebels had taken control of the city administration, and early in the following month, through a tortuous road, the Shanghai People's Commune, modeled after the 1871 Paris Commune, was finally established. The old bureaucratic administration was replaced by a new popular government organ, which virtually excluded all the old high ranking party and city officials. The manifesto of the Shanghai Commune reaffirmed the principles of the Paris Commune. All the leaders of this new government power were representatives of various mass organizations, who could be recalled at any time by the masses. Though the Shanghai Commune only lasted for 20 days, and was subsequently replaced by Three-in-One Combination leadership, also known as the Triple Alliance Revolutionary Committee favored by

combine the two and refer to the party persons with similar thinking and practices to Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping as "Liu-Dengists", or "Liuists".

Mao, it is still believed by some critics, such as Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Herry Topper, to be the climax of the whole Chinese Cultural Revolution.

As early as the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) period, a new phrase “new socialist things” (*shehui zhuyi xinsheng shiwu*, also translated as “socialist new things”) was coined to refer to those things emerging from the three great practices, namely, class struggle, and the struggles for production and scientific experiment, under the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁵¹ Many “new socialist things” came into existence at that time, and among them the most important one was the creation of people’s communes in rural areas. In some cities, there was also experimentation with city communes. During the Great Leap Forward, Liu-Dengist cadres blew “five winds” (*wufeng*), namely, a hasty leap forward of communism, exaggeration, commandism, cadre privileges, and blindly leading production. Thanks to Liu-Dengists’ disruption, to a certain degree, the socialist cause in China suffered setbacks.⁵² Many “new socialist things”, as a result, could not be sustained and further developed. For example, a great number of peasant-run factories had to close down because they no longer had state support. And due to the policy of *san zi yi bao*,⁵³ advocated by Liu Shaoqi and his lieutenants, the rural communes were put in jeopardy. In 1966, with the launch of the CR, the Maoist leaders put the issue of “new

⁵¹ The earliest application of the phrase “new socialist things” can be found in Chen Bingyu’s article “*Resolutely Support New Things*” (*Jianding de fuzhi xinsheng shiwu*) published on the CCP organ *People’s Daily* on May 1, 1960.

⁵² Nevertheless, the Great Leap Forward achieved so much as to lay a solid foundation for Chinese agricultural and industrial modernization, and unleashed endless initiatives and enthusiasm of the Chinese masses, especially Chinese peasants, to envision and construct socialism and communism. Therefore, the Great Leap Forward should never be lumped together with the “*wufeng*” (five winds), or local famines – which mainstream scholars have done and which the Maoist leadership at that time actively battled.

⁵³ Literally, three selfs and one contract. Three *zi* means practicing private plots, free markets, profit-driven small enterprises, and one *bao* means requiring fixed output quotas on a household basis.

socialist things” back on the agenda. In a discussion with some high Party cadres in the Center (*zhongyang*, the Central Committee of the CCP) in July 1966, Mao Zedong made clear that the three tasks of the CR were to struggle, to criticize, and to transform (*dou pi gai*). “Opposition, especially to the bourgeois ‘authoritative thoughts’, is destruction; without this destruction, the socialist construction could not be established and it will be impossible to No. 1 struggle, No. 2 criticism, and No. 3 reform.”⁵⁴ Marx asserted that the workers of the Paris Commune “have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant.”⁵⁵ Along a similar vein, Mao’s formula of the “struggle-criticism-transformation” aimed to liberate the masses’ creativity and new productivity, which had been counteracted for a long time by the parts of the old bureaucratic Party and state system in China that had degenerated. The experience of the Great Leap Forward had revealed that the development of the superstructure in China was lagging behind the productive forces that had rapidly developed with the adoption of socialist collectivization. So there was a need to give priority to struggle and criticism in the superstructure – in the realm of politics and ideology – could reform be carried out and “new socialist things” be created. In this sense, the Shanghai Commune and its replacement, the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, can be considered “new socialist things” as well, because they were created in the tremendous momentum of struggle and criticism amid the January Storm and the CR.

⁵⁴ *Mao’s Speech to Some CCP CC Leaders*, July 1966, from *Long Live Mao Tse-tung Thought*, a Red Guard Publication. English translation modified from Hinton, Harold C. ed., *The People’s Republic of China: 1949-1979, A Documentary Survey*, Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1980. Vol. 3, p.1552,

⁵⁵ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.76.

Along with the establishment of Revolutionary Committees across the state in September 1968 and the opening of the Ninth National Congress of the CCP in April 1969, the large scale mass movement that characterized the CR officially ended and a new phase of reform, or, creative transformation, that is, the creation of a different set of “new socialist things” started.

At the end of 1974, the Party organ *Red Flag* summarized that since the start of the CR, a host of “socialist new things” had emerged “in the thick of the fierce struggle between the two classes and the two lines”. Among the mushrooming of new things were:

lively development of the mass movement in the study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought; birth of the revolutionary committees and strengthening of the Party's centralized leadership; creation and popularization of model revolutionary theatrical works; expansion of the mass contingents of Marxist theoretical workers; enrolment of workers, peasants and soldiers in institutions of higher learning and reform in education; educated young people settling in the countryside and mountainous areas; medical workers going to the rural areas; rural "barefoot doctors" and co-operative medical service; study by the masses in their hundreds of millions of the historical experience of the struggle between the Confucian and Legalist schools and the class struggle as a whole; three-in-one combinations of the old, the middle-aged and the young in leading bodies at all levels; study classes for training worker-peasant-soldier cadres; participation in physical labor by vast numbers of cadres; especially leading cadres; many advanced units in agriculture, industry, commerce, culture and education, and numerous inventions and creations in science and technology.⁵⁶

In August 1976, on the eve of Mao Zedong's death in September, the *Red Flag* published another article propagating and boosting about the “socialist new things”. In

⁵⁶ Chi Heng, *Develop the Socialist New Things (Fazhan shehui zhuyi de xinsheng shiwu)*, in *Red Flag*, No.12, 1974. The English translation could be found in *Peking Review*, No 51, December 20, 1974.

addition to what is mentioned above, it listed many more socialist achievements, including: the emergence of many groups and individuals good at discerning and resisting the revisionist line of Deng Xiaoping; the occupation and transformation of the superstructure by the working class; the management of universities and schools by workers and middle-lower peasants; the spread of the experiences of the educational revolution in Beijing University, Qinghua University, and the Chaoyang Agricultural College in which graduates went to villages to work with the peasants in accordance with the principle of "from the communes and back to the communes" (*she lai she qu*); the development of July 21 workers' universities and peasants' part-time universities throughout the country; the rotation of professional doctors in the cities and bare-foot doctors in the villages; and the development of May 7 cadre schools.⁵⁷

But all of these creations, including the new organizational forms of state power inspired by and modeled on the Paris Commune that emerged during the CR, virtually came to a sudden end when Mao Zedong passed away on September 9, 1976 and the rightist coup d'état, plotted by Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, Wang Dongxing, Li Xiannian and other high Party and army officials, took place on October 6, 1976. Thereafter, the Chinese regimes have been promoting an ideology of "bidding farewell to revolution" (*gaobie geming*). Under such circumstances, the Paris Commune is no longer officially commemorated by the Chinese government and the CCP. As for the Chinese working people, for a quite while many of them enjoyed the

⁵⁷ Chen Yue, *Further Develop the Socialist New Things*, in *Red Flag*, No.8, 1976.

wage hike and extra bonus that the Deng Xiaoping regime offered, using the state funds accumulated mainly during the Mao era. At that time, the principles of the Paris Commune, or the Maoist theories and practices of the Chinese Communes, was forgotten. But after 1992, the workers in the cities soon have found themselves being replaced by migrant workers from the rural villages. Tens of million of workers in the cities have lost their jobs since then. In response, many Chinese workers went on strike to defend their right to work. In their struggle against capitalism, why would the Chinese working people not remember and reactivate the principles of the Paris Commune and set up another workers' Commune in the future? After all, as Marx predicted, the Social Revolution that the Paris Commune has initiated will triumph and "its birthstead is everywhere."⁵⁸

Scholarship on the Shanghai Commune and Contemporary Chinese Commune Thinking

The experiences and lessons of the Shanghai Commune are crucial not only to understand the Cultural Revolution and contemporary Chinese society, but also to envisage China's future. Unfortunately, little research has been done on this issue. Elizabeth Perry, Maurice Meisner, Andrew Walder, among others, whose works I will

⁵⁸ Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*. Volume 22, International Publishers, 1987, p.540..

discuss below, have done some significant research on the CR in Shanghai as a whole. But there are few comprehensive and in-depth studies focused on the Shanghai Commune during the CR. A book with a comprehensive historical account of the Shanghai Commune has never been published either in the West or in China. Here I would like to review the works by Chinese and Western scholars on the Shanghai Commune and contemporary Chinese thinking on the Commune.

Memoirs of Foreign Observers of the Shanghai Commune

The earliest studies on the Shanghai Commune can be traced back to narratives by witnesses of the Shanghai CR in late 1966 and early 1967. The Australians Neal Hunter and his wife arrived in Shanghai in April 1965 to work as English teachers at the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute. With the dramatic eruption of the CR in May 1966 all foreign teachers in China became unemployed, even though the Chinese government still paid them in accordance with their contracts. In April 1967, Hunter left Shanghai. During his two year stay in China, Hunter had ample opportunities to observe the early events of the CR, especially the rise of the Shanghai Commune and its ensuing replacement, the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. His book, *Shanghai Journal: An Eyewitness Account of the Cultural Revolution*, based on a rich array of wall posters, leaflets, and tabloids, is a day-to-day account of the early development and the climax of the CR in Shanghai. Anybody studying the Shanghai CR should not ignore this precious first-hand account. As a Westerner, Hunter took the Chinese CR

so seriously as to put forward that “the problems of China are, in a very real sense, our problem. If China finds answer to the contradictions of bureaucracy and democracy, revisionism and permanent revolution, industrialization and agriculture, moral and material incentives, and so on, then we will find answers.”⁵⁹ Hunter held in the preface to *Shanghai Journal*, that the Chinese Cultural Revolution presented a challenge to every society and that it influenced anti-establishment revolts in many places, such as Hong Kong, Macao, Burma, Cambodia, Japan, Britain, France, Germany and the USA.⁶⁰ Hunter differed from the mainstream China observers in the West at the time in that he believed that some kind of campaign against bureaucratism, like the CR, was necessary, because the Party could not radicalize itself without an outside impetus, such as the Red Guards.⁶¹ For Hunter, a radical change in the political structure of Shanghai during the CR – the formation of the Shanghai Commune and the Revolutionary Committee – promised a noble future. Through the “upgrading of popular forces and downgrading of tired bureaucrats to provide the city with revolutionary energy for a number of years,”⁶² Hunter argued that the influx of new blood, i.e. the rebels, the revolutionized veteran cadres and army delegates, would bring about a revitalized government with new methods and original approaches. Hunter held that the CR had an “anticlimactic ending” – here he is, possibly referring to the replacement of the Commune-style power organs with the revolutionary committees. But he insisted that the CR as a whole, was—at least

⁵⁹ Hunter, 1969, pp.291-292.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.3.

⁶¹ Ibid, pp.294-296.

⁶² Ibid. pp.293-294

partially—an economical, political, and spiritual success for China.⁶³ William Hinton, a famous chronicler of the Chinese revolution originally known for his book “*Fanshen*”, appreciated Hunter’s detailed narrative of the Shanghai CR and found it “fascinating” and “very valuable”. But Hinton also thought that Hunter’s political stance followed a “sophisticated pro-revisionist line” with “subtly expressed bias in favor of the capitalist roaders while they are still in power, that shifts to strong support for ultra-left ‘overthrow all’ forces once the establishment is toppled”. Hinton’s criticism of Hunter continued:

To Hunter proletarian revolutionaries are “Rebels” but right-opportunist counter-revolutionaries are “Moderates”. Cao Diqui’s bourgeois dictatorship in Shanghai is pragmatic common sense, but Zhang Chunqiao’s proletarian dictatorship is minority rule based on police power and army support. Zhang himself is a “schemer.” Shanghai Workers General Headquarters, the mass base on which Zhang Chunqiao, with Mao’s support, built a new revolutionary power in Shanghai, is consistently downgraded, described as lacking support, losing support, a mere shell composed mainly of outsiders, etc., while Geng Jinzhang’s split-off, ultra-left Second Regiment is blown up to large proportions, as a truly mass-based people’s movement. When Zhang Chunqiao’s revolutionary rebels attack and criticize conservative officials for handing out largesse in the form of bonuses and wage increases, this is a bad mistake, Zhang cannot afford to alienate such key cadre. But when Zhang’s forces unite with the majority of these cadre and continue them in their posts after criticism, this is unprincipled compromise, the whole CR turns into a charade, rebel youth and workers have been used and betrayed.⁶⁴

Hunter might defend himself by stating that he merely presented the positions of different factions without siding with any particular one. That might be true in

⁶³ Ibid. pp.296-299.

⁶⁴ William Hinton, *Turning Point in China: An Essay on the Cultural Revolution*, Monthly Review Press, 1972, p.78.

some cases, but not in others. For example, readers of Hunter will find little description of Zhang's virtues other than his ability to deliver speeches. Repeatedly hinting that it was only because of Mao's support that Zhang gained support from the Shanghai masses, Hunter takes every possible chance to discredit Zhang. Hunter knew, even better than others, that in the turbulent January Storm in Shanghai, it was very hard to curb the punishment of the guilty officials by the indignant and resentful masses. Yet without any solid evidence, Hunter criticizes Zhang Chunqiao for being "wrong to imagine he could unify Shanghai by humiliating so many minor officials."⁶⁵ The anti-Zhang camp launched a massive campaign to struggle against "minor officials" in charge of street and lane committees and this was regarded by the Party Center as a typical way the revisionist led things in order to "strike the most and protect a handful". But Hunter found this to be "interesting". And when Zhang Chunqiao condemned such attacks, Hunter accused Zhang of suppressing the mass movement.⁶⁶

According to Hinton, the essence of Hunter's book is a denial of class struggle, "All the sound and fury, he avers, comes from a clash between pragmatic communists and dogmatic communists; the result, a healthy shakeup in the bureaucracy but definitely not a transfer of power from one class to another. He pours scorn on the idea that the 'extreme left' could possibly have sold out to the 'extreme right' of the Party hierarchy, or have any political connection with it..."⁶⁷ An example of what Hinton is criticizing here can be seen in *Shanghai Journal* where Hunter describes the

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.223

⁶⁶ Ibid. pp.248-249.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.79.

CR as a fight “between two interpretations of Maoism.”⁶⁸

Sophia Knight, also a foreign teacher at the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute, wrote a book entitled *Window on Shanghai: Letters from China, 1965-1967*. This book also contains some important descriptions and observations of the Shanghai CR during this period. However, Knight was more cautious than Hunter in passing judgements. She candidly admits in her letters that it was difficult to tell what was going on at that time since foreigners’ knowledge was unauthenticated, insufficient, and often superficial when they did not directly participate in the movement. Another reason, she explains, was that the situation in Shanghai was increasingly complicated and fluid.⁶⁹ Yet in her book we can find many informative narratives. For example, before the January Storm, the Shanghai authority’s policy toward foreigners was basically to not let them know what was happening. November 30, 1966, on the very eve of the collapse of the old Shanghai authority, possibly arranged by the power holders, foreign teachers visited a “Class Education Exhibition”. This showcase displayed many things confiscated from searches of houses of Red Guards. These were items the Red Guards had taken from old rich capitalists, such as Guomintang flags, guns, gold bars, and old account books. After the visit, Sophia Knight was strongly convinced that there was a “hidden time-bombs in our midst” – harkening to something Mao had said, but using it with a very different understanding. The hidden time-bombs to which Mao had referred actually lay elsewhere. But the Shanghai authorities wanted people to target something else. As it turned out, Sophia Knight

⁶⁸ Hunter, 1969, p.118.

⁶⁹ Sophia Knight, *Window on Shanghai: Letters from China, 1965-1967*, Deutsch (January 1, 1967), p.227 and pp.239-240.

and some of their workmates left Shanghai for nearly a month. Knight's sponsoring institute had arranged for them to take a holiday journey to Central and Southern China from January 16 to February 12, 1967. So unfortunately, for historians of the Shanghai Commune, Knight was not present for the climax of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai.

Early Western scholarship on the Shanghai Commune

Maurice Meisner might be the first western scholar to seriously deal with the theoretical and historical meaning of the Paris Commune in China. In his 1971 article "Images of the Paris Commune in Contemporary Chinese Marxist Thought", Meisner held that the CR was "a dramatic attempt to close the gap between radical social theory and conservative bureaucratic social and political practice". Meisner says that after 1956, while Chinese Maoists more and more emphasized the necessity of "continuous revolution" under the banner of "dictatorship of the proletariat", other bureaucrats, who just paid lip service to Mao's revolutionary theory and practice, effectively pulled China back to the "seeming permanence of bureaucracy."⁷⁰ When Maoist efforts to invigorate the state apparatus with a renewed revolutionary spirit failed before the CR, a new solution was naturally drawn from "the Marxist principle of smashing the old machinery." Meisner believes that the call to model the Paris Commune was in response to the Maoists' immediate need to destroy an increasingly

⁷⁰ Maurice Meisner, *Images of the Paris Commune in Contemporary Chinese Marxist Thought*, in John Hicks & Robert Tucker eds., *Revolution and Reaction: The Paris Commune 1871*. Amherst: the University of Massachusetts Press, 1973, p.121.

oppressive form of political power, as well as out of the Maoists' intellectual interest in the Paris Commune. Meisner discusses three Marxian themes—anti-bureaucracy, egalitarianism and the spontaneous revolutionary creativity of the masses. These all largely came from Marx's summary of the lessons of the Paris Commune and were especially prized by the Chinese Maoists during the CR. Moreover, the Chinese Maoists had an intellectual affinity with Marx's interpretation of the Paris Commune: as blending nationalist and internationalist themes, which provided "a Marxist sanction to reconcile their strongly Chinese nationalist impulse with their internationalist claims and aspirations."⁷¹ Meisner also maintained that things Marx had identified in his analysis of the Commune – the anti-traditionalist strain, the revolutionary heroism, the necessity of proletarian revolutionary violence, the militarization of the masses, among others – all struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the Chinese Maoists. That's why, Meisner argues, the model of the Paris Commune assumed such prominence during the CR in China. As for the Shanghai Commune, Meisner claimed that it was an "abortive" attempt by radical Maoists groups to establish "proletarian dictatorship" in complete accordance with the revolutionary principles that Marx had put forth in his analysis of the Paris Commune. The "demise" of the Shanghai Commune, Meisner held, "signaled the beginning of the retreat from the more utopian experiments of the CR and the beginning of a long process of restructuring Chinese political life on the basis of 'revolutionary committees' representing new mass organizations, old (but pro-Maoist) Party cadres,

⁷¹ Ibid. pp.124-125.

and the army.” Meisner’s critique differs with that of those scholars who strongly criticize the Maoists for replacing the Shanghai Commune with the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, calling this a “betrayal” and restoration of the pre-CR bureaucratic order. In his 1971 article, Meisner maintained that, “Although the Marxist description of the Paris Commune no longer served as a literal guide for political action after the early months of 1967, many of the concepts and much of the revolutionary imagery of the Commune remained to influence significantly the new organizational structures which emerged during the Cultural Revolution.”⁷² In 1982, when this article was edited into his book *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*, Meisner revised his evaluation about the Revolutionary Committee, stating, “many of the concepts and much of the revolutionary imagery of the Commune remained a significant strand in the radical Maoist ideological tradition.”⁷³ But in this same book, Meisner still affirms that “The concepts and images derived from the model of the Paris Commune served for a time as stimulus for change and as a barrier against tendencies to institutionalize existing social and political reality.”⁷⁴

Even though Meisner’s analysis here is very informative and inspiring, in many ways, his interpretation of history is somewhat static and undialectical. For example, Meisner labels Mao and his followers as “populists” because they valued the initiatives of the masses. But Meisner is, at the same time, unable or unwilling to acknowledge Mao’s emphasis on the importance of leadership. When Meisner claims

⁷² Ibid. p.113.

⁷³ Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*, WI, Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1982. p.134.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.153.

that the “demise” of the Shanghai Commune marked the beginning of the Maoist “retreat” away from the more utopian aims of the CR, Meisner forgets for a moment the practical provision in *The Sixteen-point Program* that stipulated and envisioned the goal of the CR. When he says that the CR, under the influence of the anti-traditionalist strain in Marx’s analysis of the Commune, launched fiercely iconoclastic assault on “all” traditional values and beliefs, Meisner is ignoring the fact that the Maoist later upheld the ancient Legalist Schools (*fajia*) represented by Qin Shihuang, Xunzi, Han Fei, and others – or that Mao’s consistent attitude toward culture was one of “rejecting its feudal dross and assimilating its democratic essence.”⁷⁵ Meisner asserts that for the Maoists, “proletarian dictatorship” did not mean power exercised by the proletariat as such, but by those who possess “proletarian consciousness.”⁷⁶ But Meisner disregards the fact that during the whole Mao Era, several tens of millions of peasants were recruited to become workers in the factories. And a large number of workers were promoted to leading political positions. Though modifying some of his [earlier] arguments after the CR, Meisner still prefers to close his eyes to the the fact that the Maoists promoted the famous slogan “The Working Class Must Exercise Leadership in Everything”, and sent out Workers Propaganda Teams (*gong xuan dui*) during the CR to universities, factories and other work-units to occupy and transform the superstructure.

In October 1971, John Bryan Starr, another famous China specialist presented his paper “Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eyes” to a

⁷⁵ Mao Zedong, *On New Democracy*, from *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1975. Vol. VII, p.381.

⁷⁶ Maurice Meisner, 1982. pp. 151-152.

conference on the Paris Commune sponsored by the French Area Studies Center, Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario. Starr's paper traces the increasing importance of the Paris Commune model in Chinese political thought in the early to mid 1960s, its use during the CR, and the reasons for its precipitous decline in importance after 1967. Similar to Meisner's view, Starr puts forward that Chinese communists, including Mao, showed relatively little interest in the Paris Commune until 1957. This argument perhaps could be made in talking about the period of the Sino-Japan War (1937-1945). But it was not the case before the War. As I mention above, between 1926 and 1927, with the participation of more than one million people, great rallies were held in many cities to mark the 55th and 56th anniversaries of the Paris commune. At these commemorations many Chinese revolutionaries gave speeches to propagate the principles of the Paris Commune. On March 18, 1926, Mao gave a lecture, "Some Points for Attention in Commemorating the Paris Commune", to a group of Guomindang cadres who were still revolutionary. It is understandable that both Meisner and Starr failed to mention this important speech on the Paris Commune, since this article authored by Mao was only recovered from an old journal in 1986.⁷⁷ Starr also held that the Paris Commune played only a

⁷⁷ This text was later reproduced in *Mao Zedong Wenji (Selected works of Mao Zedong), Vol. I*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993, pp. 33-36. Meisner's claim is plausible, that before the middle of 1950s, "given the nature of the revolutionary situation, there is, of course, no particular reason why Mao should have been drawn to the writings of Marx and Lenin on the Commune." Meisner offered several explanations: firstly, that Mao had ardent faith in the revolutionary creativity of the rural masses and longstanding distrust of the revolutionary capacities of the Chinese proletariat and had powerful antiurban biases; and secondly, that there was no powerful, centralized bureaucratic state to destroy. When encountering a series of major massacres of workers in 1927 in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and other cities by Guomindang troops, Mao had to relocate possible revolutionary forces to rural areas where reactionary forces were relatively weak. That did not necessarily reflect that Mao had "longstanding distrust of the revolutionary capacities of the Chinese proletariat" or "powerful antiurban biases." Mao's latter efforts to diminish the gap between urban and rural areas did not necessarily imply that he harbored powerful antiurban or antiurban biases. What's more, Meisner's assertion of China's absence of a powerful, centralized bureaucratic state to destroy is equally misleading. It might be safe to say that at the first half of the 20th century China was not fully united under one central power, but that could be not safe to say that there was no powerful, centralized bureaucratic state to destroy. For Meisner's viewpoints, see his book *Marxism, Maoism and*

minor role in serving as a role model at the time of the establishment of the rural and the urban communes in 1958-1959.⁷⁸ On the contrary, Meisner says that there were many similarities between the Paris Commune and the Chinese peoples' communes.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Starr correctly pointed out that, "An active interest in the details of the experience of the Paris Commune and a concern with its relevance to contemporary Chinese domestic and foreign policies seems to have arisen during the course of Mao's formulation of the polemic arguments with the Soviet leadership during the years 1957-64."⁸⁰ Similar to Meisner, Starr devoted one special section to "the Paris Commune and the CR", in which he focuses on the Shanghai Commune. Like most scholars specializing in the Shanghai CR and the CR in general, Starr argued that Mao apparently abandoned the Paris Commune, because, as a model for the organizational changes in the CR, it "proved to be desirable but unattainable".

At the end of his article, Starr raises a "paradoxical" question: "While the rhetorical use which the Chinese made of the Paris Commune model in the CR emphasized strongly the themes of spontaneity and popular initiative, what little we know of the circumstances of the actual implementation of this model suggests that the short-lived communes involved very little, if any, spontaneity or popular initiative."⁸¹ In the fourth Chapter of this dissertation, I will offer a counter narrative and argument against Starr's viewpoints. With little information and relevant studies

Utopianism, WI, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, pp.138-139.

⁷⁸ John Bryan Starr, *Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eye*, in *China Quarterly*, No. 49. (Jan. - Mar., 1972), p. 109.

⁷⁹ Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism*, the University of Wisconsin Press, 1982. pp.141-145. For the relevance of the Paris Commune to Chinese peoples' communes, see also Liu, Joseph. "The People's Communes and the Paris Commune," in *Studies in Soviet Thought*, V. 12 (June 1972), pp.149-165.

⁸⁰ John Bryan Starr, *Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eye*, in *China Quarterly*, No. 49. (Jan. - Mar., 1972), p. 110.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 125.

on the Shanghai Commune, it was no wonder that Starr's impression of the Shanghai Commune, before it was laid to rest, was that its only recorded act was the issuance of a resolution on municipal sanitation, which was, as I will show, not the case.⁸²

In the spring of 1976, the founding issue of the journal *Dialectical Anthropology* included a translation of the article "The Great Lessons of the Paris Commune — In Commemoration of its 95th Anniversary" from *Hong Qi (Red Flag)*⁸³. The inclusion of this article reflected acknowledgement of the extraordinary position of the Paris Commune in Chinese revolutionary thought, and the unfortunate fact that the significance of the Paris Commune was hardly known in the West outside of the small professional circle of sinologists and in occasional reflections by some radicals and ultra-leftists. This issue of the *Dialectical Anthropology* also included an article entitled, "The Paris Commune in Communist China: An Anthropological Perspective", by Stanley Diamond, an American poet and anthropologist and the founder of this journal. In this article, Diamond interestingly discusses the anthropological stage of primitivism in analyzing the attractive force of the Paris Commune to the Cultural Revolution in China and in the world. Diamond puts forth that current thinking in China on the Commune "not only extends certain imperatives of the Commune into a contemporary arena but, in so doing, further validates the dialectical conception of primitive society as the archetype of socialism (which Marx well understood), as a past which provides a functional (not formal) paradigm for the future in certain determinate ways." The roots of the Chinese perspective on a

⁸² Ibid. p. 121.

⁸³ This English translation of this article was from the *Peking Review*. I will analyze it in the third chapter.

commune, according to Diamond, are therefore, not constrained to the French experience in 1871. They are also associated with the pre-state history of China, and the social ethic (or more accurately, societal critique) which resonates with it. To justify his argument, Diamond quotes Li Dazhao, one of the founders of the CCP who deeply influenced Mao, “The ethics of men has been a powerful social instinct since the most ancient period of human life. . . . [it] still echoes in our hearts. . . . This spirit of mutual aid, this ethic, this social instinct is able to cause human progress.”⁸⁴

Diamond also follows Gong Zhongwu, a contemporary scholar, who used *datong* (Great Unity) thought in the Chinese tradition to interpret Maoist thought and held that in many of Mao’s ideas “Western Marxist rationalism and the seemingly incompatible concerns of China’s ancient, ethically oriented traditions are meaningfully synthesized.” In agreement with Gong Zhongwu’s view, Diamond further suggests that the People’s Mediation Committees (of which there were approximately two hundred thousand that functioned in China during the CR), rather than courts, were a reflection of respect for the autonomy of the traditional local peasant. The People’s Mediation Committees, Diamond argues, “are based on the primitive principle of compromise, rather than on an ultimate duel of social interests, waged by greater and lesser powers, in the name of abstract, state-upheld justice; and they reflect the institutional dialogue that the revolutionary nation maintains with aspects of its own past.” For Diamond, the Chinese Paris Commune movement was directed against the state apparatus in its entirety and in its conventional functioning

⁸⁴ Diamond, Stanley, “The Paris Commune in Communist China: An Anthropological Perspective”, in *Dialectical Anthropology* 1 (1976), p.383.

and was to a great degree driven by an anti-bureaucratic, anti-state thrust. That is, the movement was looking back to pre-state, primitive society, although this was not a simple return to primitive communalism but understood dialectically, as a higher-level embodiment of it. But in fact such a commune was premature, given internal and external factors. While Diamond was confident that “the principles of the Paris commune retain their proto-typical, normative, and critical force in China”, a coup d’état duly took place in China several months later.⁸⁵ Against Diamond’s wish, the Chinese Commune movement during the CR was totally discredited in China thereafter.

Chinese Scholarship Aimed At Negating the Shanghai Commune

Since the 1976 coup d’état in China, there has been a remarkable lack of serious discussions about the Shanghai and the major support it had among the Maoist leadership. Almost all discussions are fall squarely with the framework of the official verdicts of the post-Mao regime. During the campaign against the so-called “Gang of Four” (the four major leaders or supporters of the Shanghai Commune), Charles Bettelheim, a French Marxist economist who was the chairperson of the Franco-Chinese Friendship Association at the time of the coup d’état, sharply pointed out the severe weakness of the Chinese regime’s criticism of the four Maoist leaders: “There is no Marxist analysis to be found in the published material, simply slander

⁸⁵ Quotes from Stanley Diamond and his quotations of Gong Zhongwu can be found in his article “The Paris Commune in Communist China: An Anthropological Perspective”, in *Dialectical Anthropology 1* (1976), pp.383-386.

and scandal, the low level indicating the inability of the present Chinese Communist Party leadership to develop any serious criticism of what the Four's political line might have been."⁸⁶ The post-Mao regime's concern was not to make a serious, substantial criticism, but to pass official verdicts to negate the Cultural Revolution. Responding to a report by the new Shanghai authority filed at the end of 1978, the first official verdict concerning the January Storm and the Shanghai Commune was issued the beginning of 1979. Entitled "Circular of the CCP CC Transmitting the Proposal by the Shanghai Party Committee to Resolve the Problem of the So-Called 'January Revolution'", it was passed on to any work-units with an administrative rank equivalent to, or above, a county administration or a regiment in the military (*xian tuan ji*). It was orally conveyed to selected masses, but was forbidden to be broadcast or publicized in the newspapers. In this document, the "January Revolution", which resulted in the establishment of the Shanghai Commune, was alleged to be the result of a conspiracy by Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan. It alleges that they wanted to launch a full-scale power seizure of the state machinery firstly by taking power in Shanghai. Zhang, Yao and other rebel leaders were said to be actual originators and proponents of the "wind of economism" in Shanghai,⁸⁷ rather than the "capitalist roaders". The circular also claimed there was no essential difference between the Shanghai Commune and its replacement, the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. In sum, what is being argued here is that the "January Revolution" was a reactionary

⁸⁶ Bettelheim, Charles, Burton, Neill G., *China since Mao*, Monthly Review Press, 1978, p.10.

⁸⁷ For discussion of the "wind of economism" during the Shanghai "January Revolution", see the section of *Bureaucratized Strike: the Spate of Economism* in the third chapter *The Rise of the Shanghai Commune* of this dissertation.

storm, a reactionary countercurrent and a serious step in which Lin Biao, Chen Boda and the “Gang of Four” deliberately destabilized the country in order to usurp Party leadership and seize state power. Further, the spearhead in this was directed at leading cadres who were followers of Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line. So this power seizure was actually about trying to undo proletarian rule, to seize power from the proletariat, from the Party Center (*dang zhongyang*), and from Chairman Mao. The rebel leaders of the Shanghai Commune were depicted as ambitionists, conspirators, double-dealers, traitors, agents, new bourgeoisie elements, reactionary literary prostitutes, and mobs who conducted beating, smashing, and robbing.⁸⁸

In 1980, Gao Fang, a professor at Renmin University specializing in the international communist movement, produced one of the first articles in China that criticizes the “distortion” of the Paris Commune by the so-called “Gang of Four”. In his article “The Principles of the Paris Commune and the Distortion of the Gang of Four” (*bali gongshe de yuanze he sirenbang de cuangai*), Gao Fang condemns the Gang of Four led by Jiang Qing, accusing them of misrepresenting the red flag of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Paris Commune, and they were in fact *not* really revolutionaries. Specifically, Gao stated that they distorted the principles of the Paris Commune in the following aspects: Firstly, by perverting the revolutionary principles of the Paris Commune, they attempted to smash the proletarian state machinery and form a “Chinese People’s Commune”. At first glance, Gao seems to condemn the

⁸⁸ *Circular of the CCP CC Transmitting the Proposal by the Shanghai Party Committee to Resolve the Problem of the So-Called “January Revolution”* (*zhonggong zhongyang zhuanfa Shanghai shiwei guanyu jiejie suowei “yiyue geming” wenti de qingshi baogao de tongzhi*), in *The Collection of Important Documents After the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP (Sanzhongquanhui yilai zhongyao wenjian huibian)*, Vol.1, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982.

“Gang of Four”, but in fact his real target here is actually Mao Zedong –as it was Mao who had identified before the CR that state power was, in large part, not in the hands of the proletariat. And it was Mao who first came up with the concept of the “Chinese People’s Commune”. Secondly, the “Gang of Four” distorted the democratic principles of the Paris Commune in that they attempted to bring down the old cadres and then usurp Party leadership and seize state power. Gao argues that when the “Gang of Four” advocated Paris Commune-style general election and attacked old cadres for not being democratically elected by the masses, that the real aim of this was to get rid of all the old cadres. In order to bolster this argument, Gao raises the fact that the Paris Commune used both general elections and appointments to select the leaders and functionaries, and that not all of its functionaries were elected by the masses. For example, Gao points out that three kinds of functionaries were put in office by appointment rather than by general election: 1) Leaders of various departments within the power organ such as the railway manager, the hospital administrator, the head of customs, the general director of the post office, were appointed by the Committee of the Paris Commune. The directors of post office branches (*fenju juzhang*) and their office heads (*kezhang*) were appointed by the general director of the post office. 2). The army officers above the battalion level, such as general commanders, chiefs of staff, commanders of military regions, legion commanders, were appointed by the Committee of the Paris Commune. 3). The leaders of various sections and offices in the factories were appointed by the factory councils. In fact, Marx had acknowledged these kinds of appointments, “The police

agents, instead of being agents of a central government, were to be the servants of the Commune, having, like the functionaries in all the other departments of administration, to be appointed and always revocable by the Commune....”⁸⁹ But many thinkers seemed to have missed this point. In this regard, Gao Fang did reveal a long ignored aspect of the lessons of the Paris Commune and his explanation deserves to be further explored.

The third distortion, Gao claimed, was that the “Gang of Four” misinterpreted the principle of the Paris Commune’s depending on the workers’ troops to realize the proletarian dictatorship, and the “Gang of Four” attempted to organize militia to replace the PLA, namely, to wage a reactionary coup d’état. It is now clear that the anti-Gang-of-four forces that plotted a coup d’état at that time. But Gao’s argument that in the face of threats by imperialist and hegemonist forces, the Chinese regular army should not be abolished, but instead needs to be further strengthened, is worth sober consideration.

Jin Chunming is a hardcore advocate of “thoroughly negating the CR” at the Party School of the Central Committee of CCP – an official “expert” on the CR for the Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yangbang regime. Given credibility by the Hua Guofeng’s official verdict on the CR, Jin authored some early papers on the “January Revolution” and the Shanghai Commune. In his article “The Cause and Effect of the January Revolution” published in 1983, Jin offered a rough sketch of the events of the Shanghai CR in the decisive days of 1966 and 1967. In this article, Jin characterized

⁸⁹ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.206.

the January Revolution as “not a revolution at any sense” and “without any progressive meaning”. Yet he claimed that just as it is inappropriate to label the CR as a revolution or a counterrevolution, it is inappropriate to simply “throw a hat” (means to give it a label) to the January Revolution, or even to define its nature. He offered the following reasons:

Firstly, it was improper to ascribe Shanghai power seizure to the conspiracy of Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and their group, because the power seizure, namely, “a great revolution of one class overthrowing another”, was the basic officially designated guideline of the CR. Jin’s view, to some extent represents the official verdict of the Deng Xiaoping regime, although it is different from that of the Hua Guofeng regime, which asserted that the Shanghai Commune was a conspiracy of Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and somebody else. Jin’s second argument is that the power seizure in Shanghai was supported and ratified by Mao Zedong himself.

Thirdly, Jin says that even though the power seizure in Shanghai was plotted and guided by a handful of people, such as Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen, not every concrete action was under their direction. The old Shanghai power holders even took part in some actions. Furthermore, if the January Revolution was termed as “counterrevolution,” since it had involved several hundred thousand people, should the post-Mao regime label all those people as counterrevolutionaries?

The arguments and facts about the January Storm that Jin points out do have some truth. My dissertation critiques Jin’s contention that the old power holders did good things during the January Revolution. And I will discuss the historical initiatives of

the masses.

Fourthly, the evaluation of the January Revolution is related to the issues of how one evaluates the character of society in Shanghai between 1967 and 1976, and the role of various units with authority in the CR. If the Shanghai Commune was labeled as a counterrevolutionary regime, it would then be hard to say that Shanghai continued to be socialist, since the Shanghai Commune and then the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee lasted for more than 10 years. And if the Shanghai Commune was labeled as a “counterrevolution,” this would then impact how one would have to judge all the provincial regimes that modeled themselves on the experiences of the power seizure in Shanghai. In conclusion, Jin decries the January Revolution as “utterly erroneous.” He sees it as guided by a political line that represented a left deviation from Mao Zedong, and that it involved serious counterrevolutionary activities by Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan and others like them.⁹⁰ But Jin’s evaluation and analysis of the January Revolution and the Shanghai Commune is not always consistent. For example in this article he depicts the Shanghai Commune as a “sheer fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie”.⁹¹

In 1986 Wang Nianyi, a Party historian with military rank at the PLA National Defense University wrote an article on the Shanghai CR entitled, “Some Viewpoints

⁹⁰ Jin Chunming, *Shanghai yiyue geming de qianqianhouhou (The Cause and Effect of the January Revolution)*, collected in *Wenhua dageming lunxi (Discussion and Analysis of the ‘Great CR’)*, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1985.pp.111-113. Jin Chunming also wrote another article about January Revolution entitled “*Yiyue duoquan wenti mingbian (Clarifying the Problems Related to the January Power Seizure)*”, in *Jin Chunming zixuan wenji (Jin Chunming’s Selected Essays)*. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe. Jin Jichun, ed. 2002, p.473.

⁹¹ Jin Chunming, *Shanghai yiyue geming de qianqianhouhou (The Cause and Effect of the January Revolution)*, collected in *Wenhua dageming lunxi (Discussion and Analysis of the ‘Great CR’)*, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1985.p.105.

Toward the Shanghai January Revolution”. In this article Wang labels the January Revolution a "monster fetus" (*guaitai*), manufactured by Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, and Jiang Qing. But he says the ultimate person responsible for this "monster fetus" was Mao Zedong, who was intoxicated with his left-deviationists and subjectivist utopian view of socialism. According to Wang, the campaign to target and attack the reactionary capitalist line (*zifan luxian*) after August 1966 – encouraged by the Maoist leadership – sharpened all kind of contradictions and threw the country into chaos. In the face of the stubborn resistance of the old Party and army cadres, and in order to thoroughly carry out the CR to the end and fundamentally transform society, Mao had to rely on mobilizing the workers to seize power. For a while, this was an effective way to break through the stalemate caused by the campaign of targeting and attacking the reactionary capitalist line. But when the workers rebelled, social contradictions were further intensified, making power seizures necessary. Wang Nianyi hence commented that “under the already chaotic circumstance across the whole nation, Mao’s call for power seizure was not a ‘great strategic arrangement’, but the only way out of the predicament, and a dead end as well.”⁹² For the January Power Seizure in Shanghai, Wang Nianyi emphasized what he saw as the “wicked function” that the “reactionary” Zhang Chunqiao played. In Wang’s narrative, Zhang Chunqiao’s approach to the rebel workers can be seen in his willingness to grant the workers’ demands immediately after the Anting Incident. According to Wang, this “acting first and reporting afterwards” attitude vividly demonstrated Zhang’s

⁹² Wang Nianyi, *Dui Shanghai “yiyue geming” de jidian kanfa* (Some Viewpoints Towards the ‘Shanghai January Revolution’), in *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* (The Studies of the History of CCP), No. 2, 1986.

“cattiness and cunning”.⁹³ When Zhang proposed to achieve “great unity” among the rebels during the January Revolution, he was being a “crafty old scoundrel”, since he “made a good conjecture of Mao’s thinking”.⁹⁴ And the methods Zhang Chunqiao and his fellow party leaders used to test whether or not the first Party secretary of Shanghai, Chen Pixian, really supported rebels, revealed Zhang’s “slyness, cruelty and acrimony”.⁹⁵ During its existence of over nine years, the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, which came about as a result of the January Storm, according to Wang Nianyi, had carried out many evil acts.⁹⁶ This verdict contradicts the assessment of Jin Chunming that the Shanghai regime during the CR was basically “socialist” (even though Jin sometimes inferred that the Shanghai Commune was a fascist power organ).

In the mid 1980s, during the huge campaign to attack and defame the CR, some general history books (*tongshi*) of the CR, approved by the authorities, were published. One of the first such books was *Ten-Year History of the Great Cultural Revolution (Wenhua dageming shinian shi)*, by Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao. This was released in 1986, in both mainland China and Hong Kong and sold at least one million copies.⁹⁷ The authors of this first authorized book on the history of the CR did not

⁹³ For the detail of Zhang’s action during Anting Incident, please go to the section of *The Formation of WGH and the Anting Battle* in the third chapter *The Rise of the Shanghai Commune* of this dissertation.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Wang Nianyi, *Da dongluan de niandai (The Turbulent Decade)*, Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1988, p.174.

⁹⁶ Wang Nianyi, 1988, p.183.

⁹⁷ Mainland’s first Chinese edition was published as *Wenhua dageming shinian shi (Ten-Year history of the Great Cultural Revolution)* by Tianjing renmin chubanshe in 1986. Hong Kong’s first Chinese edition was published as *Zhongguo “wenge” shinian shi (Ten-Year History of Chin’s “Cultural Revolution”)* by Xianggang Ta-Kung pao she in 1986. Taiwan’s revised Chinese edition was published as *Wenhua dageming shinian shi (Ten-Year history of the Great Cultural Revolution)* by Yuan Liu Publishing Co. of Taipei in 1990. And this book has two English translations. The first English version *The Ten-Year History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* was translated and published by Institute of Current China Studies of Taiwan in 1988, with a cover full of bloody killing scenes. The second English translation, based on the revised Chinese edition and entitled “*Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*” was translated and edited by D. W. Y. Kwok and published by University of Hawai’i Press in

give much space to discussion of the Shanghai Commune. It has only a few pages on the January Storm, and the Shanghai Commune is only mentioned twice. Following the official verdict on the CR, the section in this book on the CR in Shanghai puts forward that Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen, but not Mao, as arch “criminals” who let Shanghai fall into chaos. The Kangping Road Incident on the eve of the January Storm, the first large-scale violence in Shanghai, was said to be incited by Zhang Chunqiao.⁹⁸ On January 4, 1967, when Mao sent Zhang Chunqiao back to Shanghai, Zhang was said to be “overjoyed with the assignment, as for many years he had his eye on becoming the first secretary or mayor of Shanghai.”⁹⁹ This book is representative of the typical writing style of Chinese history books about the CR – which employ fictional stories to bolster their attacks on the Cultural Revolution. But still, this book does disclose some facts about the Shanghai CR. For example, it clearly points out that the formation of the loyalist Scarlet Guards (*chi wei dui*) was done under the direct guidance of the SPC (Shanghai Party Committee). Cao Diqui, the Shanghai mayor, proclaimed that the CCRG’s (Central Cultural Revolutionary Group) “five articles” were “poisonous weeds” and encouraged the Scarlet Guards to bring Zhang Chunqiao back to Shanghai.¹⁰⁰ As for the wind of economism, the “Circular of the CCP CC Transmitting the Proposal by the Shanghai Party Committee to Resolve the Problem of the So-Called ‘January Revolution’ ” and later official

1996. Yan Jiaqi, a pro-multi-party system of capitalism activist, was a staff of “Political Reform Office” under Premier Zhao Ziyang between 1986 and 1987. After the June 4 Incident in 1989 he fled to U.S.A. as a Chinese political dissenter.

⁹⁸ Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, “*Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*”, translated and edited by D. W. Y. Kwok, University of Hawai’i Press in 1996, p.379.

⁹⁹ Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, 1996, p.383.

¹⁰⁰ Yan Jiaqi, Gao Gao, *The Ten-Year History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, translated and published by Institute of Current China Studies of Taiwan, 1988, p. 381.

histories such as Ji Chunming's "Clarifying the Problems Related to the January Power Seizure"¹⁰¹, say that this was originally instigated by Zhang Chunqiao and other rebel leaders. In contrast to these viewpoints, Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao stated that amid the storm of power seizures by the rebels, many economist factions in Shanghai felt discontented and subsequently initiated a storm of actions such as seizing residences, demanding subsidies and other fees, redressing inadequate wages in the past, and requesting promotion and higher payment, etc. This storm swept throughout Shanghai, and indeed the whole country, effectively disrupting production at various levels and damaging the communication and transportation networks as well. Yan and Gao make it clear that the Shanghai rebels in fact did not want this "economism" to spread.¹⁰²

Chen Shuping, a specialist in French history, wrote another important book entitled *The Paris Commune and China* in 1988. This book includes three chapters: the first is about the introduction of the Paris Commune in China in the late Qing period; the second is about the promotion and commemorations of the Paris Commune during the New Democratic Revolution Era (1919-1949); the third is about the promotion and study of the Paris Commune during the socialist era (after 1949). This is the first and only book that deeply discusses the relationship between the Paris Commune and China. Unfortunately, the author takes the view that "to distort the historical lessons of the Paris Commune to serve certain political purposes has been a

¹⁰¹ Jin Chunming, "Yiyue duoquan wenti mingbian (*Clarifying the Problems Related to the January Power Seizure*)", in *Jin Chunming zixuan wenji (Jin Chunming's Selected Essays)*. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe. Jin Jichun, ed. 2002.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.385.

phenomena in our party's history along with the Left-deviated errors." Because of this, Chen only wrote one small paragraph in regard to the largest Commune movement in Chinese history during the "10 years of internal chaos" (*shinian neiluan*), namely, the ten years of CR. And the Shanghai Commune in 1967 is only mentioned once in his book.¹⁰³

The Marxist Elegies to the Shanghai Commune in the West after 1976 Coup

The Shanghai Commune was neglected in the West for about 10 years (apart from scattered research done by a handful of China specialists, such as Maurice Meisner and John Bryan Starr). But after the coup d'état in 1976 and the subsequent total negation of the CR by the Chinese regime, it was re-introduced into political and academic discussions. These discussions on the Shanghai Commune were principally conducted by people with various viewpoints from within a Marxist political perspective. A major part of these arguments point out that the "failure" of the CR could actually be traced back to what they see as the "abandonment" of, or the "retreat" from, the Shanghai Commune in the spring of 1967 on Mao Zedong's order. In May 1977 Charles Bettelheim resigned from his position as chairperson of the Franco-Chinese Friendship Association in protest of the Chinese coup d'état the year before. After this Bettelheim wrote a long article "The Great Leap Backward", to summarize the lessons of the CR. In this article, he devoted one section, "The

¹⁰³ Chen Shuping, *Bali gongshe yu zhongguo (The Paris Commune and China)*, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1988, p.184.

Shanghai Commune: The Theoretical and Practical Implications of Its Rapid Disappearance”, to a critique of the “abandonment” of the Shanghai Commune which “possesses considerable importance, both theoretical and practical”. When recalling certain “facts” related to the Shanghai Commune, Bettelheim states that “in Shanghai as in other cities, the commune form, though it had been mentioned in *the sixteen-point declaration*, was dropped and replaced by that of the revolutionary committee. No real argument justifying this change has ever been set forth. A variety of reasons have been given, mainly in Zhang Chunqiao’s speech of February 24, in which he alluded to Mao Zedong’s remarks on the creation of the Shanghai Commune.”¹⁰⁴ It is true that *The Sixteen-point Declaration* specified that the new forms of organization of the masses emerging from the CR were supposed to “institute a system of general elections, like that of the Paris Commune” and were “organs of power of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution” (point 9). But it also stipulated that the new forms of organization of the masses should be put under the leadership of the Communist Party. It does not seem like the Maoist leadership ever called for strictly following the model of the Paris Commune as it was originally or in its entirety. What the Maoist leadership called for, instead, was to learn from the principles of the Paris Commune, which Marx summarized as “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.”¹⁰⁵ And as Bettelheim attested, Mao himself never questioned the principles of the Paris Commune. But Bettelheim still bemoaned the nominal shift

¹⁰⁴ Charles Bettelheim, Neill G. Burton, *China since Mao*, Monthly Review Press, 1978, p.102.

¹⁰⁵ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.68.

from the Shanghai Commune to the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, which according to him, implied “abandonment” of the Paris Commune model. Bettelheim’s main proof of this is was that the commune form had been mentioned in the *Sixteen-Point Declaration*, yet its name was changed at that time. But after a careful reading of the *Sixteen-point Declaration*, one would find that in its original text, the Paris Commune was just considered as a model for instituting a system of general elections within the mass organizations. Indeed, there was no clear evidence in this document to show that the party, the regular army, the police and the bureaucracy should be abolished – things which which Marx valued in the experience of the Paris Commune.

If Bettelheim only considered the Paris Commune a model in terms of the institution of general elections, he might be justified in his accusation that the nominal shift to the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee was an “abandonment” of the Paris Commune model, since the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee did not run a general election. But it is doubtful that this is Bettelheim’s whole conception of the Commune as a model. In any case, the Paris Commune cannot be simplified or reduced to mere general elections, because Marx, on the one hand, claimed that “nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture,” and on the other hand he admitted that the universal suffrage could also be appropriated by the bourgeoisie to decide “once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people.”¹⁰⁶ In fact, even the

¹⁰⁶ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.73.

Paris Commune itself did not institute a complete general election in which all functionaries were elected by the masses. It is well known that all women in the Commune did not have the right to vote, and as Gao Fang has discussed, many positions were actually appointed by the Commune authorities. Furthermore, a major portion of the Paris population had actually fled to Versailles and other places before the general election of the Commune. As for the Shanghai Commune, it was never clearly declared that it would institute a general election right away. Instead, it effected a kind of delegation system which could not be equated to what Marx described as “hierarchic investiture”. That is, the power organs of the Shanghai Commune consisted of delegates from various mass organizations that participated in the Commune, and those delegates were usually elected or recommended by the members of their own factions. Therefore, even though the Shanghai Commune did not run a general election, most of its staff persons were democratically chosen by their own organizations. If one equates the Paris Commune model with general elections, then, from the very beginning, the Shanghai Commune will be seen as deviating from the Commune model, since it did not have a clear agenda for general elections. In this regard, Bettelheim’s view of the transformation of the Shanghai Commune as a sign of the “abandonment” of the Commune model might be somewhat simplistic. And this analysis by Bettelheim also misses the nature and content of the Shanghai Commune.

Nevertheless, Bettelheim also tries to answer the question he himself raised: how did the revolutionary leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, who had

supported the political form of the commune, recede, in practice, to their previous attitudes, claiming that China was not “ready” for this political form? How did they thereby open up a new course, which was to be marked by a series of retreats interrupted by partial, but increasingly less effective, counteroffensives? To illustrate these questions, Bettelheim points to two sets of facts during the CR: First, various revolutionary organizations (in Shanghai and elsewhere) were apparently incapable of uniting. Second is the negative reaction from the majority of party members at the highest level that quickly developed in the beginning of 1967. I will elaborate on these two sets of facts in Chapter 5. Bettelheim further suggested that “The unfolding of events is not enough, however, to explain either this abandonment or the eventual defeat of the revolutionary line. Explanation of these facts calls for the study of the problem of the party’s relations with the mass organizations, and especially with organizations of the commune type, constituting organs of the power of the working masses.” To argue this hypothesis, Bettelheim brings up Lenin, “In 1919 Lenin noted, as a negative fact, that the Soviets were not, as they should have been, ‘organs of government *by* the working people’ but ‘organs of government *for* the working people by the advanced section of the proletariat, but not by the working people as a whole.’ This situation was not destined to change, and led to the complete loss of power by the Soviet working people.”¹⁰⁷ But Bettelheim ends his quotation here and does not mention Lenin’s further explanation for the reasons that triggered this situation. In fact, Lenin went on to state that “so far we have not reached the stage at which the

¹⁰⁷ Charles Bettelheim, Neill G. Burton, *China since Mao*, Monthly Review Press, 1978, pp.103-107.

working people could participate in government” because of the low cultural level of the Russian working people. The way to resolve this problem was through “prolonged education”, and if the cultural level of the working people was not raised, the bourgeois type bureaucrats would occupy their old positions. Here Lenin is not hinting at abrogating the leadership of the Party. Rather, he is implying that one of the leading functions of the party is to educate the working people.¹⁰⁸ Compared to Lenin’s views on the education of the working people, Mao stressed even more the political training of the working people in the hope of fostering and consolidating class consciousness. In this sense, the main purpose of the CR was aimed at establishing a working people’s culture and proletarian hegemony at all spheres of society, especially in terms of ideology.

Similar comments on the Shanghai Commune were made in numerous position articles by various radical groups in the wake of the Chinese coup d’état. Sam Marcy, a Marxist critic and the founder of the Workers World Party in U.S.A, wrote a book, published in 1977 and entitled *China: The Suppression of the Left*. This book, which evaluates the lessons of the Chinese CR, discusses the significance of the Shanghai Commune as “It is impossible to understand the later defeat of the left and the current ascendancy of the rightist forces unless we examine, even if only in outline form, the meaning of the Shanghai Revolution, the subsequent development of the Shanghai Commune, and its supersession by the Triple Alliance.”¹⁰⁹ Marcy believes that the Shanghai Commune was not “something that the left-wing leadership

¹⁰⁸ V. I. Lenin, *Eighth Congress of the R.C.P. (B.) March 18-23, 1919*, in *Lenin’s Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, Volume 29, p.183.

¹⁰⁹ Sam Marcy, *China: The Suppression of the Left*, World View Publishers (1977), p.38.

had set up against Mao or went beyond Mao, but was a practical application of what was codified in a principal party directive.” The Shanghai Commune “spread terror in the camp of the rightist revisionist forces”, who put up strong opposition to the Commune. Consequently, even though the Commune idea “held out the prospect of eventually dislodging the rightist forces”, it was superseded by the Triple Alliance favored by Mao. Marcy argues that Mao’s reasoning for superseding the Communes with the Triple Alliance did not lend itself to credibility. With regard to Mao’s reasoning that “the working class was still being split and divided, it had to clarify its ideology and unite. There were still seven hundred or more organizations in Shanghai’s factories which were not yet in the Commune,” Marcy holds that with the help of the Central Party leaders, the support for the Commune would have been considerably broadened. Marcy also does not subscribe to Mao’s claim that the Commune-type power organ was not able to cope with the counter-revolutionary efforts, or that the Commune would succumb to anarchism or Bonapartism.

A more interesting exploration by Marcy is his examination of the basic difference between the Shanghai Commune and the ensuing Triple Alliance. The first major difference, Marcy points to is that the Triple Alliance, as a coalition government, was restricted to three forces in the struggle: mass organizations, the army, and party cadres whereas the Commune was based on the workers, peasants, and masses of the people. The Triple Alliance, therefore, narrowed the participation of the broad masses compared to that of the Commune. Another fundamental difference was that the Triple Alliance owed its structure of composition, first of all, to the

forging of a coalition from the top whereas the Commune presupposed elections by the broad masses and the institutionalization of this form as the basic way for consummating a proletarian democracy. The third difference based on this, in contrast to Mao's view, was that the Commune could dislodge the rightist forces much more effectively than the Triple Alliance, which left the door wide open for the rightist, revisionist, bureaucratic, and elitist elements, as long as they pretended to claim that they were in favor of Mao Zedong's line. Moreover, in a Commune-type organization, the entire administrative apparatus, including the party, was subjected to the will of the Commune, while under the Triple Alliance, no matter how hard the revolutionary elements strived, Marcy held, the intractable, elitist managerial and governmental apparatus would return to positions of authority.¹¹⁰

Still some other radical factions, such as the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), though pro-Mao in its initial stage, have denounced Mao Zedong and his followers for what they refer to as Mao's "crushing" of the Shanghai Commune. PLP's article, "Shanghai Workers Won't be Stopped", commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Shanghai Commune, characterized the Shanghai Commune as directed against "the Maoist system of new democracy" and a state form "more in keeping with the socialist economic base." Mao is depicted as a revisionist traitor of the communist cause: As one of the communist movement's "most skilled centrists", Mao should be held responsible for the revisionist tendency in Chinese society in the 17 years before the CR and the later treachery of workers' struggle during the CR. Mao's two

¹¹⁰ Sam Marcy, *China: The Suppression of the Left*, World View Publishers (1977), pp.42-45.

“henchmen”, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, were nothing more than two sellouts of the Shanghai January Revolution and the latest “handful in power” who were supporters of capitalism in China from this time on. When Zhang Chunqiao sided with the rebel workers in the upsurge, he was portrayed as performing a “good-cop bad-cop” ploy with the workers, and “they [Zhang Chunqiao and other Maoists] took the side of the workers as a gambit to lead them into the hands of the bourgeoisie. Once they had served their purpose for the capitalists, they were themselves discarded.” When the spate of economism flooded into Shanghai and virtually bankrupted and paralyzed the city, PLP says that “Mao and his gang” “dropped their centrist subtlety” and moved to crush the rebellion. Mao’s initial endorsement of the Commune, the PLP explains, merely demonstrated Mao’s intention to set up a new state, “different in form but essentially similar in content, replacing his own enemies with loyal aides, and making it appear to the workers that a more profound change had taken place.” Shanghai workers, according to PLP’s narrative, decided to form a Commune which decisively broke away with the new democratic type state set up by the revolution of 1949. Yet after a while, the Commune was replaced by the Triple Alliance due to Mao’s “attack” of the Commune. The reason why the Shanghai workers were defeated in their fight to maintain the Commune lay in the fact that the vast majority of them “failed to perceive Mao as a revisionist” due to the fatal personality cult. Therefore, “the actions of the Shanghai workers in January 1967 stand as the first great rebellion against modern revisionism”,

that is, Maoism.¹¹¹

Western China Scholars' Rediscovery of the Shanghai Commune

After the coup d'état in 1976, especially with China's Open-Up policy in 1978, and with the major shift in the general evaluation of the CR in China, similar shifts also took place in the circles of China studies in the West. The ensuing Reform Era in China enabled a major portion of Chinese specialists to switch their focus of research from the CR to the Reform. The Western China specialists who remained on the track of CR studies, thereafter, began to challenge previous "mainstream" interpretations of the CR in the West that had allegedly been influenced by the official and radical Chinese narratives during the CR. The views of these Western China scholars, however, more or less, echoed the new and sometimes 180-degree reverse assessment of the CR by the Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping regimes after 1976. As for the studies of the Shanghai CR, not coincidentally, many Western studies echoed the official Chinese reassessment of the CR. Andrew Walder, a China specialist, published a book, *Chang Chun-ch'iao (Zhang Chunqiao) and Shanghai's January Revolution* in 1978. Theoretically set in an analytical framework of organizational, social structure and conflict, Walder's research on the Shanghai CR is aimed at toppling the "single theme" in the Western writings on the CR in Shanghai: that the January Revolution was a victory of the revolutionary rebels over an entrenched

¹¹¹ PLP pamphlet "China - The Reversal of Socialism: How the "Gang of Four" Betrayed the Left During the Cultural Revolution", 1976.

municipal bureaucracy actively resisting and/or suppressing the emerging movement. He rebuffs two assertions of previous writings: that the Scarlet Guards colluded with the SPC (Shanghai Party Committee) to oppose the revolutionary rebels, and that the “economism” and the ensuing economic breakdown of the city in early January 1967 was a deliberate attempt by the SPC to sabotage the CR and preserve its power. Moreover, he challenges the portrayal of the deposed Mayor Cao Diqu as repressive and Zhang Chunqiao as a “radical ideologue” who assisted the rebel struggle in order to create a democratic commune in Shanghai.¹¹² By overemphasizing the pivotal role of Zhang Chunqiao and downplaying the initiative of the masses, Walder asserts that the January Revolution was “not a power seizure by workers’ organizations of municipal administration from a recalcitrant group of Party officials but an effort organized by Zhang Chunqiao to bring mass political action under control and to restore the normal operation of Shanghai’s economy.” Such a conclusion, no matter how Walder tries to justify it, is similar to the official Chinese verdict after the coup d’état that the Shanghai January Revolution was “not a revolution in any sense”, and that Zhang Chunqiao was an arch criminal who manipulated the movement in Shanghai. In addition, when Walder charges that it was the CCRG (Central Cultural Revolutionary Group) itself, not the old power holders, such as Cao Diqu, that performed the crime of economism,¹¹³ he enforces the official Chinese verdict against the so-called “Gang of Four” on the issue of economism.

Walder’s accusation of the CCRG on economism, given the historical

¹¹² Walder, Andrew C., *Chang Chun Ch’iao[Zhang Chunqiao] and Shanghai’s January Revolution*, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, 1978, pp.1-2.

¹¹³ Ibid. p.48.

evidence he provides, however, is not historically grounded.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, the contribution of Walder on the issue of economism in the Shanghai January Storm lies in his in-depth study on the social and historical origins of the wind of economism on the part of the economist mass organizations. This is echoed in the book, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution*, by Elisabeth Perry and Xun Li published in 1997.

In addition to the issue of economism, another central claim of Walder, that Mayor Cao Diqui actively supported the CR movement and adhered to the CCRG policies, and was unwilling to suppress the masses, is not very convincing as well. It is true that Cao did support a specific kind of “movement”, that is, the conservative student and workers movement, not the rebel one, acting just like his counterparts did in other places during the CR. Compared to his counterparts elsewhere, Cao might have openly designated fewer pro-CR activists as “counterrevolutionary”. But there were still more than a few people in Shanghai, overtly or covertly, who were treated as “counterrevolutionary” under his leadership, as he later admitted in his confession.¹¹⁵ Walder’s claim that the Shanghai Commune was neither distinctively “radical” nor unrealistically “utopian” might be controversial. But his argument that the Shanghai Commune “relied heavily upon the PLA for its very survival” and that it

¹¹⁴ See “Bureaucratized Strikes and the Spate of Economism” in Chapter 4.

¹¹⁵ See Cao Diqui, *Cao Diqui de jiancha* (*Cao Diqui's Self-Criticism*), March 12, 1966. From <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=12215> cited on Dec. 13, 2009. For Cao Diqui’s suppression of the rebel student movement, see *Cao Diqui shi zhengya xuesheng yundong de da guizishou* (*Cao Diqui is a Big Executioner of Suppressing Student Movement*), in *Zhibu shenghuo* (*Life in Party Branches*), Nos. 2-3 (Combined issue), Jan 17, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.61-64. See also Perry, Elisabeth and Li, Xun, 1997, p.11. For Cao Diqui and Chen Pixian’s support and manipulation of conservative Red Guard movement, see Li Benrong, *Chen Cao shiwei shi yuan hongweibing zongbu de hei houtai* (Chen and Cao’s Municipal Committee is the Black Backstage Supporter of the Former Red Guard Headquarters), in *Shanghai hongweibing*, May 25, 1967, ed. by *Shanghai shi dazhuanyuanxiao hongdaihui chouweihui*. Li Murong was a former responsible person for the Red Guard Headquarters of Shanghai Universities and Technical Institutes (*Shanghai shi dazhuanyuanxiao hongweibing zongbu*).

survived largely unchanged after the name shift to the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, contains some reasonable points.¹¹⁶

Elizabeth Perry is one of the respectable China scholars who emerged in the West after the Mao era. In 1997, together with one Chinese collaborator, Perry published *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* which deals with the issue of Shanghai workers' power. This book, which utilizes various archival sources: factory surveys, classified government and party reports, transcripts of worker roundtable discussions, handbills issued by worker organizations, background data on rebel leaders, and Public Security Bureau confessions, as well as firsthand interviews with key participants, covers the period from the turbulent days of the CR to the death of Mao Zedong, a topic that has been relatively less popular among mainstream Western scholars for quite a long time. In this book, Perry maintains that "the remarkable political activism displayed by ordinary citizens during the course of that movement served to discredit the prevailing totalitarian model and to engender new approaches that assigned greater influence to social forces." In her book, she summarizes three representative paradigms in the West in interpreting the CR as a social and political movement: Franz Schurmann, Hong Yung Lee, and Stanley Rosen whose emphasis is on socioeconomic interest groups, focusing on grievances; Andrew Walder and others on clientelist networks, focusing on organizations; and Lucian Pye, Richard Solomon et al on psychocultural orientations, focusing on identities.¹¹⁷ In her book, Perry argues that all of these considerations are relevant. In addressing the three

¹¹⁶ Walder, Andrew C., 1978, pp.60-61.

¹¹⁷ Perry, Elisabeth and Li, Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the CR*, Westview Press, 1997, pp.3-4, p.189.

facets of working class activism, that is, rebellion, conservatism, and economism, Perry comprehends them in all of these analytical traditions. She argues that the Pye-Solomon mode has much to tell us about the leadership of the rebels who attacked particular party authorities and that party networks are essential for understanding the conservatives who defended the authorities. As for the economist factions, Perry's view is that it is better to understand them from the conventional emphasis on group characteristics.¹¹⁸ Through her exhaustive study of Shanghai workers' activism during the CR, Perry finds that "Maoist state initiatives, rather than stifling the possibility of collective dissent, served to structure mass activism into identifiable patterns of association promoted by different types of local leaders." Therefore, while she shares the common premise that China (even after 1976) has been a socialist and communist state with some scholars, such as Zhou Xueguang and Daniel Kelliher, Perry effectively challenges their view that the Chinese popular protest was amorphous and disorganized in the face of an arrogant state power.¹¹⁹ In addition to this theoretical contribution, Perry also refutes the popular idea that the mass organizations during the CR were nothing more than elite-sponsored instruments for perpetrating terror, and that the working people gained nothing but further repression from their involvement in the whole sorry enterprise of the Cultural Revolution. Perry states that the workers' political status and their class consciousness, not only in Shanghai, but also in the whole country, were markedly elevated owing to the CR. For example, "the 'iron rice bowl' privileges enjoyed by the state workers

¹¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.5, pp.194-196.

appeared to have been strengthened during the CR, with fewer punishments meted out for infractions of rules or poor on-the-job performance and greater latitude for workplace freedom; workers and their children were now favored in the university admissions, government employment, and as marriage partners; the visible career advancement of the old rebels served to instill a sense of political efficacy among the working class.” And so on and so forth.¹²⁰ From this perspective, we can discern that it is groundless to consider the replacement of the Commune-type power organs with the Revolutionary Committees as a clearly failed project. Yet Perry holds that the rebel worker leaders were more concerned with their personal political endeavors than the welfare of the ordinary workers, and that the common workers’ plight, i.e. the actual living condition, was noticeably deteriorating. Perry’s view, I believe, needs to be further substantiated and explored. At least, as we know, the system of contract and temporary laborers was officially abolished in the later stages of the CR, and those laborers were turned into full-time workers. Their situation obviously improved. But even if the the workers’ situation did deteriorate, this has to be seen in light of the historical significance of the efforts by the Maoist leadership and conscious rebel leaders to narrow the big gap in China between the cities and the countryside, and between the workers and the peasants. Given that the general socioeconomic status of the workers was better than that of the peasants, measures that put a priority on the welfare of workers inevitably undermined or even jeopardized the worker-peasant alliance, and therefore the workers’ rule in Maoist China.

¹²⁰ Ibid. pp.192-193.

In 1998, Perry published an interesting article titled “From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back: Workers as Citizens in Modern Shanghai”, that discusses four political confrontations in Shanghai that have changed the face of modern China. These movements are: the May Fourth Movement of 1919, the Three Armed Uprisings of 1926-27, the Shanghai Commune in 1967, and the June Fourth Incident of 1989. All of these events involved the crucial participation of the working class. Among these four events, the Three Armed Uprisings and the Shanghai Commune of 1967 were heavily influenced by the Paris Commune. The “ill-fated” Shanghai Commune in 1967, Perry held, demonstrated an effort to empower the proletariat in the local government and is an embodiment of the political experimentation during the CR. Perry differs from the Marxist analysis of the Shanghai Commune, in that she insists that despite the rebels’ rhetorical embrace of “class struggle,” the Shanghai Commune, resonating with the earlier experiments in citizen rule such as the Representative Congress of Shanghai in 1927, was just a bid for political inclusion (or “citizenship”), rather than a battle against an “already moribund bourgeoisie”. In all these events, Perry points out that there had been a noteworthy tendency for the workers to downplay their own particular demands in favor of more universalistic claims, and to subordinate workplace grievances in favor of playing the role of citizens. She also discusses the worker-student relationship in these movements, and notes not only the national significance of these movements, but also their international implications that extended beyond the borders of China. “One of the more arresting, yet relatively unexplored, features of modern protest movements,”

Perry commentes, “is their tendency to erupt with remarkable simultaneity in different countries.” Each of these movements was also part of a larger transnational process. On February 6, 1967, a handbill hailing the inauguration of the Shanghai Commune entitled “The country is ours; political power is ours” proclaimed the founding of the Shanghai Commune as “a great beginning that stirs the world”. Perry argues that this claim was not empty hyperbole and their “new Paris Commune” did have global significance.

The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in China helped to trigger widespread popular protest around the world. In 1968, mass demonstrations erupted in the United States, Italy, Germany, Japan, Ireland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. But none was more dramatic than the May Revolt in Paris. For the first time since the Commune of 1871, Parisians in 1968 erected barricades in the center of their city as part of a massive political protest. Participants were conscious not only of their own national revolutionary heritage, but also of contemporary events elsewhere around the world, especially in China....Global interactions seemed to have come full circle. A Chinese revolution sparked half a century earlier by European influences was now itself serving to inspire would-be revolutionaries in Europe.¹²¹

In the end, Perry was confident that “when the next global protest cycle gets underway we may well find ourselves looking to the Paris of the East for yet a new chapter in worker-citizen rule.”¹²²

Badiou and Zizek on Revolution and the Shanghai Commune

¹²¹ Perry, Elisabeth, *From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back: Workers As Citizens in Modern Shanghai*, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1999), p.365.

¹²² Ibid. p.373.

Alain Badiou is a major thinker who advocates restoring the “political visibility” of the Commune model, including both the Paris Commune and the Shanghai Commune. In favoring a process of “dis-incorporation”—rupture with the parliamentary Left, Badiou asserts that “it must be extracted from the leftist hermeneutics [of Commune] that have overwhelmed it for so long.”¹²³ Such “Leftists” are referred to by Badiou as “a set of parliamentary political personnel”, that “has now fallen so low that it no longer even makes a pretence of remembering the Commune.” The moral and political falling of such “leftist” originates from their instinctive fear and loathing of any authentic social revolution, especially violent ones. The treachery of the PCF in May 1968 was no more than a footnote of such “leftist” intervention.¹²⁴ To remember the Paris Commune, for Badiou, is to reactivate the revolutionary potentiality and momentum inscribed in it. During the CR, and especially between 1966 and 1972, Badiou holds that the Paris Commune was reactivated, leading to the formation of the Shanghai Commune in January 1967 and the gigantic centennial commemoration of the Paris Commune in China in 1971.¹²⁵

While consistently acclaiming the activation and realization of the spirit of the Paris Commune in China during the CR, Badiou’s interpretation of the Shanghai Commune, the ensuing Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, and the CR as a whole has undergone changes over time. In 1976, Badiou stated that the Shanghai workers’ practice of the “workers’ commune” slogan in 1967, “returns to the practical, historical, inexhaustibility of the Paris Commune”; and at the same time, “the positive

¹²³ Badiou, Alain, Winter, Cécile, *Polemics*, Verso, 2006, p. 273.

¹²⁴ Badiou, Alain, Winter, Cécile, 2006, pp.270-273.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.266.

development of this slogan, in the new form of the three-in-one revolutionary committee, carries this return forward.”¹²⁶ Obviously, Badiou praised both the Shanghai Commune and its successor the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee as embodying the principles of the Paris Commune. Yet no later than 2003 Badiou moved in the direction of favoring the Shanghai Commune over the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. In his article “The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution”, Badiou puts forward that the shift from the Commune to the Revolutionary Committee was “by no means insignificant”,¹²⁷ and that even the title of the “revolutionary committee” was “indistinct”¹²⁸ and ambiguous, for “ ‘committee’ has always been the name for the provincial or municipal party organs.”¹²⁹ But we could ask, what Badiou would think of the title of the “Revolutionary Committee”, if the purpose of the CR had nothing to do with demolishing the Party? Nevertheless, Badiou correctly pointed out that the nominal shift of the new power organ from February onwards revealed that it was “the impure product of the political conflict”. But Badiou’s elaboration on such impurity is not accurate or comprehensive. On the one hand, Badiou believes that “for the local revolutionaries, it is a matter of substituting a different political power for the party, after the nearly complete elimination of the old leading cadres.” Nonetheless, even though the majority of the old leading cadres were eliminated from the new power organs in different localities amid the January Storm, the extent of exclusion varied in

¹²⁶ Alain Badiou, *The Flux and the Party: In the Margins of Anti-Oedipus*, in *Polygraph*, No15-16, Duke University, 2004, p.77.

¹²⁷ Alain Badiou, Cécile Winter, *Polemics*, Verso, 2006, p.311.

¹²⁸ Alain Badiou, Cécile Winter, 2006, p. 267.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p.311.

different places. Shanghai might have been one of the places with the most instances of the removal of old leading cadres. But the Shanghai Commune still had Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, two representatives of old Party cadres from the CCRG, who symbolized the Party leadership. In addition, the Shanghai Commune contained a great number of middle-lower Party cadres who had participated in rebellions and formed the *Jilianzhan*, and who worked very well in helping with the operation of the new power organ. Moreover, out of the fear of being labeled as “anti-Party”, almost every rebel organization tried its best to install Party members as its leaders. It is true that there did exist a tendency among some rebels to “kick aside the Party committees and leave the Revolution to the masses” (*tikai dangwei nao geming*). But the Party committees that were kicked out were limited to local civil ones, not military ones, nor ones of the Central Committee of the CCP. Historically speaking, there were virtually no rebels who called for abolishing the whole Party in 1966 and in the beginning of 1967.¹³⁰

On the other hand, for the conservatives, Badiou holds, it is a matter of “putting back in place the local cadres after the mere fiction of a critique.” It is true that the conservative masses tended to protect the local old cadres mostly out of strong reverence, trust, and love for the Party. But seldom would they defend those old cadres who were disclosed by the rebels as responsible for serious crimes, such as being traitors of the revolution in war time, or cadres who were major targets of struggle named by the Central Committee of CCP. Though the criticism of the old

¹³⁰ The representative manifesto *Whither China* by Hunan “ultra-leftist” Yang Xiaokai, calling for establishing a “Chinese People’s Commune” modeled upon the Paris Commune, did hint at abolishing the current CCP, but it actually proposed to form a new party based on Maoism, or more precisely, it suggested to reconfigure the Party.

cadres by the conservatives might have been milder than that of the rebels, in most cases, the critiques were constructive and by no means unsubstantiated.¹³¹ Partly because of this, Deng Xiaoping proclaimed after the CR that both factions, rebel and conservative, had made errors. As for the Maoist national leadership, Badiou remarks that “it is a matter of defining the stakes for the revolutionary organizations (the ‘seizing of power’) and of inspiring a lasting fear in their adversaries, all the while preserving the general framework for the exercise of power, which remains in their eyes the party and the party alone.”¹³² In Badiou’s explanation, the other two components within the triple combination, i.e. the army and the mass organs, and the two rivalries among the mass organs, i.e. rebel and conservative factions, were taken out from the horizon of the Maoist national leadership. And what is left out is the dialectical relationship between the Party and the mass organs, as well as the law of the unity of the opposites.

Badiou’s distrust of the revolutionary committees comes from his different and mutating attitudes toward the party-state. As early as 1976, Badiou believed that “each great revolt of the working and popular masses sets them invariably against the State. Each revolt takes position against one power and in the name of another, of one thought as a step toward the dilution of the state. Each extensive revolt, across its specific contents (the school, the country, factory hierarchy), is an anti-state proposition”. At the same time, he valorized the role of the party in the process of

¹³¹ Nevertheless, sometimes the loyalist factions would struggle very hard with the old Party cadres who supported the rebels. For example, in Lankao county of He’nan Province, Zhang Qinli, a close friend of model Maoist revolutionary cadres Jiao Yulu and a supporter of rebels, were under harsh treatment, including beatings, by the loyalist faction *wei dong lin jiao*. See Lao Tian, *An Oral History of the CR in Lankao, He’nan (He’nan Laokan wenge koushu shi)* at <http://www.wyzsx.com/Article/Class14/200608/8958.html>, cited on Dec. 12, 2009.

¹³² Alain Badiou, Cécile Winter, *Polemics*, Verso, 2006, p.311.

diluting and dissolving of the state, “The party directs the withering of what it must direct (the State, the separation of politics).” In this process, “the mass movement engages in a necessary dialectic with the State. Between the two there is no continuity, but rather unity of opposites. If the State is a proletarian State, the contradiction can be of the non-antagonistic type. If it is a State of exploiters, the contradiction is antagonistic at heart.”¹³³ In his article “The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution” published in 2003, Badiou held that the CR is “the typical example (yet another notion from Maoism, the typical example: a revolutionary discovery that must be generalized) of a political experience that saturates the form of the party-state,” and “the last significant political sequence that is still internal to the party-state (in this case, the Chinese Communist Party), and fails as such.” The positive aspect of the CR is in fact extracted from its negative lessons: “without the saturation of the sixties and the seventies, nothing would as yet be thinkable, outside the spectre of the party-state, or the parties-state.”¹³⁴ In 2006 in *Logic of Worlds*, Badiou went on to proclaim the decisive failure of the Shanghai Commune, the CR, and the paradigm of revolution,

For the sake of all of the world’s revolutionaries, the CR effectively explored the limits of Leninism. It taught us that the politics of emancipation can no longer work under the paradigm of revolution, nor remain prisoner to the party-form. Symmetrically, it cannot be inscribed in the parliamentary and electoral apparatus. Everything begins—and here lay the sombre genius of the Cultural Revolution—when, by saturating the previous hypotheses in the real, the high-school and student Red Guards, and then the workers of Shanghai, between 1966 and 1968, prescribed for the decades to come

¹³³ Alain Badiou, *The Flux and the Party: In the Margins of Anti-Oedipus*, in *Polygraph*, No15-16, Duke University, 2004, p.81.

¹³⁴ Alain Badiou, Cécile Winter, *Polemics*, Verso, 2006, p.292..

the affirmative realization of this beginning. But their fury was still so enmeshed in what they were rising up against that they only explored this beginning from the standpoint of pure negation.¹³⁵

By the same token, with a perspective of the Badiou type paradigm of the party-state, Slavoj Žižek attempts to construe the Shanghai Commune as a “momentary utopian explosion”.¹³⁶ The Shanghai commune is said to have been aimed at “getting rid of the party-state apparatus itself and replacing it with communal self-organization.”¹³⁷ Žižek elaborates,

In spite of (or, rather, because of) all its horrors, the CR undoubtedly did contain elements of an enacted utopia. At its very end, before the agitation was blocked by Mao himself (since he had by then achieved his goal of re-establishing his influence and getting rid of the top nomenklatura competitors), there was the “Shanghai Commune”: one million workers who simply took the official slogans seriously, demanding the abolition of the state and even the party itself, and the direct communal organization of society. It is significant that it was at this very point that Mao ordered the army to intervene and to restore order. The paradox is that of a leader who triggers an uncontrolled upheaval, while trying to exert full personal power—the overlapping of extreme dictatorship and extreme emancipation of the masses.¹³⁸

Here, I want to point to some missing points in Žižek’s narrative. Firstly, there was, if any, only a tiny handful of rebels who, in proposing the formation of the Shanghai Commune, had vague ideas and intentions of demanding the abolition of the state and the party. Amid the storm of power seizure, nearly all Shanghai rebels focused their efforts on the local Shanghai affairs, not those of the whole state. Secondly, among the two million Shanghai workers, even if one million of them were

¹³⁵ Alain Badiou, *Logics of worlds*, translated by Alberto Toscano, London: Continuum, p.518.

¹³⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, Verso, 2009, p.148.

¹³⁷ Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, Verso, 2008, p.371.

¹³⁸ Žižek, 2008, p.207.

demanding the direct communal organization of the society, there were still another one million taking different political positions, let alone numerous common Shanghai citizens. It is hard to imagine that a Paris Commune as workers' power would have been established if the Versailles people, who fled from Paris, were still in the metropolis. (This is a somewhat awkward analogy, of course, as the Shanghai people in 1967 who did not support the communization of society should not be regarded as the Versailles people in 1871). Similarly, Mao's support of the CR by no means merely aimed at getting rid of the top nomenklatura competitors and restoring his "lost" personal power. Not at all. Mao would have never hesitated to give up or reduce his personal power if that was good for the revolution. At one point, before the Great Leap Forward, Mao had proposed that he retire. Mao's real purpose was to empower the people. And if Mao had really meant to execute "extreme dictatorship", he would not have initiated the CR-style mobilization of the masses to begin with. The initial aim of dispatching troops during the Shanghai January Revolution was not to execute "extreme dictatorship" and to restore order, but to assist the Left in seizing power from the old power holders who were taking the capitalist road.

Doubtful of the popular conception that Mao's opposition to the Shanghai Commune revealed his ruthless manipulation of the rebel movements, Žižek surmises that Mao might have been "aware that the very flourishing of movements of the multitude always-already had to rely on some dispositif of Power which structures and sustains the very space within which they operate." And deducing from Badiou's interpretation of the CR, Žižek argues that the lesson of the CR lies in the

impossibility of pursuing radical politics from or within the framework of the party-state. “So neither can we practice revolutionary politics outside the party-state framework, nor can we do it within this framework.”¹³⁹ Zizek hence introduces another “more fundamental reproach” for his criticism of Mao and the traditional “Leninist” Marxists, which is formulated by the postmodern Left such as John Holloway¹⁴⁰: that they all focus on state power, on taking over state power. A “much more radical” strategy than that of Mao, in taking such a postmodern position, is to “withdraw from state power and focus on directly transforming the very texture of social life, everyday practices which sustain the entire social structure.”¹⁴¹ Believing that there is a moment of truth in this approach, Zizek maintains that the failure of the CR was precisely the failure to create a new form of everyday life, because it remained a carnivalesque excess, with the state apparatus (under Zhou Enlai’s control) guaranteeing the reproduction and maintenance of everyday life and production.¹⁴²

Since they reach these conclusions mainly from the lessons of the CR as “the last revolution”, especially those of the Shanghai Commune, in order to further justify their claim of unthinking of the revolution from or within the framework of so-called party-state, Badiou and Zizek need to explore the following questions deeper: Would a proletarian party be monolithic, without line struggles within the party? Were the CCP before the CR and between 1967 and 1976 the same? Can the pre-CR Chinese state machine and the one between 1967 and 1976 be equated to the “party-state” in

¹³⁹ Zizek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, Verso, 2008, p.401.

¹⁴⁰ John Holloway, *Change the World without Taking Power*, Pluto Press, 2005.

¹⁴¹ Zizek, 2008, pp.371-372.

¹⁴² Zizek, 2008, p.205.

the same way? If the “failure” of the first CR could be used to prove the ineffectiveness of the party-state, why did Mao, in the unfolding of the CR, predict that there would be more rounds of CRs in the future under the dictatorship of the proletariat?¹⁴³ As we know, the Paris Commune did not abolish the capitalist system of private property. Given the current situation of intensified class struggle on a global scale, is it possible to practice the politics of emancipation for the working people without seizing state power and abolishing the system of private property? In other words, how can the capitalist means of production be abolished without the intervention of a proletarian state? Moreover, how can the communist orientation of the politics of emancipation be insured without communist-oriented parties, or some entities similar to parties, no matter what label they are given? As Badiou sometimes complains “Does the working class have a heart? Today, in any case, little [about the Paris Commune] is remembered, and badly so.”¹⁴⁴ When the majority of working people who are doing material or immaterial labor in a class and socially divided society have no idea of the Paris Commune, that is, communist-oriented politics, is it possible for the majority of the population to reach a consensus of politics of emancipation based on “egalitarian marxism”? Before a decisive world revolution engulfs the whole globe, at least in some of the most powerful countries, is it possible to abolish all of the state apparatus such as the standing army, the system of

¹⁴³ Mao said: “The present great Cultural Revolution is only the first; there will inevitably be many more in the future. ...the issue of who will win in the revolution can only be settled over a long historical period. If things are not properly handled, it is possible for a capitalist restoration to take place at any time. It should not be thought by any Party member or any one of the people in our country that everything will be all right after one or two great cultural revolutions, or even three or four. We must be very much on the alert and never lose vigilance.” See The Editorial Departments of *Hongqi* and *Renmin ribao*, “A Great Historical Document”(weida de lishi wenjian), May 18, 1967, in *Peking Review*, No.21, May 19, 1967. Mao’s words were put in boldface.

¹⁴⁴ Alain Badiou, Cécile Winter, *Polemics*, Verso, 2006, p.257.

bureaucracy, etc. within a socialist country? Does Badiou's communist vision based on the Commune imply an untimely theoretical hypothesis before any actual world revolution of abolishing private property?

Raymond Lotta, a Maoist economist, together with two other scholars, has specifically criticized Badiou's views on the Shanghai Commune. Badiou argues that the "authentically revolutionary sequence is to be found only in its initial segment (1965-8) [of the CR]", and that the mass upheavals overthrew oppressive party and state authority and created new structures challenging and transcending the party-state system. Yet unfortunately, these political efforts were curbed and suppressed owing to Mao's insistence of the party-state authority. This kind of interpretation of the CR, Lotta argues, is not original at all,

It has been articulated in various permutations by progressive China scholars like Maurice Meisner. It was taken up by currents of international Maoism, especially in France in the late 1960s, and subsequently by intellectuals like French political economist Charles Bettelheim. Not least, in the CR itself, some Red Guard formations advocated that the CR would succeed if and only if it became a full-scale assault on all cadre and existing structures of power.¹⁴⁵

Badiou's conception that the Shanghai Commune was something approaching unmediated democracy, a declaration of "maxim of equality", and a break-out from the party-state framework, according to Lotta, is greatly misleading,

On the one hand, he suggests that a broad democracy was taking hold from below, *empowering* by virtue of its mass, egalitarian (classless)

¹⁴⁵ Alain Badiou's "Politics of Emancipation": A Communism Locked Within the Confines of the Bourgeois World by Raymond Lotta, Nayi Duniya, and K. J. A., from http://www.demarcations-journal.org/issue01/demarcations_badiou.html, cited on October 8, 2009.

character—when in fact this great mass upsurge and ferment, which was indeed a profound expression of mass democracy, also contained *different social and class forces and agendas*. On the other hand, Badiou counterposes to this idealized mass movement a monolithic (classless) party-state structure—*oppressive* by virtue of its specialized functions and powers—when in fact, as we have seen, two political and ideological lines and headquarters representing different class interests were contending within the party. And the contending agendas would (and did) have radically different social outcomes, in terms of the direction of society and in terms of which class would actually rule society.¹⁴⁶

As “the party was an object of struggle and transformation in the course of the GPCR and went through a great deal of change during this period”, Lotta contends that Badiou’s complaint about the replacement of the Commune and the reassertion of the party’s leading role is without merit. Lotta holds that while distorting the practical history of the Shanghai Commune and Mao’s analysis of the limitations of the Commune form, Badiou idealizes the Shanghai Commune by papering over the complexities and problems of the Commune experiment itself. In countering Badiou’s idealizing of the Commune and his rejection of the role of the party, state structures, and leaders in mediating emancipatory politics, Lotta holds that Badiou’s “egalitarian maxim” conceals class contradictions and cannot rise above particular interests. First, “the inequalities and differences in socialist society need to be recognized and acted on, and this requires a certain kind of vanguard leadership and a certain kind of state power.” Second, if the Commune-type local, quasi-autonomous self-governing democracy becomes the essential political framework and ideological horizon for decision-making, then the development of larger entities than given communes—in a society and world marked by profound inequality— will be severely affected, with

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

greater possibilities for a negative outcome. In a class society, “These are examples of some of the crucial questions that, by their very nature, cannot be solved on a narrow local basis. Spontaneity left to itself, including in the form of democratic decision-making, will lead to the re-emergence of inequality and the increasing influence of commodity relations—and ultimately will lead back to capitalism.”¹⁴⁷

Based on such judgments, Lotta thinks highly of Mao’s valorization of the Revolutionary Committees, within which important features of the commune model were incorporated, including elections in the mass organizations and cadre participation in labor. He comments,

The CR and the creation of new revolutionary organs, like the revolutionary committees, involved masses of people and their representatives on a dramatically enlarged scale at every level. It involved unprecedented means for ensuring that the participation of the masses was genuine and profound; through extremely widespread debate and discussion, through continuing political-ideological struggle, and through direct leadership responsibility. (By 1973, an estimated forty thousand workers in Shanghai held leading positions in factories, other work units, and higher level municipal organs.)¹⁴⁸

But why were the revolutionary committees themselves ultimately unable to withstand the onslaught of the capitalist roaders who successfully waged a coup d’etat immediately after Mao’s death? Lotta believes that this reveals an important lesson of the CR and of the experience of the Shanghai Commune. He avers that no political structure or form is intrinsically impervious to bourgeois degeneration. The commune form, revolutionary committee, and communist vanguard parties can all be

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

transformed into oppressive vehicles of bourgeois production and social relations. But compared to the revolutionary committees, the Commune form, in a society still marked by significant and profound class and social divisions and the corresponding ideological influences, could not well “serve the task of enabling power to be kept in the hands of the masses *and* enabling the masses to carry forward the process of transforming the economic base of society and all the social and political relations and institutions, and the culture and ways of thinking among the people—and advancing the world revolution.”¹⁴⁹ In the end, Lotta asserts that “fidelity” to the Shanghai Commune, as Badiou has insisted on, could not prevent capitalist restoration in China and is not a path for an emancipatory politics.¹⁵⁰

Recent Chinese Reappraisals of the Shanghai Commune

There is a powerful trend of positively re-evaluating the CR coming from grass-roots people and non-mainstream intellectuals. This is going up in the face of the mainstream narrative, which simply “thoroughly negates the CR” and labels the Shanghai Commune and its supporters as counterrevolutionary. But this narrative is becoming unconvincing, unfounded, and to some degree irrelevant, because it is the current regime which has gone through a process of “de-revolutionization” that are disseminating the idea of opposing almost all revolutions in the mass media. Under

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., emphasis original.

¹⁵⁰ Alain Badiou's *"Politics of Emancipation": A Communism Locked Within the Confines of the Bourgeois World* by Raymond Lotta, Nayi Duniya, and K. J. A., from http://www.demarcations-journal.org/issue01/demarcations_badiou.html, cited on October 8, 2009.

such circumstances, some of the efforts to negate of the Shanghai Commune have taken a different twist of concealing and defacing the real character of the Shanghai Commune. He Shu's research of the Shanghai Commune is a case in point. Ironically, He Shu, an intellectual in the establishment (*tizhi nei zhishifenzi*) and a mouthpiece of the Chongqing government on the Party history, makes the accusation that distortions by political leaders about the true nature of the Shanghai Commune can be found in official historical materials.¹⁵¹ In his article “The So-called ‘Shanghai January Revolution’ During the CR—A Manufactured ‘CR Model by Mao Zedong’”, he avers that the so-called “January Revolution” in Shanghai was actually unworthy of the name, and almost says that it never existed, that the Shanghai rebels never really seized the power of the SPC; and that the “achievements” of the “Shanghai Storm of January Power Seizure” is sheer fiction. According to He Shu, Mao manufactured the laurel of the “January Revolution” to bestow on his disciples. And he did this in order to cultivate his sworn followers in Shanghai, such as Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Jiang Qing, who spared no effort to propagate the CR line. In addition, He Shu believes that the “baseless” achievements which Mao “talked through his neck” was conversely attributed to Mao’s “wisdom and greatness” by his “sycophantic courtiers”.¹⁵²

Cao Weiping, a former Red Guard at the Fudan University in Shanghai and a current internet activist who has done much research on the Shanghai Commune,

¹⁵¹ He Shu works as deputy chief editor of *Hongyan Chunqiu* (*Chronicle of Red Cliff*), which was run by Party Studies Office of Chongqing Party Committee, and he was also a long-term collaborator of above-mentioned Wang Nianyi on the study of CR.

¹⁵² He Shu, *Wenge zhong suowei de “Shanghai yiyue geming”—Mao Zedong zhizao de yige “wenge yangban”* (“The So-called ‘Shanghai January Revolution’ During the CR—A Manufactured ‘CR Model by Mao Zedong’”), in *Dangdai zhongguo yanjiu* (*Contemporary China Studies*), No. 2, 2001.

repudiated He Shu's conclusions as "nonsense". As a former Shanghai Red Guard who participated in the bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao, Cao Weiping has a negative evaluation of Zhang. But Cao valorizes Zhang's view that the mass rally of "bringing down Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu" on January 5 1967 was an indication of the rebels' seizure of power from the old SPC, that the actual seizure of power took place even earlier, and that the only difference lay in the fact that the power seizure before the rally was just local and partial. Cao argues that the loyalists' walking-off from their working positions, and the blowing of the wind of economism, which were masterminded by the old power holders in Shanghai at the end of 1966, signaled the SPC's automatic renunciation of power. This is because, as Cao argues, "the breaching of duty of the rulers means the loss of power. In this sense, there had been always automatic renunciations of power by the rulers themselves rather than power seizures by the rebels." Cao Weiping declares that He Shu's denial of the initiation of power seizures by the Shanghai rebels with the pretext of the late founding of the Shanghai Commune is unfounded. After the rally on January 5 1967, the Shanghai rebels clearly took over power from the old Shanghai authorities and formed the Frontline Headquarters, the Committee of Defending the Great Proletarian Revolution, and the Liaison Post of the Rebel Organizations, in place of the original Shanghai Municipal Committee, Shanghai Public Security Bureau and the SPC. Cao concludes that because He Shu and others who thought like him realized this was "*their stigma*" (emphasis mine), they tended to disallow the fact of power seizure even many years later. He Shu pointed to the fact that the two most important rebel documents in

January— *Message to All Shanghai People* on 5 January 1967 and *the Urgent Notice* on January 9, 1967—did not even mention the words “power seizure” to negate the rebels’ power seizure. But Cao Weiping argues that this does not disprove the actual power seizure. As for He Shu’s claim that it was Mao who single-handedly “manufactured” the “January Revolution” out of the thin air, Cao holds that it was the Shanghai rebels who launched and “invented” the January Revolution and that Mao just theoretically summarized the experiences of the January Storm.¹⁵³ In the fourth chapter of my dissertation, somewhat differing from Cao Weiping’s arguments, I argue that around the January Revolution, a political dual power status appeared in Shanghai. The first pole of the dual power was the old SPC, which was significantly disgraced by the discontented rebels due to its tyrannical behavior toward the mass movement and it was said to be “completely collapsed” at the time of the colossal rally of January 6, 1967. But the SPC still nominally and partially held the Shanghai local state apparatus in its hands. The other pole of the dual power was a “controlling” government in the form of organizations created by rebels. Later power struggles between the two poles, I argue, eventually drove the old SPC out of the dual power structure.

As CR memoirs without the permission from the authorities were forbidden to be published in mainland China after the coup d’état, many celebrities of the CR chose to publicize their recollections in Hong Kong or Taiwan. Understandably, many of these writings are much more anti-Mao, anti-CR and anti-communist than even the

¹⁵³ Cao Weiping, *Ping He Shu wenge zhong suowei de “Shanghai yiyue geming” yiwen* (*Commends on He Shu’ The So-called ‘Shanghai January Revolution’ During the CR—A Manufactured ‘CR Model by Mao Zedong*), see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=12396> cited on Dec. 5, 2009.

Chinese authorities, at least on the surface, because most of the presses in Hong Kong and Taiwan are controlled by pro-capitalist owners. These anti-CR memoirs by old Party or army officials and “scar literature” by the privileged intellectuals all repeated each other and distorted historical reality so much. And for this reason, many Chinese readers lost interest in these works. In recent years, presses in Hong Kong and Taiwan have chosen to publish many anti-CR memoirs by former rebel leaders. The representative authors of these works include some former members of the CCRG in the top leadership, such as Wang Li and Chen Boda, and some local rebel leaders, such as Nie Yuanzi in Beijing, Lu Li’an in Wuhan, Yang Xiaokai, Chen Yi’nan in Changsha, and Xu Jingxian and Chen Jide in Shanghai. Understandably, the negation of the CR by these former “Maoist” rebel leaders are perhaps more convincing and effective in their demonization of the CR than that of the old privileged class such as old Party officials or intellectuals. Lu Li’an, for example, a former ultra-leftist “Maoist” who claimed to carry through the CR to the end and “overthrow everything”, now talks on the Free Asian Radio run by the American government – saying that Mao was no more than a Hitler. Yang Xiaokai, another former ultra-leftist “Maoist” in Changsha had insisted on instituting a Chinese People’s Commune in the wake of Revolutionary Committee movement during the CR. Then, after the coup det’at in 1976, Yang totally abandoned his beliefs in communism and converted himself into a Christian and a neo-liberal economist. It has been said that he had the potential to win the Nobel Prize for economics, but unfortunately, Yang died in Australia in his mid-fifties. These views about the CR in the Reform Era have deeply influenced

many young people to oppose communism and Mao's legacy.

Xu Jingxian was the de facto No. 1 rebel leader in Shanghai during the late years of the CR since his seniors in Shanghai—Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang mainly worked in the Party's Center in Beijing. Xu's memoir, *Ten Years A Dream*, published in Hong Kong in 2005, focuses on the Shanghai CR and provides useful material on the January Storm and the Shanghai Commune. Before the CR, Xu Jingxian worked in the Writers' Group of the SPC. With the encouragement of Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, he led the Writers' Group to rebel collectively. After the January Storm, he was elected into the leadership of the new Shanghai power organ. After the coup d'etat in 1976, he was jailed for 20 years. With this background, Xu Jingxian carries some weight in terms of his arguments that discredit the CR. If readers of "*Ten Years A Dream*" subscribe to Xu's views in this book, they will not only end up looking down on the worker leaders and manual laborers, but also appraise the CR as a ludicrous farce.

Cao Weiping wrote a long article commenting on Xu Jingxian's memoir.¹⁵⁴ Cao disclosed that Xu Jingxian was a loyalist (*laobao*) who helped to suppress the rebels in the early stages of the CR. Compelled by the pressing circumstances, Xu became an opportunist in disguise, who felt he had to join the rebel ranks. But even after he converted himself into a "rebel", his non-revolutionary political line affected what he did. For example, when he wielded power, Xu Jingxian as a loyalist did a great deal to suppress genuine rebels. Cao says that Xu's book is in effect a smear

¹⁵⁴ Cao Weiping, *Ping Xu laosan shi nian yi meng* (Comments on Xu laosan's "*Ten Years A Dream*"), see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=2614> cited on Dec. 5, 2009.

campaign of the true rebels and the mass movement, and an attack on the CR – and that this really shows Xu Jingxian’s loyalist political nature and his desire to return to his original rank as a pro-establishment *laobao*. What angered Cao Weiping most was Xu Jingxian’s claim that the fundamental reason for the January Revolution was the rebels’ personal ambition to wield power in the biggest city of China. Xu Jingxian’s book tries to justify the capitalist roaders’ vilification of the rebels and the January Revolution in another way. Cao Weiping reveals and criticizes how Xu Jingxian does his best in his memoir to describe and exaggerate the contradictions among various rebel organizations. Cao says this shows that Xu does not have one iota of class sentiment (*jieji ganqing*) toward the proletariat. Cao refutes Xu Jingxian’s blame for the wind of economism on the rebels by correctly pointing out that it is the loyalist and the economist workers, who were encouraged by the old Shanghai power holders, not the rebels, who should be held responsible for the spate of economism. Cao argues that what actually happened in the January Revolution is that the old SPC, led by Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu, tried to exert pressure on the Maoist leadership in the Party Center with economic measures. When the rebels and Red Guards stood out against the wind of economism and took the responsibility for production, power shifted from the old SPC into the hands of the rebels. With regard to Xu Jingxian’s condemnation of the economist organizations in his memoir, Cao Weiping’s view is that the rebels should not have labeled all the economic demands of the temporary workers and sub-contract workers’ organizations as “economist” because most of their economic demands were in fact reasonable. On the one hand, unreasonable economic

phenomena should be improved,— for example in 1971 Mao ordered that all temporary and sub-contract workers should be granted the position of full-time workers. On the other hand, the rebels should have steered the narrow economist inclinations of the temporary and sub-contract workers' organizations in a revolutionary, political direction. And even if some of the workers were unwilling to be re-oriented in a political direction, they still should not have been classified as undesirable, unbelievable and/or non-revolutionary.

In concluding his comments on Xu Jingxian's book, Cao Weiping proposes that in order to avoid the new revolutionary power organ being usurped by Xu Jingxian-like old bureaucrats, it is necessary to institute an election which includes all mass organizations yet excludes class enemies (who comprised 5 percent of the people, at most). This will avoid armed struggles among various mass organizations in the process of power distribution. Cao further suggests a specific way of carrying out elections: each voter can only vote for one candidate and this candidate can be anyone. If one is satisfied with someone, one can give one's vote to this person face to face. The more votes a person gets the more power he/she can wield, if he/she passes the stipulated numbers of votes for entering into the new power organ. For example, at the time of the formation of the Shanghai Commune, if it had been stipulated that anyone who got 2,000 or 3,000 votes could enter into the new power organ, then every 2,000 or 3,000 voters in Shanghai could have had their one representative, who was subject to recall any time by his/her voters in accordance with the principles of the Paris Commune. While admitting that it is not the system that determines the

nature of a society, Cao thinks that some kinds of systems should be instituted along with the development of a society. Nevertheless, he warns that one should never enshrine a system – thinking that a system in and of itself is going to solve the problem. The most democratic thing in the world, he claims, is revolution. The thinking that a new system can resolve all the problems is merely a beautiful illusion.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

Chapter Two: Lessons of the Paris Commune: Classical Marxist Writers on the State

The Paris Commune: An Embryonic Model of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

During the CR, a Mao quotation was repeatedly invoked by different political forces, “The force at the core leading our cause forward is the Chinese Communist Party; the theoretical basis guiding our thinking is Marxism-Leninism.”¹ In the early stages of the CR, Mao hailed the first big-character poster by a group of teachers and staff members at the Beijing University as “the first Marxist-Leninist” big-character poster. On the eve and at the height of the CR, the Maoists called for establishing “a wholly new form of state structure” patterned after the Paris Commune which had been interpreted as an ideal (semi-) state model in the Marxist tradition.² In 1975, in the last days of his life, Mao urgently pointed out that in the Chinese Communist Party there were not many people who really understood Marxism-Leninism, and he called on people, especially high Party and Army cadres to study original works of Marx, Engels and Lenin.³ As we can see, for Mao and his followers, the launching and operation of the CR was theoretically based on Marxism-Leninism especially the

¹ *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung*, Peking Foreign Languages Press, 1966, p.1. This is the first sentence of this “little red book”.

² I will analyze this in the next chapter.

³ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao (The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC)*. Vol. 13. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988, p. 426.

theories of the state by Marx, Engels and Lenin which were elaborated in their analysis of the Paris Commune. To better understand the theoretical background of the Chinese CR, it is worthwhile to examine the Marxist and Leninist interpretation of the state in their discussions of the Paris Commune.

Although Marx planned to write a treatise on the theory of the state, he never actualized it. Henri Lefebvre went so far as to say that Marx did not have a coherent and systematic theory of the State.⁴ It seems that, unlike Lenin, Marx also refused to give a clear-cut general definition of the state that would be applicable to the states for all times and in all places. Yet he offered a definition of the modern state in his *Second Draft of the Civil War in France*,

...in one word, the modern struggle of classes, the struggle between labor and capital, assumed shape and form, the physiognomy and the character of the state power underwent a striking change. It had always been the power for the maintenance of order, i.e., the existing order of society, and, therefore, of the subordination and exploitation of the producing class by the appropriating class.⁵

“Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another.”⁶ While admitting the oppressive character of the modern state that as a huge governmental parasite, entailed the social body “like a boa constrictor in the ubiquitous meshes of its bureaucracy, police, standing army, clergy and magistrature”⁷ – Marx fully acknowledged the progressive function of the

⁴ Lefebvre, Henri, *De Hegel à Mao par Staline: (la théorie "marxiste" de l'état)*. Paris: Union Générale d'Éd., 1976, p.212.

⁵ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.203.

⁶ Marx & Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works* (hereafter *MECW* in this chapter), Volume 6, p.506.

⁷ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.203.

modern state in history, originated in the days the days of absolute monarchy. He stated,

The centralized state power had at that time to serve nascent middle-class society as a mighty weapon in its struggles of emancipation from feudalism. The French Revolution of the 18th century, with its task to sweep away the medieval rubbish of seigniorial, local, townish and provincial privileges, could not but simultaneously clear the social soil of the last obstacles hampering the full development of a centralized state power, with omnipresent organs wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labor.⁸

After sweeping away the monarchical order and establishment of the capitalist relations of production, class struggle between producing class and appropriating classes became progressively intensified. Marx observed that the state power in France “more and more developed its character as the instrument of class despotism, the political engine for forcibly perpetuating the social enslavement of the producers of wealth by its appropriators, of the economic rule of capital over labor.”⁹ Each revolution in modern France could only strengthen the repressive character of the state power, since the bourgeoisie, in order to maintain their privileges, employed the violent aspects of the state machinery more and more mercilessly. Consequently, all previous revolutions “only perfected the state machinery instead of throwing off this deadening incubus.”¹⁰ With the uninterrupted crusade against the producing masses, the French ruling class had to “invest the Executive with continually increased powers of repression whereas at the same time to divest their own parliamentary

⁸ Ibid. p.203.

⁹ Ibid. p.204

¹⁰ Ibid. p.150.

stronghold—the National Assembly—one by one, of all its own means of defense against the Executive.” As a result, Louis Bonaparte’s Second Empire, “with the coup d’etat for its certificate of birth, universal suffrage for its sanction, and the sword for its sceptre,” was born as the natural offspring of the “Party-of-Order” Republic of France. The Second Empire, Marx assured, was the only governmental form possible at a time “when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation.”¹¹ Imperialism, Marx argued, is “the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the State power which nascent middle-class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labor by capital.”¹²

The French working masses were committed to breaking their enslavement. Disregarding Marx’s warning that any working masses’ uprising would untimely be “desperate folly”—as the reactionary forces were stronger and there was danger of a restoration of the monarchy. In face of the betrayal of the French bourgeoisie during the Prussian-Franco War, the Parisian workers made up their minds to take arms against the appropriating class and duly set up the Paris Commune in March 1871. Even though Marx believed that the working class had not yet acquired the ability to rule the nation, he still enthusiastically hailed the historical initiative of the storming-heaven masses.

As the sphinx of the Paris Commune was tantalizing to the bourgeois mind,

¹¹ Ibid. p.70.

¹² Ibid. p.8

Marx disclosed that its true secret lay in the fact that it was “essentially a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labor.”¹³ The working-class nature of the Paris Commune was not only true in the sense that the bulk of the National Guard, which replaced the old standing army serving the interests of the bourgeoisie, consisted of working men and women, but also that “The Commune was formed of the municipal councilors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class.”¹⁴ According to Marx, many of the social, economic and political measures the Paris Commune adopted served to deracinate “the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class-rule. With labor emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labor ceases to be a class attribute.”¹⁵ The working men’s government of the Paris Commune, as the at-last-discovered political form to have labor economically emancipated, Marx stressed, was emphatically international, “Within sight of the Prussian army, that had annexed to Germany two French provinces, the Commune annexed to France the working people all over the world.” A working-class power did not necessarily presuppose that the working people accounted for the majority of the population as long as the workers held hegemony and led the revolution forward to the economic and political emancipation of the

¹³ Ibid. p.75.

¹⁴ Marx, Karl. The Civil War in France, in *MECW*, Vol.22, p.331.

¹⁵ Ibid.,p.335.

masses. By labeling the Paris Commune as the workers' rule, Marx argued that the Parisian working class was openly acknowledged as the only class capable of social initiative by the Parisians, even by the great bulk of the Parisian middle class--shopkeepers, tradesmen, merchants—but not the wealthy capitalists. By promising and practicing an economical government, the Commune saved the urban middle class from debts, and could have saved the peasantry from the blood tax, from all kinds of judicial vampires, from the tyranny of the garde champetre, the gendarme, and the prefect, and from the stultification by the priests. Established as the working men's government, as the bold champion of the emancipation of labor, Marx averred, the Commune was at the same time the true representative of all the healthy elements of the French society, and hence a truly national government.

Even though Marx himself did not literally call the Paris Commune the “dictatorship of the Proletariat”, his close friend Engels referred to the Commune as a manifestation of the dictatorship of the Proletariat. At the end of his “Introduction to the Civil War in France”, Engels posited, “Of late, the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: dictatorship of the proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the proletariat.”¹⁶ Critical of Engels' assessment of the Paris Commune, many scholars and politicians such as Erik Molnar, disagree with Engels arguing that the Commune should be considered merely a petti-bourgeois and radical democratic regime, or just a

¹⁶ Ibid.p.34.

workers' rule, but not the dictatorship of the proletariat In order to understand the nature of the Paris Commune as defined by Marx, it is necessary to go back to Marx's own explanations about the dictatorship of the Proletariat.

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* published in 1848, Marx and Engels expounded that the first step of the working class revolution was “to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.”¹⁷ In 1850, when criticizing the doctrinaire socialism of the petty-bourgeoisie, Marx stated that socialism is was “the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.”¹⁸ In 1852, Marx introduced the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat more clearly. He said,

Now as for myself, I do not claim to have discovered either the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me, bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this struggle between the classes, as had bourgeois economists their economic anatomy. My own contribution was 1. to show that the existence of classes is merely bound up with certain historical phases in the development of production; 2. that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; 3. that this dictatorship itself constitutes no more than a transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.¹⁹

¹⁷ K. Marx and F. Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *MECW*. Volume 6, p.504.

¹⁸ Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850*, in *MECW*. Volume 10, p.127.

¹⁹ Marx to Joseph Weydemeyer. 5 March, 1852, in *MECW*. Volume 39, pp.62-65.

The phrase above only appeared in one of his personal letters to his friend Joseph Weydemeyer, and Marx did not further elaborate on the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But if we read this letter together with the *Manifesto* in 1848, the basic meaning here is clear. That is, in modern society, after the decisive collapse of the monarchical system, the class struggle, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat became increasingly intensified. It was in the course of such historical developments that the proletariat, by the force of circumstances, could raise its own class consciousness and “organize itself as a class”; and through a revolution, establish itself as the ruling class. In other words, the dictatorship of the proletariat, according to Marx at this stage, referred to the working class’s elevation of itself to the ruling class, and the revolutionization of the old power organ into a workers’ power. In Marx’s view, there was not much difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the working peoples’ government, so long as the latter took upon itself the goal of the abolition of class distinctions. Under a workers’ government, the proletariat would “sweep away by force the old conditions of production; then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.” When class distinctions disappear, “the public power will lose its political character.”²⁰

Even though Marx did not explicitly label the Paris Commune as “the dictatorship of the proletariat” in his first, second, and final draft of his famous piece,

²⁰ K. Marx and F. Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *MECW*. Volume 6, pp.505-506.

The Civil War in France, he used the term “working-class government” to refer to the nature of the Paris Commune regime. For Marx, the Paris Commune was an historical moment in which the working class transformed itself to become the ruling class, a moment of intense class struggle leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, it would be hard to say that Marx would object to referring to the Paris Commune as “the dictatorship of the proletariat”. On September 25, 1871, several months after the defeat of the Paris Commune, Marx coined the term of “proletarian dictatorship” at a meeting celebrating the seventh anniversary of the International, which many Communard refugees attended. Marx said,

The last movement was the Commune, the greatest that had yet been made, and there could not be two opinions about it — the Commune was the conquest of the political power of the working classes. There was much misunderstanding about the Commune. The Commune could not found a new form of class government. In destroying the existing conditions of oppression by transferring all the means of labor to the productive laborer, and thereby compelling every able-bodied individual to work for a living, the only base for class rule and oppression would be removed. But before such a change could be effected a proletarian dictatorship would become necessary, and the first condition of that was a proletarian army. The working classes would have to conquer the right to emancipate themselves on the battlefield. The task of the International was to organize and combine the forces of labor for the coming struggle.²¹

Some people could use these words to argue that even though Marx posited the Paris Commune as “the political power of the working classes”, the Commune was far from “the dictatorship of the proletariat”, since it did not “found a new form of class government” and under the framework of the Commune, “a proletarian

²¹ *Record of Marx's Speech on the Seventh Anniversary of the International*, in *MECW*. Volume 22 p.634.

dictature would become necessary.” But with a deeper look, we will find that Marx here, rather than denying the Paris Commune’s nature as “the dictatorship of the proletariat”, stressed the necessity of introducing more specific and forceful measures to make the Paris Commune more viable and sustainable, as a workers’ government. The great social measure of the Commune, according to Marx, was “its own working existence” and “its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people.”²² In refuting the “apologetic phraseology of the mouthpieces of present society with its two poles of Capital and Wage-slavery”, Marx stated that “the Commune intended to abolish that class-property which makes the labor of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labor, into mere instruments of free and associated labor. “But this is Communism...”²³ Apart from its socialist tendency, Marx was very clear that there was “nothing socialist” in the decisions made by the Paris Commune,²⁴ which could be seen as a shortcoming and reason for the defeat of the Commune. To establish a viable new form of class government, the Communards should have destroyed with force the existing conditions of oppression by transferring all the means of labor to the labor of production. In order to achieve this, a powerful proletarian army that could execute proletarian dictatorship would have been necessary. More than once in his summaries of the lessons of the Paris Commune, Marx deplored the military

²² Marx, Karl. The Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.339.

²³ Marx, Karl. The Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.335.

²⁴ Marx, Karl. The Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.499.

weakness and inefficiency of the Commune to ward off its enemies. For instance, the Communards should have advanced to Versailles immediately after the uprising; the Central Military Committee should not have transferred its power to the Commune so early; universal suffrage should not have been put into effect so hastily, and so forth. In short, the Commune should have used more violent suppression, that is, exercised proletarian dictatorship, rather than democracy toward its enemies in and outside of Paris. The first task of the working class was to seize power in order to found “a new form of class government” on the basis of revolutionary violence, to compel every able-bodied individual to work for a living so as to remove the only base for class rule and oppression, and to ward off possible bourgeois military forces or other kind of interventions. Only with this could the workers’ power be consolidated in the name of “the dictatorship of the proletariat”.

In 1875, Marx wrote *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, in which he tersely defined “the dictatorship of the proletariat” as the following,

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

Marx said that the Paris Commune was a working men’s government: “The red flag, hoisted by the Paris Commune, crowns in reality only the government of workmen for Paris!”²⁵ And did the Paris Commune inherently oppose capitalism and have a tendency to initiate a transformation of capitalism toward socialism and

²⁵ Ibid. p.499.

communism? Marx's answer would be yes. To strengthen his argument, Marx quoted a Journal officiel of the Central Committee of the National Guard,

The workmen, who produce everything and enjoy nothing, who suffer from misery in the midst of their accumulated products, the fruit of their work and their sweat, ... shall they never be allowed to work for their emancipation?... The proletariat, in face of the permanent menace against its rights, of the absolute negation of all its legitimate aspirations, of the ruin of the country and all its hopes, has understood that it was its imperious duty and its absolute right to take into its hands its own destinies and to assure their triumph in seizing the state power (en s'emparant du pouvoir).²⁶

Marx held, it was plainly stated here that the government by the working class could save France and carry the national business by working for its own emancipation; and the workers' struggle was proclaimed as a war of labor upon the monopolists of the means of labor, upon capital.²⁷ For Marx, the Paris Commune had waged a war against capitalism since the working class of the Paris "clearly, consciously proclaimed the Emancipation of Labor, and the transformation of Society, as their goal!"²⁸ The goal of the social movement advocated by previous utopian socialist founders of different groups, that is, superceding the wage system with all its economical conditions of class rule, was also the Paris Commune's goal. But the means identified to achieve this were different and the real conditions of the movement were no longer clouded in utopian fables since "in their place came a real insight into the historic conditions of the movement and a more and more gathering

²⁶ Ibid. p.500.

²⁷ Ibid. pp.500-501.

²⁸ Ibid.p.499.

force of the military organization of the working class.”²⁹ The Paris Commune, as a workers’ power, aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. This was an endeavor to transform every man into a productive laborer, not an exploiter. That is, as labor is emancipated from capital, every man will become a worker. The Paris Commune, oriented toward communism, was no more than “the produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labor.”³⁰ As for the transformation of society, the Paris Commune had a vivid anti-capitalist nature as well, since the workers understood that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.” The old bourgeois state machinery was thoroughly smashed and a new type state—the “the dictatorship of the proletariat” was thus established in the Paris Commune.

Nevertheless, Marx explained, “the actual ‘social’ character of their Republic consists only in this, that workmen govern the Paris Commune! As to their measures, they must, by the nature of things, be principally confined to the military defence of Paris and its approvisionnement.”³¹ That is to say, the main reason to refer to the Paris Commune as “the dictatorship of the proletariat” was the Commune’s political break-away from the old bourgeois power organ, not its economic measures. The Commune, consisting mostly of working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class, was a working, not a bourgeois parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. All the Commune's functionaries were paid at workmen's

²⁹ Ibid. p.500.

³⁰ Ibid.p.334.

³¹ Ibid.p.499.

wages. The bourgeois standing army was replaced by the armed masses. The police force was stripped of its bourgeois political attributes, and turned into responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. The judicial functionaries were divested of their sham independence which had served the interests of the ruling class. By decreeing the separation of the church from the state, the Commune broke the spiritual force of repression, the “parson-power.” All these political measures of the Commune anticipated the later socialist and communist movement all over the world. Politics had been put in command. And Marx fully believed that had the Commune survived, it would have unavoidably taken more advanced actions to emancipate labor from capital as “The political rule of the producer cannot coexist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule. With labor emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labor ceases to be a class attribute.”³²

Unfortunately, the Commune did not last long and there was not enough time to shake off the “survivors of and devotees to past revolutions”, the unavoidable evil which hampered the real action of the working class,³³ or implement more social and economic measures to transform the capitalist relations of production and advance the socialist cause. As the pillar of “the dictatorship of the proletariat”, the communard army was not strong enough to suppress the counteroffensive of the bourgeois standing troops. Moreover, the Commune was too merciful to the enemies. The

³² Ibid.pp.334-335.

³³ Ibid. p.341.

Commune lacked strong leadership. And all these political and military weaknesses made it impossible for the Commune to deepen the revolutionary transformations in society. In discussing “the dictatorship of the proletariat”, Rosa Luxemburg held that “This dictatorship consists in the manner of applying democracy, not in its elimination, but in energetic, resolute attacks upon the well-entrenched rights and economic relationships of bourgeois society, without which a socialist transformation cannot be accomplished.”³⁴ It is true that the Commune, by effecting “the dictatorship of the proletariat,” applied unprecedented democracy to the broadest masses. However, one of the problems of the Commune, according to Engels, was that it applied too much democracy to its enemies. And it should have used authority over its enemies more freely. If it had not made use of the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie, Engels averred, the Paris Commune would have not lasted a single day.³⁵ Yet this is by no means to say that Marx or Engels, as the masters of dialectics, downplayed the role of democracy with “the dictatorship of the proletariat.” For them, there never exists either a dictatorship without democracy, or a democracy without dictatorship; it is a unity of opposites. When people talk about “pure democracy” without dictatorship, society will be transformed into an a-political society– and the original meaning of “democracy” will disappear, that is, democracy as a political conceptualization will lose its political attributes. In addition, as Rosa Luxemburg posited, the “dictatorship of the proletariat” should also consist in the form of “energetic, resolute attacks upon the well-entrenched rights and economic

³⁴ Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, in Rosa Luxemburg, *Selected Political Writings*. Cape, 1972, p.249.

³⁵ F. Engels. On Authority, in *MECW*. Volume 23. p.425.

relationships of bourgeois society.” But the Commune virtually did not have any time to initiate these tasks. Not only was the issue of abolishing private property not put before the Commune, but also the well-trenched bourgeois rights were not dealt with. On the contrary, “by a sagacious settlement of that ever-recurring cause of dispute among the middle classes themselves — the debtor and creditor accounts,” the Commune saved the Paris middle class—shopkeepers, tradesmen, merchants;³⁶ by freeing the dying civil society from the boa constrictor-like, parasitical excrescence of the state, the Commune in effect saved the “living civil society”. A major portion of Paris’ middle class of the bourgeoisie took the side of the Commune during its early days. In this sense, the Paris Commune was none other than an embryonic model of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lenin had no doubt of the nature of the Paris Commune: “The Commune was a dictatorship of the proletariat.”³⁷ Yet he pointed out that the real task of the Commune was above all to put into effect a minimum programme, that is, a democratic, not a socialist dictatorship.³⁸ For him, a dictatorship of the proletariat meant *workers’ power*, not necessary *a socialist dictatorship*, yet the former had to advance toward the latter, sooner or later. After all, a fully developed “dictatorship of the proletariat” of communist revolution, as Marx and Engels hypothesized in the *Manifesto*, required two “radical ruptures”: the most radical rupture with traditional property relations and the most radical rupture with traditional ideas in the

³⁶ Marx, Karl. The Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.336.

³⁷ V. I. Lenin, *Fear of the Collapse of the Old and the Fight for the New*, in *Lenin’s Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Volume 26, 1972, p. 400.

³⁸ *The Paris Commune and the Tasks of the Democratic Dictatorship*, in *Lenin on the Paris Commune*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, p.120.

development of the communist revolution.³⁹ The Commune did very little in terms of bringing about these two “radical ruptures.” For the emancipation of the working people on an international scale, the Paris Commune was only an initial beginning – or quoting Stalin, “neither a complete nor a firm” type of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was the first yet significant step toward the long march of socialism and communism. As Stalin put it, “The bourgeois revolution is usually consummated with the seizure of power, whereas in the proletarian revolution the seizure of power is only the beginning.”⁴⁰

The Communal Semi-State

Bearing the lessons of the newly-defeated Paris Commune in mind, Marx and Engels stated in the preface to the new German edition of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* that that “this programme has in some details become antiquated.” Specifically, to repeat Marx’s stress in *The Civil War in France*, the Commune proved that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes”.⁴¹ Rather, the working class should overcome, break down, or shatter [Sprengung]⁴² the old state machinery itself. Marx claimed that the Commune was the direct opposite of the Empire, the ultimate and exhausting shape of the governmental power of old society.⁴³

³⁹ Marx & Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *MECW*. Volume 6, p.504.

⁴⁰ J. V. Stalin, *Concerning Questions of Leninism*, January 25, 1926, in *Stalin Works*, Vol. 8, January-November, 1926, Publisher: Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954.

⁴¹ K. Marx and F. Engels. Preface to the 1872 German Edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, in *MECW*. Volume 23, p.175.

⁴² The word “shattering [Sprengung]” of the previous state power was used by Engels in his *Introduction [to Karl Marx’s the Civil War in France]*, from *MECW*. Volume 27. p190.

⁴³ *MECW*. Volume 22. p.536.

What characterized the State machinery of the Second Empire and the ensuing bourgeois Republic Versailles regime, which the Paris Commune smashed? According to Marx, the modern bourgeois state, the Second Empire and the ensuing Versailles regime included, was embodied in two great organs, parliament and government, on which the Commune set the target of struggle. Since the Second Empire had already disbanded the parliament and concentrated the State power in the government, “all the working class had to do was not to revive it [parliamentarism].”⁴⁴ As for the parasitic government, the repressive organs of the bourgeoisie – the bureaucracy, police, standing army, clergy and magistrature, among others, had to be smashed. What the Commune did to smash the old state machinery were,

The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people. ...The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, of acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the Administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workmen's wages. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. ...Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the physical force elements of the old Government, the Commune was anxious to break the spiritual force of repression, the “parson-power,” ...The whole of the educational institutions were opened to the people gratuitously, and at the same time cleared of all interference of Church and State. Thus, not only was education made

⁴⁴ Ibid.p.536.

accessible to all, but science itself freed from the fetters which class prejudice and governmental force had imposed upon it....The judicial functionaries were to be divested of that sham independence which had but served to mask their abject subserviency to all succeeding governments to which, in turn, they had taken, and broken, the oaths of allegiance. Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible, and revocable.⁴⁵

For Marx, the state of the Second Empire was separated from and independent from society. But the forecited measures adopted by the communards enabled the re-absorption of the state power by the society, “as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organized force of their suppression — the political form of their social emancipation, instead of the artificial force (appropriated by their oppressors) (their own force opposed to and organized against them) of society wielded for their oppression by their enemies.”⁴⁶ As mentioned above, Marx believed that the Commune not only freed Paris’ middle class, but also saved the “living civil society” from the parasitic, repressive state of the Second Empire. The Commune represented a living society, which was diametrically opposed to the old State. Obviously, Marx harbored an animosity toward the state as a form of class rule. Very often, Marx spoke of the existing modern state in a politically derogative tone as a “parasitic excrescence” and “boa constrictor” to society and the nation. Similarly, Engels described, “the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy; and at best an evil...”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Karl Marx. The Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. pp.331-332

⁴⁶ Karl Marx, First Draft of The Civil War in France, in *MECW*, Volume 22. p.487.

⁴⁷ Engels, *Introduction [to Karl Marx's the Civil War in France]*, from *MECW*, Volume 27, p190.

Then can we say that Marx was in favor of abolishing the whole and all states once and for all without any conditions? It seems that Marx did claim that the Commune was against the state itself. In the first draft of *The Civil War in France*, Marx wrote that the communard uprising was not a revolution “against this or that, legitimate, constitutional, republican or Imperialist form of State Power. It was a Revolution against the State itself, this supernaturalist abortion of society, a resumption by the people for the people, of its own social life.”⁴⁸ The proletariat’s new social task was to “break the instrument of that class rule — the State, the centralized and organized governmental power usurping to be the master instead of the servant of society.”⁴⁹ But in the second draft of *The Civil War in France* and the final version of *The Civil War in France*, Marx retained similar phrasing to say that the Commune was the true antithesis to the Empire, but he abandoned the description that the Commune was against the state itself. This change is significant. One of the concerns of Marx here, I hypothesize, was that he had distanced himself from the position of the anarchists, who from the beginning of the proletariat revolution, frequently proposed the abolition of the state.

In the final version of *The Civil War in France*, Marx rephrased this part as “The direct antithesis to the Empire was the Commune. The cry of ‘Social Republic,’ with which the revolution of February was ushered in by the Paris proletariat, did but express a vague aspiration after a Republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical form of class-rule, but class-rule itself. The Commune was the positive

⁴⁸ Karl Marx, First Draft of the Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.486.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp.486-487.

form of that Republic.”⁵⁰ That is to say, what the Paris working class opposed was “class rule”, more specifically, the class-rule of the expropriators, not the class-rule of the producers, not the proletariat state, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat. And this kind of new proletarian state, e.g. the Communal state, since it abolished the major oppressive organs of the old bourgeois state, most notably the bureaucracy and the standing army, Engels claimed, ceased to be a state in the true sense of the term;⁵¹ and it began to “wither away” from the first day of its establishment. But the Communal state and the workers’ “Social Republic”, without doubt, were also certain types of the state. It was Marx who viewed the Paris Commune organization as a ‘Social Republic’. And a democratic republic, Engels held, was even “the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁵² However, Lenin believed that the proletarian state that withers away was only “commune state”⁵³ and semi-state.⁵⁴

From Marx’s perspective, the Paris Commune did not mean a *complete* destruction of the old State. Rather, “In its most simple conception the Commune meant the *preliminary* destruction of the old governmental machinery at its central seats, Paris and the other great cities of France, and its superseding by real self-government which, in Paris and the great cities, the social strongholds of the working class, was the government of the working class.”⁵⁵ Within the political framework of the Communal constitution, according to Marx, the Central

⁵⁰ Ibid.pp.330-331.

⁵¹ Frederick Engels, *Letter to August Bebel*, March 18-28, 1875, in *MECW*.Volume 24.p.71.

⁵² Frederick Engels, *A Critique of The Draft Social-Democratic Programme of 1891*, in *MECW*. Volume 27. p.227.

⁵³ Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.15.

⁵⁴ Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.279.

⁵⁵ Karl Marx. Second Draft of the Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.536. Emphasis mine.

Government would still exist, even though the Central functions would not exercise direct governmental authority over the people, but necessitated by the general and common wants of the country, such authority would be executed by communal agents, and, therefore, under the control of the Commune.⁵⁶ “The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally mis-stated.”⁵⁷ Since the proletariat still had to make use of the state for various purposes, Marx was in effect envisioning about a new type of (semi-) state under the communal constitution, which should be fundamentally different from the old bourgeois repressive state. This kind of new semi-state provided a political form for the proletariat to work out the economic emancipation of labor. According to Engels’ statement, Marx and himself both suggested universally substituting Gemeinwesen (means community, “communal being”, or commonality) for the Proletarian state: “it is a good old German word that can very well do service for the French ‘Commune’”.⁵⁸

Some scholars, like Alain Badiou, insist that Marx contradicted himself on the issue of the state in the *Civil War in France*. “Marx's account is in fact ambiguous,” Badiou held,

On the one hand, he praises everything that appears to lead to a dissolution of the state and, more specifically, of the nation-state. In this vein he notes: the Commune's abolition of a professional army in favor of directly arming the people; all the measures it took concerning the election and revocability of civil servants; the end it put to the separation of powers in favor of a decisive and executive function; and

⁵⁶ Ibid.p.537.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.332.

⁵⁸ Ibid.p.71.

its internationalism (the financial delegate of the Commune was German, the military leaders Polish, etc.). But, on the other hand, he deplores incapacities that are actually statist incapacities [incapacités étatiques]: its weak military centralization; its inability to define financial, priorities; and, its shortcomings concerning the national question, its address to other cities, what it did and did not say about the war with Prussia, and its rallying of provincial masses.⁵⁹

But Marx's writings on the Paris Commune and the issue of the state were not ambiguous at all. Yes, the old bourgeois state needed to be shattered, especially its bureaucracy and standing army. However, they should not be completely shattered. Some of the central functions of the old state would have to be retained. Furthermore, the destruction of the old state did not mean the negation of a new type of state, nor a semi-state. The working men, after the smashing of the old bourgeois state, for the purpose of keeping down its enemies, nationally and internationally, had to establish its own state system in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this sense, Marx was a proletarian statist, not a bourgeois statist. It is true that Marx in principle praised the communards' actions to dissolve and disband the old bourgeois state machineries, as this was the social and historical task of the proletariat. The actions that the Communards had taken, as a matter of fact, inspired Marx to summarize important lessons on the issue of the state. But just like Marx's remarks on the heroic self-sacrifice of the Parisian workers did not necessarily mean that he praised the defeat of the Commune, Marx's glorification of the communards' deeds of smashing the old state did not mean either that he advocated forsaking, when threatened by the covetous and powerful enemies in and outside Paris, the possible statist measures to save the Commune from perdition. On the contrary, Marx bemoaned that the Central

⁵⁹ Badiou, Alain, 2006, pp.262-263.

Committee should not have surrendered its power to the Commune so soon, and the general election, seen as crucial to a commune regime by Marx, took place too early. The first and most important concern of the Paris Commune, Marx believed, should focus on strengthening its military power to ensure the defeat of the Versailles enemies and the Commune's survival, not the general election. Even though the old bourgeois type nation-state of France, as Badiou tells us, was to be dissolved by the Paris Commune, Marx held, "the unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal constitution;"⁶⁰ and the political union of French society, in replacing the old bourgeois centralized state machinery, would be achieved through the Communal organization.⁶¹ This kind of communal organization, actually, was no more than a communal state based on a communal constitution.

In the final analysis, Marx was by no means an anarchist. Just several months before the Paris Commune, an uprising took place in Lyons on September 4, 1870 due to the debacle of the French imperial troops at Sedan. As a result, a revolutionary Lyons Commune was set up there. The Lyons Commune, Marx said, correctly abolished the octrois and armed the whole people, "but the asses, Bakunin and Cluseret, arrived at Lyons and spoiled everything." What enraged Marx was that the anarchist Bakunin and Cluseret issued "foolish decrees on the *abolition de l'état* (abolition of the state) and similar nonsense" in Lyons. Marx attributed the failure of the Lyons Commune partly to the anarchist foolish abolition of the State, partly to the fact that the French middle class on the whole "prefers Prussian conquest to the

⁶⁰ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.332.

⁶¹ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.504.

victory of a Republic with Socialist tendencies.”⁶² Obviously, the Lyons Commune, in the eyes of Marx in 1870, should be and was a kind of republic local state power organ. After the formation of the Paris Commune, even though Marx claimed that the working class should break the old bourgeois state, he did not favor the total and immediate abolition of the state as the anarchists did in Lyons. Instead, the state should be reshaped. Markedly, Marx viewed the Paris Commune as “the positive form of that Republic [with Socialist tendencies]”.⁶³

Engels took his position on the issue of the state more clearly. About one month after Marx’s death, Engels stated in reply to Philipp Van Patten’s inquiry about Marx’s attitude towards anarchism,

Marx and I, ever since 1845, have held the view that one of the final results of the future proletarian revolution will be the gradual dissolution and ultimate disappearance of that political organisation called the State.... At the same time we have always held, that in order to arrive at this and the other, far more important ends of the social revolution of the future, the proletarian class will first have to possess itself of the organised political force of the State and with its aid stamp out the resistance of the Capitalist class and re-organise society. This is stated already in the Communist Manifesto of 1847, end of Chapter II.

The Anarchists reverse the matter. They say, that the Proletarian revolution has to begin by abolishing the political organisation of the State. But after the victory of the Proletariat, the only organisation the victorious working class finds ready-made for use, is that of the State. It may require adaptation to the new functions. [In *Der Sozialdemokrat* this sentence reads: 'This State may require very important changes before it can fulfil its new functions.'] But to destroy that at such a moment, would be to destroy the only organism by means of which the victorious working class can exert its newly conquered power, keep down its capitalist enemies and carry out that economical revolution of society without which the whole victory must end in a defeat and in a

⁶² *Marx To Edward Spencer Beesly*, October 19, 1870, in *MECW*. Volume 44., pp.88-89.

⁶³ Marx, Karl. *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. pp.330-331.

massacre of the working class like that after the Paris Commune.

Does it require my express assertion, that Marx opposed these anarchist absurdities from the very first day that they were started in their present form by Bakunin? ... The result of the five years' struggle was the expulsion, at the Hague Congress, September 1872, of the Anarchists from the International, and the man who did most to procure that expulsion was Marx.⁶⁴

Even though Marx and Engels' ideal was to realize a classless and stateless society, this was just their maximum programme for the distant future. At a time when the nascent working class, who opposed the powerful expropriators, took arms on a large scale for the first time, it would be too risky and unrealistic to abolish the whole state immediately and completely. In fact, Marx and Engels considered the abolition of classes as the precondition for the abolition of the state: "The abolition of the state has meaning with the Communists, only as the necessary consequence of the abolition of classes, with which the need for the organised might of one class to keep the others down automatically disappears." Then they went on to remark on various versions of the "abolition of the State",

In bourgeois countries the abolition of the state means that the power of the state is reduced to the level found in North America. There, the class contradictions are but incompletely developed; every clash between the classes is concealed by the outflow of the surplus proletarian population to the west; intervention by the power of the state, reduced to a minimum in the east, does not exist at all in the west. In feudal countries the abolition of the state means the abolition of feudalism and the creation of an ordinary bourgeois state. In Germany it conceals either a cowardly flight from the struggles that lie immediately ahead, a spurious inflating of bourgeois freedom into absolute independence and autonomy of the individual, or, finally, the indifference of the bourgeois toward all forms of state, provided the

⁶⁴ Engels to Philipp Van Patten, 18 April 1883, in MECW. Volume 47.p.10.

development of bourgeois interests is not obstructed.⁶⁵

Obviously under the capitalist means of production, without external colonies or semi-external colonies (e.g., the Indian lands in America, or the colonial and neo-colonial exploitations of the “underdeveloped” localities by “developed” entities), there would be no way to fully develop the so-called civil societies and to truly abort the repressive state. In a society based upon class antagonisms, to call for the abolition of the state is actually to call for the set up a new type of state. In a class society, the state can be reduced, but can never disappear. Before the victorious proletariat made use of the state for their own purposes, the old, bureaucratic, administratively centralized state machine could not be used without major transformations. It had to be, as Engels said, first shattered, then reshaped. And “very important changes” had to be made.⁶⁶ The feasible and viable way of coping with the issue of the state for the working people, could be enacted in accordance with Engels’ words, that is, after its victorious struggle for class supremacy, the victorious proletariat, just like the Paris Communards, should lop off at once the worst sides of the state as much as possible, “until such time as a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap heap.”⁶⁷ The proletariat needed the state, and Lenin could not more agree with this. Yet the proletariat needed “only a state which is withering away, i.e. a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away. And, secondly, the working people need a

⁶⁵ Karl Marx and Frederick Engel, *Reviews From The Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch-Ökonomische Revue No. 4, April 1850*, in *MECW*. Volume 10.pp.333-334.

⁶⁶ *Engels To Eduard Bernstein*, 1 January 1884, in *MECW*. Volume 47.p.74.

⁶⁷ Engels, *Introduction [to Karl Marx's the Civil War in France]*, from *MECW*. Volume 27. p190.

‘state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class’.”⁶⁸ Just in the sense of gradually withering away, Lenin referred to the proletarian communal state as a semi-state. In the long process of the transformation of the society, meaning the narrowing of the class differences and the gradual withering away of all classes nationally and internationally, the proletarian state in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as transient historical stage, would naturally be withering away. In this sense, “the State is not ‘abolished’. It dies out.”⁶⁹

Class Struggle in the Commune State

Marx viewed the Commune as the political form of social emancipation, “of the liberation of labor from the usurpation of the (slaveholding) monopolists of the means of labor, created by the laborers themselves or forming the gift of nature.”⁷⁰

Just as it was a form, Marx thought that the Commune was actually not the real life of the working class. He said,

As the state machinery and parliamentarism are not the real life of the ruling classes, but only the organized general organs of their dominion, the political guarantees and forms and expressions of the old order of things, so the Commune is not the social movement of the working class and therefore of a general regeneration of mankind but the organized means of action.⁷¹

The real life of the working class, Marx held, lay in its organized action and

⁶⁸ Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p284.

⁶⁹ Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, in *MECW*. p.321.

⁷⁰ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 490.

⁷¹ *Ibid*.

social movement, namely, class struggle. Marx averred, “The Commune does not [do] away with the class struggles.”⁷² According to Marx, the old state machinery of the capital and landowner class should be replaced by the communal organization, within which the state was first reconstructed as a healthy “Social Republic” then social transformation was constructed.⁷³ The Paris Commune could survive at the historical conjuncture only in the form of a “Social Republic”. For such a democratic social republic, Lenin held, “without in the least abolishing the rule of capital, and, therefore, the oppression of the masses and the class struggle, inevitably leads to such an extension, development, unfolding, and intensification of this struggle that, as soon as it becomes possible to meet the fundamental interests of the oppressed masses, this possibility is realized inevitably and solely through the dictatorship of the proletariat, through the leadership of those masses by the proletariat.”⁷⁴ The purpose of class struggle, initiated by the communal organization, was to abolish all classes and, therefore, all class rule, because the Commune “does not represent a peculiar interest. It represents the liberation of ‘labor’, that is the fundamental and natural condition of individual and social life which only by usurpation, fraud, and artificial contrivances can be shifted from the few upon the many.”⁷⁵

The highest expression of class struggle within a nation state was no more than civil war. The Paris Commune “demonstrated the strength of civil war”, which took place between the expropriator and the expropriated, stirring the socialist

⁷² Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 491.

⁷³ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 497.

⁷⁴ Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p320.

⁷⁵ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 491.

movement throughout Europe.⁷⁶ But arguably, when Marx stated that the Commune did not do away with class struggles, he was not referring to the civil war of winning the class supremacy of the proletariat, like the Paris-Versailles war. Rather, Marx was talking about the class struggles after the working people had won the first major battle over the exploiters, smashed the old bourgeois state machinery and established a commune state—in Marx's word after the communal organization was firmly established on a national scale.⁷⁷ Then when the Commune was “the true representative of all the healthy elements of French society, and therefore the truly national Government,” why was class struggle necessary and inevitable? The answer lay in the fact that as a working men's government, as the bold champion of the emancipation of labor, the Commune would resolutely be aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators, transforming the means of production, land and capital, chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labor into mere instruments of free and associated labor. Without fulfilling this promise, “the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion. The political rule of the producer cannot coexist with the perpetuation of his social slavery.”⁷⁸

The attempt and practice of the expropriation of the expropriators would, unavoidably, trigger fierce resistance from the old class rulers. Marx optimistically surmised that after the commune state was established, “the catastrophes it might still have to undergo, would be sporadic slaveholders' insurrections, which, while for a moment interrupting the work of peaceful progress, would only accelerate the

⁷⁶ Lenin, *Lessons of the Commune*, in *Lenin on the Paris Commune*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, p.22.

⁷⁷ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 491.

⁷⁸ Marx, Karl. *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.334.

movement, by putting the sword into the hand of the Social Revolution.”⁷⁹

Unfortunately, the slaveholders’ direct armed offensive successfully prevented a Commune state from coming into being in France. Even though a commune state did manage to form, once the Commune state tried to advance toward socialism, there could be many elements, together with the former slaveholders’ direct insurrections, contributing to a possible restoration of the old class rule in such a communal state. Let me briefly go through the “healthy elements” consisting of the Paris Commune. Without doubt, the working people were the resolute supporters of the Commune, and they fought to the end in its defense. But there were still a number of supporters of the old class rule among the workers. For instance, many working people joined the bourgeois troops and fled with the exploiters to Versailles. Secondly, it was true, as Marx stated, “For the first time in history the petty and moyenne middle class has openly rallied round the workmen's Revolution, and proclaimed it as the only means of their own salvation and that of France! It forms with them the bulk of the National Guard, it sits with them in the Commune, it mediates for them in the Union Républicaine!”⁸⁰ But due to the wavering character of the petty and moyenne middle class—shopkeepers, tradesmen, merchants, who had assisted in the suppression of the working men's insurrection of June, 1848—Marx expressed his deep concern about them: “Whether the gratitude of this great body of the middle class will stand the present severe trial, time must show.”⁸¹ It turned out that the middle class did not stand the trial in fighting for the Paris Commune, not to mention it could not stand the

⁷⁹ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.491.

⁸⁰ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.496.

⁸¹ Marx, Karl. *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.337.

trial in the socialist advancement in the future. Lenin elaborated the differentiated political stances among the supporters of the Paris Commune,

At first this movement was extremely indefinite and confused. It was joined by patriots who hoped that the Commune would renew the war with the Germans and bring it to a successful conclusion. It enjoyed the support of the small shopkeepers who were threatened with ruin unless there was a postponement of payments on debts and rent (the government refused to grant this postponement, but they obtained it from the Commune). Finally, it enjoyed, at first, the sympathy of bourgeois republicans who feared that the reactionary National Assembly (the “rustics”, the savage landlords) would restore the monarchy. ...Only the workers remained loyal to the Commune to the end. The bourgeois republicans and the petty bourgeoisie soon broke away from it: the former were frightened off by the revolutionary-socialist, proletarian character of the movement; the latter broke away when they saw that it was doomed to inevitable defeat. ...Deserted by its former allies and left without support, the Commune was doomed to defeat. The entire bourgeoisie of France, all the landlords, stockbrokers, factory owners, all the robbers, great and small, all the exploiters joined forces against it. This bourgeois coalition, supported by Bismarck (who released a hundred thousand French prisoners of war to help crush revolutionary Paris), succeeded in rousing the ignorant peasants and the petty bourgeoisie of the provinces against the proletariat of Paris, and forming a ring of steel around half of Paris (the other half was besieged by the German army).⁸²

Marx himself frankly admitted that in the Commune “there are influences at work other than those of the working men.”⁸³ Many of the influences were, apparently, not so positive for the survival and advancement of the Commune. Since the Commune saved the Parisian middle class and hence saved the “living civil society”, the great body of the middle class was full of gratitude to the Commune. But

⁸² Lenin, *In Memory of the Commune*, in *Lenin on the Paris Commune*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, pp.25-26.

⁸³ *Marx to Léo Frankel and Louis Eugène Varlin*, 13 May 1871, in *MECW*, Volume 44, p.149.

to save the “living civil society” would not be the ultimate goal of the Commune movement. For Marx, the true goal of the Commune movement was to eventually get rid of the “living civil society” itself based on private property and the capitalist means of production, and liberate the whole society from the state. After discerning this “socialist tendency” of the Commune, as Lenin pointed out, the middle class in the Commune was “frightened off by the revolutionary-socialist, proletarian character of the movement.” Furthermore, according to Marx, a major portion of the personnel in the old State machineries serving the interest of the exploiters, for example, the notaries, huissiers, auctioneers, bum-bailiffs and other judicial officers, would automatically be “transformed into agents of the Commune receiving from it fixed salaries like other workmen.”⁸⁴ But obviously, these kinds of former functionaries of the old state could not shift their class stance and political attitude overnight, regardless of their service in the new working people’s government. Once the situation went against the new power organ of the working people and when the Paris Commune was defeated in the battlefields and collapsing, those old functionaries with hidden class position could become a corrosive force of reaction. And there was not a lack of resistance, as Lenin pointed out, from the insignificant handful, who were still strong because of yesterday’s money-bags and yesterday’s store of knowledge. Many old professors, teachers and engineers, who transformed their knowledge into an instrument for the exploitation of the working people, might not be very cooperative with the new workers’ government.⁸⁵ The Paris Commune had no time to

⁸⁴ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.474

⁸⁵ Lenin, *Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ And Peasants’ Deputies*, in *V. I. Lenin*

reorganize public instruction (education), Marx said, “but by removing the religious and clerical element from it, the Commune has taken the initiative in the mental emancipation of the people.”⁸⁶ Nonetheless, without rapidly training the Proletarian intellectuals and popularizing workers and peasants’ education, without a proletarian educational revolution, it would be very tough for the Commune state to foster revolutionary successors and deepen the socialist revolution. For a socialist Commune state, the bourgeoisie, even the “healthy” part of the bourgeoisie, was potentially dangerous as the “Bourgeoisie will stop at nothing. Today liberals, radicals, republicans, tomorrow betrayal, shootings.”⁸⁷ All these bourgeois elements in a Commune state, would be the objects of class struggle in the course of the socialist advancement.

Interestingly enough, Marx called attention to another danger for the cause of the Commune. This danger was from the old revolutionary veterans. Marx expounded,

In every revolution there intrude, at the side of its true agents, men of a different stamp; some of them survivors of and devotees to past revolutions, without insight into the present movement, but preserving popular influence by their known honesty and courage, or by the sheer force of tradition; others mere bawlers, who, by dint of repeating year after year the same set of stereotyped declamations against the Government of the day, have sneaked into the reputation of revolutionists of the first water. After the 18th of March, some such men did also turn up, and in some cases contrived to play pre-eminent parts. As far as their power went, they hampered the real action of the working class, exactly as men of that sort have hampered the full

Selected Works in Three Volumes, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.546.

⁸⁶ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p.473.

⁸⁷ Lenin, *Plan of a Lecture on The Commune*, in *Lenin on the Paris Commune*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, p.13.

development of every previous revolution. They are an unavoidable evil; with time they are shaken off; but time was not allowed to the Commune.⁸⁸

In the Paris Commune, these kind of old revolutionary veterans, could be those Blanquists (could be others as Marx did not specify), who believed that, “if a small well-organised minority should attempt to effect a revolutionary uprising at the right moment, it might, after scoring a few initial successes, carry the mass of the people and thus accomplish a victorious revolution.” Thereafter, the Blanquists had to establish an iron-fist dictatorship, not of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat, “but of the small number of those who accomplished the coup and who themselves are, at first, organised under the dictatorship of one or several individuals.”⁸⁹ As a petty-bourgeois socialist, Blanqui, in his book *Ni Dieu ni maitre (Neither God no Master)*, condemned the theory of class struggle and the separation of the interests of the proletariat from those of the nation, drawing no line between the workers and the revolutionary bourgeoisie.⁹⁰ Such viewpoints and practices of the Blanquists within or outside the Paris Commune would inevitably conflict with the full development of the revolution of the working class, thus enabling those old veteran revolutionaries of, and devotees to, past revolutions to be one of the very targets of class struggle in a Commune state. The phenomenon that the old veteran revolutionaries became the targets of new revolutions, as Marx observed, was universal in every revolution, including the Cultural Revolution which I explore in this dissertation.

Even the workers themselves could be divided by capitalism. As a result, an

⁸⁸ Marx, Karl. The Civil War in France, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 341.

⁸⁹ Frederick Engels, *Refugee Literature*, in *MECW*. Volume 24.p.13.

⁹⁰ Lenin, *Plan of a Lecture on The Commune*, in *Lenin on the Paris Commune*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, p.12.

insignificant yet influential handful of the upper section of the working class could rally around the bourgeoisie. In addition, the workers and their political ally—the peasants, could have no sufficient confidence in their own strength; “age-old tradition has made them far too used to waiting for orders from above. They have not yet fully appreciated the fact that the proletariat is the ruling class.”⁹¹ As to the issue of the peasants for a communal revolution, Marx fully favored the Paris Commune’s appeal— “*To the Working People of the Villages*”, in which the peasants were told that the Commune’s victory was their only hope. As long as the peasants rallied around the communal Republic, they would immediately benefit and soon have confidence in the Commune state.⁹² But that did not happen partially due to the block of communications by the Versailles forces between the Paris Commune and the peasants. Consequently, the French peasants did not rise up to support the Paris Commune. In a sense, it was the peasants that brought about the downfall of the Paris Commune. In order to secure a revolution in a country with a considerable majority of the peasants, the working men’s government must take actions to “enable the peasant to directly improve his condition, i.e. to win him over to the revolution.” Marx especially warned that a proletarian government must not sacrifice the interests of the peasants to serve the revolution. On the one hand, the proletariat needs to facilitate the transition from the private ownership of the land to the collective ownership in villages. On the other hand, the proletariat should avoid antagonizing the peasants and lead the peasants to collective ownership of their own accord. The abolition of the

⁹¹ Lenin, *Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ And Peasants’ Deputies*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.549.

⁹² Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*, Volume 22. p. 494.

right of inheritance, or the abolition of his property was possible, “only where the capitalist tenant farmer has ousted the peasants, so that the actual farmer is as much a proletarian, a wage-laborer, as the urban worker, so that he has the same interests as the latter directly and not indirectly. Still less should smallholdings be strengthened by increasing the size of allotments simply by dividing up the large estates among the peasantry, as in Bakunin's revolutionary campaign.”⁹³ In a workers' state, the peasants should be the political ally of the workers. They should not be in an antagonistic relationship. But if not handled well, the fierce class struggle between the working class and the peasants would be imaginable. The result could be disastrous.

Some of the aforementioned elements make class struggle in a communal state possible, and some make class struggle unavoidable. In a commune state, in which the old bourgeois regime had been toppled, “the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased tenfold by their overthrow (even if only in a single country), and whose power lies, not only in the strength of international capital, the strength and durability of their international connections [of the bourgeoisie], but also in the force of habit, in the strength of small production. Unfortunately, small scale production is still widespread in the world, and small-scale production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale.”⁹⁴ Small-scale production of the peasants would be an inducement for the capitalist restoration. In addition, a portion of the working class, under the influence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, would degrade into new bourgeois elements.

⁹³ Karl Marx, *Notes on Bakunin's Book Statehood And Anarchy*, in *MECW*. Volume 24. p.517.

⁹⁴ V. I. Lenin, “*Left-Wing*” *Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.3, International Publishers, 1967, p.339.

Moreover, the encirclement of the Communal state by the world system of capitalism, the possible military intervention of the imperialist forces and their conspiratorial activities, were the external conditions that determined the long-time existence of class struggle within a Communal state.

Marx assured the people that the Commune “affords the rational medium in which that class struggle can run through its different phases in the most rational and human way.”⁹⁵ Marx did not specify what the rational medium meant and what the most rational and human ways were. He did not specify the different phases of class struggle either. The most possible “rational and human” way of waging class struggle could be universal suffrage, by which the Parisian working people elected their own government. Marx considered it a key feature of the spirit of the Commune. Karl Kautsky hence credited the Paris Commune as being a “pure democracy” as it was democratically elected by universal suffrage, i.e. without depriving the franchise of the bourgeoisie and other social groups, which was for him “the deep source of mighty moral authority.” In refuting Kautsky, Lenin pointed out that it was ridiculous to represent the division of the citizens of Paris into two belligerent camps, one of which embraced the entire militant and politically active section of the bourgeoisie, as “pure democracy” with “universal suffrage”.⁹⁶ That is, Marx’s labeling of the Paris election as “universal suffrage” was not so accurate, as a large portion of the Paris bourgeoisie who fled to Versailles was actually excluded from the general election of the Paris Commune. And the women in Paris did not get the right to vote at the time

⁹⁵ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 491.

⁹⁶ Vladimir Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.3, International Publishers, 1967, p.52.

of the Commune either. As the Paris Commune was merely a rudimentary form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or more accurately, a revolutionary democratic dictatorship, under which the means of capitalist production was not abolished, it was possible to institute an incomplete “universal suffrage” to form a Communal state. But if the Communal state continued the revolution toward socialism, “universal suffrage” could not work well in serving this end. At most, “universal suffrage” could only be one form of class struggles employed by various political forces, both in the old bourgeois state and in the new Communal state. In the old bourgeois State, Marx held, the universal suffrage was to decide once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament.⁹⁷ Sometimes the ruling class encouraged the masses to vote. Sometimes not. For example, in order to consolidate the falling regime, the Second Empire set up a plebiscite, but the Paris members of the International led by Marx told the French people publicly and emphatically that voting in the plebiscite was voting despotism at home and war abroad.⁹⁸ If the class rulers felt that the universal suffrage did not serve the interests of the ruling class, say, in a state of emergency or other exception, it would be subject to suspense. Revisionism tried to use political freedom, democracy and universal suffrage to remove the ground for the class struggle.⁹⁹ But in fact, they were mostly the manifestations and battle grounds for class struggles. Class struggles would be played out in these politicized categories.

⁹⁷ Marx, Karl. *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 333.

⁹⁸ Karl Marx, *First Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association on the Franco-Prussian War*, in *MECW*. Volume 22, p.3

⁹⁹ V. I. Lenin, *Marxism and Revisionism*, in *Lenin Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1973, Moscow, Volume 15, p. 36.

The universal suffrage is not a cure-all for a communal state to advance toward socialism and communism. While believing that a Commune regime could provide the most rational and human way to wage class struggle, Marx candidly admitted that the Commune “could start violent reactions and as violent revolutions.” Once the Communal regime was expropriating the expropriators, it could start violent reactions. When the Communal regime was continuing the revolution to consolidate socialism and head for communism, it could start violent reactions as well. As a Chinese proverb goes, “The tree desires stillness but the wind will not subside.” The rational medium that a communal regime offered could be turned upside down by the violent reactions from the opponents of socialism and communism, and from many people among the old revolutionary ranks and the working class itself who did not want to continue the revolution. Lenin, too, as a revolutionary optimist and a realist at the same time, pointed out the possibility of an unprecedented violent class struggle in the transitional period,

(...Not a single educated liberal will refuse to recognize the class struggle "in principle"!)

[Revisionist] opportunism does not extend recognition of the class struggle to the cardinal point, to the period of transition from capitalism to communism, of the overthrow and the complete abolition of the bourgeoisie. In reality, this period inevitably is a period of an unprecedentedly violent class struggle in unprecedentedly acute forms, and, consequently, during this period the state must inevitably be a state that is democratic in a new way (for the proletariat and the propertyless in general) and dictatorial in a new way (against the bourgeoisie). Further. The essence of Marx's theory of the state has been mastered only by those who realize that the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general, not only for the proletariat which has overthrown the bourgeoisie, but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from

"classless society", from communism.¹⁰⁰

“Dictatorship, however, is a big word,” Lenin warned, “big words should not be thrown about carelessly.” The dictatorship of the proletariat meant democracy for the have-nots on the one hand, and dictatorship, violence and force not excluded, for the haves, the proponents of capitalist system and activists of the bourgeoisie on the other. “Dictatorship is iron rule, government that is revolutionarily bold, swift and ruthless in suppressing both exploiters and hooligans.”¹⁰¹ In a communal State, the embodiment of the class struggle, as Marx foresaw, could be in the form of violent revolutions, i.e., civil wars, even international wars, which could be triggered by the violent reactions on the part of bourgeoisie, internally and externally, in the process of advancing socialism and communism. The complexity of the class struggle could, for a time, weaken some typical characteristics of a Commune state, say, the abolition of bureaucracy and standing army, as Marx hypothesized. Marx held that the safest guarantee against foreign aggression would be the national militia, not the standing army.¹⁰² But as we know, the Parisian national militia was tragically defeated by the Versailles regular troops. Lenin, in line with Marx’s interpretation of the Paris Commune, had long thought that a proletarian Russia should abolish the standing army in the first place. But facing tremendous military threats and counterrevolutions at home and abroad, besides a people’s militia, Lenin with his comrades had to set up a standing Red Army. Lenin explained, “The organization of a Red Army was an

¹⁰⁰ Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.292.

¹⁰¹ Vladimir Lenin, *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.670.

¹⁰² Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 488.

entirely new question which had never been dealt with before, not even theoretically. Marx once said that it is to the credit of the Paris Communards that they carried into effect decisions which were not borrowed from some preconceived theories, but were dictated by the actual necessity.” “If the ruling class, the proletariat, wants to hold power, it must,” Lenin stressed, “prove its ability to do so by its military organization.” The consolidation of the proletarian power could not merely depend on universal suffrage. The proletarian army had to utilise “all that was most coercive and abhorrent in what we had inherited from capitalism.”¹⁰³ In regard to one of the two pillars of the modern state, namely, the bureaucracy, Marx, “referring to the example of the Commune, showed that under socialism functionaries will cease to be ‘bureaucrats’, to be ‘officials’, they will cease to be so in proportion as—in addition to the principle of election of officials—the principle of recall at any time is also introduced, as salaries are reduced to the level of the wages of the average workman, and as parliamentary institutions are replaced by ‘working bodies, executive and legislative at the same time’.”¹⁰⁴ Slightly differing from Marx’s position on the issue of the bureaucracy, Lenin pointed out,

Abolishing the bureaucracy at once, everywhere and completely, is out of the question. It is a utopia. But to smash the old bureaucratic machine at once and to begin immediately to construct a new one that will make possible the gradual abolition of all bureaucracy--this is not a utopia, it is the experience of the Commune, the direct and immediate

¹⁰³ V. I. Lenin, *Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.), March 18-23, 1919*, in *Lenin’s Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972 Volume 29, pp. 152-154.

¹⁰⁴ Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.356.

task of the revolutionary proletariat.¹⁰⁵

Lenin appeared to be more practical on the issue of the abolishment of the bureaucracy by stating that after a triumphal proletarian revolution, the bureaucracy, though limited, would still exist. Indeed it may exist for a fairly long time, as it was not possible to do away with it at once, everywhere and completely. Both Marx and Lenin, in envisioning the abolition of the bureaucracy, assumed an ideal circumstance which would ensure the socialist and communist direction by merely conducting general elections of the Paris Commune type. However, if the educational level and the class consciousness of the masses, including a major bulk of the non-proletariat people, were not intellectually and politically mature enough to vote for those candidates who supported socialism and communism, a capitalist restoration would be quite possible. In such a situation, a revolutionized and limited system of bureaucracy which was subject to the strict supervision of the masses, could be more efficient in promoting the socialist and communist agenda. Furthermore, in a state of emergency, for example, in the face of a large-scale bourgeois revolt at home, or a military threat, or intervention by international bourgeoisie, a hierarchical system of the “revolutionized” bureaucracy could be better at mobilizing the masses to ward off the bourgeois offensive. This manifested in Marx’s remarks that the Central Committee should not hand its power too early to the Paris Commune. In any case, a revolutionized and limited system of bureaucracy, together with an equally revolutionized and limited standing army, could exist for a long time before the

¹⁰⁵ Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.303.

realization of communism. Only under communism, will the bureaucracy totally disappear and all administrative work of the society will be run by every common able man, though authorities will still persist in such a society. Only under communism, or when at least the major powers on the globe are socialist, can the standing army in the socialist states be abolished. The extent of limiting the bureaucracy and the standing army, and the withering away of the State, would solely depend upon the development of class struggle, nationally and internationally.

The final destiny of a communal state in Marx's strict sense of doing away with the standing army and bureaucracy would hinge on the balance of power on an international scale, or, more accurately, on the class struggle between the global proletariat and global bourgeoisie. Marx himself hinted at the precondition of an amiable international environment for the existence of a Communal state,

The working class knows that they have to pass through different phases of class struggle. They know that the superseding of the economical conditions of the slavery of labor by the conditions of free and associated labor can only be the progressive work of time, (that economical transformation) that they require not only a change of distribution, but a new organization of production, or rather the delivery (setting free) of the social forms of production in present organized labor (engendered by present industry) of the trammels of slavery, of their present class character, and their harmonious national and international coordination.¹⁰⁶

Yet Lenin realistically expressed his reckoning of a hostile bourgeois international environment when the proletariat seized power within one nation state, most possibly at the weak link of the world capitalist system. He said,

¹⁰⁶ Karl Marx, First Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 491.

If the exploiters are defeated in one country only—and this, of course, is typical, since a simultaneous revolution in a number of countries is a rare exception—they still remain stronger than the exploited, for the international connections of the exploiters are enormous. That a section of the exploited from the least advanced middle-peasant, artisan and similar groups of the population may, and indeed does, follow the exploiters has been proved by all revolutions, including the Commune (for there were also proletarians among the Versailles troops, which the most learned Kautsky has “forgotten”).¹⁰⁷

Therefore, as long as the exploiting class is not toppled and abolished internationally, at least in the major capitalist countries, there are still hopes for the bourgeoisie to restore their class rule and recover their lost paradise. Before a decisive victory of the world proletariat on the global scale, viz. a successful world revolution of the proletariat, any single communal state based on the so-called “pure democracy” out of universal suffrage (as Kautsky suggested), and based solely on the not-well-trained militia, could suffer a tragic defeat one day. And, “The final victory of socialism in a single country is of course impossible.”¹⁰⁸ In this sense, the Communal state is future- and world revolution- oriented. Marx fully understood this and foresaw the inevitable defeat of the Paris Commune. “The Paris Commune may fall,” Marx stated, “but the Social Revolution it has initiated, will triumph. Its birthstead is everywhere.”¹⁰⁹ In conformity with Marx’s prediction, the cause of the Paris Commune was continued by the working people globally, and by the Chinese working people in particular.

¹⁰⁷ Vladimir Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.3, International Publishers, 1967, p.64.

¹⁰⁸ Lenin, *Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ And Peasants’ Deputies*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.550.

¹⁰⁹ Karl Marx, Second Draft of *The Civil War in France*, in *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 540.

The classical Marxist writings on the state, which were mainly summarized from the lessons of the Paris Commune, exerted a deep influence upon the Chinese Maoists' theory of continuous revolution and the practice of the CR. Contrary to Stalin and Khrushchev's views that in a socialist society there would be no longer sharp class struggles, Mao held that in the historical period of socialism classes, class contradictions and class struggle would exist for a long time. Mao hence reactivated Marx's view that after the establishment a Communal state, in progressing toward the socialist and communist society, the working class could not do away with class struggles. To continue the revolution, according to Mao, was to wage class struggles continuously in such a society. The CR was nothing more than the waging of large-scale class struggles based on mass movements under the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to classical Marxist writers, the Paris Commune was an embodiment of the dictatorship of the Proletariat. Though embryonic, it manifested two important characteristics: It was a workers' power consisting mainly of the working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class; it had to advance toward socialism and communism by exercising dictatorship over the bourgeoisie. In many ways, the CR was aimed at fulfilling these two goals by waging intense class struggles. First, after the large-scale power seizure in 1967 by the working class, a large number of workers were delegated into the new power organs. Compared to the pre-CR Chinese government, which included very few workers, this was a fundamental change. Second, by virtue of the CR, the Chinese state system was transformed from the people's democratic dictatorship (stipulated in the 1954

Constitution), which did not exclude the bourgeoisie from the government and did not completely abolish the ownership of the bourgeoisie, to the dictatorship of the proletariat (stipulated in the 1975 Constitution), which declared war on the bourgeoisie and their agents within the Party. In keeping with the Marxist theory of the state, the new proletarian power organs that emerged during the CR did not intend to abolish the state as a whole. Instead, a wholly new form of state structure based on a triple combination was introduced. In many ways, it anticipated a type of semi-state that began to initiate the withering-away of the state itself.

Chapter Three: Envisioning a Wholly New Form of State Structure

The largest Commune movement in China took place at the height of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. What was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution? According to Mao Zedong, it was a revolution in which one class overthrew another.¹ Specifically, it was the proletariat overthrowing those agents of the bourgeoisie within the Communist Party.

The fundamental framework that made the CR possible, both theoretically and practically, was Mao's thinking on continuous revolution. The starting point of Mao's theory of continuous revolution is the promise that even though Chinese communists took state power in 1949, the class struggles never ceased. In order to transform the Chinese state system from the people's democratic dictatorship to the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to advance Chinese society from semi-capitalism to true socialism, it was necessary to initiate and wage class struggles against those enemies of the proletariat within and outside the communist Party. And then, uninterruptedly, the revolutionaries had to transform the socialist society toward communist society over a fairly long historical period under the dictatorship of the proletariat. During this process, the state, as the machinery of suppressing one class by another, would be gradually withering away. In this regard, the Paris Commune, as a specter haunting later generations, has always served as a model for imagination and a point of reference for the continuous revolution. The Paris Commune interpreted in the classical Marxist tradition was considered by Maoist theoreticians as a model of a government of the producers, a semi-state power organ, with all the ready-made

¹ *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, ed. by Stuart R. Schram, Pantheon Books, 1974, p.275.

bourgeois state machinery smashed and its residuals gradually withering away. The goal, or the decisive hallmark of the theory of continuous revolution was to prevent the degradation of power-holders—going from servants of society to masters of society— and to ward the established socialist society off capitalist restoration. It was this concern that underlay Mao and his theoreticians’ repeated emphasis on various aspects of the Commune state as ways of consolidating dictatorship of the proletariat and steps toward a semi-state and stateless communist society. These include relative equal wage payments among officials and workers, general elections by the masses, the institutionization of mass organizations, the reduction of police power, the development of the people’s militia and so forth.

The CR was by no means an anarchist movement aimed at abolishing the state as a whole, as post-Mao Chinese regimes and some Western critics have hinted. Rather, based on the theory of continuous revolution, this was an intense class struggle and great effort to empower the masses by revolutionizing the state so as to relegate some of the state power to them. In order to reach this goal, “a wholly new form of state structure” inspired by the Paris Commune was envisioned and created by the Maoist revolutionaries. In fact, the explorations and experiments in “a wholly new form of state structure” before and during the CR was one of the most far-reaching yet often ignored issues in CR studies. What was this wholly new form of state structure? How should it be established? What was its nature and character? How did it differ from other forms of state structures? Tracing its philosophical basis via a close reading of several representative theoretical texts from that time, I plan to draw a basic blueprint of this new form of state structure envisioned by the Maoist

theoreticians in the current and later chapters. Being a great historical movement, the CR involved multiple dynamics and strategies in a different time and space, from different leaders at various levels and with the participation of many individual participants. A comprehensive historical narrative about the CR is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and in this chapter, I will only give rough sketches wherever historical background is necessary and focus on theoretical delineations and textual analysis.

The Two-line Struggle within the CCP and the Formation of Continuous Revolution

Mao's thinking and practice of the Chinese revolution after the proletarian power seizure in 1949 consisted of two major aspects: advancing from the New Democratic Revolution to the Socialist Construction (1949-1965)² and the continuous revolution under the proletarian dictatorship (1966-1976) — the Cultural Revolution which was seen by the Maoists as a transitional period leading toward communism. The first aspect of Maoist thinking could be regarded as primarily economic while the latter conceptualization on continuous revolution stressed on cultural, political and ideological dimensions. The former mainly included transforming agriculture, handicrafts, and capitalist industry and commerce along socialist lines. The best way

² According to Mao Zedong, the Chinese revolution must go through two stages, "first, the democratic revolution, and second, the socialist revolution, and by their very nature they are two different revolutionary processes. Here democracy does not belong to the old category—it is not the old democracy, but belongs to the new category—it is New Democracy." (*On New Democracy*, January 1940, from *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Vol. VII, pp.341-342. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1975).

to realize the latter, according to Mao, was through mass movements and specifically, in the form of CRs. The Maoist leadership paid much attention to the issue of creating socialist cultural hegemony between 1949 and 1965. For example in 1964, Mao's wife Jiang Qing led a campaign to reform the old Peking opera that was viewed to be embedded with feudal and capitalist ideologies. However overall, the achievements in the cultural fronts during the 17 years between 1949 and 1965 did not meet the Maoists' expectations.³

By delineating the formation of Mao's theory of continuous revolution within its social, historical and political context, I will demonstrate in the next couple of sections how this theory prepared and prefigured theories and practices in the CR, and I discuss how running battles between the Maoists and those who misunderstood, misinterpreted, ignored or even opposed the theory and practice of continuous revolution, represented by Liu-Dengists, characterized and underlay a lasting two-line struggle among top CCP leaders from the beginning of the PRC, and how this led directly to the outbreak of the CR. On the one hand, similar to Mao's other theories, the conceptualization of continuous revolution both grew out of and was aimed toward practices within the Chinese revolution. By contextualizing its formation, I will untangle how the theory was rooted in the unique social, historical, and political

³ Mao himself (and the Maoist rebels during the CR) basically thought that a "black line" reigned in China on the cultural front: "Since the Liberation [in 1949], most leading units on cultural fronts have been ruled by the anti-Party and anti-socialist black line represented by Zhou Yang, which run counter to the Central Committee of CCP and comrade Mao Zedong's working line of culture. Most cultural departments became their battle positions at which the anti-Party and anti-socialist black line executed [bourgeois] dictatorship over the proletariat." See *Zhongong zhongyang pizhuan wenhuabu wei chedi ganjing gandiao fan dang fan shehuizhuyi fan mao zedong sixiang de heixian er douzheng de qingshi baogao (Issued With Instructions From The CCP CC: Report by The Ministry of Culture on Struggles to Wipe Out the Anti-Party, Anti-Socialist, Anti-Mao Zedong Thought Black Line)*, June 26, 1966, from *Wenhua da geming yanjiu ziliao (Research Materials of the Great Cultural Revolution)*, Vol. 1, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun guofang daxue dangshi dangjian zhenggong jiaoyan shi, 1988.)

conditions in China. The crucial issues it touches upon, on the other hand, are not unique at all. The experience of the CR relates directly to the core of socialism, that is, the question of how socialism can develop and remain strong in a capitalist world system. This is an issue that has perplexed revolutionaries from the Paris Commune onwards and from the inception of socialist practices. Yet Mao was never merely a theoretician in the ivory tower but an adamant practitioner. The CR, in that regard, not only embodied and reified the Paris Commune's spirit but also tested its potentials and possibilities in a different space and at a different time. Only in light of the theory and practice of continuous revolution, I argue, can we have a better grasp of the achievements, contributions, and lessons of the CR and Chinese revolution.

In 1949, after nearly 30 years of revolutionary violence against various enemies, among them, the Japanese invaders and the Guomindang regime, Chinese Communist Party finally seized state power and established the Peoples Republic of China. Right before the founding of the PRC, the CCP, together with numerous "democratic parties and people's organizations", drafted the "Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference" passed by the first plenary session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference on September 29th, 1949 in Beijing. This functioned as a "temporary constitution" during the first five years of the PRC until it was replaced by the official 1954 constitution. This "temporary constitution" proclaimed that "the People's Republic of China is a New Democratic or a People's Democratic state." "The Chinese people's democratic dictatorship is the state power of the people's democratic united front of the Chinese

working class, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie and other patriotic democratic elements.” It also declared the objective to “protect the economic interests and private property of workers, peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie” and “develop the people’s economy of New Democracy and steadily transform the country from an agricultural into an industrial one.”⁴ This was largely based upon Mao’s theory of New Democracy expounded in wartime. According to Mao’s classification of revolutionary stages,⁵ China stepped into a transitional period from the New Democratic Revolution to the socialist construction from 1949 onwards, that is, a period of socialist transformation. During this transitional period, even though the working class was the leading political force and China was a people’s democratic dictatorship founded on the worker-peasant alliance, four revolutionary classes, namely, the working class, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, led China cooperatively and shared state power with one another. In other words at this stage, China was a republic under the joint dictatorship of several revolutionary classes. This stage lasted about five years (1949-1954). Since the “Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political

⁴ See *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi gongtong gangling (The Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference)*, in *People’s Daily* 1949, 9, 30. The English translation can be found in *the Important Documents of the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference* (Peking: Foreign Languages press, 1949), pp. 1-20.

⁵ Mao says, “Revolutions too can be classified into old and new, and what is new in one historical period becomes old in another. The century of China’s bourgeois-democratic revolution can be divided into two main stages, a first stage of eighty years and a second of twenty years. Each has its basic historical characteristics: China’s bourgeois-democratic revolution in the first eighty years belongs to the old category, while in the last twenty years, owing to the change in the international and domestic political situation, it belongs to the new category. Old democracy is the characteristic of the first eighty years. New Democracy is the characteristic of the last twenty. This distinction holds good in culture as well as in politics.” (*On New Democracy[xin minzhu zhuyi lun]*, January 1940, from *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Vol. VII pp.341-342. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1975) Mao here in effect divides the Chinese Revolution into several stages: the Old Democratic Revolution from 1840 to 1919, led by the bourgeoisie; the New Democratic Revolution after 1919, led by the working class and other joint revolutionary classes, and the socialist revolution led by the proletariat when the New Democratic Revolution has been accomplished. In the stage of the New Democratic Revolution, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie are not its objects but rather the subjects and driving forces and thus allies of the proletariat.

Consultative Conference” was just a “temporary constitution”, the direction of the New Democracy, according to Mao’s theory, should gradually lead to the socialist orientation. At this stage, however, China practiced a special kind of capitalism, i.e. state capitalism, as Mao clearly stated.⁶ It was merely a transitional period toward socialist revolution; China must step into the next stage—the socialist revolution under the leadership of the working class. In this process, the working class would gain more power over other classes, and others, such as the national bourgeoisie, would eventually lose ground in the leadership of state power. In fact, Mao began to prepare for a socialist general line for the transitional period as early as 1952, that is, in the middle of the Korean War. At a meeting of the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee that year, he insisted that it would take 10 to 15 years to complete this transitional process to socialism. And if there had been no Korean War, the socialist transformation might have been put on the agenda even earlier.

Right after the Korean War in 1953, China began to carry out many economic transformations to realize this transition. Meanwhile, the 1954 Constitution of the People’s Republic of China was promulgated by the 1st National People’s Congress meeting in Beijing on September 20, 1954, and it stated:

From the founding of the People’s Republic of China to the attainment of a socialist society is a period of transition. During the transition the fundamental task of the state is, step by step, to bring about the socialist industrialization of the country and, step by step, to accomplish the socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce. In a few short years our people have

⁶ Mao Zedong, *About the State Capitalism (guanyu guojia zibenzhuyi)*, in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Vol. V., Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977.

successfully carried out a series of large-scale struggles: the reform of the agrarian system, resistance to American aggression and aid to Korea, the suppression of counter-revolutionaries and the rehabilitation of the national economy. As a result, the necessary conditions have been created for planned economic construction and gradual transition to socialism.⁷

From 1953 to 1956, as the 1954 constitution hoped, private enterprises underwent fundamental changes, transformed from private ownership to joint-ownership by the state and the private enterprises.⁸ At the same time, autarkical small-scale farming completed its corresponding socialist transformation as well through a gradual process of mutual aid teams, elementary and advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives, and the people's communes. The state took control of ownership as representative of the entire people. As such, the Chinese economic system as a whole realized socialist public ownership of the means of production. By 1956, therefore, China had successfully gone through the transitional period and entered a new stage of socialist revolution. Yet this further advancement from the New Democratic to the socialist revolution encountered many obstacles and even far-reaching resistance from both within and outside the CCP. Liu Shaoqi, the chairman of PRC, for example, was a leading representative who viewed that the most important task at the time was to consolidate the so-called "New Democratic social order", not to move toward socialism.⁹ In fact, Liu Shaoqi, together with his allies

⁷ *Constitution of the People's Republic of China (zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianfa)*, 20 September 1954, in *The People's Republic of China: 1949-1979, A Documentary Survey*, Vol. 1, p.99, ed. Harold C. Hinton, Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1980.

⁸ In 1966 after the first wave of the CR, the means of production in cities finally came fully under public ownership. See *Transmitted by The CCP CC: Report by the Office of Finance and Trade and the State Economic Commission of the State Council Concerning Some Finance and Trade and Handicraft Industry Policies*, Sept. 24, 1966, in *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian huibian (The Collected Documents of the CCP CC, 1966.5-1968.5)*, published in May 1968, editors unknown.

⁹ Liu's view was refuted by Mao in a speech at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP. Mao said, "'Firmly establish the new-democratic social order.' That's a harmful formulation. In the transition

(for example, Bo Yibo, Liu Lantao and Deng Zihui, An Ziwen etc.), opposed the movement of cooperative transformation of agriculture at the time.¹⁰ Liu Shaoqi's argument was that the mechanization of agriculture must take place first before any collectivization as there were neither tractors nor fertilizers. For Liu Shaoqi, the conditions for collectivization were far from mature at the beginning of 1950s.¹¹ Nevertheless, had China followed Liu Shaoqi's plan, the collectivization of agriculture could have been postponed forever, since even today it is still hard to describe Chinese agriculture as being mechanized. Contrary to Liu Shaoqi's plan, Mao insisted on collectivizing before the mechanization of agriculture, arguing that only through collectivization could rural China accumulate enough funds through collective efforts to purchase industrial machines and to have agriculture mechanized. For industry and commerce, Liu Shaoqi openly supported the continued bourgeois ownership of businesses, putting forward his famous proposition that "exploitation

period changes are taking place all the time and socialist factors are emerging every day. How can this 'new democratic social order' be 'firmly established'?... Our present revolutionary struggle... will bury the capitalist system and all other systems of exploitation once and for all. The idea, 'Firmly establish the new-democratic social order', goes against the realities of our struggle and hinders the progress of the socialist cause." (See "*Refute Right Deviationist Views That Depart From The General Line*" (*pipan likai zongluxian de youqing guandian*), June 15, 1953, From the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. V, pp. 93-94. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977.)

¹⁰ Liu Shaoqi and some other top CCP leaders, such as Bo Yibo and Liu Lantao, strongly opposed forming agricultural co-operatives through further developing mutual aid unions in Shanxi Province in 1951. Shanxi cadres in favor of supporting the existing co-operatives run by peasants who on their own initiatives formed new co-operatives were severely criticized by Liu and his men. In May 7, 1951, at the National Working Meeting for Propaganda, Liu sternly criticized those Shanxi cadres, saying that the activity to form co-operatives was a manifestation of "agricultural utopian socialism", "it is impossible to realize", and: "Within our party, a large number of our comrades buy into this kind of agricultural utopian socialism, which should be corrected." But some Shanxi cadres who did not agree with Liu's view directly wrote to Mao Zedong. In response to their letter, Mao firmly supported these Shanxi cadres and criticized Liu and his like. See *Shanxi shiban quanguo shoupi nongye hezuoshe de qianqianhouhou: Tao Lujia fangtan lu* ("The First Experiments in Shanxi of Forming agricultural Co-ops Within the Entire Country: Interview with Tao Lujia"), in *Dang de wenxian (The Party's Literature)*, 2008 No.5. 1955 saw a nationwide upsurge in agricultural cooperation in response to Mao's call. Yet when Mao Zedong was not in Beijing that year, Deng Zihui, minister of the Department of Rural Work, proposed to Liu Shaoqi to retrench and dissolve 200,000 co-operatives. Liu Shaoqi approved his plan and ordered the dismantling all of the 200,000 cooperatives in a little over two months. See *Liu Shao-Ch'i's Self Criticism (Liu Shaoqi de ziwu piping)*, October, 1966, in Harold C. Hinton, ed., *The People's Republic of China 1949-1979*, vol. 3 1965-1967 *The Cultural Revolution Part I*, p. 1621. Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc. 1980.

¹¹ See Bo Yibo, *A Recollection of Some Important Decisions and Events (Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu)*, 2 vols. pp 187-188. Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dang xiao chubanshe, 1993.

has its merits.”¹²

What underlay this divergence is a tense two-line struggle within the CCP that had gradually developed since the founding of the PRC in 1949. Opposing Liu Shaoqi group’s stubborn resistance to the socialist transformations in the economic spheres, Mao warned that even though the socialist mode of production was basically attained in China in 1956, there was still be a long road to fight against capitalist restoration. Based upon such misgivings, Mao gradually produced his theory of continuous revolution. The earliest expression of Mao’s thinking on continuous revolution could arguably be traced back to the middle 1950s. In his famous article “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” (*lun zhengque chuli renmin neibu maodun*) in 1957, Mao claimed:

In China, although socialist transformation has in the main been completed as regards the system of ownership, and although the large-scale, turbulent class struggles of the masses characteristic of times of revolution have in the main come to an end, there are still remnants of the overthrown landlord and comprador classes, there is still a bourgeoisie, and the remoulding of the petty bourgeoisie has only just started. Class struggle is by no means over. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the various political forces, and the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the ideological field will still be protracted and tortuous and at times even very sharp.¹³

In this article, Mao contended that the class struggle would exist in the long term. He stated that the danger for capitalist restoration of socialist China would come

¹² See “*Struggle Between the Two Roads in China's Countryside*”, by the Editorial Departments of “*Renmin Ribao*,” “*Hongqi*” and “*Jiefangjun Bao*”, in *Peking Review*, No. 49, December 1, 1967, p.12

¹³ From *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Vol. V. p. 409, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977. This is Mao’s speech at the Eleventh Session (Enlarged) of the Supreme State Conference. Mao went over the verbatim record and made certain additions before its publication in the *People's Daily* on June 19, 1957.

from the “remnants” of the overthrown old exploiting classes and the petty bourgeoisie. As time wore on, the major threat to the party would be re-identified by Mao to be the “capitalist roaders” within the Party who represented the interests of the bourgeoisie. The way to stay away from this formidable danger would be a kind of “permanence of the revolution” in Marx’s sense,¹⁴ and an “uninterrupted revolution” as Mao stated in January 1958 in the 11th article—“Uninterrupted Revolution” in the Party document “The Sixty Articles for Working Methods (Draft)”: “Our revolution comes one by one.”¹⁵

While Mao was determined to advance the revolution uninterruptedly, Liu Shaoqi and some other top leaders were inclined to keep China on a state capitalist track, even though they had to implement some projects along Mao’s line because of Mao’s widespread and deep influence. In fact, the resistance to the socialist road came not only from civilian officials such as Liu Shaoqi, but also from high-ranking military officials. Peng Dehuai, for example, a valiant general who gloriously and victoriously commanded the Chinese army during the Korean War, was not satisfied with the collectivization of agriculture, especially the Great Leap Forward, after he learned of the dire consequences of the “wind of exaggeration” and the “wind of communism”¹⁶ when visiting his rural hometown in Hunan Province at the end of

¹⁴ ¹⁴ Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850*, in *MECW*. Volume 10, p.127.

¹⁵ From *Mao Zedong wenji (Mao Zedong Works)* Vol. 7, p.349, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999.

¹⁶ During the Great Leap Forward, there occurred five types of serious left adventurist deviations (or using Maoist discourse, “left” in form yet right in essence), plotted mainly by Liu-Dengist cadres in a fairly large number of rural areas. The five deviations were named as the “five winds” or “five styles” (*wufeng*): “The Communist wind”; “the wind of exaggeration” (*fukua feng*); “the commandist wind” (*mingling feng*); “the wind of cadre privileges” (*ganbu tequan feng*); and “the wind of blindly leading production” (*xia zhihui shengchan feng*). Among them, the Communist wind was blown by some cadres who believed that Communism would be something which could be achieved overnight rather than through a drawn-out transition in the long run. A typical result of the wind of communism was known as “one equalization and two transfers” (*yi ping er diao*), i.e., egalitarianism in all aspects of life and unrestricted transfer of brigade manpower and materials by commune authorities. The “wind of exaggeration” was a manifestation of failure to carefully investigate actual conditions. The most serious “wind of

1958. In April 1959, Peng Dehuai led a military delegation to visit to some Eastern European countries during which he harshly criticized the “personality cult of leaders”, “the wind of exaggeration and communism” during the Great Leap Forward and even communization itself on several occasions.¹⁷ In May 1959 when visiting Albania, Peng Dehuai informally chatted several times with Khrushchev who had been labeled by the CCP as an unfriendly revisionist and national chauvinist since he had criticized China’s Great Leap Forward and promoted a revisionist theory and practice of “peaceful co-existence” with and “peaceful transition” of capitalist countries. Even though Peng may have talked of nothing of real importance with Khrushchev, their similar harsh criticism of the Great Leap Forward and communization connected these two together later in some people’s views. Set against this background, Peng Dehuai submitted a so-called “ten-thousand-word” letter to Mao Zedong¹⁸ at the Lushan conference in July 1959 which actually targeted Liu-Dengists who were practically in charge of the launch of Great Leap Forward. In this letter and in other talks at the Lushan conference, Peng Dehuai claimed that there was much “petty-bourgeois fanaticism” in the Great Leap Forward, and argued that the agricultural collectivization movement was “too hasty” and “very bad”.¹⁹ In a talk with Huang Kecheng on July 19, Peng Dehuai point to the third version of *The Soviet*

exaggeration” was reporting false output figures either in fear of punishment for lagging behind or in hope of winning praise. (See Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965*, pp.352-359. M.E. Sharpe, 1993) Because of the “five winds”, serious famine occurred in several provinces controlled by adamant Liu-Dengist bureaucrats, such as Anhui, Sichuan, He’nan and Shandong. Frederick C. Teiwes (1993) believed that taking an overall view, both Mao and Liu Shaoqi were particularly harsh in denouncing “the Communist wind” as exploiting and robbing the peasants, but according to my study, Liu Shaoqi, together with Deng Xiaoping, was big agitator of the winds of communism and exaggeration.

¹⁷ Wang Yan, *Peng Dehuai nianpu (A Chronicle of Peng Dehuai's Life)*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, pp.735-744, 1998.

¹⁸ Literally, the letter has only 3,500 words.

¹⁹ *From the Failure of Peng Dehuai to the Bankruptcy of the Chinese Khrushchev*, in *Red Flag*, No. 13, August 17, 1967.

Textbook the Political Economy, where there was discussion of the early Soviet agricultural communes and how as the agricultural productivity in the Soviet Union right after the violent revolution was very low, the mandatory communization regardless of material insufficiency ended up in rapid disintegration. In reference to this example Peng asked, “when others had lessons, why should we repeat it?” In this regard, Peng’s basic premise of communization was in fact similar to Liu Shaoqi’s viewpoint favoring mechanization before collectivization.

What really contributed to the downfall of Peng Dehuai at Lushan was not his viewpoints and harsh criticism about the Great Leap Forward. It lay somewhere else. Peng went so far as to assert on several occasions that “if the Chinese workers and peasants were not as good as they are, a Hungarian incident would have occurred in China and it would have been necessary to invite Soviet troops in.”²⁰ With the previous lessons of the Soviet coup d’état against the Stalinists, this kind of remark shocked the CCP leadership including Mao. Mao himself did not want to punish Peng and his like for his harsh remarks about the people’s communes and the Great Leap Forward. But Mao had to agree with the Liuists to launch a campaign against Peng mainly for his role and misgivings on the Sino-Soviet relationship under great pressure from the Liuist group. In order to maintain the unity of the party, a resolution was passed to condemn “the Anti-Party clique headed by Peng Dehuai.”²¹ In the final

²⁰ *Resolution of 8th Plenary Session of 8th Central Committee of CCP Concerning the Anti-Party Clique Headed by Peng Teh-huai (Excerpts)*, delivered on August 16, 1959, in *Peking Review*, No. 34, August 18, 1967.

²¹ What drove Liuists to punish Peng at Lushan were quite different reasons. As can be seen, in regard to the People’s communes, the attitudes of Peng Dehuai and Liuists had no major differences; they both were not so enthusiastic with this movement. Some scholars even suspect that blowing up the so called “communist wind” was a deliberate attempt by the Liu-Dengists to sabotage the Great Leap Forward designed by Mao. In fact, after the Lushan meeting, Liu Shaoqi openly criticized the general line as having been put forth blindly, the Great Leap Forward as being “brought about in a rush” causing the economy to be “out of balance;” that “the people’s

round of criticism, Peng and “his accomplices and followers” were declared as “essentially representatives of the bourgeoisie who joined our Party during the democratic revolution.” “Peng joined the Party and the revolutionary army led by the Party with an idea of ‘investing in a share.’ ...his anti-Party activities reflect the kind of class struggle in which the Chinese bourgeoisie opposes the proletarian socialist revolution and attempts to remold the Party, the army and the world in its own bourgeois image.”²² This conclusive statement, though an official document of the Party, in fact embodied Mao’s thinking on the continuous revolution. It clearly revealed that it was very likely that the capitalist restoration in China might not be led by the old reactionaries any more, but by the representatives of the bourgeoisie who joined the Party, i.e. “the party persons in power taking the capitalist road.” The target for preventing capitalist restoration therefore shifted from those outside of the party to those inside the party at the highest levels of leadership. Mao later generalized this

communes were set up too early,” and “here is the danger of disintegration.” He even made the assertion that “the Lushan meeting made a mistake,” and that “it was wrong to oppose right opportunism.” (See *Peng Teh-huai and His Behind-the-Scenes Boss Cannot Shirk Responsibility for Their Crimes*, *Peking Review*, No. 35, August 25, 1967, p.7.) The point at issue here is the power struggles between the Liuists and Peng Denghuai’s military group. Some scholars such as Lao Tian [see his *xin zhongguo wushinianlai jingying jieceng neibu maodun fenxi (An Analysis of the Contradictions Within the Elite in the Fifty Years of the New China)*, <http://www.wyzxsx.com/xuezhelaotian/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=35>,

accessed April 1 2009] hold that this power struggle between the Peng and Liu groups embodies the long-enduring discontent and distrust in the armed struggle era between an army group who got huge historical credits in communist-controlled areas, namely, “Red Area”, and cadres who worked underground in Guomindang-controlled areas, namely, the “white territory.” Peng Dehuai, a representative of the army group, took the view that since they contributed more to the establishment of PRC, they should wield more power than those in the “white territory”, represented by Liu Shaoqi. Yet after liberation, most important positions were assigned to the latter. As Peng Dehuai wanted to hold Liuists responsible for many errors and excesses in the Great Leap Forward, so as to seize power from them, the counter strike by the powerful Liuist group was decisive and the destiny of Peng’s political life was hence doomed, since Mao was also not satisfied with Peng’s open opposition to the Great Leap Forward and especially his dubitable talk about inviting in the Soviet Red Army. Mao had partly retired from the decision-making core in 1958 before the Lushan conference in order to allow more room for his successors. But he remained a strong influence in the party and the whole country. And this time Mao sided with Liuist group, since at least ostensibly, at the Lushan conference, the Liu Shaoqi group supported the “three red banners”, that is, the general line, the Great Leap and the people’s communes that had been theoretically designed by Mao at the time. But the final verdict passed at the meeting about Peng’s “crime” was basically due to his possible connection with the unfriendly Soviet regime at the time.

²² *Resolution of 8th Plenary Session of 8th Central Committee of C.P.C. Concerning the Anti-Party Clique Headed by Peng Teh-huai*, *Peking Review*, No. 34, August 18, 1967

conflict as a “two-line” struggle within the party.²³

By exaggerating the partial failure of the Great Leap Forward, which had in effect been executed by Liu-Dengists of the first front (*yixian*) with Mao himself presiding at the second front (*erxian*),²⁴ Liu Shaoqi claimed in 1962 that “the peasants have gained nothing from the collective economy in the last few years.”²⁵ Such remarks showed that Liu attempted to shift responsibility for the partial failure of the Great Leap Forward onto others, mainly Mao, who was the major architect and proponent of the General Line for Socialist Construction and the Great Leap Forward. “Don’t be afraid of capitalism running amok,” Liu Shaoqi openly contended, “the free markets should continue to exist,” and “we must fall back as far as necessary both in industry and in agriculture, even to the extent of fixing output quotas based on the individual households and allowing individual farming!”²⁶ Deng Xiaoping elaborated this in a figurative way. “So long as it raises output, ‘going it alone’ is permissible,” he argued, “Whether cats are white or black, so long as they can catch mice, they are good cats.”²⁷ With the support of Liu-Dengists, a wind of *san zi yi bao* blew up in many rural areas. *San zi yi bao* is translated as three selfs and one contract literally.

²³ For example, Mao argued on Dec. 27, 1964, “there are at least two factions in our party: one is socialist faction, and the other capitalist.” See *Remarks at the CCP CC Work Meeting (zai zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de chahua)*, in *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.199, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968; when talking with Mehmet Shehu, a leader of Albanian Party of Labor in May 1966, Mao says, “whoever will win? Marxist-Leninists or Revisionists? It is an issue of two line struggle.” (Mentioned in *Talk with comrade Karbo and Baluku(he kabo baluku tongzhi de tanhua)*, Feb. 3, 1967, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.288, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

²⁴ At the end of 1953, after learning lessons from the Soviet Union on the issue of successors after Stalin’s death, Mao Zedong proposed that the work of CCP leadership be split into a first front (*yixian*) and a second front (*erxian*). The top cadres who worked at Central Committee, government and army were to be on the *yixian*; whereas those on the *erxian* did not exercise direct leadership but functioned as advisers and influenced policymaking from behind the scenes. (See Henry Yuhai He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People’s Republic of China*, p.101, M.E. Sharpe, 2001.) At the time of the Great Leap Forward, Mao was literally sitting on the second front.

²⁵ See “*Struggle Between the Two Roads in China’s Countryside*”, by the Editorial Departments of “*Renmin Ribao*,” “*Hongqi*” and “*Jiefangjun Bao*”, in *Peking Review*, No. 49, December 1, 1967, p.15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Three *zi* means practicing private plots, free markets, profit-driven small enterprises, and one *bao* means requiring fixed output quotas on a household basis.²⁸ Contrary to the contemporary mainstream narrative, *san zi yi bao* resulted in disastrous damage to agricultural production. The reason why *san zi yi bao* did not work lay in the fact that the vulnerable individual families which conducted *san zi yi bao* could not ensure stable yields when they encountered severe weather conditions such as drought or excessive rain in those years. Consequently, grain production decreased rapidly, resulting in wide-spread famine in those areas.²⁹ This is what the mainstream narrative intentionally hides. Had the *san zi yi bao* propagated in China, the people's commune, which the Maoists had considered the "gold bridge to communism" and had painstakingly organized and practiced for years, would have collapsed in no time without a doubt.³⁰ Mao clearly pointed out the dire consequences of the ruin of communes later:

Why do I see the practice of household responsibility system so seriously? China is a big agricultural country. If the foundation of the system of ownership in rural areas changes, the industrial foundation that serves the collective economy [of agriculture] would be undermined, and the public ownership of industry would change accordingly overnight. There would emerge a polarization between the poor and the rich rapidly. ... When the time comes, how could we communists defend the interest of the workers and peasants? How

²⁸ With *san zi yi bao*, Liu-Dengists aimed to promote the extension of plots for private use, the extension of free markets, an increase in the number of small enterprises with sole responsibility for their own profits or losses, and the fixing of output quotas on the basis of individual households. In the eyes of the Maoists, this was going down the road of capitalist restoration.

²⁹ Cao Weiping, *Cao Anhui Chuxian de nongye kan dayuejing he baochan daohu (On the Great Leap Forward and the Household Responsibility Seen From the Case of Chu County, Anhui Province)*, <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=15489>, cited 28, March, 2009.

³⁰ In fact, all of these practices of *san zi yi bao* reemerged after the CR when Deng Xiaoping took power.

could we defend the national industry and commerce?...³¹

In response to the Liu-Dengists' challenge at this critical moment, Mao Zedong convened the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP in the autumn of 1962, at which Mao sharply criticized and repudiated the Liu-Dengists' "capitalist line" and deterred the wind of "*san zi yi bao*" and the corresponding effort to dissolve the People's Communes. It is also at this meeting that Mao called on the entire Party and the masses throughout the country to "never forget class struggle" and set the task of "socialist education".³² The Socialist Education Movement was hence launched between 1962 and 1966. Also referred to as the "four cleans movement," it aimed at cleaning up the Party politically, economically, organizationally and ideologically.

The original goal of the "four cleans movement" set by Mao in "The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Problems in Current Rural Work" (that is, *The Ten-point Decision*) was to struggle against "Party persons in power taking the capitalist road", and its nature was identified as contradictions between socialism and capitalism. But things went temporarily against Mao's plan. After sitting at the second front (*erxian*) for several years, Mao officially stepped down from the No. 1 position in 1962, hoping to give his successors, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, more chances to develop their leadership capabilities. Nevertheless, being Mao's successors and in charge of the "four cleans movement", Liu and Deng boldly altered Mao's original policies in their "Second Ten-point

³¹ Ma Shexiang, *The Prelude: Mao Zedong's Reascending Jinggang Mountain in 1965 (Qianzou: Mao Zedong yijiuliuwu nian chongshang jinggangshan)*, Beijing: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe, 2006.

³² See "Struggle Between the Two Roads in China's Countryside", by the Editorial Departments of "Renmin Ribao," "Hongqi" and "Jiefangjun Bao", in *Peking Review*, No. 49, December 1, 1967, p.16.

Decision (draft)” in 1963 and the “Revised Draft of the Second Ten-point Decision (draft)” in 1964. The latter two documents by Liu and Deng were in direct opposition to Mao’s “Ten-point Decision” in 1962. In the new documents by Liu and Deng, the movement’s nature was set as “the contradiction between the ‘four cleans’ and the ‘four uncleans’” and “the intertwining of the contradictions inside and outside the Party.” Thus unsurprisingly, they designated the main struggle targets as the lower-middle cadres and the common masses with bad family backgrounds, causing widespread sufferings yet missing the targets that had been set by Mao, that is, Party members in power taking the capitalist road. Discontented with Liu’s leadership and his wife Wang Guangmei’s oppressive behaviors in the “four cleans movement” in 1964, Mao Zedong ordered the drawing up of a document called “Some Problems Currently Arising in the Course of the Rural Socialist Education Movements” (that is, *The 23-article Document*) the same year so as to rectify Liu’s mistakes in this movement, and to consolidate people’s communes in rural areas. It was in this paper that the concept of “Party persons in power taking the capitalist road” (*zou ziben zhuyi daolu de dangquanpai*), capitalist roaders (*zouzipai*) in short, first appeared in a CCP document. It clearly stated that “the key point of this movement is to rectify those people in positions of authority within the Party, who take the capitalist road, and to progressively consolidate and develop the socialist battlefield in the urban and rural areas.”³³ So who were capitalist roaders? This question actually puzzled millions of

³³ *Some Problems Currently Arising in the Course of the Rural Socialist Education Movement*, January 14 1965, in *Ssu Ching: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966* by Richard Baum and Frederick C. Teiwes, University of California, Berkeley, 1968, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.280, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

people during the ensuing CR. Indeed, this question had no easy answer. This might explain why there were so many ambiguities and complexities in the CR that involved a lot of conflicts and violence. But in Mao's eyes, some power holders, without any doubt, should be relegated to being called "capitalist roaders". When discussing the draft of *The 23-article Document*, Mao said:

During the first half part of the year of 1962, there blew a "wind of individual farming (*danganfeng*)"; and [at the same time] there appeared a wind of *san zi yi bao* and a wind of *san he yi shao* (three reconciliations [with imperialists, reactionaries and modern revisionists of foreign countries.] and one reduction [of support and assistance to the liberation struggles of other peoples.]) How strong were the winds! As for the "wind of individual farming", Deng Zihui was among the advocates. There are also several other people [who advocated this]. Some comrades took the lessons, but some not. They did not speak and answer questions. It has been many years for us to build socialism. After listening [to the lessons], some comrades still did not speak, and cannot answer questions....Why do I talk about the current situation? Because some people said that unless installing "*bao chan dao hu*" (the household responsibility system), the Chinese economy could not recover within eight or ten years. To build socialism or capitalism? This is class struggle. That's why I bring forward the issue of whether or not there exist classes, class conflicts and class struggles...The crucial point is to struggle against the power holders taking the capitalist road...³⁴

Obviously for Mao, the power holders in the Party who actively advocated individual farming and the household responsibility system and were indifferent to the world revolution deserved the title of "capitalist roader." But in the written version of *The 23-article Document*, publicly released on January 14, 1965, there was never a clear definition of "capitalist roader". It just stated that "the great majority of our

³⁴ Mao, *Speech Delivered at the CCP CC Work Meeting (zai zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua)*, December 28, 1964, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.199, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

cadres want to take the socialist road, but there are some among them who have but a hazy knowledge of the socialist revolution, who employ personnel improperly, who are haphazard about checking up on work, and who commit the mistake of bureaucratism.” Seen from here, the “capitalist roaders” seemed to consist mainly of bureaucratists (*guanliao zhuyi zhe*). If so, no cadre dared to say that he was immune to any bureaucratism. Practically, all cadres could be targeted as “capitalist roaders” due to any of their mistakes in work. Moreover, even though the so-called “capitalist roaders” were the pivot on which the CR revolved, it seemed that there never publicly appeared a clear definition for it by the Maoist leadership during the entire CR.

Nevertheless, Mao’s theory of continuous revolution gradually took its shape after running battles within the party against the Peng Dehuai group in 1959, and Liu-Dengists in 1962 and 1964. It was this sharp and irreconcilable ideological split between Maoists and Liu-Dengists that unfolded clearly from 1949 to the middle of 1960s. I would like to argue here that this difference led to and made inevitable the outbreak of the CR in 1966. Obviously, there was a deep split over whether or not to continue and further the revolution, especially in the rural areas. For many CCP cadres, once the CCP had used revolutionary violence to seize power, the revolution came to an end, just like after a bus arrives at its final station, all passengers should get off. The only thing they wanted to do was to enjoy the fruits of their success, and to be rewarded by honors and privileges that they felt they were entitled to. Thus the major targets of struggle for Liu-Dengists lay outside the party. Within the party, there was little chance that the Liu-Dengist power-holders would be the targets of struggle.

The veteran revolutionaries had all the rights to “lie on their records of merits to sleep” (which means enjoying life according to their past contributions). Indeed, Liu-Dengists once advocated their version of communism in the form of “wind of communism” during the Great Leap Forward. Liu Shaoqi himself even brought Kang Youwei’s book, *Datongshu: The One-World Philosophy*, to bear on his experiments in communism. Once their excessive practice of “communism” suffered debacles, they did not take the lessons and reflect on their own mistakes. Instead, they forsook all the efforts to build socialism in a way that goes toward communism. They retreated to the capitalist mode of production by trying to dissolve people’s communes in agriculture and encouraged a policy of “economy and profits in command” in industry. The issues of defending and advancing socialism, smashing the state machinery of the bourgeoisie and practicing the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the principle of the Paris Commune, never really concerned Liu-Dengists. In sharp contrast, for the Maoists the principles of the Paris Commune had always been a beacon for Chinese revolution.

The Paris Commune in the “Bourgeois Rights” (*faqian*) Debate: Theoretical Debut of Zhang Chunqiao

For Mao and his comrades, the revolution had just started. The general direction of China, without a doubt, should be communism. To achieve it, the crucial task for real communists was not to consolidate the social order of New Democracy,

but to fight against the capitalist tendency within and outside the CCP. What needed to be clarified was that in this further advance toward socialism, namely, the socialist revolution, the CCP needed to smash the state machine of the bourgeoisie in light of the principles of the Paris Commune. In this process, the petty-bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie should become, unlike in the former stages of the New Democracy and the transitional period, the targets of the Socialist Revolution and consequently subject to revolutionary criticism, even violence, if necessary. And resistance both in practice and theory was unavoidable as changes here are fundamental and touch the very core of society.

In order to retreat to and consolidate the “New Democratic social order”, the Liu-Dengist line tended to justify and practice social hierarchy and corresponding bourgeois rights (*faquan*), which directly opposed the principles of the Paris Commune. For example, regardless of Mao’s objection, they installed a system of military rank modeled upon the Soviet army. Mao himself firmly refused the title of Generalissimo and never touched the Grand Marshal’s uniform made for him. Under this ranking system, the gap between the highest wages of army officers and lowest pay for common soldiers was very wide. Even among officers, the highest wage was 6 times of the lowest one. This difference among army officers was even wider than that in the Hungarian army, in which the highest wage of an army officer was only 2.5 times that of the lowest wage. (Upon receiving a Hungarian military delegation, Mao purposely praised the Hungarian army for this.)³⁵ Similarly, a multi-level wage

³⁵ Wang Yan, *Peng Dehuai nianpu (A Chronicle of Peng Dehuai's Life)*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1998, p.730.

system was propagated throughout Chinese society. The Maoist theoreticians ferociously objected to this tendency. From 1958 to 1962, a heated theoretical debate over “bourgeois rights” among Chinese thinkers revealed complex issues which foreshadowed some trends in the CR. Given the fact of the establishment of socialist China, opponents of the socialist revolution had to take up the strategy of waving “red flags” to oppose the red flag.³⁶ In this context, the central issue that was vigorously debated from 1958 to 1962 was not whether bourgeois rights should be opposed, but what are bourgeois rights. By invoking the Paris Commune, Zhang Chunqiao, an active participant of this debate and a major figure of the Shanghai Commune, made it clear in his theoretical debut “*Eradicating Bourgeois Rights*”³⁷ in 1958 that it was hierarchy that lay at the core of the bourgeois system of rights.

Quoting Marx’s statement in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* that a communist society “in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, is still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges,” Zhang agreed that a socialist society could not immediately resolve all the inequality inherited in the bourgeois system of rights. Take the principle of distribution for example, we could only follow the principle of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his work” rather than “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs”. But Zhang highlighted that Marx had no intention at all to suggest that bourgeois rights and their innate hierarchy were justified and needed to

³⁶ This was a popular practice for the rightists during the CR as well, and it is still true even for the contemporary Chinese regime.

³⁷Zhang Chunqiao *Pochu zichanjieji de faquan sixiang (Eradicating Bourgeois Rights)*, in *People’s Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, Oct. 13, 1958..

be systemized and institutionalized. On the contrary, in order to criticize the trend of paying too much attention to “material benefits” and “material incentives” at that time, Zhang cited Marx’s approval of the Paris Commune in *The Civil War in France*, “From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workmen’s wages. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.”³⁸ Zhang hence regarded the adoption by the Paris Commune of the revolutionary measures that focused less on material interests as part of the efforts to thoroughly demolish the hierarchical system of bourgeois rights. Zhang went even further to argue that there was a need to strengthen communist education from political and ethical perspectives so as to struggle for the complete eradication of bourgeois rights. In that regard, he favored a free supply system (*gongji zhi*), where pay were handed out according to needs rather than a hierarchical wage system. That is, Zhang Chunqiao basically treated the Paris Commune as a model with the communistic virtue of abolishing hierarchy and bourgeois rights. This view foreshadowed what really took place in the CR, within which Zhang Chunqiao himself played a major part in trying to build a new commune in Shanghai.

In discussing whether or not to publish Zhang’s article in the *People’s Daily*, the chief-editor Wu Lengxi gathered many opposing opinions. Wu himself could not make the decision and submitted the article to Mao. In a letter responding to Wu Lengxi, Mao praised Zhang’s article as “basically correct”, with the only shortcoming

³⁸ The English translation is from *The Civil War in France*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1964, p. 70, emphasis original.

being that it was “not so comprehensive for interpreting the historical process of bourgeois rights”.³⁹ With this short article, Zhang became an important communist theoretician. Mao’s resolute support of Zhang Chunqiao during the CR could be partially traced back his appreciation of Zhang’s theoretical viewpoints in this bourgeois rights debate.

Yet the following years saw a great deal of counter arguments toward Zhang’s article. Zheng Jiqiao, another famous theoretician and politician, for example, insisted that the core of bourgeois rights was not the hierarchy because the bourgeois constitution stipulated that everybody was equal before the law and in the court.⁴⁰ Other theoreticians contended that mere vestiges of bourgeois rights could not be equated with bourgeois rights in and of itself. And still others attempted to justify the wage system in the new China, stating that in the long socialist period before communism, the principle of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his work” should be thoroughly carried out, etc..

Mao paid close attention this whole debate around bourgeois right. When reading Zheng Jiqiao’s arguments, Mao wrote down a brief comment, saying that bourgeois equality is “merely in form” (not in essence).⁴¹ Yet in the ensuing years, the multi-level-payment wage system was consolidated and institutionalized. At Mao’s insistence though, the amount of the highest wage payment offered to the top leaders similar to him was greatly reduced in the 1960s. The popularity of these

³⁹ Mao Zedong, *Introduction for Eradicating Bourgeois Rights*, in *People’s Daily (Renmin ribao)*, Oct. 11, 1958.

⁴⁰ Zheng Jiqiao, *On Eradicating Bourgeois Rights (Tantan xuechu zichanjieji faquan)*, in *People’s Daily(Renmin ribao)*, Oct. 18, 1958.

⁴¹ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao [The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC]. Vol. 7. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988, p. 483.*

counter arguments clearly reflected the mainstream viewpoint of the CCP, that is, after wiping out the visible landlords and capitalists, how could so-called bourgeois rights still exist in a socialist society? Understandably, when Party leaders who once risked their lives during the revolution to seize power began to enjoy privileges, the struggle to eradicate bourgeois rights was not easy. The continuous revolution was necessary at this time, aimed at disguised and sometimes even stronger enemies. At its core was the fight against revisionism as well as any retreat to the old society and hierarchy to which everyone was so accustomed.

It was this tense two-line struggle embodied not only in the conflicts on whether or not to collectivize agriculture and industry but also manifested in the bourgeois rights debate, among other contradictions, that led to and underlay the CR. The launch of the CR signaled and embodied unprecedented social and cultural practices of the theory of continuous revolution. As the guideline of the CR—*Sixteen Points (The Eleventh Plenum's Decision on the Cultural Revolution, 8 August, 1966)* put it, the CR represented “a more intense and extensive new stage of the development of socialist revolution”, and was “a great revolution that deeply touches people to the very souls.” Hence at the height of the CR in 1967, Yao Wenyuan, Chen Boda and their colleagues, as Mao’s disciples and communist theoreticians, offered a succinct summary of Mao’s conceptualization of continuous revolution in six aspects:

One. It is necessary to apply the Marxist-Leninist law of the unity of opposites to the study of socialist society...

Two. “Socialist society covers a fairly long historical stage. In this stage, classes, class contradictions and class struggle continue, the

struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road continues and the danger of capitalist restoration remains.” ...In order to prevent capitalist restoration and “peaceful evolution,” it is imperative to carry the socialist revolution on the political and ideological fronts through to the end.

Three. The class struggle under the dictatorship of the proletariat is in essence still a matter of political power...

Four. The struggle between the two classes and two roads in society is inevitably reflected within the Party. ...

Five. It is of the greatest importance for the continuation of the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution should be carried out.

Six. “Fight self, repudiate revisionism” is the fundamental programme of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the ideological field. ... use proletarian ideology to overcome bourgeois egoism and all non-proletarian ideas, transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure that are not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, and thus uproot revisionism.⁴²

From the above brief delineation, it was clear that Mao’s thinking on continuous revolution took its shape from the actual practices of the Chinese revolution, that is, from struggles against various tendencies that risked abandoning revolution and leading China astray from socialism. The key issue here was still “a matter of political power”. For the Maoists’ proposition that “power comes from the barrel a gun,” the Paris Commune served as a model for seizing power and abolishing the old state apparatus. But apparently, armed force was just one of the aspects of how to defend proletarian power. There were still powers not coming from the barrel of a gun. Maoists’ theory of continuous revolution hence addressed the difficult issues of

⁴² *Advance Along The Road Opened Up By The October Socialist Revolution--In Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, by the Editorial Departments of *People’s Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, *Red Flag (Hongqi)* and *Liberation Daily (Jiefangjun Bao)*, in *Peking Review*, No. 46, November 10, 1967.

defending, maintaining, and developing socialist societies after the proletariat was in power in a world still dominated by capitalism. In other words, socialist societies could always be empowered by drawing on the spirits and fundamental dynamics that the Paris Commune highlighted.

In continuous revolution and long-term struggles, the Paris Commune, the first experiment of workers' power with its accomplishments and lessons, is summoned up again and again. As an unprecedented manifestation of the theory of continuous revolution, the CR also invoked the Paris Commune as a model of abolishing the old bourgeois-style state machine and establishing "a wholly new form of state structure". In this regard, the lessons of the Paris Commune greatly inspired Chinese Maoists and influenced the theory and practice of the CR.

Smashing the Old and Establishing the New: Zheng Zhi's Interpretation of the Paris Commune

Mao Zedong and other Maoist theoreticians had high expectations that "a wholly new form of state structure" would emerge from the CR. They envisioned for the CR many aspects of the long-expected "wholly new form of state structure" based upon the principles of the Paris Commune on the eve of the CR and in its early stages. Delineating this "new form" with great details, the Maoist leadership and its theoreticians gave priority to the masses' initiatives. For Mao, what mattered most were not the visions and commands of leaders, but the broad masses' voices and

creativity. That is, no matter how delicate a political roadmap and design was, the blueprint would be of little use if the political and class consciousness of the mass was not mature and their fighting spirit was not high. Mao said that “On a blank sheet of paper free from any mark, the freshest and most beautiful pictures can be painted.” However the painters and artists here by no means represented the leaders alone. “The outstanding thing about China’s 600 million people is that they are ‘poor and blank.’ This may seem a bad thing, but in reality it is a good thing. Poverty gives rise to the desire for change, the desire for action and the desire for revolution.”⁴³ What Mao was emphasizing here was the masses’ initiatives. In order to create a beautiful work of art, the masses and the leaders have to work together closely. The mass was also the decisive driving force in advancing history according to Mao. He encouraged the masses to go through self-education and self-liberation by actively participating in the movements, or to use a metaphor that he cherished very much, to “learn swimming from swimming”, especially “swimming in great winds and waves.” Through the revolutionary process, the Maoists leadership hoped that various “new socialist things” would be created by the masses with acute political consciousness, and in particular, a kind of “wholly new form of state structure” modeled after the Paris Commune would enter onto the historical stage.

However, the vision of Mao and some major other Maoist theoreticians about the Paris Commune in effect oriented the masses’ thoughts and imaginations about a “wholly new form of state structure” to a great extent. On the eve of the CR, a key

⁴³ Mao Zedong, *Introducing a Co-operative* (April 15, 1958), from *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, p. 36. Beijing: Peking Foreign Languages Press, 1966.

article entitled “The Great Lessons of the Paris Commune—in Commemoration of Its 95th Anniversary” appeared as an editorial on the CCP theoretical organ *Red Flag* (*Hongqi Magazine*) on March 26, 1966,⁴⁴ indicating that some early signs and trends of the historical movement loomed on the horizon. Similar to some other important documents released during the CR, the author Zheng Zhisi (Cheng Chih-Sze) was just a penname which could not be traced to a single person in any Who’s Who dictionary about modern China. It might be a pseudonym of Chen Boda, the chief-editor of *Red Flag* in 1966, who was a major advocate and theoretician of the people’s commune in the rural areas (and some urban commune experiments as well) during the Great Leap Forward. In this editorial, Zheng began with a general comment that “The great Chinese revolution, victorious under the guidance of Mao Zedong (Tse-tung)’s thought, has inherited and further developed the experience of the Paris Commune and the experience of the October Revolution.” It was known that the official launch date of the CR was May 16th, 1966. Before that, the PRC state structure mainly followed that of its counterpart in the USSR, and there were no major state structural changes modeled upon the Paris Commune. Why then did Zheng Zhisi argue that the Chinese revolution inherited and extended the experience of the Paris Commune and that the CCP was “struggling resolutely against all renegades who have turned their backs on the principle of the Paris Commune”?⁴⁵

According to “The Great Lessons of the Paris Commune”, the most fundamental principle of the Paris Commune was “the use of revolutionary violence

⁴⁴ Its English translation can be found in *Peking Review*, Nos. 14-16, April 1, April 8, and April 15, 1966.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

to seize power, smash the state machine of the bourgeoisie and practice the dictatorship of the proletariat.” Furthermore, reflecting the lessons of the Paris Commune, Zheng emphasized the pertinence of the principle in China especially after the revolution:

It is out of the question for the leaders of any proletariat party not in power to lead a revolution, if they turn their back on the principle of the Commune. What is more, such leaders will become renegades and stool-pigeons. If such leaders discard the principle of the Commune after they have assumed power, there exists the danger of the people’s revolution losing its fruits and these leaders themselves will likewise become outright renegades and stool-pigeons, and flunkys and accomplices of the imperialists.

In this regard, the principle of the Paris Commune was of great importance in two stages: before and after the proletariat was in power. It was not only about how to seize power from below, but also about how to defend power and safeguard the fruits of revolution. Practicing and maintaining this principle thus necessitated long-term and continuous revolution that could be grouped into stages characterized by different tasks, different enemies and different manifestations. Had the CCP before the CR followed and further developed this principle? The answer would be both YES and NO with the tense two-line struggle within the CCP in mind. It was a No because the Liu-Dengists’ Sovietization and bureaucratization of the Chinese state structure counteracted the enthusiasm and initiatives of the broad masses; it was a Yes because the Maoists’ efforts in following the mass line and valorizing renewed revolutionary spirits based on the dictatorship of the proletariat emancipated the productivity and

transformed the corresponding superstructure.⁴⁶ Obviously, because of Mao Zedong's thinking on and practice of the continuous revolution, Zheng Zhisu was able to state that the Chinese revolution had inherited and further developed the experiences of the Paris Commune and the October Revolution.

Why was the Paris Commune still relevant and worthy of commemoration in the 1960s in the 20th century? Zheng quoted Engels, "The Commune was the grave of the old, specifically French socialism, but at the same time it was the cradle of the international communism that was new to France."⁴⁷ The old socialism, inferred from Zheng's quotations of Marx and Engels, was the petty-bourgeois socialism that had flourished in the middle of the 19th century France, especially in the form of Proudhonism and Blanquism which were strongly represented in the Paris Commune. Nevertheless, the true secret of the Commune was, according to Marx, that "it was essentially a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor."⁴⁸ The Commune was not run in any sense by given "principles" of Proudhonism and Blanquism, but merely by simple and practical needs. All the economic measures the Commune adopted, therefore, were driven "not at all in accordance with the spirit of Proudhonism, but certainly in

⁴⁶ This has always been the direction of Mao's efforts.

⁴⁷ Engels, "Letter to August Bebel, Oct. 29, 1884," *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, Russian ed., State Publishing House of Political Literature, Moscow, 1964, Vol. XXXVI, p. 196. Quoted from Cheng Chih-Szu, *The Great Lessons of The Paris Commune -- In Commemoration of Its 95th Anniversary*, in *Peking Review*, No. 15, April 8, 1966.

⁴⁸ Marx, "The Civil War in France," *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, Vol. I, p. 522. Quoted from Cheng Chih-Szu, *The Great Lessons Of The Paris Commune - In Commemoration of Its 95th Anniversary*, in *Peking Review*, No. 15, April 8, 1966.

accordance with the spirit of German scientific socialism,⁴⁹ which was based on a scientific analysis of economic conditions and means of production, and based on a scientific interpretation and transformation of the practical needs of the proletariat. From the Paris Commune onward, international communism, rooted in the German scientific socialist tradition, quickly grew up from its cradle and gained greater strength day by day. Breaking through the bonds of Proudhonism and Blanquism-type petty bourgeois socialism that dominated the Second International, and distorted the Marxian legacy of German scientific socialism, and following the masses' will, Lenin, at last, blazed a new trail along the road opened up by the Paris Commune. A Commune-type Soviet was created upon the establishment of a working people's state—the USSR. Quoting for authority Engels' comments on the international meaning of the Paris Commune, Zheng explained its renewed pertinence in the spring of 1966. Even though Zheng's editorial mainly tackled the history of the Paris Commune, it was intended to address also the context of contemporary national and international reality. "Smashing the military-bureaucratic machine of the bourgeoisie and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat to replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie—this is the quintessence of Marxist-Leninist theory on the state and the most important experience of the Paris Commune." Invoking the model of the Paris Commune, Zheng advocated burying the old, specifically the actually existing bureaucratized and degraded USSR socialism since "the Khrushchov [Krushchev] revisionists, under the pretext that times have changed, publicize the deceitful myth

⁴⁹ Engels, "The Housing Question," *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, Vol. I, p. 612, quoted from Cheng Chih-Szu, *The Great Lessons of The Paris Commune -In Commemoration of its 95th Anniversary*, in *Peking Review*, No. 15, April 8, 1966.

that the proletariat can seize state power without smashing the state machine of the bourgeoisie and that socialism can be built without the dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁵⁰ The article also expressed the discontent toward the Chinese state machinery in previous years to some extent, when it more or less showed the repressive characteristics of the Soviet state apparatus toward the masses after Stalin.

“The political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation.”⁵¹ Following this vein, Zheng’s article on the Paris Commune stressed the necessity of smashing the bourgeois state machine with revolutionary violence and the dictatorship of proletariat. The Paris Commune was not just “a product of a ballot by the whole people and of ‘pure democracy’” (as Kautsky claimed); it was more a product of blood and fire, a product of revolutionary violence, which surely resonated in the historical practices of the CR. Nevertheless, Zheng Zhisi could not treat the existing Chinese state structure as totally bourgeois and call for its immediate smashing so as to give way to the establishment of establish a wholly new state structure modeled upon the Paris Commune.⁵² But he did advocate many features of a brand new state in a Commune style that Chinese socialism lacked or needed to improve. Some of the features of the proposed new society are:

1. Opposing the Khrushchevian revisionists’ theory and practice of “peaceful transition”; it is necessary to smash the state machine of the

⁵⁰ Cheng Chih-Szu, *The Great Lessons Of The Paris Commune -In Commemoration of Its 95th Anniversary*, in *Peking Review*, No. 15, April 8, 1966.

⁵¹ Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, Second Draft, from Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: *Collected Works* V.22. p.533, Lawrence & Wishart, 1986.

⁵² Mao himself later considered socialist China as “a bourgeois state without capitalists” in 1976. Zheng Zhisi and his colleagues could not go as far in 1966 as what Mao did in 1976.

bourgeoisie.

2. Opposing the Khrushchevian revisionists' theory and practice of "the state of the whole people"; without the dictatorship of the proletariat, there is no way to build socialism.
3. Abolishing high salaries and multiple salaries. "The proletariat which has seized power must prevent the transformation of its state organs from servants of society into masters of society. High salaries and multiple salaries for currently-held posts must be abolished among all cadres working in proletarian state organs, and these cadres must not enjoy any special privileges."⁵³
4. Putting politics rather than material incentives in command.
5. Disbanding the standing army and replacing it with the national guard (militia).
6. Filling all posts by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by the same electors.⁵⁴

And so on and so forth.

The purpose of going over the experience and lessons of the Paris Commune, according to a *Red Flag* ("Hongqi") editor's note of "The Great Lessons of The Paris Commune—In Commemoration of Its 95th Anniversary", was to wage a struggle against Khrushchevian revisionism and carry forward the world revolution. When Zheng Zhiqi published his article in 1966, one major target of his criticism, Khrushchev himself, had already been dismissed from his position as the party secretary of the CPSU two years before. But the CCP believed that the USSR still carried out a Khrushchevian revisionist line without Khrushchev himself. Therefore to condemn Khrushchevian revisionism in an editorial commemorating the Paris

⁵³ *Peking Review*, No. 16, April 15, 1966, p.23.

⁵⁴ I summarize the six features from Zhang Zhiqi's editorial *The Great Lessons of the Paris Commune -In Commemoration of Its 95th Anniversary*, in *Peking Review*, No. 15, April 8, 1966.

Commune was still “of vital and practical significance.”⁵⁵ In fact, the CCP’s struggle against Khrushchevian revisionism could be traced back to 1956, when Khrushchev put forward his “parliamentary road” and “three-peace” at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, i.e. peaceful coexistence and peaceful competition with capitalist states, and peaceful transition of capitalist societies. Directly targeting these slogans, the CCP publicized an important article “More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” in 1956 to reaffirm the road of the October Revolution, i.e. violent revolution as a universal law of proletarian revolution. At the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in 1961, Khrushchev proclaimed the Soviet Union and the CPSU as the state of the entire people and the party of the entire people, in opposition to the state of the proletariat and the party of the proletariat insisted on by the CCP. Khrushchev’s view was totally inconsistent with the CCP’s ideology at the time. From 1956 to 1966, the CCP produced a series of theoretical articles to criticize Khrushchev’s position, among which the most important nine treatises were referred to as “nine commentaries”. Zheng Zhisi’s article on the Paris Commune, as mentioned above, was part of this effort.

Nevertheless, with the CR approaching, the problems tackled in Zheng’s treatise could not be irrelevant to the reality in China at the time. The denunciation of Khrushchev was in fact also targeting Khrushchev-style cadres in China as well. Khrushchev’s viewpoints did command a great deal of sympathy among some Chinese high ranking officials. As discussed above, many civilian and military high

⁵⁵ Ibid.

ranking cadres in China, like Khrushchev, actually disliked the people's commune and were content with profit-driven industry policies. With regard to international affairs, the corresponding slogan of Khrushchev's "three-peace" in China was summarized as "three reconciliations [with imperialists, reactionaries and modern revisionists of foreign countries.] and one reduction [of support and assistance to the liberation struggles of other peoples.]" ("*san he yi shao*"), which was first advocated by Wang Jiaxiang. One of the senior leaders of the CCP in its early stage, Wang was the vice minister of Foreign Affairs after 1949 and the director of the CCP Central Committee's International Liaison Department after 1951. However, Wang Jiaxiang's view was by no means limited to himself. Most major CCP leaders, such as Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, Wu Xiuquan, Liu Ningyi, and Wang Li, endorsed this policy.⁵⁶ When Liu Shaoqi was brought down during the CR as the "Chinese Khrushchev" and the "No. one capitalist roader" in the party, the policy of "*san zi yi bao*" (three selfs and one contract) was seen as his restorationist program for national affairs, and the "*san he yi shao*" was characterized as his international program.

Zheng Zhisi's description of a wholly new Paris Commune style state did correspond to Maoist efforts to abolish or limit bourgeois rights after the establishment of the new China. When the Liu-Dengists established high salaries and the multiple salaries system, Mao proposed to reduce his salary and reduce the levels of multiple salaries in the whole state. When Liu-Dengists employed material incentives in the economic realms, Mao and Lin Biao called for putting politics in

⁵⁶Wang Li, *Xianchang Lishi — Wenhua Da Geming Jishi (History Witnessed—Reminiscence of the Cultural Revolution)*, pp.20-22, Hong Kong: Oxford University, 1993.

command. When Peng Dehuai and other generals were devoted to the formalization and modernization of the army, Mao and Lin Biao energetically advocated developing the people's militia, abolishing the military rank system, and reaffirming the application of people's war. When other leaders believed that the party could manage everything, Maoist cadres encouraged the masses to supervise the party and participate in management, while the cadres should participate in productive labor. All of these efforts were in sharp contrast to Khrushchev and the practices of his Chinese followers. As the Liu-Dengists acquired more and more state power, the two-line struggle was increasingly intensified. As a result, Maoists' achievements in abolishing or limiting bourgeois rights were far from satisfactory on the eve of the CR. That might be an important concern for Zheng Zhisu to reiterate these principles in this treatise.

According to Maoist theoreticians such as Zheng Zhisu, a new commune-type state power created by the masses along Mao's line would not only be the grave of USSR-style bureaucratism (and of, to some extent, Chinese bureaucratism), but also be of great significance for international communism. It would uphold the theories and practices of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and repulse those of Khrushchev's "peaceful transition" and "the state of the whole people." Indeed, theories and practices of the CR and the Chinese experiments with the Commune style organs were reverberated across the world in the sixties and seventies in the 20th century.

Mass Movement and “The Declaration of the Chinese Paris Commune”

In effect, Mao was quite clear about the great significance as well as the great difficulties of making fundamental changes in revolution, i.e., making revolution within revolution. In a talk addressed to chief leaders in the Central Committee in July 1966, Mao highlighted the importance of the CR which came at a critical juncture in the building of socialism: “The current Great Cultural Revolution is an earthshaking event. Can we or do we dare undergo the test of socialism? This aims in the final analysis to wipe out classes and reduce the three great differences.”⁵⁷ In other words, in preventing the possible emergence of a new privileged class and gradually reducing all the inequalities inherited from the old society, the CR represented a crucial watershed in continuous revolution that would keep China on the socialist and communist road.

Roughly two months after Zheng Zhisi’s article in commemoration of the Paris Commune, some young instructors and staff members, including Nie Yuanzi in the Department of Philosophy in Beijing University put up a famous big-character poster entitled “What are Song Shuo, Lu Ping, and Peng Peiyun up to in the Cultural Revolution?” on May 25, 1966. The poster was later referred to as the first

⁵⁷ *Mao supports the Red Guards*, 21 July, 1966, in *The People’s Republic of China: 1949-1979, A Documentary Survey*, Vol. 3, p.1552, ed. Harold C. Hinton, Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1980. “Three great differences” (*san da chabie*) refer to the fact that there exists in socialist countries the difference between manual and mental laborers, between the city and the country, and between peasant and worker. The communists aim to eliminate these three major disparities.

Marxist-Leninist big-character poster.⁵⁸ In it, Nie and her colleagues openly criticized Beijing University's administration for suppressing students' active involvement in political struggles against the "advocates of capitalist rules" in the CCP. Parts of it read,

At present, the people of the whole nation, in a soaring revolutionary spirit which manifests their boundless love for the Party and Chairman Mao and their inveterate hatred for the sinister anti-Party, antisocialist gang, are making a vigorous and great cultural revolution; they are struggling to thoroughly smash the attacks of the reactionary sinister gang, in defense of the Party's Central Committee and Chairman Mao. But here in Beijing University the masses are being kept immobilized, the atmosphere is one of indifference and deadness, whereas the strong revolutionary desire of the vast number of the faculty members and students has been suppressed. What is the matter? What is the reason? There is something fishy going on. Let us take a look at what has happened very recently!

It took place after the publication on May 8 of the articles by He Ming and Kao Chu [Gao Ju] and the upsurge in the nationwide struggle to denounce the "Three-Family Village." On May 14, Lu Ping [President of Beijing University and Secretary of its Party Committee] hastily transmitted the "directive" issued by Sung Shih [Song Shuo, the deputy head of the department in charge of university affairs under the Beijing Municipal Party Committee] at an emergency meeting of the department. Sung Shih [Song Shuo] said that at present the movement badly needs a strengthened leadership and the Party organizations in the colleges are required to strengthen the leadership and stand fast at the posts. . . . Big meetings can in no way serve to completely discredit the anti-Party, antisocialist remarks and theoretically repudiate them. ... In case the angry masses demand that a big meeting be held, do not suppress them but guide them to hold small group meetings, study documents and write small-character posters.

Lu Ping and Peng Pei-yun [a cadre in the department in charge of university affairs under the Beijing Municipal Party Committee and Deputy Secretary of the Beijing University Party Committee] conducted the movement in Beijing University entirely in the same

⁵⁸ See *Peking Review*, No. 37, September 9, 1966.

vein. They said,

... It is not suitable for Beijing University to stick up big-character posters. . . . Big-character posters must not be encouraged; if the masses want to post them, actively guide them away.

Is this the line for the Cultural Revolution laid down by the Party's Central Committee and Chairman Mao? No, absolutely not! It is an out-and-out revisionist line that runs counter to the Party's Central Committee and to Mao Zedong's thought.

"This is an ideological struggle." "The anti-Party, antisocialist remarks have to be completely repudiated theoretically." "Persist in reasoning." This struggle "must be conducted in a very careful manner." What does all this mean? Can it be considered a theoretical problem? Is it all just remarks? Whither do you want to "guide" the life-and-death political struggle we are waging to counterattack the sinister anti-Party, antisocialist gang? Isn't it one of the main tactics of Deng Tuo and his instigators in resisting the Cultural Revolution to divert this serious political struggle to "purely academic" discussions? Why are you still doing things this way up to this moment? What kind of people are you actually?

"The masses, when they arise, need to be led onto the correct path." "Guide the movement toward a correct orientation in its development." "Only by energetically assuming the leadership can [the movement] be led to its normal development." "What is meant by "correct path"? What is meant by "correct orientation"? What is meant by "normal development"? You have "guided" the great political class struggle into a "purely theoretical" and "purely academic" trap. Not long ago, was it not you who personally "guided" the comrades of the law faculty to consult fifteen hundred volumes of books and material running to fourteen million characters to study the question concerning the "reversal of wrong verdicts" by Hai Rui? Was it not you who have given great publicity to this as "correct orientation and the right method," asking everybody to learn from this "good experience"? In actual fact, this is "good experience" which has all been created by you

and Deng Tuo and his sinister gang: and this is also the very essence of your talk that “the movement is healthy.” The Party’s Central Committee and Chairman Mao have long since shown us the correct path for the Cultural Revolution and its correct orientation. You say nothing about them and work out your own so-called “correct path” and “correct orientation” in the hope of drawing the revolutionary mass movement into your revisionist orbit. Frankly speaking, this is a vain hope!

“Big meetings can in no way serve to theoretically repudiate them.” “It is not suitable for Beida [Beijing University] to stick up big-character posters,” we “must guide them to hold small group meetings and write small-character posters.” Why are you so afraid of big-character posters and the holding of big denunciation meetings? To counterattack the sinister gang which has frantically attacked the Party, socialism, and Mao Zedong’s thought is a life-and-death class struggle. The revolutionary people must be fully aroused to vigorously and angrily denounce them, and to hold big meetings and put up big-character posters, is one of the best ways for the masses to do battle. By “guiding” the masses not to hold big meetings, not to put up big-character posters, and by creating all kinds of taboos, aren't you suppressing the masses' revolution, not allowing them to make revolution, and opposing their revolution? We will never permit you to do this!...⁵⁹

Even though this big-character poster by Nie and her colleagues itself did not mention the Paris Commune, Mao hailed it as “the declaration of the Chinese Paris commune of the sixties of the twentieth century. Its significance surpasses the Paris Commune. It is beyond us to write this kind of big-character poster.”⁶⁰ Why did Mao speak so highly of it, and why did Mao claim that he and his comrades could not compose it?

The reasons, I argue, lie in the different attitudes toward the idea of continuous

⁵⁹ Nieh Yuan-tzu and Others, *What Are Sung Shih, Lu Ping, and Peng Pei-yun Up To in the Cultural Revolution?* modified from *Peking Review*, No. 37, September 7, 1966.

⁶⁰ *Mao supports the Red Guards*, 21 July 1966, in *The People’s Republic of China: 1949-1979, A Documentary Survey*, Vol. 3, p.1552, ed. Harold C. Hinton, Scholarly Resources Inc. Wilmington, Delaware.

revolution from people with different backgrounds. Achieving victory and obtaining high positions, the once revolutionaries would not only distance themselves from the masses, but also incline to maintain the status quo, and they could not realize the necessity and importance of continuous revolution without new revolutionary stimulations. On the contrary, the masses, including low ranking officials, tend to feel the repression and injustice of the new hierarchical power structure. They were prone to the idea of continuous revolution and cried for changes. This might be the very hotbed of all kinds of social movements. The CR, without exception, found a large number of its supporters among the broad masses. In this sense, the CR was far from a revolution from above, as some scholars claim today or as described in David Kotz's narrative of the collapse of USSR.⁶¹ It was more a revolution from below, even though it was led by the active direction and strong support from the Maoists in the CCP leadership. I will elaborate on this point in the next chapter on the rise of Shanghai Commune.

If the Paris Commune marked the beginning of proletarian revolution, the CR then represented the continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to an authoritative, official biography of Mao Zedong, Mao in his late days summarized his whole life as having accomplished two great things,⁶² one was the victory over Japanese invaders and the Guomindang regime, and the other was the CR. Noticeably, Mao himself highly valued the CR and equated it to his great success, which no one can ignore even now, in winning the struggle of establishing an

⁶¹ See David Michael Kotz, Fred Weir *Revolution from Above: the Demise of the Soviet System*, Routledge, 1997.

⁶² *The Biography of Mao Zedong (Mao Zedong zhuan)*, Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji ed. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 2003, p. 1781.

independent China. The Paris Commune (like most other revolutions) was triggered by accumulated sufferings and miseries that the people could bear no longer, so that rebellion was their only choice. Centering on the practice of mass movements and the idea of continuous revolution, Mao's CR by contrast, aimed to tackle the difficult issue of the alienation of power in post-revolutionary societies in order to maintain the dynamics of a permanent revolutionary process. As argued above, almost without exception, veteran revolutionaries tend to become non-revolutionary or anti-revolutionary once power has been seized. They rapidly degenerate into the opposite of what they stand for. In this sense, the CR that Mao promoted was an unprecedented and spectacular, though hard, endeavor that attempted to re-activate the revolutionary potential and vibrancy in a post-revolutionary society. Compared with previous revolutions, Mao's continuous revolution nearly set up an impossible mission.

After the launch of the CR, the group of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping tried to limit the political and ideological struggles triggered by Yao Wenyuan's *A Critique of the New Historical Play*, *Hai Rui's Dismissal from Office* to the so-called academic discussions, which were in fact meant to defuse the CR. By emphasizing "reinforcing the leadership and sticking to one's post," the administration of Beijing University tried to suppress all oppositions expressed in posters written by revolutionary faculties and students. It refused not only to be subjected to the supervision of public opinions, but also to take responsibility for mistakes, even crimes, under their leadership.

Opposition to mass movements and the CR, to a great extent, was rooted deeply in the

political instinct of the bureaucracy. The poster by Nie Yuanzi, in this regard, pointed out incisively that power holders attempted to soften fierce political class struggles, and limit them to “pure theory” and “pure academics.” Replacing politics with “pure academics”, as Wang Hui suggested, was no more than a political action of de-politicization,⁶³ which manifested itself as a reaction that rejected theories and practices of the continuous revolution in the CR.

The big-character poster by Nie Yuanzi and her colleagues frightened the Liu-Dengists, as it clarified the nature of the CR as being political, rather than merely “cultural” or “academic”, and that the CR necessitated political participation of the masses rather than party bosses’ issuing directives and giving commands. Four days after Nie Yuanzi’s wall poster, the top leaders in Beijing, including Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, hastily decided to send in work teams to Beijing University and other places on May 29, 1966. What was Mao’s view of their decision? Mao, who was on a trip away from Beijing, agreed by phone to the idea of sending work teams, which was a long-standing CCP political tradition to mobilize the masses. But a vital difference between Mao and other major leaders existed in terms of how they viewed the role of work teams. For Mao, work teams were just tools for helping the masses to carry out revolution. If work teams hindered revolution, they should be disbanded without hesitation. After returning to Beijing from Southern China, Mao found that most work teams erred in their political line by not assisting and fostering the mass movement. In an evaluation of work teams, he said:

⁶³ See Wang, Hui, *Qu zhengzhi hua de zhengzhi (The Politics of De-Politicization)*, Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2008.

[Generally speaking,] Work teams hindered revolution. Yet there are still work teams that did not hinder revolution. If hindering revolution, the work teams will surely become reactionary. Take Xi'an Communication University for example, work teams there forbade people to call, to send representatives to the Center [in Beijing]. Why are they so scared of people's going to the Center? Let them [go and] surround the state council. It should be allowed in governmental documents for people to call the Center and send representatives [to Beijing]...⁶⁴

Obviously for Mao, the sending of work teams was not the essential issue.

What mattered was whether work teams helped the masses to make revolution or not.

According to his observation, nearly 90 percent of work teams in the CR neither struggled against capitalist roaders, nor reformed unreasonable things;⁶⁵ and he

believed that for Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, the purpose of sending work teams

was to suppress revolution and oppose the masses.⁶⁶ With this judgment Mao ordered

the withdrawal of almost all the work teams that had been sent out under the orders of

Liu and Deng. But there were some work teams that received praises by Mao for their

promotion of revolution at their stationed work-units (*danwei*), e.g., the work team

sent to the *People's Daily* and led by Chen Boda, the director of CCRG. But for Liu

Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, the dispatch of work teams was intended to suppress the

spreading wild fire of political dissension among the masses targeted power-holders

energetically persecuting political dissenters. As Liu Shaoqi admitted in a

self-criticism in October 1966,

⁶⁴ Mao, *Speech at a Meeting of CCP Secretaries of Large Regions and CCRG Members (zai huijian daqu shuji he zhongyang wenge xiaozu chengyuan de jianghua)*, July 22, 1966. from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.280, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

The rebel spirit of the proletarian class must be advocated. [At the time of sending work teams,] our way did not trust the masses, and did not encourage the masses to rise up in self-education and self-liberation. On the contrary I believed in the role of the work teams, and encouraged them to take over the work of mass movement. I feared chaos and extensive democracy. I feared the rising up of the masses and rebelling against us. I feared the appearance of counterrevolution on the stage....I made a mistake in judging the situation of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution at the time. I regarded the normal and inevitable defects of the mass movements as the reverse upsurge of anti-party, anti-socialist, and anti-proletarian dictatorship trends....⁶⁷

Work teams that were sent out and instructed by Liu-Dengists considered the current mass movement merely a new version of the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign, during which hundreds of thousands intellectuals were labeled as “rightists”, many of them just raising criticisms toward their direct party secretaries. Through his daughter Liu Pingping, Liu Shaoqi personally gave instructions to the work team that was sent out to the No.1 Middle School attached to Beijing Normal University, where his daughter studied. Liu Shaoqi said that in the range of the country, the enemies to be targeted should at least be 5 percent. But according to his daughter’s report of her school Liu Shaoqi said that enemies in this school could be far more than the baseline of 5 percent. Consequently, more than 90 percent of cadres in this school were labeled as “ghosts and monsters” and “black gangsters”. 77 percent of class advisers were struggled with. Many of them were forced to do “labor reform”. Some of them were even harshly beaten.⁶⁸ Deng Xiaoping also personally supervised the CR in the

⁶⁷ Liu Shaoqi's Self-criticism at the CCP CC Work Meeting (*Liu Shaoqi zai zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jiantao*), October 23, 1966, in *The People's Republic of China: 1949-1979, A Documentary Survey*, Vol. 3, pp.1622-1623, ed. Harold C. Hinton, Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1980.

⁶⁸ Xiao Xidong *The Fifty Days in 1966: The Politics of Memory and Oblivion (1966 nian de 50 tian: jiyi yu yiwang de zhengzhi)*, <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=17265>, cited 28 March, 2009.

middle school attended by his daughter Deng Rong. Deng Xiaoping set the targets of struggle at this school as ordinary students and teachers, even instructing people to struggle against the parents of targeted students.⁶⁹ Consequently, in the first fifty-odd days after the work teams were sent out, there were waves of “white terror” (Mao’s description) wildly striking the whole country. Work teams recklessly imposed control of the mass movement. Outspoken people were accused and labeled by work teams as “rightists”, “bogus leftists/true rightists” and even “counterrevolutionaries”. Many activists were in this way jailed or even compelled to commit suicide. According to statistics, in the first two months of the CR during “white terror”, 10,211 students were designated as “rightists” and 2591 teachers were designated as “counterrevolutionaries” by work teams at just 24 universities in Beijing (there are many more universities in Beijing) under the instructions of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.⁷⁰

This kind of political persecution was by no means just limited to Beijing. Take Wuhan for example. The earliest work team in the country— the Educational Revolution Group of Wuhan University, was set up in Wuhan, Hubei Province on April 18, 1966, one month before the official launch of the CR. At the time, Wang Renzhong, the first party secretary of Hubei Party Committee and the director of

⁶⁹ Deng Rong: *Dui Deng Xiaoping de jiefa (Disclosing Deng Xiaoping)*, in *Chedi qingsuan Deng Xiaoping zai wuchan jieji wenhua da geming zhong de taotian zuixing (Thoroughly Liquidate Deng Xiaoping’s Monstrous Crime In The GPCR)*, ed. by the 02621 Corps of New Beijing University Commune (xin beida gongshe), April 1967. In Deng Rong’s girls school, the vice-president Bian Zhongyun was the first teacher in the whole country beaten to death—this occurred on August 5, 1966 and was done by the Red Guards consisting mainly of children of high Party cadres. (There are also sources that attribute Bian’s death to some adults who did not get along with Bina, not Red Guards). At the time, the work team already left the girls school upon Mao’s order, but the work team formed a “Representative Committee of Revolutionary Teachers and Students” to take control of the school.

⁷⁰ Xiao Xidong *The Fifty Days in 1966: The Politics of Memory and Oblivion (1966 nian de 50 tian: jiyi yu yiwang de zhengzhi)*, <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=17265>, cited 28 March, 2009.

Hubei CR, claimed that the CR would be no more than a “Four Cleans Movement” between 1962 and 1966 plus a “Anti-Rightist Movement of 1957” and that the targets of this struggle should be intellectuals.⁷¹ Therefore, the work team leader sent to Wuhan University asserted that the CR would be a higher stage of the Anti-Rightist Movement. In line with this, the work team and its successor, the CR Committee of Wuhan University, branded 232 teachers and staff members as “black gangs” (*heibang*) and being part of the “black line” (*heixian*) within just four months. This represented 19% of the total 1,242 personnel on campus. 108 cadres ranking higher than the vice-secretaries of the Party branches and the deputy directors of teaching and research sections were relegated to “black gangs”, which accounted for 38.2 % of all cadres in the university. In the Chinese Department, 36 out of 63 staff, 18 out of 19 senior cadres and all 5 secretaries of the party branches were labeled as “black gangs” and being in the “black line”. Among the rest of the personnel in the department, many were reprimanded, forced to make self-criticism, dismissed from important positions or even were put under supervision and house arrest. In the university, more than 150 persons were deprived of voting rights and the right to be elected. The work team forced the targets of criticism and struggle to study Liu Shaoqi’s *How to be a Good Communist* (*lun gongchan dangyuan de xiuyang*), but refused them access to most Mao’s works. In addition, even though the CCP central committee issued a circular in forbidding the local authorities from reducing the wages of those being

⁷¹ *Thoroughly Criticizing the Bourgeois Reactionary Line of Wang Renzhong's Work Team on the Issue of Wuhan University's Cadres* (*Chedi pipan Wang Renzhong gongzuo zu zai Wuhan daxue ganbu wenti shang de zichan jieji fandong luxian*), in *East Is Red* (*dongfang hong*), ed. by The Third Headquarters of Red Guards in Wuhan Region, May 11, 1967.

struggled against, the work team in Wuhan University continued to reduce their wages for more than three months. The CR Committee of Wuhan University even sent more than 200 persons to the so-called “labor reform camp” set up by the work team.⁷² In the same city, Xiao Weiye, a young teacher at Moshuihu High School in Wuhan, together with some teachers and students, put up wall posters to disclose the suppression of student movement in June, 1966. The work team there quickly designated these young people as “counterrevolutionaries”. All the major activists in this high school were put in jail. Some of them were even sentenced to the death penalty, and the three youngest students aged 16 were sentenced to 3 or 5 years’ imprisonment.⁷³

In Lanzhou, the capital city of the western province of Gansu, under an atmosphere of ruthless struggles and merciless blows (*canku douzheng wuqing daji*), Zhang Chaoren, a student of Lanzhou University, was driven to suicide by throwing himself at a moving train. A female student Kuang X X jumped from a building, resulting in disabling injuries. Zhang Haiyan, a student in the Chinese department, was almost beaten to death. The scope of attacks in Lanzhou University accounted for 32.3% of the total 5,000 or so personnel on the whole campus.⁷⁴ In Xi’an Communication University of Shanxi Province, more than 300 cadres were dispatched to take control of the campus movement by the Shanxi Provincial Party

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Wang Renzhong’s *Crime of Suppressing Mass Movement: A Report of Jailing the Revolutionary Teachers and Students in Wuhan Moshuihu High School* (Wang Renzhong zhenya qunzhong yundong de zuixing: Wuhan Moshuihu zhongxue geming shisheng ruyi jishi), in the *Battle News of Criticizing Tao Zhu* (*pi tao zhanbao*), March 14, 1967.

⁷⁴ Lu Yanfu, *Tell the People the Historical Truth: The More Than Fifty Days’ White Terror in Lanzhou University at the Early Stage of the CR* (*Ba lishi zhenxiang gaosu renmin: wenge chuqi lanzhou daxue de wushi duo tian baise kongbu*), see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=6449>, cited on September 25, 2009.

Committee. The work team claimed that there was 10 to 15 % “ghosts and monsters” on campus. Under the ruthless suppressions of the powerful work team, 4 people committed suicide, and two of them died. The deceased were charged as “suicide with crimes” (*weizui zisha*) and hence branded by the work team as “counterrevolutionaries”.⁷⁵

Similar cases happened everyday in the entire country in the work-team-dominated period. Due to work teams’ ruthless persecution, cases of suicide were reported everywhere. Even though the post-CR regime never disclosed the statistics, the death toll caused by work team under the instruction of Liu-Dengists could be counted in tens of thousands. The persecution naturally widened the distance and caused grave tension between work teams and their targets, which unsurprisingly aroused people’s revolutionary ire toward work teams and their “behind-the-scenes bosses” in the top leadership of the CCP. Mao was so outraged by this suppression that he wrote a famous big-character poster to condemn the work teams and their instructors from the Center to the local authorities. It read,

China’s first Marxist-Leninist big character poster and Commentator’s article on it in *Renmin Ribao* (*People’s Daily*) are indeed superbly written! Comrades, please read them again. But in the last fifty days or so some leading comrades from the Center down to the local levels have acted in a diametrically opposite way. Adopting the reactionary stand of the bourgeoisie, they have enforced a bourgeois dictatorship and struck down the surging movement of the great cultural revolution

⁷⁵ See *Lofty Emotions were Expressed in Self-Sacrifice, so the Sun and Moon were Asked to Give a New Face to Heaven: On The Proletarian Rebel Action On June 6* (*weiyou xisheng duo zhuangzhi, ganjiao ri yue huan xintian: ji liuliu wuchan jieji zaofan xingdong*), in *Lofty Emotions were Expressed in Self-Sacrifice: Thoroughly Criticizing the Bourgeoisie Reactionary Line of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, Defending to the End The Proletarian Revolutionary Line Represented By Chairman Mao* (*weiyou xisheng duo zhuangzhi: chedi pipan liudeng zichan jieji fandong luxian, shisi hanwei yi maozhuxi wei dailbiao de wuchan jieji geming luxian*), compiled by the Cultural Revolution Committee of Xi’an Communication University, March 1967.

of the proletariat. They have stood facts on their head and juggled black and white, encircled and suppressed revolutionaries, stifled opinions differing from their own, imposed a white terror, and felt very pleased with themselves. They have puffed up the arrogance of the bourgeoisie and deflated the morale of the proletariat. How poisonous! Viewed in connection with the Right deviation in 1962 and the wrong tendency of 1964 which was 'Left' in form but Right in essence, shouldn't this make one wide awake?⁷⁶

By terming the work team stage as "white terror", Mao differentiated himself from Liu-Dengists on the issue of how to run the CR. For Mao, to actively support the mass movement on its own initiatives was to serve the interests of proletariat. In an opposite way, Liu-Dengists' plan of running the CR never included extensive mobilization of the broadest masses. Even though it was hard for the Party bureaucrats to control the situation singlehandedly, the Liu-Dengists would mobilize some loyalist masses to fight against rebel masses. Paradoxically, the Liu-Dengists' vigorous suppression of the mass movement actually demonstrated that the big-character poster by Nie Yuanzi and others was necessary, very much in line with Mao's idea of mass movements and the conceptualization of continuous revolution. The suppression of the mass movement by Liu-Dengists precisely confirmed the belief by the Maoist leadership that capitalist roaders did in fact exist within the party. The protests of Nie Yuanzi and her colleagues, the masses' desire to participate in the movements were vivid manifestations of the peoples' power to fight against the revisionist line in the party in the eyes of the Maoist leadership. That is why Mao Zedong highly praised Nie Yuanzi and her fellow rebels. When talking to two communist theoreticians Chen Boda and Ai Siqi in Dec. 1965, Mao once argued:

⁷⁶ *Mao Zedong, Bombard the Bourgeois Headquarters—My Big-Character Poster*, in *Peking Review*, No. 33, August 11, 1967

Political work must follow mass line. It will not work to merely depend on leaders. How can you handle so many things? You can not see a lot of things. You can only see some things. Therefore, it is necessary to mobilize everybody to take responsibility. Let everybody speak, agitate and criticize. Everyone has eyes and mouths. Let them see and speak. Let the masses take care of their own affairs. This is democracy. Here are two lines: one is to depend on individual leaders, another is to mobilize the masses to take care of things. Our politics is democratic politics of the masses. The masses, instead of a few people, should rule. It is a must to mobilize everybody to speak. Since everybody has a mouth, he should take two responsibilities: one is to eat while another is to speak. In the face of bad things and bad styles [of work], he should speak and shoulder the fighting responsibility. Without the Party's leadership, or merely depending on individual leaders, surely we can not do things well. We must depend on the Party and all the comrades, rather than individual leaders, to handle things. We need to mobilize the masses. It is necessary to foster an atmosphere under which the masses hold responsibility and speak. For the above, depend on the Party's leadership; for the below, depend on the broadest masses. Only in this way could things be well done. ⁷⁷

Obviously, Mao believed in the superiority of democratic politics of the masses, and regarded the mobilization of the masses under the leadership of the Party as the best way to realize democratic politics. As he clarified, "I'm not Mao Zedong again if I do not promote mass movements." "The mass movement is necessary in all work. Things won't go without the mass movement."⁷⁸ For him, in face of the deepening bureaucratization of the Chinese state apparatus up to 1966, only great mass movements, such as the CR, could keep the Chinese revolution afloat dynamically. And the veteran revolutionaries could make new contributions for the people. Similarly, a party was hardly a communist party any more if it did not support

⁷⁷ Mao Zedong, *Talk to Chen Boda, Ai Siqi and Other Comrades in Hangzhou (Zai Hangzhou yu Chen Boda Ai Siqi deng tongzhi de tanhua)*, Dec. 21, 1965, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.249, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

⁷⁸ *Peking Review*, No. 30, p.6. July 27, 1973.

and carry out mass movements. Liu Shaoqi, together with Deng Xiaoping, in this sense, were not true communists any more when they deviated from the mass line and tried to suppress mass movements in the early stage of the CR. Liu Shaoqi told his children: “I have no experience of running a movement in this fashion under socialism; nor have I ever in the past come across our party using this form of rectification.”⁷⁹ Liu’s explanation here was a mere excuse; the key was not about experiences of leaders, but about whether or not leaders should follow the mass line.

Characterizing the big-character poster as a manifesto of a Chinese Paris Commune in the sixties of the twentieth century also revealed the enormous significance of the Paris Commune model for Mao Zedong Thought. In fact, many theoretical breakthroughs and practical creations manifested as “socialist new things” that took shape during the CR era (1966-1976), could, in one way or another, be traced back or related to the Paris Commune.

Conceptualizing the transformation, defense and advancement of socialism as continuous revolution centering on mass movements, Mao not only further developed the principles of the Paris Commune, but also laid a firm philosophical foundation for the CR, thus paving the way for further explorations and creations in theory and practice. Upon such a theoretical foundation, we can now move on to concrete aspects in the CR that echoed the Paris Commune of nearly one century earlier.

⁷⁹ Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p.63, 2006.

The Sixteen Points: Call for Modeling upon the Paris

Commune

Mao's "Bombard the Headquarters—My Big-Character Poster" was released among top leaders of the CCP in Zhongnanhai, Beijing on August 5, 1966. In this poster, Mao mainly accused the Liu-Dengists of making "white terror" among the masses, and the historical Rightists deviations conducted by Liu-Dengists in 1962 and 1964. Under its influence, the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (which lasted 12 days from August 1st to 12th and included representatives from the Red Guard) finally adopted an official program for the CR on August 8. This is "The Decision of the CCP Central Committee Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", which later came to be generally known as *The Sixteen Points*.

Succinctly, this "16-point Guideline" touched on fundamental issues of how the CR should be carried out and what its significance was. It clarified the targets of the revolution in Point 5: "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution and it is likewise a question of the first importance for the great Cultural Revolution."⁸⁰ Yet as Mao acknowledged later during the CR, there was no easy answer to this question. It is easier in war time to identify who the enemies and friends are, he said, but during peace time such as the 1960s in China, it is tough to tell who is who. Actually, it was right on this foremost

⁸⁰ *Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Adopted on August 8, 1966)*, in *Peking Review*, Vol. 9, No.33, Aug.1966.

important issue that the so-called seemingly monolithic “Maoists”, including Liu-Dengists, who claimed they had always been loyal to Mao’s revolutionary line, fell into different camps during the CR – even though all of those who attended the Eleventh Plenum on August 1966, including Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, approved the Sixteen Points at the meeting. For the genuine Maoists who were in favor of the CR as a large-scale class struggle, the main targets in this movement should be persons in authority who sympathized with the capitalist mode of production and management. This was a significant difference from the Anti-Rightist Movement in the late 1950s. As *The 16-point Guideline* states: “The main target of the present movement is those within the Party who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road.” But other party bureaucrats, i.e., Liu-Dengists, basically had the view that the CR was no more than another round or rounds of the “anti-rightist movement”. With regard to the ongoing CR, similarly, the main targets for them, were different than what had been identified by Mao and his adherents. The main targets for the Liu-Dengists were the five categories of already-designated people in previous political movements, namely, (former) landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists, or to use Maoists’ terms, the “dead tigers.” These were people that were deprived of certain economical and political rights after 1949 and hence considered no major threats to socialism. To put it another way, Liu-Dengists maintained that the main targets of struggle in the CR should be directed to the “dead tigers” who mostly existed outside the party, while the Maoists saw the main targets as within the party, especially those who were in power

and deviated from the socialist line. Judged from the different political performances in the 17 years before the CR, these divergences were not only unavoidable, but also prefigured complicated developments, conflicts and struggles that were to develop later.

Even though Liu Shaoqi faced fierce criticisms from his colleagues and had to make some self-criticism after Mao released his “Bombard The Headquarters—My Big-Character Poster”— that directly condemned Liu’s capitalist policies from 1962 to 1966 and the “white terror” persecutions of common people and cadres in the first months of the CR— Liu’s political influence remained strong among CCP cadres who had similar views. In fact, *the 16-point Guideline*, to some extent, represented a compromise between the Maoists and Liu-Dengists in the central committee of CCP. Nevertheless, at the same time, the Maoists and Liu-Dengists began to identify a different target for the struggles that would continue to intensify in later days of the CR. For example, it could be discerned from the text that the objective of the CR was not only “to struggle against and crush those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road,” but also “to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic ‘authorities’ and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes.” “Concentrate all forces to strike at the handful of ultra-reactionary bourgeois Rightists and counter-revolutionary revisionists.”⁸¹ That is to say, the Maoists and Liu-Dengists agreed that both power-holders taking the capitalist road and the reactionary bourgeois academic ‘authorities’ should be struggled against (conducted

⁸¹ Ibid.

by reasoning, not by coercion or force). But as the CR advanced, the Liu-Dengists mainly struggled against the so-called “reactionary bourgeois scholar despots and ‘authorities’” and the defiant masses who were mostly outside the Party. Sometimes non-intellectual middle-lower cadres within the party were also singled out as scapegoats for mass struggle in order to protect higher ranking bureaucrats. In sharp contrast, the Maoist rebels mainly struggled against the so-called “persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road.” Since those in authority naturally had more organized political, economic and military power, the Maoist activists usually suffered the most during the CR. Furthermore, some Liu-Dengist officials even thought the main purpose of the CR was merely to transform Chinese educational system just as the name of “cultural revolution” implied. The main targets therefore were non-communist intellectuals in the education system. This view was partly manifested in the article 10 “Educational Reform” of the 16-point guideline, that says “to transform the old educational system and the old principles and methods of teaching” was “a most important task.”⁸² In other words, the Liu-Dengists tended to treat “a most important task” as *the* most important task of the CR.

Among *The 16-point Guideline*, article 9 “Cultural Revolutionary Groups, Committees and Congresses” clearly called for modeling on the Paris Commune. Article 9 in effect defined the nature and features of the proposed new Commune, which might be the first and last call to promote the Paris Commune model in official CCP decisions after 1949. Let us now take a close look at this and dwell on its

⁸² Ibid.

far-reaching significance.

Firstly, just as article 4 emphasized “let the masses educate themselves in the movement”, the Maoists who had long been dissatisfied with the old state apparatus since it had become, more or less, a tool for capitalist restoration, wished that the masses could envision and find a wholly new form of state structure modeled on the Paris Commune through participation of the current movement. They also hoped that this new form of state could empower the masses so as to prevent capitalist restoration initiated by some of those who were power holders. They declared that they finally found what they wanted in the sixteen-point guidance after experimenting in the first three months of the CR. Article 9 stated that many socialist new things “of great historic importance”⁸³ already emerged, including but not limited to the cultural revolutionary groups, committees and other organizational forms.

Secondly, these cultural revolutionary groups, committees and congresses were not just “organs of power of the proletarian cultural revolution”, but also “excellent new forms of organization whereby under the leadership of the Communist Party the masses are educating themselves.” Why did the masses need to educate themselves? From the viewpoints of the Maoist leadership, the political and class consciousness of the masses was by no means mature. They were highly worried about issue of the successors of the revolution as the masses were not well prepared for potential political counter-strikes. In this regard, the CR could be seen as a movement for cultivating revolutionary successors. Mao repeatedly emphasized

⁸³ *Ibid.*

before and after the launch of the CR that class struggle should be the main course for everyone in favor of socialism and communism to learn from, and that the CR was meant to be a kind of military exercise and maneuver for possible class warfare in the future. For the extensive outburst of armed struggles around the whole country later on, on the one hand, Mao was basically not in favor of the armed struggle as a method of struggle in the CR, but when it occurred, Mao saw it as a good thing to some extent as “We don’t have war experience for more than ten years...it is also an exercise.”⁸⁴ Only by bravely facing and challenging the fierce storm of class struggle, could the masses raise and refine their political and class consciousness, and could the working class advance from the state of “in-itself” to “by-itself”, to use Marx’s terms. A more democratic commune-type state structure could take shape amid the storm of class struggle.

Thirdly, in the official guideline of the CR, even though the new forms of the organs of the masses could wield power to carry out the CR, they could never replace the Party. Rather, the Party should lead those mass organs. Since the mass organs should be subject to the Party leadership, they were by no means totally independent organs. At best, they were semi-independent and semi-autonomous. The cultural revolutionary groups, committees, and the mass organization as a whole functioned as channels that mediated between the masses and the Party. On the one hand, they could determine their own cultural, economic, political, even military (with the Party’s permission) activities, and express their own concerns toward the Party and request

⁸⁴ Mao Zedong, Mao zhuxi zhongyao zhishi (Chairman Mao’s Important Instructions), in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC). Vol. 13, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988, p.488.

responses from it. On the other hand, it could collect diverse opinions from the mass organs and act directly upon the mass' interests as long as they do not violate socialist principles, i.e. be against socialism and communism. In order to realize the CCP's long-cherished "mass line" with a mass perspective— "from the masses, to the masses," the mass organs were viewed as complementary to the Party. Therefore the cultural revolutionary groups, committees, and the mass organization as a whole were more efficient in fighting against the party bosses' commandism than the former local party branches or organizations directly led by the Party, such as women's unions, the communist youth league, workers' unions before the CR.

Fourthly, these cultural revolutionary groups, committees and congresses, as organs of power of the proletarian Cultural Revolution should not be temporary but permanent and standing mass organizations. They should be established not only in colleges, schools, various levels of government and other organizations, but also for factories, mines, other enterprises, urban districts and villages. That is, they should be established throughout the country. Moreover, the Paris Commune style general elections should be applied in order to form such mass organs:

It is necessary to institute a system of general elections, like that of the Paris Commune, for electing members to the cultural revolutionary groups and committees and delegates to the cultural revolutionary congresses. The lists of candidates should be put forward by the revolutionary masses after full discussion, and the elections should be held after the masses have discussed the lists over and over again.

Similar to stipulations practiced by the Paris Commune, article 9 stated that all elected committee members were subject to be replaced or recalled if necessary.

Last but not the least, article 9 states:

The cultural revolutionary groups, committees and congresses in colleges and schools should consist mainly of representatives of the revolutionary students. At the same time, they should have a certain number of representatives of the revolutionary teaching staff and workers.

Clearly, various powers in favor of the CR on this principle should participate in the power organs and share power. At the time the 16-point guideline was issued, the armed forces had yet to participate in the CR. In colleges and schools, the first experimental fields for carrying out the CR, therefore, a kind of “two-in-one” sharing schema, which consisted of revolutionary students and teaching staff and workers, was arranged in line with the 16-point guideline. This is more or less a rudimentary form of the later “three-in-one” combination power structure that Mao personally approved. As the armed forces entered into the CR, their role was bound to be crucial. Eventually, the “two-in-one” combination arrangement would be replaced by the “three-in-one” combination, within which the army was often a major player in the triple arrangement that also involved representatives from the masses and veteran cadres who were still “revolutionary”. As for the armed forces, the 16-point guideline gave only one simple sentence in article 15. It merely states that participation of the armed forces in the CR “should be carried out in accordance with the instructions of the Military Commission of the Central Committee and the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army.”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Merely judged from this text, the armed forces, a key player of the CR since the beginning of 1967, appeared to be pretty hastily prepared, or almost unprepared, for the coming storm in which they would be deeply embroiled. It could also be attributed to a suggestion that at that time, the Maoist group in the top leadership had no clear

A careful reading of article 9 also revealed compromises or different interpretations between the Maoists and Liu-Dengists on the role of the existing CR committees. Although this article claimed that these cultural revolutionary groups and committees were formed on the initiative of the masses, this was far from the complete story. As can be seen, before Mao returned to Beijing from his trip in the southern provinces at the end of July, the CR had already been carried out throughout the country for more than two months under direct and active guidance of the Liu-Dengists. On June 3, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping sent out work teams to major colleges and middle schools to tame—or more precisely—suppress the political momentum of the masses. According to many memoirs available today, most of such cultural revolutionary groups and committees were in fact established under the guidance of and with full support from persons in authority—in many cases, work teams. For example, Lu Yanfu, a low ranking cadre who followed the Liu-Dengists line at the early stage of the CR and a *xiaoyangpai* (bystander) after the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP in August 1966, recollected:

At the beginning of June 1966, the Gansu Provincial Party Committee sent a work group (*gongzuozu*) to Lanzhou University. On June 7, 1966, students with different positions put up posters debating the role of the University Party Committee. The work group supported one faction and suppressed another.... Some suppressed students sent a telegram to the Center to report the situation....For fear that the students would demonstrate on the street, the Gansu Provincial Party Committee formed a [bigger] work team (*gongzuotuan*) this

strategy and tactics on how to push the CR forward with regard to the army. Miscalculation about the function of the army in the CR was inevitable. In fact, this was an Achilles' heel of the CR.

night....By morning of June 8, the work team repeatedly broadcasted that all people who orally opposed the work group, or sent telegrams to Beijing, would be designated as counter-revolutionaries. White terror reigned on campus....After stationing at the campus, the work team started to form the Cultural Revolution Committee. At first it was called as the Leading Group, later it was renamed as the Preparatory Committee of the Lanzhou University Cultural Revolution Committee. All departments, sections and offices established corresponding organizations.⁸⁶

Even though some of the cultural revolutionary groups and committees were publicly elected, their candidates were more or less subject to the censorship or at least acquiescence of work teams or people in power who had close tie with the work teams. Very often, the chosen candidates were willingly cooperative activists, who were usually members of the Party or the Communist Youth League and from cadres' families. Most of them were sturdy supporters of work teams and the hierarchical state structure. They were accordingly labeled as "loyalists" and "conservatives" by the rebels later. Thus, these cultural revolutionary groups and committees in 1966 were actually official or semi-official entities mainly mediating between the conservative activists and the party branches or work teams. They served the CR's general strategies and tactics mapped out by Liu-Dengists in the Central Committee of

⁸⁶ Lu Yanfu, *Tell the People the Historical Truth: The More Than Fifty Days' White Terror in Lanzhou University at the Early Stage of the CR* (*Ba lishi zhenxiang gaosu renmin: wenge chuqi lanzhou daxue de wushi duo tian baise kongbu*), see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=6449>, cited on September 25, 2009. The manipulation of the election of CR committees by work teams was a popular practice at that time. Shen Ruhuai, one of the most adamant leaders of the pro-establishment Red Guard faction "April 14" (*siyaosi*) in Qinghua University of Beijing, who had been the party secretary of his class before the CR, recounts: "On June 9, 1966, the new Beijing Municipal Party Committee sent a huge work team consisting of 513 persons, which was led by Ye Lin [yet actually controlled by Wang Guangmei, the wife of the state chairman Liu Shaoqi]. Upon the arrival of the team, the cadres at all levels of the University Party Committee were dismissed from their positions. The work team, replacing the University Party Committee to function, led the CR in the campus. ...The work team established CR Committees in all departments and appointed corresponding Committee members. Naturally, those students actively opposing Jiang [Jiang Naxiang, the president of Qinghua University], who were children of high Party cadres, became the reliable objects of the work team and the CR Committees' members. A daughter of a high official was given responsibility in my class while the original Communist Youth League and the Class Committee stopped running. I myself was pushed aside, too....The work team was so ruthless as to brand more than 700 students as "counter-revolutionaries" [within several days]." See Shen Ruhuai, *CR in Qinghua University: An Autobiography of a Red Guard Leader* (*Qinghua daxue wenge jishi: yige hongweibing lingxiu de zishu*), Hongkong: Shidai yishu chubanshe, 2004.

the CCP. All of them generally endorsed the pre-CR order that benefited them most.

In this regard, how could these kinds of cultural revolutionary groups and committees be models for the new Paris Commune style power organs? Furthermore, even if they were free of any pressures from work teams or the local party branches, was there any possibility of electing cultural revolutionary groups or committees that sincerely embraced the theory and practice of continuous revolution? Under the general political environment of a party cult at that time, this was quite questionable. From the beginning of the CR, the rebels were always in the minority. Even though Maoist leaders repeatedly called for rebellion against the old state apparatus, in practice, it was still difficult if not impossible for the rebels to recruit enough people to outnumber the so-called conservative masses. In places where the rebels formed the majority, almost without exception, they were hampered by infighting among sub-factions of the rebels partially due to the powerful influence of power-holders. The realization of a new Paris Commune-style general election, indeed, suggested a real dilemma for the Maoist leadership.

But at least at the time of issuing the 16-point guideline, Maoist leaders in Beijing still hoped that the majority of the masses would come to their side. For them, a given organizational form could be used as a tool for both non-revolutionary and revolutionary purposes. Although many cultural revolutionary groups and committees at the early stage of the CR had become tools for party bureaucrats to resist and suppress the revolution before the issuance of the 16-point guideline, the stipulation of article 9 still conveyed a clear message to the masses who were unprecedentedly

and actively participating in this great political movement. It was a message about what the future state should look like, and how the future power system should be structured and formulated. Never before in Chinese history was the direction of the future literally put in the hands of the masses. Moreover what was put in the hands of the masses at the same time was the struggle for the right to interpret and practice the Paris Commune model, along with the struggle for the right to interpret and practice the so-called cult of personality toward Mao,⁸⁷ the incarnation of revolution. The underlying linchpin was class struggle, with which the class and political consciousness of the proletariat could be promoted and grow mature. For many people involved in this unprecedented heaven-storming mass movement, this was a life-or-death battle. Only when the rebels won the class struggle against advocates of capitalist practices in the Party and the conservative, i.e., as yet class-unconscious masses, could the building of a new Paris Commune in China become a reality. Otherwise it would be inevitably postponed, regardless of the wishes of its initiators. Just as Marx pointed out with regard to the Paris Commune that “apart from the fact that this was merely the rising of a city under exceptional conditions, the majority of the Commune was in no way socialist, nor could it be. With a modicum of common-sense, however, it could have reached a compromise with Versailles useful to the whole people – the only thing that could be attained at the time.”⁸⁸ Before material conditions and matured class consciousness were ready, it was impossible for

⁸⁷ See Maurice J. Meisner *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism: Eight Essays* chapter 6: *The cult of Mao Tse-tung*, pp.155-183, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

⁸⁸ *Marx to F. Domela-Nieuwenhuis, February, 22, 1881*, from *Marx/Engels Collected Works (MECW)*, Volume 46, p.65, New York: International Publishers, 1968.

a democratic Paris Commune type power organ to survive.

Proletarian Dictatorship, General Election and the Paris Commune

Signaled by the 16-point program, the Paris Commune was finally and officially put on the stage of history in the CR. Right after the curtain fell on the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP, the Party's theoretical organ the *Red Flag* released a short yet important article entitled "*the General Election System of the Paris Commune*" by Liu Huiming (which seemed to be a pen name) on August 21, 1966, which intentionally elaborated article 9 of the *16-point Guidance* and touched on crucial issues concerning the ongoing events.

This article reaffirmed Marx's theme that the Paris Commune fundamentally negated all the previous state power, stood squarely opposed to all the previous state machines, and enabled "the masters of society" to be "people's servants." This in effect, as I mentioned before, conveyed the Maoists' discontent toward the pre-CR state machinery. Bold and clear, it was more or less a negation of the ways that formed and structured the pre-CR state machine. From the very beginning of the history of commune after liberation in 1949, whether it was the people's communes in rural areas from 1958 onward, or the defunct people's communes in cities that were modeled after their rural counterparts, or the proposed commune model during the CR, the Maoist leadership always regarded communes as, so to speak, semi-autonomous units and tools for the broad masses to realize their democratic rights. To quote a

Maoist saying, the commune was the golden bridge to communism. This was consistent with Mao's dialectics of centralized and decentralized power structure. The somewhat decentralized Commune-type entities complemented and balanced the shortcomings of the Soviet system characterized by heavily centralized power structure. During the Great Leap Forward, most rural communes were warmly welcomed by peasants and cadres. But things always varied over space and time. In areas with a longer history of Democratic Revolution, the masses had a better understanding of their democratic rights and worked more successfully with the newly-established communes in production and in political activities. Relationships among the state, the party, and the local communes, and the masses usually ran smoothly. But in areas where the Democratic Revolution tradition had been shorter, very often, the masses did not take active initiative, and local Liu-Dengist party bosses dominated. The communes there usually did not function well enough to serve as efficient democratic tools. Tensions between the state, the party, and local communes grew continuously. As a result, tragedies such as starvation, given the conditions of low productivity in China at that time, inevitably happened in some areas controlled by Liu-Dengist bureaucrats. In fact, during the initial phase of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, Mao even tried to propagate the commune model for the whole of country, not just limited to the rural areas as a negation of the old state machinery and a way of empowering the masses. Nevertheless, due to the partial setbacks of the Great Leap Forward in the following years and the low level of democratic consciousness of the masses in many places—or using Maoists

terminology, due to the sabotage of class enemies— Mao had to temporarily give up this idea. In the mid 60s, the Maoist leadership made up their mind to promote the Paris commune model throughout the entire country in a storm of intensive class struggle. “They are suitable not only for colleges, schools and government and other organizations, but generally also for factories, mines, other enterprises, urban districts and villages.” (*The 16-point program, article 9*) It attempted to limit and reduce the power of the state and the party, but extended the power of communes as semi-autonomous, democratic power organs.

As discussed before, after the establishment of the PRC, the first constitution was released in 1954, among which the first article stated that China was a “people’s democratic state led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.” In the preamble of this constitution, China was designated as executing “people’s democratic dictatorship.” But after the completion of socialist transformation in all spheres of Chinese society, and especially with the launch of the Great Leap Forward, there was an imminent drive within and outside the Party to advance China from people’s democratic dictatorship to the dictatorship of the proletariat. This signified by no means only a nominal shift. But many cadres in the party lagged behind or were not willing to continue the revolution. They even overtly or covertly opposed Maoists’ advancements. As a result, the tense two line struggle in the party made the CR inevitable. Maoists’ efforts toward this goal culminated in 1975 when the second version of the Chinese constitution stipulated, in its first article, that China was “a socialist state of the dictatorship of the proletariat led by the

working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.” This was a telling manifestation and logical result of Mao’s theories and practices of continuous revolution. Seen along this vein, Liu Huiming’s article “The General Election System of the Paris Commune” represented an effort to call for this great transformation. In negating the old people’s democratic dictatorship, it aimed to vigorously mobilize the masses to realize proletarian power in this historical conjuncture. Hence, when discussing the Paris Commune, Liu’s article put much emphasis upon the nature of the Paris Commune’s proletarian dictatorship.

The Paris Commune model featuring “general elections” played a pivotal role in Mao’s drama of continuous revolution. How did the Paris Commune manage to maintain its proletarian dictatorship? Differing from Zheng Zhisi’s stress on the revolutionary violent power-seizure, Liu Huiming paid attention to the role of “general election” in line with the Paris Commune legacy, aiming at elaborating article 9 of the “Sixteen-point Guidance”. Liu argued that “in order to guarantee its proletarian nature and to realize its function of proletarian dictatorship, the Paris Commune created and conducted a general election, which was of historical significance.” Before the CR, the legitimacy of PRC state power was not really in question, because never before were Chinese people’s democratic rights realized so deeply and broadly. Many positions, especially at grass-root levels, such as factories, schools, urban districts and villages, were directly elected by the masses. Nevertheless, there was still a problem in terms of political participation by the broad masses. The Paris Commune stipulated that all leaders should be elected by the people. Then how

about the Chinese state apparatus? Even though many cadres took office through elections for positions in the government and the party, a good number of the candidates were nominated by the party. Moreover, many positions were directly appointed by the Party. There was a need to unite the national bourgeoisie and non-communists to participate in the establishment of the new China. For example, many Democrats and bourgeois forces, even former Guomindang leftists were nominated and elected as ministers in various state departments. Election procedures, in that case, were to some extent a kind of political formality since candidates were in fact “pre-selected” by the CCP which made strategic adjustments, such as not having competitive candidates for a given position in order to guarantee the final election results. When a cadre was chosen and appointed directly by his leaders, he tended to (even though not always) estrange himself from the masses and just feel responsible to his leaders – which could lead to being a supporter of a hierarchical capitalist restoration. Such phenomena sometimes caused a good many complaints from the masses.

Consequently, some of the supposed “people’s servants”, faced with the bureaucratization of the state apparatus, gradually degenerated into “masters of society”, transforming themselves from communist revolutionaries to advocates of revisionism and capitalist rule so as to protect their own privileged interests. To learn from the Paris Commune meant learning how to prevent the “servants” from becoming “masters” of the society. Inspired by the spirit of the Paris Commune and armed with the theoretical weapon of continuous revolution, Maoist writers such as Liu Huiming

under the authorization of the Maoist leadership called for a real “general election” aimed at “smashing the old state machinery” entirely and seizing power for the proletariat for the first time in China. For quite a while during the CR, the “general election” was regarded by many Maoists as a key link to recapture and restore proletarian dictatorship. But ironically, the call for “general election” was also used by conservative forces that were usually in the majority, as a weapon to oppose the CR and its supporters. For example, Li Hongshan, a Red Guard in Beijing Forestry Institute, claimed that the CCRG was illegal as it had not been elected and did not therefore have the legitimacy of the electoral process.⁸⁹

In 1930, which was a difficult time in the Red Army era, Mao Zedong – in responding to Lin Biao’s doubts about the future of Chinese revolution – was positive that a high tide of revolution would come. Judging the revolutionary situation at that time, Mao wrote confidently and vividly that, “It is like a ship far out at sea whose masthead can already be seen from the shore; it is like the morning sun in the east whose shimmering rays are visible from a high mountain top; it is like a child about to be born moving restlessly in its mother’s womb.”⁹⁰ Yet would Mao and his followers in 1966 have the same confidence about the long-expected Chinese Paris Commune? Would the Maoists’ theoretical visions be fully carried out in the CR? Are actual practices consistent with the original framework? Were there any organizational creations that came out of the initiatives of the mass, and if so, what were they? What

⁸⁹ *Dadao fangeming xiaotoumu Li Hongshan* (Bring down the Reactionary Little Head Li Hongshan), in *Jinggangshan*, December 19, 1966, ed. by *Beijing Shifan daxue Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing jinggangshan zhandou tuan*.

⁹⁰ *A Single Spark Can Start A Prairie Fire*, (January 5, 1930) in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Vol. 1, p.127. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1975.

lessons could we learn from the practices of the new Paris Commune in China? The answers are blowing in the wind. Let me now move on to actual historical practices in the CR, specifically, the formation of Shanghai Commune at the end of 1966 and the beginning of 1967.

Chapter Four: The Road to the Shanghai January Revolution

A So-called “Paris Commune-Style Election” at Shanghai No.17 Textile Mill¹

After the pass of the “Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” on May 16, 1966, the first wave of the CR surged throughout China. The first battlefield was set on the campuses. On May 25, seven young instructors and staff people in the Philosophy Department at Peking University put up the first big-character poster, which was hailed by Mao Zedong as “the declaration of the Chinese Paris commune of the sixties of the twentieth century.” Mao stated that, “Its significance surpasses the Paris Commune,”² because it revealed the chilling reality that party bureaucrats had actually been attempting to put out the fast-spreading wildfire of the CR. In response to this, Mao personally ordered that this big-character poster be broadcast nationwide on June 1, 1966. And this greatly encouraged all the potential activists, not only on the campuses, but also in factories, various levels of government, urban districts, and villages.

¹ The materials in this section are mainly based on two pamphlets: “Disclose the Capitalist Reactionary Line of the Municipal Work Team led by Shi Huizhen” (*Jielu yi Shi Huizhen weishou de shiwei gongzuodui de zichan jieji fandong luxian*), by the Fighting Team (*zhandou dui*) of Loyal to Mao’s Thought Forever in the No. 17 Textile Mill, published in December 8th, 1966; “The Revolutionary Locomotive in the ‘Red Stronghold’: On the First Six Communists Who Stood Out from the Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill” (*Hongse baolei li de geming huochetou: ji guomian shiqi chang zuizao sha chu lai de liuge gongchan dangyuan*).

² *Mao supports the Red Guards*, 21 July 1966, *The People’s Republic of China: 1949-1979, A Documentary Survey*, Vol. 3, p.1552, Ed. Harold C. Hinton, Scholarly Resources Inc. Wilmington, Delaware.

Amid the storm of the Red Guard movement, the majority of the rank-and-file workers were not fully involved in the first wave of the CR. But along with six other workers, Wang Hongwen, who later became one of the key rebel leaders in Shanghai, grasping the historical significance of Mao's earnest call for a new revolution, were among the first to be fully involved in the Cultural Revolution. Wang, a veteran of the Korean War, had been working at the Shanghai's No. 17 Textile Mill for ten years, first as a maintenance worker (*baoquangong*) and then as the factory's security chief. On June 12, 1966, inspired by Nie Yuanzi and her colleagues' wall poster, the 7 rebels at No. 17 Textile Mill put up a big-character poster entitled "See through the Make-ups of the Party Branch to Get the Truth Out" in the factory. Putting out the slogan of "bringing down the bourgeois authorities, uprooting the deep-rooted old revisionism!" in this poster, Wang and his comrades accused Zhang Heming, the vice-secretary of the factory's party branch³, of "revisionism," offering a good deal of evidence to question the old party committee: "why do you avoid class struggle like the plague? Doesn't your revisionist line of cadres intend to pave the way for capitalism? Where do you want to lead our whole factory with eight thousand workers?" Like a heavy bomb that broke through the once murky silence, this big-character poster hit right at the heart of the party committee. Zhang Heming and his men were so scared that they hurried to lay siege to Wang Hongwen and his comrades trying to divide and demoralize them, following and spying on them. Using all of their resources and power, they tried their best to stamp out the flames kindled

³ Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill had no party secretary at that time, and the vice-secretary Zhang Heming was the top leader at the factory.

by the big-character poster.⁴ Late on the night of June 19, Zhang Heming and his trusted aides broke into and rummaged through the office where Wang and his two comrades were composing other posters. This later became known as “the June 19 incident”. The next day, June 20, they besieged Wang Hongwen and branded him and the cosigners of the poster as “the Petofi club”, calling them counterrevolutionaries and accusing them of intending to initiate an “armed uprising” similar to that of Hungry in 1956.⁵ They even demanded that fire engines be ready and had raw cotton storehouses closely watched and warded, as if faced with a formidable foe. The factory authorities considered everybody who came close to Wang Hongwen and his comrades to be a suspected member of Wang Hongwen’s so-called “counterrevolutionary group” and they were threatened with expulsion from the party if he or she was a Communist Party member.⁶ This was really a “Sword of Damocles” that hung above the heads of Wang Hongwen and his comrades.

Not yielding to the political persecution from the factory authorities, Wang Hongwen and his comrades kept persuading and recruiting more workers to struggle against their opponents. The Shanghai municipal administration had to send in a work

⁴ See the pamphlet entitled “The Revolutionary Locomotive in the ‘Red Stronghold’: On the First Six Communists Who Stood Out from the Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill”(Hongse baolei li de geming huochetou: ji guomian shiqi chang zuizao sha chu lai de liuge gongchan dangyuan) from <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=3889> , cited 20th, July, 2009. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

⁵ The Petofi Club was a literati forum critical of the workers’ power in Hungary before the 1956 anti-communist riot. After the Hungarian riot, the CCP sometimes called anti-communist groups or organizations Petofi Clubs.

⁶ From the pamphlet “Disclose the Capitalist Reactionary Line of the Municipal Work Team Led by Shi Huizhen” (*Jielu yi Shi Huizhen weishou de shiwei gongzuodui de zichan jieji fandong luxian*), by the Fighting Team (*zhandou dui*) of Loyal to Mao Zedong’s Thought Forever in the No. 17 Textile Mill, published in December 8th, 1966, personal collection. There were tons of pamphlets, broadsheets, tabloids, generally referred to as “newspapers of Red Guard” (*hongweibing xiaobao*), printed and circulated by various fighting teams during the CR. A lot of them were destroyed on governmental orders after the CR, and many were compiled and reprinted by the Center for Chinese Research Materials between 1975 and 2002 in U.S.A. But there are still many more in the regular and underground market, even though the administration still raids those who sell CR material and such materials are often confiscated. In the following narrative, materials without noted sources belong to my personal collection.

team led by Yu Wei to the No. 17 Textile Mill on June 20, 1966, hoping to restore order there. But what happened was not what the Shanghai authorities had wished. On the one hand, the team leader Yu Wei more or less sympathized with the rebel workers. On the other hand, the workers, inspired by the *People's Daily* editorial “Revolutionary Big-Character Posters Are Demon-Detectors To Unveil All Ghosts And Monsters” released on June 20, gathered new momentum to make all-round attacks on the factory party committee represented by the vice secretary Zhang Heming. The whole factory, which had over eight-thousand employees, seethed with surging revolutionary activities. Just from the 7th to 19th of July, rebel workers in this factory led by Wang Hongwen wrote 7,525 posters bombarding the factory’s party committee.⁷

The Shanghai municipal administration felt that it was losing control of events. So they recalled Yu Wei’s old work team and sent in a new and higher-level work team led by Shi Huizhen, a female veteran revolutionary and at that time the vice-chairperson of the Shanghai General Workers’ Union. This new work team consisted of more than one hundred members who the Shanghai authorities trusted. On July 20, Shi Huizhen gave a talk to the whole factory with a tone that depicted the factory authorities as only “making some grave mistakes to repress the big character poster writing”, rather than “suppressing the revolutionary mass movement”.⁸ Instead of targeting the party authorities, the new team leader called for putting up big

⁷ See Ye Yonglie, *Wang Hongwen zhuan (The Biography of Wang Hongwen)*, from *Ye Yonglie jishi wenji (A Collection of Ye Yonglie's Documentary Essays)*, Vol. 5, p.46, Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2000.

⁸ From the pamphlet “Disclose the Capitalist Reactionary Line of the Municipal Work Team led by Shi Huizhen” (*Jielu yi Shi Huizhen weishou de shiwei gongzuodui de zichan jieji fandong luxian*), by the Fighting Team (*zhandou dui*) of Loyal to Mao’s Thought Forever in the No. 17 Textile Mill, published in December 8th, 1966, personal collection.

character posters to disclose each other's "grave bourgeois thoughts" among the ordinary workers. This new policy led to chaotic fights among the masses, since everybody could be accused of having some bourgeois thoughts. And the effect of this was to protect a small bunch of power holders in the factory.

The new work team had to deal with the problems of the factory's top authorities, which were greatly revealed by the big-character posters. But this time, on the pretext that the masses did not know much about the authorities, the work team refused to involve any common workers as representatives in their conferences, to say nothing of welcoming workers' suggestions or investigations. The workers were enraged by the work team's attitudes toward the masses and the delayed and superficial resolution of the problems in the factory. In August the workers produced a great number of posters targeting the work team, which clearly showed that the relationship between workers and the work team was rapidly deteriorating. After the release of the *16-point Program* by the CCP Central Committee (hereafter referred to as the Center), Shi Huizhen presided over a workers' congress on August 10, 1966, at which she hinted that some workers paid only lip service to support the CR, when in fact they opposed it—i.e. they were waving red flags to oppose the red flag. Rebels later considered this an obvious signal of revisionism – mobilizing conservative workers to attack rebels and in this way suppressing the mass movement in the factory. Instigated and manipulated by the work team, the conservative workers, who were a majority in the factory, waged all-round struggles against the rebels. Long besieged, the rebels were stuck with the labels of being "anti-party and anti-socialism" and

“ghosts and monsters”. Their big-character posters were treated as “poisonous weeds”.

Some rebels were even beaten until they vomitted blood.

On August 18, Mao received one million Red Guards at Tian’anmen Square in Beijing and encouraged the masses to take an active part in the CR. Mao wore a PLA military uniform and a Red Guard’s armband as a supportive gesture toward the Red Guards. Upon hearing this news, Wang Hongwen and his comrades decided to organize Workers Red Guards among their factory’s militia. The work team was very scared by this move and regarded it as a “counter-revolutionary power seizure”. The vice leader of the work team Zhang Ge said: “This is by no means a minor issue; it is class struggle. Wang Hongwen and his like are seizing power!” To counter this, the work team formed the official workers Red Guards even before Wang Hongwen organized theirs. Zhao Ge suggested: “Let’s do it first no matter how many workers would join in. If we form Red Guards first, we are legal. Wang and his like have to join us. If they don’t, let them be.”⁹ The later city-level conservative workers’ organizations were actually based on this kind of loyalist factions in various Shanghai factories. The hardliners of conservative workers’ organizations were usually drawn from the ranks of skilled workers, many of which were members of the Communist Party or the Communist Youth League, or were model workers respected in the whole society. Those old skilled workers often felt great reverence for the Communist Party, since many of them had lived a wretched life under the Nationalist regime, and their economical, political, and social status rose significantly after Liberation in 1949.

⁹ Ibid.

The 16-point Program, as the guiding document of the Cultural Revolution, had already been distributed throughout China to all levels of units (*danwei*) after its publication by the *People's Daily* on August 9, 1966. It paid much attention to cultural revolutionary groups, committees, and other organizational forms, calling for modeling the Paris Commune by instituting a system of general elections. These kinds of cultural revolutionary groups and committees were regarded by the Maoist leadership as leading organs for the CR. Therefore, their formation and operation became a focal point for all competing political powers.

To take the leadership of and justify their control over the ongoing CR, the work team zealously called for a “Paris Commune Style Election” at Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill. Paying lip service to general elections in the factory, the work team made many decisions in the name of common workers yet without their actual consent. Before the “general elections”, in order to ensure the desired result, the work team gerrymandered the rules, regrouped the workers to benefit their chosen candidates, and even persuaded some potential competing candidates to withdraw. Their strategy was to guarantee the success of some docile workers while excluding the rebels from the leadership of the cultural revolutionary committee. On the pretext of broadening representation, for example, the Transportation Team in the factory passed other candidates while pushing aside most rebels from the leadership of the cultural revolutionary committee. In the Political Department of the factory, some “die-hard loyalists” to the work team—who were actually loyal to the pre-CR Party order in general—were successfully elected because of the regrouping arrangement that had

been done by the work team.¹⁰

In the Security Department, where Wang Hongwen worked, the work team found faults in every candidate nominated by the masses, and produced their own nomination list. The work team demanded that the workers in the Security Department cast votes only within the list. And then, at the same time, the work team sent two cadres from the Security Department along with two work team members to mediate and alleviate workers' discontent. To those who disobeyed, Cui Qingchao, one of the two cadres, stated that voting for designated candidates was a major issue of principle, while another cadre Dong Guifang remarked at a meeting about the election for the Cultural Revolution committee that "some people tried to make waves for the cultural revolutionary committee election. We need to keep record and let's get even with them later." Cui Qingchao even clearly threatened that: "we'll make those people pay for this later."¹¹

In addition to these tricks, the head of the work team even announced right before the election that votes for persons other than those listed candidates arranged by the work team would not be counted at all, for fear that the workers would still vote for those they did not want. The work team tried whatever they could to take control of the voting process, and to make sure whoever they chose would be elected. As a result, a number of conservative activists deeply involved in suppressing the rebel mass movement were elected into the leadership of the Cultural Revolutionary

¹⁰ The terms "loyalist" and "conservative" were widely used during the CR, especially at the end of 1966 and 1967, to refer those who supported the pre-CR party and state system and defended the pre-CR order. Usually they were accused by the rebels as political tools of the Liu-Dengist revisionist line. For fear of splitting the masses, the Maoist leadership did not advocate calling those people "loyalist" and "conservative". Instead, their organizations were named "mass organizations" rather than "loyalist organizations" and "conservative organizations."

¹¹ Ibid.

committee.¹² Nevertheless, since Wang Hongwen enjoyed great prestige and strong support among the rebel workers, he entered into the final list, running for director of the Cultural Revolutionary committee of the factory, and competing with another candidate backed by the work team and conservative workers. To defame, the work team mobilized many people to make personal attacks on him. Predictably, Wang Hongwen lost the election since the rebel workers were still a minority at that time.¹³ This was, as the work team and conservative activists in Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill claimed, a “Paris Commune Style Election”.

The Formation of the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters (WGH) and the Anting Battle¹⁴

After Mao received Red Guards for the first time in Beijing on August 18, 1966, many Beijing students went to Shanghai to “exchange revolutionary experiences.” Keeping in mind Mao’s teaching that revolutionary students must integrate into the workers’ movement, the Red Guards went into Shanghai factories. On the surface, the Shanghai authorities welcomed the Beijing Red Guards as “Chairman Mao’s guests”, but they were actually very hostile to them. On Sept. 2, some students were beaten by conservative workers. The next day, when Beijing Red Guards demonstrated in front of Shanghai’s city hall demanding meeting with top

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See Ye Yonglie, *The Biography of Wang Hongwen (Wang Hongwen zhuan)*, from *A Collection of Ye Yonglie’s Documentary Essays (Ye Yonglie jishi wenji)*, Vol. 5, pp.49-52, Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2000.

¹⁴ WGH is the abbreviation of the “Shanghai Workers’ Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters” (*Gong Zong Si*).

cadres about the incident, the Shanghai government summoned many workers to the spot for protection, including 700 workers from Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill on the order of work team led by Shi Huizhen¹⁵ A physical fight developed between the Red Guards and Shanghai workers, resulting in bloodshed. The rebel workers went to provide support to the students, showing their help with the Red Guards in their common struggle against the authorities. On Sept. 4, representatives of rebel workers and students held a joint rally at the Eastern China Textile Technology Institute, expressing their solidarity with each other. On the same day, when the Red Guards struck the Shanghai city hall, rebel workers also went to display their solidarity, even though both the rebel students and workers were still outnumbered by loyalist workers and citizens on the spot.¹⁶

Regardless of open persecution and secret sabotage executed by the work team and conservative workers, Wang Hongwen and more than 30 rebel workers made up their minds to form a fighting team on October 11, 1966, with the name, “Faithfully Carrying Out the Proletarian Cultural Revolution to the Bitter End ” (*shisi jiang wuchanjieji wenhua dageming jinxing daodi zhandou dui*). This was an early attempt in Shanghai by the workers to form their organization on their own initiative. After that, Wang Hongwen managed to visit Beijing with 14 comrades, and they went to many units to exchange experiences, such as Beijing University, Qinghua University, and Beijing No.1 and No.2 Textile Mills. To their great excitement, they got a chance

¹⁵ From the pamphlet “Disclose the Capitalist Reactionary Line of the Municipal Work Team led by Shi Huizhen” (*Jielu yi Shi Huizhen weishou de shiwei gongzuodui de zichan jieji fandong luxian*), by the Fighting Team (*zhandou dui*) of Loyal to Mao’s Thought Forever in the No. 17 Textile Mill, published in December 8th, 1966, personal collection.

¹⁶ From the pamphlet “A Summary of Shanghai WGH’s Struggle” (*Shanghai gongren geming zaofan zong siling bu douzheng jiyao*), in the series of *January Storm*, ed. and printed by the WGH, Shanghai.

to join the Red Guards to be received by Mao at the Tiananmen Square on October 18, 1966. When they returned to Shanghai, they found that another rebel workers' fighting team named "Always Loyal to Mao Zedong's Thought" had been established at their factory. Due to Wang Hongwen's prestige and organizational skills, the two rebel groups merged into one and Wang was elected its new leader. The new group soon attracted more than one thousand rebel workers. Nevertheless, right before Wang Hongwen's return to Shanghai, to counter rebels' fighting teams, and with the strong support of the work team, conservative workers in the factory formed their own organization named "The Committee of Defending Mao Zedong thought." They recruited about five thousand workers, which greatly outnumbered the rebels in the factory. At its inauguration ceremony, work team leader Shi Huizhen gave a warm speech, welcoming the formation of the Committee.

Realizing that the suppression of rebel workers had in fact originated from the Shanghai authorities, in addition to putting up posters in the factory, Wang Hongwen's rebel team posted many posters on the wall of the Shanghai Municipal Committee, attacking the city's main power-holders. At the same time, they actively exchanged experiences with similar rebel organizations in other Shanghai factories.

On the night of November 5, rebel workers from various factories streamed into the Shanghai Liaison Centre of the Third Capital's Red Guard Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters (hereafter the Third Headquarters) for a meeting named "Exchanging Revolutionary Experiences of Shanghai Rebel Workers". At this rally, Red Guard students and rebel workers swore to fight together. In the concluding

speech, Bao Pao, a Red Guard from China Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing proposed that the Shanghai rebel workers should master their own destiny and establish a city-wide rebel workers' organization.¹⁷ The next day, inspired by the joint rally, rebel representatives from 17 Shanghai factories gathered at 311 Yu Park Road.¹⁸ At this meeting, work teams sent to factories became the targets, and rebel workers accused them of committing unrighteous crimes against the rebels. In order to fight against "Liu-Dengists' capitalist reactionary line", all representatives agreed to forge a great alliance, that is, a large city-wide rebel workers' organization.¹⁹

On November 8, the day before the founding ceremony of the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters (hereafter the WGH), the committee in charge of preparing for the ceremony sent representatives to the Shanghai Municipal Committee several times. They asked Mayor Cao Diqui to talk at the inauguration the next day, in the hope that the WGH would be recognized by Shanghai's party authorities. To their disappointment, however, Cao refused to even see them, giving the poor excuse that he was sick. Moreover, the Shanghai authorities adopted a "three no's" stance (that is, no-attendance, no-recognition and no-support toward the WGH), and even tried their best to deter workers from attending the ceremony by issuing an order that workers could not take off work to attend it.²⁰

¹⁷ See "Rebel Workers and the Chinese Human Right Movements: Interview with Pan Guoping, a Former Leading Official of Shanghai Workers General Headquarters" (*Gongren zaofan pai yu zhongguo renquan yundong: fang yuan Shanghai gong zong si fuze ren Pan Guoping*), in *Supplement to China News Digest (Huaxia wenzhai zengkan)*, No. 99, 1996.

¹⁸ These included Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill, Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory, No. 822 Factory, Shanghai No.31 Textile Mill, Institute of Synthetic Fibre Research, Lianggong Valve Factory, Loading and Unloading Machinery Repair Plant of Shanghai Railway Bureau, Shanghai May 1 Electrical plant, Jichu Company, and Shanghai No.3 Steel Mill.

¹⁹ See Zhang Baolin, *Shanghai gongren geming zaofan pai douzheng gaishu* ("A Summary of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Workers' Struggle"), in *January Storm*, No. 4.

²⁰ *Shanghai shiwei canku zhengya gongren yundong de zuize nantao (The SPC Cannot Escape From the Criminal Responsibility of Ruthlessly Suppressing Workers' Movement)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, Nos.

Mayor Cao repeatedly refused workers' requests to attend the inauguration and he even openly declared: "Now all the dregs of humanity in Shanghai come out for it. I'll never attend it. If I do, I would make serious mistakes." This was by no means Mayor Cao's personal opinion about the rebels, but rather the shared view of the majority of Shanghai top cadres. Han Zheyi, a secretary of CCP East China Bureau stationed in Shanghai,²¹ recalled, "In our eyes, the so-called rebels were just some social dregs with serious problems. We harbored in our hearts a feeling of antipathy and abhorrence toward those guys."²² On November 9, the Shanghai authorities secretly instigated the loyalist workers to twice attack the ceremonial presidium and played the workers and Red Guards off against each another. Due to Mayor Cao's insistence on refusing to acknowledge the WGH, the ceremony had to be postponed for more than two hours. At last, the Shanghai Municipal Committee sent Zhang Wenbao, merely a deputy minister of the Department of Organization, to the inauguration, yet he not only refused to make speech, but also claimed that the Shanghai authorities would never recognize the WGH.²³

Nevertheless, November 9 witnessed the coming into existence of the WGH,

2-3 (Combined issue), Jan 17, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. p.50.

²¹ East China Bureau was one of the six regional bureaus that were direct appendages of the Center led by members or alternates of the central committee of CCP. As the highest power organ in Eastern China, the East China Bureau was in charge of the work of Anhui, Fujian, Jiangsu, Shandong, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Shanghai. It had far greater power than that of any local authority in the six provinces and Shanghai. On the eve of the CR, Wen Wenbo was the head of this Bureau. Han Zheyi was one of the secretaries of the East China Bureau.

²² Han Zheyi, "The Anting Incident that I Experienced" (*Wo suo qinli de anting shijian*), in *Dang'an chunqiu* (*Chronicle of Archives*), p.3, No.1, 2005.

²³ See "Rebel Workers and the Chinese Human Right Movements: Interview with Pan Guoping, a Former Leading Official of Shanghai Workers General Headquarters" (*Gongren zaofan pai yu zhongguo renquan yundong: fang yuan Shanghai gong zong si fuze ren Pan Guoping*), in *Supplement to China News Digest* (Huaxia wenzhai zengkan), No. 99, 1996. According to the WGH, more than 40,000 workers attended the inauguration of the WGH. See *Anting fengbao: Shanghai gongren geming zaofan zong silingbu douzhengshi zhiyi* (Anting Storm: The Struggle History of the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters I), in *Gongren zaofan bao* (*Workers' Rebel News*), May 19, 1967.

which was to become very influential later in Shanghai. Organizers had expected over 1,000 workers to be present at the founding ceremony, but more than 30,000 workers from over 470 factories all over the city attended.²⁴ This was totally against the Shanghai authorities' wish. During the course of the ceremony, the Shanghai authorities received live reports relayed by a bugging system that had been installed in the ceremony platform, and they retrieved and reviewed the records of every organizer. At the ceremony, many rebel workers spoke out and condemned persecutions committed by power-holders. Workers from the Loading and Unloading Machinery Repair Plant of the Shanghai Railway Bureau even presented confiscated lethal weapons and blood-stained clothes, demonstrating atrocities inflicted by people who had been influenced by the Shanghai authorities. All this astonishing evidence made the workers' blood boil. The newly-formed WGH set out its "Manifesto of the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters", claiming that:

We will vehemently rebel against the capitalist reactionary line, vehemently rebel against the capitalist roaders in the Party, and vehemently rebel against all ghosts and monsters! We will seize power, that is, take back people's power from the capitalist roaders in the Party and hold it firmly in hands of the proletariat. We will ferret out all the Krushchevian revisionists who are trying to usurp the supreme power of the Party and the army. None of them will escape punishment! We will struggle till they are stinking, falling and crumbling to dust, and then trample on them to ensure that they would never be able to turn over! ²⁵

The rally was a great success. For the first time after 1949, the Shanghai

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ From *Shanghai gongzongsi xuexi cailiao (The Study Materials of the Shanghai WGH)*, printed by WGH, Shanghai, 1967.

workers cried out the slogan of “power seizure”. It was also the first workers’ manifesto claiming “power seizure” since the outbreak of the CR in the entire country. For the Shanghai authorities, this was a bold offensive from the rebels who were clearly attempting to overthrow the political status quo, to seize power from power-holders in the Shanghai Party. For the workers, however, it was more about verbally expressing a political stance in response to the call of power seizure from the Maoist leadership than a planned agenda for certain actions to be carried out. In fact, most workers held the party authorities in awe and had enormous respect for them owing to great achievements the Party had been making since its birth. How could a worker dare or even imagine seizing power from the great and glorious Party?

Right after the founding of the WGH, more than 20,000 workers held a demonstration and proceeded to the city hall with a petition. In a cold winter rain, workers demanded that Mayor Cao should receive them before 22:30 pm. Yet what followed angered workers even more. Mayor Cao sent a staff after the deadline passed, informing the workers that they should leave the city hall and the mayor would see them at another place, the Friendship Theater. Without having any food for nearly a whole day, the workers agreed to walk to the theater. But they were cheated again. After waiting at the Friendship Theater for another 3 hours, the workers found no trace of the mayor. At 2 o’clock in the morning, the Shanghai authorities sent the chairperson of Shanghai General Workers’ Union, a colleague of the work team leader Shi Huizhen at Wang Hongwen’s factory, to the Friendship Theater. This messenger claimed that there was never such an organization as the WGH in the *Sixteen-point*

Program, thus making the attitudes of the Shanghai authorities crystal clear that the WGH was illegal and needed to be disbanded immediately. At this point, a propaganda vehicle outside the theater broadcasted a so-called “telegram from Beijing” (later revealed as a rumor) saying that “Premier Zhou stated: ‘if the Shanghai Municipal Committee doesn’t want to see you, come to Beijing; I will see you!’” Infuriated with the messenger’s comments on the WGH and emboldened by the “telegram from Beijing”, assembled rebel workers were determined to go to Beijing to present their case and make an appeal directly to the Maoist leadership against the suppression they were suffering. Without any hesitation, a great number of rebels rushed to the Shanghai railway station.²⁶

Confronted with so many rebel workers inflamed with anger, the Shanghai authorities agreed, but only verbally, to arrange trains to transfer workers to Beijing. Yet their actual plan was to disperse the assembled workers to different locations by train so as to play a game of “divide and conquer” with the rebels. The first colony of rebel workers got on a Beijing-bound train, but very soon, the Shanghai authorities contacted the authorities of Nanjing, a city not far from Shanghai, to stop the train. The second express train with two thousand rebel workers and some Red Guards on board steamed out of Shanghai to Beijing at 7 o’clock on the morning of November 10. But soon, it was converted to a slow train on orders from Shanghai authorities, and its speed was reduced from 90 to 20 kilometers per hour. Finally, after about one

²⁶ See “Rebel Workers and the Chinese Human Right Movements: Interview with Pan Guoping, a Former Leading Official of Shanghai Workers General Headquarters” (*Gongren zaofan pai yu zhongguo renquan yundong: fang yuan Shanghai gong zong si fuze ren Pan Guoping*), in *Supplement to China News Digest (Huaxia wenzhai zengkan)*, No.99, 1996.

hour, this train stopped at Anting station in the suburbs of Shanghai. The third train, packed with rebel workers, was scheduled to leave at 10:10 a.m., but never left the platform. The petitioning workers were thus successfully dispersed by the Shanghai authorities into three different places: Shanghai, Anting and Nanjing. For the workers, this was a brutal deception.

Anting station was located in a desolate small town. Under the Shanghai authorities' arrangement, a large number of local cadres, work team members and loyalist workers soon arrived there to stimulate "debates" with the hungry and exhausted rebel workers. Yet in most cases, what characterized these "debates" were merely violent streams of abuse, wantonly labeling the rebels "counter-revolutionaries", "political pickpockets", "saboteurs of production" or "anarchists", and so forth. To further demoralize the rebels, family members of these workers were transported there to try to persuade their relatives to give up their rebel actions. In addition, many undercover cops mixed in with the crowd, spying on rebel workers and students. As there was virtually no preparation for this trip, after the train had gotten stuck at Anting station for more than three days and three nights, the rebels, most of them without a single cent with them, had to endure hunger, cold weather, lack of sleep and crowded conditions. Many fainted due to hunger and hypertension in and outside of the packed train cars. Due to a shortage of medicine for the sick, workers went to local towns to obtain medicine. But after getting orders from Shanghai, local cadres refused the rebels the much-needed medicine. Because of illness contracted at Anting, one female rebel worker even passed away later in

Shanghai.

When the Shanghai authorities realized that they could not starve the rebels into submission, they shipped “one thousand and five hundred loaves of bread” to Anting.²⁷ But the cadres in charge of bread distribution required people to register with employee cards for food. Therefore, many workers were reluctant to obtain food under such a condition, for fear of being retaliated later. Some rebels even preferred to sell their cherished watches to buy food from local stores and share this with others. In fact, according to information disclosed later, the Shanghai authorities had been collecting “black files” since the founding ceremony of the Shanghai WGH. Of the 16 founding leaders of the WGH, three of them had been privately sentenced to the death penalty, three to life imprisonment, and others had set terms of imprisonment. And the authorities had even already decided on the execution ground and localities of prison houses.²⁸ Upon learning of the situation of the rebels at Anting, three thousand rebel workers and many Red Guards walked from Shanghai to Anting to come to the rescue of the rebel workers. Bringing large amount of food and medicine with them, after

²⁷ See the pamphlet “Comments on the Capitalist Reactionary Line of the Shanghai Municipal Committee”(*Ping Shanghai shiwei de zichan jieji fandong luxian*), published in Shanghai by the Red Rebel Unified Army of the New Beijing University and the Red Guard Revolutionary Committee of the New Beijing University Stationed in Shanghai, December, 1966, from <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=4490>, cited July 3, 2009.

²⁸ See Zhang Baolin, “A Summary of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Workers’ Struggle”(*Shanghai gongren geming zaofan pai douzheng gaishu*), in *January Storm*, No. 4. See also Zhou Guoting, “ ‘Death Penalty’ Can Not Threaten Our Rebel Workers at All” (*Panchu sixing xia bu liao women gongren zaofan pai*), in *January Storm*, No.2 . As a matter of fact, there were precedents of the execution of common workers by old bureaucrats in 1966 in the first wave of the CR manipulated by Liu-Dengists. At Wuhan Steel Works, Hubei, it was disclosed in a big-character poster by another loyalist worker Huang Liansheng that Pang Yulai had hid the fact that he was raised by a capitalist family before the Liberation. Believing that he was just a common worker and should not be the target of the ongoing CR, Pang Yulai tore off the poster and then quarreled with Huang and his supporters. In the mess, Pang picked up a piece of stone to hit Huang yet missed, and the stone landed on an onlooker’s head and injured him. This small incident was regarded by the Wang Renzhong-led Hubei authority as a counter-revolutionary case and after a huge rally 15 days later on July 5, 1966, Pang Yulai was executed. Irritated, many common people in Wuhan turned into rebels. See Cao, Chengyi, *Recollecting the Cultural Revolution in a Sorrow-Joy Mixed Emotion (Beijin jiaoji hua wenge)*. Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenhua chuanbo chubanshe (China Cultural Communication Press), 2010. Cao Chengyi was a former leader of the Xin Yi Ye Revolutionary Rebels’ Headquarters in Wuhan.

one night of walking, this rescue parade finally joined the spirited workers at Anting.

But both sides were locked in a stalemate. The rebels decided to take a long shot gamble. Led by Pan Guoping, Huang Jinhai and other rebel leaders, several hundred rebels stopped a train running on the tracks of a major north-south railway passage. Since there was only one track at Anting, this move effectively blocked all trains from passing through Anting station, including the No. 14 International Express with many foreigners on board. The rebels' move shocked the authorities of Shanghai and the CCP East China Bureau. An urgent telegram was sent to Beijing. At that time, the State Council headed by Premier Zhou Enlai and the CCRG headed by Chen Boda were in charge of the everyday state of affairs. Entrusted by Zhou Enlai, Chen Boda sent back a telegram in response, which was a disadvantage for the rebels. Part of it read:

I hear that a lot of Shanghai workers wanted to come to Peking and that they have since occupied the Anting East railway station. When the situation was explained to them, many went home of their own accord. This is very good; this is the correct thing to do. I hear there are others, however, who refuse to leave the station.

Now, I understand their enthusiasm in wanting to come to Peking. 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 job 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.²⁹

²⁹ Neale Hunter, *Shanghai Journal: An Eyewitness Account of the Cultural Revolution*, pp.139-140, New York: Praeger, 1969.

Besides Chen Boda, Tao Zhu, another senior cadre in the Center who was in charge of everyday state affairs and a leading member of the CCRG called the Shanghai Party Committee as well, expressing similar views toward the Anting Incident, decrying the workers' action in going to Beijing. But what really mattered here was not whether rebels violated rules of production or disobeyed Party instructions. Rather, it was whether or not rebel workers could form their own city-wide organizations as the Red Guards had, and involve themselves in the movement during work time. The Red Guard had already turned the whole nation upside down. It was very hard for the authorities to take control of the Red Guard movement, let alone the workers' organizations. Set against this background, it was no wonder that the power-holders at various levels were reluctant to allow workers to form their own independent organizations. The feeling of resistance to mass movements was vividly embodied in Liu Shaoqi, the state chair, who said: "You ask me how to make the CR. To be frank, I don't know."³⁰ Yet the Shanghai party's refusal of recognition compelled the rebels of WGH to go to the Center in Beijing for recognition.

Upon receiving Chen Boda's telegram, the Shanghai authorities immediately sent a delegation to Anting the night of November 10, which consisted of Han Zheyi (a secretary of CCP Eastern China Bureau), Li Gancheng (a vice-mayor), and Yang Kai (a vice minister of the Propaganda Department of CCP Eastern China Bureau). Negotiations between the delegation and rebels lasted several hours until midnight,

³⁰ *Liu Shaoqi's Address at the Meeting of Cultural Revolution Activists Among Revolutionary Teachers And Students In Beijing, July 29, 1966,*

yet remained fruitless. Having been repeatedly cheated by the Shanghai authorities, the rebels were suspicious about the authenticity of Chen Boda's telegram since it was just a copy, not the original. Moreover, they were dissatisfied with Chen's call for them to return to their jobs without any mention of their demands, especially the issue of the legal status of the WGH. For them, gaining official recognition for the WGH as a "revolutionary organization" was the bottomline. According to Han Zhenyi's recollection, a bone of contention was that the rebels insisted that they had the right to make revolution during working hours. Han Zheyi and other cadres stated that they could not make the final decision about the rebels' demands without the authorization of the Center. With the excuse that there was no way to contact the Center from such a remote railway station, the delegation led by Han left for Shanghai.³¹ While the whole railway system of Eastern China got snarled up, more and more angry rebels settled in Anting for a possible siege. Some workers even prepared to walk more than one thousand kilometers to Beijing to petition to the Center.

It was Zhang Chunqiao, the deputy leader of the CCRG and a deputy secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee, who broke this deadlock. On November 11, after a discussion among major leaders such as Zhou Enlai, Chen Boda, and Tao Zhu, the Center entrusted Zhang Chunqiao to handle this event and sent him to Shanghai by a military airplane. The next morning, in the heavy rain, Zhang Chunqiao appeared at Anting, standing in a truck and making speeches to the rebels through a loudspeaker. Regardless of the rain, rebels stepped out, speaking against the Shanghai Municipal

³¹ Han Zheyi, "The Anting Accident that I Experienced" (*Wo suo qinli de Anting shijian*), in *Dang'an chunqiu*, p.5, No.1, 2005.

Committee in the face of Zhang Chunqiao one after another. During a nine-hour meeting, they appealed again and again to Zhang for the recognition of the WGH. Zhang Chunqiao carefully listened to the workers' accusations and explained to them the complex relationship between "grasping revolution" and "promoting production". Zhang promised the rebels that he would report their grievances and sufferings inflicted by the Shanghai authorities to Chairman Mao and the CCRG and a solution would be worked out once the rebels returned to Shanghai. Furthermore, Zhang agreed that the workers could send representatives to Beijing. Upon the demands of the workers, Zhang verbally recognized the WGH as a "revolutionary organization" and expressed his personal support. Rebel worker leaders, such as Pan Guoping, promised to bring the workers back to Shanghai. But until the WGH was to receive recognition from the government, the leaders insisted that they would not disperse and return home. They demanded a written statement from the government that recognized their organization. However, after those nearly 10,000 rebels at Anting returned to Shanghai, all other Shanghai Party leaders refused to recognize the WGH. To the astonishment of Shanghai's officials, Zhang Chunqiao held a mass meeting in the Culture Plaza of Shanghai on November 13, 1966 with the rebels from the Anting battle and formally signed five points that the rebels had demanded. It read:

1. Recognition of the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters as a revolutionary and legitimate organization;
2. Recognition of the November 9 inauguration and forced trek to Beijing as a form of revolutionary action; (for similar cases in the future, workers should send their representatives instead.)
3. Attribution of all responsibility for the consequences of the Anting Incident

to the East China Bureau and the Shanghai Party Committee;

4. Public self-criticism of Cao Diqu;

5. Provision of various sorts of aid to the WGH to facilitate its future work.³²

Regardless of Zhang Chunqiao's verbal promise to support the rebels, some 474 workers insisted on going to Beijing on foot from Anting, wanting "to have a word with Chen Boda about his 'repressive telegram'". Together with Mayor Cao Diqu, Zhang left Shanghai again for Suzhou, where the defiant rebels departing from Anting had lodged. Led by Geng Jinzhang, the worker representatives presented Zhang and Cao with another set of five demands. Differing from Zhang's attitude of signing again, Mayor Cao was appalled and felt betrayed, as he had thought that their task was merely to persuade the 474 workers to go back to Shanghai. After fiercely arguing with Zhang Chunqiao for two hours, Cao gave in and signed.³³ For the rebels, Mayor Cao's signature signaled that not only the Center and the CCRG were on their side, but also the Shanghai Party Committee conferred them legal status.

Today, it is still not clear whether or not Mao himself authorized Zhang Chunqiao to recognize the WGH or gave Zhang a bottom line before he left for Anting. What we do know, however, is that before Zhang's departure, some regular Politburo members of the CCP had talked to him, and suggested that he should not agree with the workers' demands, and all he needed to do was to calm down the rebels and persuade them to go back to work. According to what Zhang confided to his colleagues later, his support of the rebels and approval of the WGH risked "having his head chopped off", and his only protection was the article of "freedom of assembly

³² The English translation was modified from Elizabeth Perry & Li Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in The Cultural Revolution*, p.35, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

³³ Neale Hunter, 1969, p.143.

and association” in the Constitution. When an enlarged meeting was held in Mao’s study in Beijing to discuss Zhang Chunqiao’s action, Tao Zhu, who ranked fifth among the Party leaders at that time, assailed Zhang’s decision with a Chinese saying— “chopping off the heads first and memorialize later”, which means acting first and reporting afterwards.³⁴ That was a serious accusation to Zhang, because a very strict system of party discipline had been enforced on the basis of Liu Shaoqi’s political treatise *How to be a Good Communist* before the CR. If one disobeyed the instructions from the superior, one could be labeled as “anti-party”, or even as “counter-revolutionary”. Nonetheless, Mao lent his full support to Zhang and stated: “you can chop off their heads first and memorialize later.”³⁵ “Facts always come first, then concepts.” As clarified by Mao later, “If there are no facts, how could concepts form? If there is no practice, where is theory? Sometimes theory and practice run parallel, sometimes theory comes first, but practice is decisive and the most important. If workers didn’t make revolution first, how come we were able to make some rules for it?”³⁶

Zhang Chunqiao’s audacious initiative in dealing with the Anting incident won him the reputation for fully supporting the CR as well as the rebel workers’ trust, which paved the way for Zhang and his comrades to influence the movements in

³⁴ See “Rebel Workers and the Chinese Human Right Movements: Interview with Pan Guoping, a former leading official of Shanghai Workers General Headquarters” (*Gongren zaofan pai yu zhongguo renquan yundong: fang yuan Shanghai gong zong si fuze ren Pan Guoping*), in *Supplement to China News Digest (Huaxia wenzhai zengkan)*, No.99, 1996.

³⁵ Elizabeth Perry & Li Xun, 1997, p.36. Mao’s words means that one can do things first without his or her superior’s permission.

³⁶ Mao Zedong, “A Talk on the Discussion of the Ten-point Directive Concerning the Great Cultural Revolution in Factories and Mines and the Ten-point Directive Concerning the Great Cultural Revolution in the Countryside” (*Taolun gong kuang shitiao shi de jianghua*), Dec. 6th, 1966, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.280, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

Shanghai in the coming years. Similarly, rebel leaders, such as Wang Hongwen, Pan Guoping, Huang Jinhai, among others, became well known in Shanghai because of the Anting battle and the workers' struggle gaining recognition for the WGH. The historical significance of the Anting incident lay in the fact that it signaled a watershed moment in the CR. From then on, workers, superseding students, emerged as a key player in the CR. With the endorsement of the WGH by the Maoist leadership, the political landscape of the Cultural Revolution—both in Shanghai and in the entire country—changed profoundly. In the following months, the WGH was to deal a deadly blow and make possible a great political experiment—the Shanghai People's Commune—emulating the Paris Commune nearly one hundred years earlier.

Bureaucratized Strikes and the Spate of Economism³⁷

After the Anting Incident, on Nov. 24, the SPC convened an enlarged meeting to discuss the volatile situation in Shanghai. At the meeting, Zhang Chunqiao was

³⁷ Economism was first introduced into Marxist discourse by Lenin. At the beginning of the 20th century, Lenin harshly criticized the so-called "economists" in the Russian Marxist movement. According to Lenin, the result of the economism was "to obscure the class character of the struggle of the working class, weaken this struggle by a meaningless 'recognition of society' and reduce revolutionary Marxism to a trivial reformist trend". While Lenin actively advocated creating a revolutionary workers' party, the Russian economists favored "assistance to the economic struggle of the proletariat". (See Duncan Hallas, *Controversy: What is 'economism'?*, *International Socialism (1st series)*, No.56, March 1973, pp.18-19.) During the Mao era, economism mainly referred to putting economics, rather than politics in command. " *Guangming Ribao*" on January 17, 1967 commented that "Economism leads people astray, causing them to pay attention only to immediate, partial interests, while ignoring the fundamental interests of the proletariat. It is against Marxism-Leninism, against Mao Tse-tung's thought, and is out-and-out counter-revolutionary revisionist stuff." Mao's quotations about opposing economism were also published in the paper. Mao's main points were summarized as the following: 1. Politics is the supreme commander, the soul. Political work is the life-blood of all economic work. 2. We should put the greatest efforts into political struggle. In the absence of political reforms all the productive forces are being ruined. 3. We should not see merely the immediate and partial interests of the working class while forgetting its broad, long-range interests. 4. Be vigilant against attack by "sugar-coated bullets." (See *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-tung On Opposing Economism*, the English translation appeared in *Peking Review*, Vol. 10, No. 5, Jan. 27, 1967, pp. 5-6.) According to Elisabeth Perry and Li Xun, some organizations were dubbed "economistic" in the January Storm of Shanghai because of "their relative disinterest in the political debates of the day; they were not centrally concerned with the issue of attacking or defending party leaders. Their focus was directed instead on redressing socioeconomic grievances." (See Perry and Li, 1997 p.97)

under heavy attack from other high ranking SPC cadres. One accusation toward Zhang was that his approval of the WGH's demands could undermine production. Deputy Mayor Song Jiwen explicitly threatened Zhang with economic statistics pertaining to production in Shanghai. He said, "Now we should prepare for the most difficult situation. There are many kinds of disorder: minor, medium and major ones. Minor disorder appears now and production is affected 10 percent; a medium disorder would have greater influence [on production]; as for a major disorder, it would have an impact on people's lives. And the situation will be paralyzed. Under the sun, you are afraid or not afraid [of the disorder]? If you are not afraid, we are not afraid either. Just let the disorder develop." Zhang Chengzong, another deputy mayor, also complained that the WGH's demands, which Zhang Chunqiao had signed, influenced production. He said that people should certainly prepare for the utmost chaos in Shanghai. At the meeting, Zhang Chunqiao rebuffed them by stating that it was not the WGH that had caused Shanghai's disorder; rather, the WGH had come into existence precisely because of the previous disorder in Shanghai. Zhang maintained that he had acted in accordance with the state's Constitution in recognizing the WGH. Moreover, whether to recognize a workers' organization was an indication of one's attitude toward the masses.³⁸ To some degree, Song Jiwen's phrasing "let the disorder develop" was an early reflection of the SPC's wish to use an economic weapon to attain a political aim.

Thereafter, several incidents heightened conflicts and intensified confrontation

³⁸ *Shanghai shiwei ba paokou duizhun wuchan jieji silingbu de taotian zuixing (The SPC's Towering Crime to Set the Cannon onto the Proletarian Headquarters)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, Nos. 2-3 (Combined issue), Jan 17, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.31-32.

between the rebel workers and students and the Shanghai authorities. As Shanghai entered into a turbulent stage of the Cultural Revolution in the wake of the Anting battle, the SPC reacted by organizing a city-wide loyalist workers' faction to counter the WGH and protect the establishment. As early as the beginning stage of rebel workers' movement, noted by Shanghai Trade Union chair Zhang Qi, "Chen Pixian and Cao Diqui³⁹ thought up a way to organize the 'majority faction' to counter them." And they provided tacit yet crucial support to conservative workers' organizations in some factories.⁴⁰ Apparently, the Shanghai Party needed a larger loyalist workers' organization to prepare for the coming storm. Right after the Anting battle, the frustrated Shanghai authorities were busy building a city-wide conservative workers' organization which would take a pro-SPC stance. Meeting with more than 500 workers on November 19, Cao Diqui attacked the WGH as "impure" (meaning that within the WGH there were many anti-communists), and he lent his support only to those who rebel against bourgeoisie. As soon as Zhang Chunqiao left Shanghai for Beijing to report the outcome of the Anting Incident on November 24, 1966, Mayor Cao Diqui was too impatient to wait. In sharp contrast to his insistence on evading representatives from the WGH just a few days earlier, on November 24, he gladly received more than one hundred worker representatives from 38 factories of Shanghai, who were preparing to form the loyalist "Scarlet Guards" to protect the establishment. During the meeting, Mayor Cao suggested setting up a preparatory committee and promised that the Shanghai Party would send key figures to attend its inauguration.

³⁹ Chen Pixian was the first secretary of Shanghai Party Committee and Cao Diqui was the mayor of Shanghai at the time.

⁴⁰ Elisabeth Perry and Li Xun, 1997, pp.80-81.

The proposed “Scarlet Guards” organization was entrusted to the Shanghai General Workers’ Union (*Shanghai zong gonghui*). The next day, Mayor Cao talked with the representatives again, claiming that it had just been a tactic and temporary measure for the Shanghai Party to recognize the WGH, and that the way that Zhang Chunqiao had dealt with the Anting Incident was absolutely wrong.⁴¹ In addition, Cao even encouraged the representatives to seize Zhang Chunqiao and send him back to Shanghai to make self-criticism.⁴²

The organizational power of the conservative workers in Shanghai was first presented and tested to in the famous *Liberation Daily* battle. *Liberation Daily*, as one of the two major party organs in Shanghai, was understandably reluctant to cover rebel news. Partly out of envy for the rebel workers’ great success in the Anting battle, a group of Red Guards in Shanghai, led by the largest rebel student organization, the Red Guards’ Revolutionary Committee of the Colleges and Universities of Shanghai (Red Revolutionaries in short),⁴³ surprised Shanghai citizens on the last day of November 1966 by occupying the building of the *Liberation Daily*. Their aim was not to seize the *Liberation Daily* from the Party. Rather, they demanded their own tabloid “*Red Guard Battle News*” to be jointly distributed with the *Liberation Daily* through the newspaper distribution office in the Postal Department under the charge of the

⁴¹ Cao Diqui shi gongren chiweidui de houtai laoban (*Cao Diqui is the Wire-pulling Master Behind Workers’ Scarlet Guards*), in *Zhibu shenghuo* (*Life in Party Branches*), Nos. 2-3 (Combined issue), Jan 17, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.46-47.

⁴² Yan, Jiaqi, Gao, Gao, *The Ten-Year History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, translated and published by Institute of Current China Studies of Taiwan, 1988, p. 381.

⁴³ The Red Revolutionaries, which included college students and high school students, was said to have forty thousand members at the beginning of February, 1967. See the pamphlet *Yi honggehui mouxie fuzeren wei daibiao de paoda zhongyang wenge de fandong niliu jiyao* (*A Summary of the Reactionary Countercurrent of Bombarding the CCRG Represented by Some Red Revolutionaries’ Responsible Persons*), Ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, March 1967. p.24.

Shanghai Party. The WGH intervened immediately, suggesting that students should demand a self-criticism from the *Liberation Daily* for following a “capitalist reactionary line”. This idea was adopted by the students. Soon after the occupation, hundreds of thousands of loyalist workers and Shanghai citizens rushed to the *Liberation Daily* to besiege the occupiers. Many students were injured in repeated waves of attacks from pro-party people. Workers from the WGH were dispatched to the *Liberation Daily* to come to the rescue. On the early morning of December 3, the WGH workers in the *Liberation Daily* building gathered all occupiers for a meeting. All attendants agreed with the WGH’s suggestion of forming a “Frontline Headquarters”, which was given a free hand to direct the battle. In later confrontations, similar “Frontline Headquarters” organized by workers became a model of running various businesses abandoned by the Shanghai authorities. On December 5, after nine days seige on the rebel students, the Shanghai authorities surrendered, signing all the demands proposed by the Red Revolutionaries.

In this battle, although rebel workers of the WGH and students fought together and triumphed over the Shanghai authorities, they diverged on the question of whether to use this incident as a springboard to pull down the still strong Shanghai authorities. Seeds of inauspicious dissensions was sown among them. Claiming to secure the Shanghai authorities to keep their word, a small group of student hardliners guarded the building as a fortress and set up another “Fighting to the Bitter End Headquarters” to call for “fighting to death in the *Liberation Daily* building.” This was strategically unwise since the rebels got most of what they had originally wanted

when the authorities capitulated to their demands. If the rebels were not strong enough to make the authorities keep their promise outside the building, it was unlikely that they could do this by “fighting to the death” within the prison house-like fortress. Criticized by most occupiers and the “Frontline Headquarters” in the building, the hardliners had to give up their plan to avoid more bloodshed. Nonetheless, the showdown between rebels and authorities at the *Liberation Daily* demonstrated once again the powerful strength of the rebel students and workers, especially when the rebels united. Possibly intending to buy off the workers and cast in a bone between workers and students, the Shanghai authorities suggested in the final round of negotiations giving all rebel workers involved in the *Liberation Daily* Incident a PLA military uniform – which at that time was rare, fashionable and honorable among civilians. The WGH unequivocally refused this offer which was later seen as one of the first attempts by the old Shanghai authorities to use economism to buy off workers for their own political purposes.⁴⁴

One direct outcome of the *Liberation Daily* siege was that it polarized and differentiated workers with divergent political positions. And this motivated and accelerated the formation of the city-wide conservative workers’ “Scarlet Guards”, which absorbed many existing smaller conservative workers’ organizations and greatly expanded. It was in this incident that the Scarlet Guards gathered momentum and strength and emerged as the main opponent of the WGH, even greatly outnumbering the rebels. To invest in and control the conservative workers, the

⁴⁴ See “*The Liberation Daily Incident that Shakes the Whole Country*”, in *Workers’ Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, edited by the Shanghai WGH, June 1, 1967.

Shanghai Party endowed them with substantial material assistance. Zhang Qi, member of the Shanghai CCP Standing Committee and chair of the Shanghai Trade Union, said bluntly, “The union has so much money, now is the time to use a little.” In sharp contrast to their disregard toward and non-recognition of the WGH, the Shanghai authorities were more than happy to offer the Scarlet Guards 125,000 identifying armbands within a short time.⁴⁵ Roughly at the end of the *Liberation Daily* Incident, on December 6, just one month after the WGH’s foundation, the official inauguration of the Scarlet Guards with more than 200,000 members was held at the People’s Plaza. Immediately after the inauguration, the Scarlet Guards dispatched a huge contingent to protest against the rebels and the Shanghai party’s “capitulation” (to the rebels) and “betrayal” outside the *Liberation Daily* building. When the rebels retreated from the building after the authorities met their demands, many of them were beaten up by Scarlet Guards members waiting outside. For the rest of December after the *Liberation Daily* siege, waves of civil unrest broke out throughout the city. The opposing camps—the WGH and the Scarlet Guards—waged a propaganda war against each other. The ensuing skirmishes burst out here and there. Both camps tried their best to rally supporters from all sources. With skillful mobilization by Party branch secretaries, heads of unions, and factory managers, in mid-December, the Scarlet Guards organization reached its climax and emerged as a gigantic group with a membership of nearly one million.

Nonetheless, the Scarlet Guards began to decline when the overall political

⁴⁵ Perry and Li Xun 1997, p.81.

atmosphere was no longer favorable, as the rebels grew stronger and stronger through recruiting more underprivileged people, such as contract and temporary workers. With the backing of the Maoist leadership in the CCRG, rebel students in Beijing University, Qinghua University and the Third Red Guard Headquarters of Beijing eventually gained upper hand in struggles against loyalist, conservative students. They could then exert greater influence on the CR in Shanghai through their liaison posts in the city. On Dec. 11, Mao called for “winning new victories” to all the rebels throughout the country. The same day, the Shanghai rebels held a huge rally under the slogan “Making Headway against the New Counter-offensive of the Bourgeois Reactionary Line of the Municipal Committee” with an impressive attendance of six hundred thousand. Three days later, the WGH and 18 other organizations convened a “joint meeting” (*lianxi huiyi*), at which they demanded that the Shanghai Municipal Committee and its cadres at all levels support the rebels; that no public self-criticism by the Shanghai Municipal Committee and its cadres at all levels could be made without permission from the rebels; that methods and timing for public self-criticism of all cadres had to be decided by the rebels. The organizational format of the “joint meeting”, according to a later official narrative of the WGH, signaled the beginning of a great alliance by all proletarian revolutionary organizations in Shanghai and also paved the way for the preparatory establishment of proletarian power.⁴⁶

The rebel forces were further strengthened when the literati rebels joined in.

⁴⁶ See *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, edited by the Shanghai WGH, January 12, 1968. Facing the growing strength of the rebels, the Shanghai Municipal Committee became inclined to be two-faced in their attitudes toward rebels and conservative workers, making self-criticism and declaring support while attending rallies of both sides. These demands targeted this inclination and attempted to stop hedging.

Helped and prompted by Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, both members of the CCRG, the Writers' Group of the Shanghai Municipal Committee announced its "collective rebellion" and its independence from the Shanghai Party. Viewed as "a bombshell exploded in the backyard of the Cao (Diqu) family" at that time, this dealt a heavy blow to the Shanghai authorities because the Writers' Group had functioned as the insider source of information for the Shanghai Party. On Dec. 18, the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (*jilianzhan* for short), with the Writers' Group as its core, convened a big rally to "hold high the red flag of Mao Zedong's thought and strafe the bourgeois reactionary line of the old Municipal Committee", at which Mayor Cao and his senior Chen Pixian, the first secretary of SPC were forced to stand on a table, lowering their heads to make public self-criticism. Obviously, the tide was running against the old Shanghai Municipal Committee and the Scarlet Guards they supported.

Out of a strong will for political survival, cadres at all levels of the Shanghai Party acted rapidly and efficiently. They used all the resources that were available to check the movement, among which the most handy and effective tool was money, since the economic system, such as banks and treasury departments at all units, remained intact, and seals for authorizing money distribution were still under their control. The role of the bureaucrats in creating a so-called "wind of economism" blowing in the last days of 1966 and the first days of 1967 would be decisive. For the Shanghai authorities, on the one hand, they could use money to buy off workers for exchanging political support, or, at least, compromises. A money deluge, on the other

hand, could be a practical and powerful tool to exert enormous pressure on the Maoist leadership which was in support of the rebels.⁴⁷

For those rebels who struggled merely for economic rights, there did exist many inequalities and semi-exploitative arrangements in the pre-CR labor system, such as temporary laborers, contract laborers and sub-contract laborers. Based on enormous sufferings from inequalities they had experienced, those economically underprivileged laborers had solid reasons for requesting compensation and labor reforms from the authorities. When those rebels' need of money and promotions met with the cadres' willingness to give away money and material benefits to shake off political attacks, it was inevitable that there would be a financial exodus from the state run enterprises and banks to economically underprivileged laborers and other people, such as those travelling to other cities to "exchange revolutionary experiences" or "lodge complaints".

Specifically, the wind of economism was mainly embodied in the following phenomena: 1. Wage compensation and promotion of the wage level. People who felt inadequately paid would ask for wage compensation and promotion from the power holders. 2. Workers' exchange of revolutionary experiences (*chuanlian*). Students and teachers' *chuanlian* was initially advocated by Mao and pro-CR leaders as it helped the launch and development of the CR. Millions of Red Guards, paid by the state,

⁴⁷ Some rebel workers in Qiuxin Dockyard surmised two other purposes behind the power holders' blowing of the wind of the economism. Firstly, in so doing, they could shift the main direction of political struggle. Secondly, psychologically feeling that they could not act as "officials" for too long, the power holders intentionally committed retaliatory sabotage against the national economy, thus creating havoc within the whole country. See *Jinggen Mao zhuxi, chedi nao geming: Qiuxin zaochuanchang bufen zhonglaonian gongren zuotan jiyao* (Following Chairman Mao, Making Revolution to the End: The Summary of a Symposium of Some Middle-aged and Old Workers in Qiuxin Dockyard), in *Worker's Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No.3, Jan.14, 1967.

travelled all over the country to make revolution. After three months' *chuanlian*, the CCP leadership found that the national transportation system was overburdened by free riders. Moreover, it was a heavy burden to the national economy. Therefore, the Maoist leaders called for exchanging revolutionary experiences on foot.⁴⁸ But as with the rise of the workers' movement, a lot of workers who insisted on "exchange of revolutionary experiences" by train, ship and bus would ask the local power holders for travel expenses, which caused major economic problems for their work units. More seriously, unlike students and teachers, workers' walking out of work gravely influenced production and the economy. 3. Housing occupations. People with housing difficulties would forcefully occupy state's or former capitalists' houses. 4. Change of workers' status. A large number of contract workers, sub-contract workers, temporary workers, and apprentice workers demanded to be treated as full time workers. 5. Enhancement of welfare. Workers demanded more welfare such as insurance, retirement pension, etc. 6. Change of factories' status. Since wage and welfare in state-run enterprises under the ownership by the whole people was better than enterprises under collective ownership, many neighborhood factories, lane production teams and other small factories petitioned to merge their small units into bigger

⁴⁸ The CCP Central Committee and the State Council decided on November 16, 1966 that as from November 21, 1966 and until April 1967, all the revolutionary teachers and students and Red Guards in institutes of higher learning, army academies and schools and intermediate schools shall stop coming to Peking and other localities by train, ship, and bus for exchanging revolutionary experiences, and the Central Committee and the State Council decided on Dec. 1, 1966 that as from December 21 the teachers and students and Red Guards in Beijing would no longer be provided with food and train and bus services free of charge. But apparently, this decision was not strictly enforced as on Feb.3, 1967, the Central Committee and the State Council issued another circular to stipulate that "The revolutionary teachers and students and the Red Guards who have come to Beijing and have not paid for their meals are as a rule required to pay for their meals as from February 8, and no more free meals will be provided from that date." On November 16, 1966, it was stipulated that the *chuanlian*, mainly on foot, would be resumed from April 1967. But the *chuanlian* movement was officially called off on March 19 1967 in that "the tasks of struggle-criticism-transformation [at local levels] are very complicated and heavy." See *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1967*, Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, 1968, pp.108-111, pp.127-129, pp.227-232, and p.378.

enterprises, to change their small factories from collective ownership into state ownership, and to redirect their small factories' affiliation in the hope of effecting centralized management by the state, and so forth.⁴⁹ As can be seen, most of their economic demands were reasonable, but if all the demands were to be satisfied within a short period of time, as the Shanghai power holders attempted to do on the eve and during the January Storm, the Shanghai economy, even the national economy would surely collapse. In point of fact, the consequence of this kind of “wind of economism” turned out to be devastating.

Actually, this was a vested strategy for the Shanghai bureaucrats aimed at putting a stop the momentum of the CR. Right after the Anting Incident, in order to know more about the inside stories of the WGH, Mayor Cao Diqui ordered Xia Mingfang, the deputy director of the Shanghai Industrial Political Department, to form the “Liaison Post of the Workers’ Revolutionary Organizations”. Instructed by Mayor Cao, Xia Mingfang taught the staff persons of the Post to “do political work through economic work”, that is, to attain the SPC’s own political goal with money.⁵⁰ The first secretary of the SPC Chen Pixian once openly instructed his subordinates to relax on economic issues: “You should not be obstructionist to the masses. Some issues, if possible, should be resolved.” “You should not be very strict with economic demands of the masses. Do not go against the masses’ wishes.”⁵¹ In mid-November,

⁴⁹ See *Jianjue datui you yigu jingji zhuyi yaofeng (Resolutely Repel another Evil Wind of Economism)*. This is an editorial of *Jiefang ribao (Liberation Daily)* in Shanghai, January 25, 1967.

⁵⁰ *Shanghai shiwei canku zhengya gongren yundong de zuize nantao (The SPC Cannot Escape From the Criminal Responsibility of Ruthlessly Suppressing Workers’ Movement)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, Nos. 2-3 (Combined issue), Jan 17, 1967, ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. p.51.

⁵¹ See the pamphlet “Annals of Opposing the Economism in Shanghai During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (For Discussion, Nov. 1966- March 15,1967)” (*Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming zhong Shanghai*

many sent-down workers, who returned from remote border areas and were assigned temporary jobs in factories, demonstrated against the Shanghai authorities about the unjust assignments and payments in the allocation system. In response, Wang Shaoyong, a senior cadre and deputy secretary of the Shanghai party, conveniently characterized this as merely an economic issue and promised to offer the protestors two million yuan per year in payment, yet did not address at all how to solve the underlying problems in the labor system. Thereafter, out of Wang Shaoyong's promise, a work group, led by a senior cadre Wang Ke, was formed to handle this allocation issue. This resolution, as an anti-economist narrative pointed out, "was a plot set up by Shanghai's black heads of the Party Committee, Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu, which meant to change the direction of struggle and marked the start of the evil wind of economism."⁵²

Invigorated by the initial success of sent-down workers, many workers from various underprivileged backgrounds united and raised similar economic issues to the Shanghai authorities. In order to cater to the needs of those who rebelled for economic reasons, the SPC set up a special group on Nov. 29, headed by vice mayor Song Richang, to handle workers who complained about the labor system and wage payments. As long as complaints and demands were economic in nature, Mayor Song's responses were always positive and he was ready to sign anything related to economic demands. Another senior cadre Wang Litian said: "My concern is how to establish good relationships with those rebelling for economic reasons. We should be

fandui jingji zhuyi dashiji (taolun gao, 1966.11-1967.3.15), Compiled by the Liaison General Headquarters of Opposing the Economism, Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, March 17, 1967.

⁵² Ibid.

very generous as long as we can make it.” Consequently, it was no surprise when the founders of the Sent-down-to-rural Workers’ Headquarters requested an outlay of one hundred yuan for this organization, Wang Litian offered them 200 yuan instead.

Several days later, these workers raised other 21 demands, most of which were economic in nature, such as trucks, propaganda vans, and etc. Without any hesitation, Wang Litian promised them all.⁵³

In the book *Zhang Chunqiao and Shanghai’s January Revolution*, Andrew Walder charged that the CCRG people in Beijing, rather than the local power holders, were the criminals who unleashed the spate of economism nationwide. The first evidence Walder mentioned took place on Dec. 26, when “Jiang Qing met with a delegation of temporary and contract workers in Peking and endorsed their demands while denouncing the Ministry of Labor and Liu Shaoqi for supporting the ‘corrupt’ contract labor system.” Walder claimed that it was one of the two reasons that triggered the wind of economism. But a careful reading of the dialogues between the delegation and Jiang Qing reveals that the wind of economism related to the issue of temporary and contract workers had already been fanned by the old power holders in some places before Jiang Qing’s remarks. One of the delegates reported to Jiang Qing that currently the power holders in some units were doing sabotage and playing tricks. For example, one day before, the power holders in the Chinese Academy of Sciences had decided to immediately turn all contract workers into full time workers, in the hope of calming the workers’ fighting will.⁵⁴ While condemning Liu Shaoqi’s

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ In fact, as Cao Diqui later confessed, as early as November, 1966 the SPC signed to convert elementary schools

operation of the temporary and contract worker system, apparently, Jiang Qing opposed the immediate abolishment of such a system. Against the power holders' new move to promote temporary and contract workers to full time workers immediately, Jiang Qing encouraged workers to oppose this kind of economism. She said: "You should reject their offering of turning you into full time workers. You contract workers want revolution!" In this dialogue, Jiang Qing did propose to pay back wages to the temporary and contract workers, albeit under strict conditions: during the CR it is forbidden to fire temporary and contract workers, who should be duly paid; those laid-off workers after June 1, 1966 (possibly for political reasons) have to be granted jobs in their original units and their wages should be paid back to them.⁵⁵ The numbers of such workers who were laid off between June 1, 1966 and Dec. 26, 1966 in Shanghai should not be very big. Therefore, the argument can not be made that Jiang Qing's speech had triggered the wind of conomism. If the numbers of such workers in Shanghai were large, it would conversely argue against Walder's claim that the Shanghai authority represented by Mayor Cao Diqui did not fiercely suppress the masses.

Another piece of evidence that Walder used to accuse the CCRG of being the major criminal who propagated economism was the editorial of the *People's Daily*

run by the local people to state-run ones. This gave an early green light to the economism. Contract workers from rural areas were unusually sent by rural communes, in the condition that the contract workers should pay some amount of money they earned in cities to their original communes. At the beginning of November, the old SPC agreed to the demands of contract workers from rural areas to raise their personal shares of payment compared to the shares of communes, and so forth. See Cao Diqui, *Cao Diqui's Self-Criticism(Cao Diqui de jiancha)*, March 12, 1966. From <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=12215> cited on Dec. 13, 2009.

⁵⁵ *Jiang Qing Chen Boda Kangsheng deng jiejian quanguo hongse laodongzhe zaofan zongtuan bufen daibiao shi de jianghua (Talks of Jiang Qing, Chen Boda and Kangsheng Et Al With Some Representatives of the Nationwide Red Workers Rebel Corps)*, Dec. 26, 1966, from *Research Materials of the Great Cultural Revolution (Wenhua da geming yanjiu ziliao)*, Vol. I, pp.191-193., Beijing: Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun guofang daxue dangshi dangjian zhengong jiaoyan shi, 1988.

“Welcome the Upsurge of the Great CR in the Factories and Mines” released on the same day when Jiang Qing met with the workers’ delegation, possibly in accordance with the CCRG’s suggestion. Walder argues that this editorial “more than any other single event” was what “triggered the incidence of ‘economism’ in Shanghai.”⁵⁶ But in fact, this directive just elaborated on Jiang Qing’s suggestions in the delegation meeting. Walder did not quote the original text of this editorial, and his arguments could be deduced from the following sentences, “The Party Center stipulates that during the great CR, the leaders of any factories and mines can not revenge and persecute the masses who advance criticism and disclose facts; and it is forbidden to reduce or hold wages, fire workers, or expel contract workers and temporary workers because of this....those revolutionary workers who are persecuted and forced to leave factories should be allowed to return to their factories to take part in production and the CR. Revolutionary workers’ wages since their forced leaving should be paid back.”⁵⁷ If Walder insisted that this directive alone triggered the economism, then it should be the “Party Center” as a whole, including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, not just the CCRG, that should be held responsible. But obviously, the directive was aimed at protecting the workers, including the contract and temporary workers from being politically persecuted and subjected to economic revenge. However, it did not necessarily mean that a huge amount of money should be given away.

On January 1, 1967, moderated by Mayor Cao Diqui, with the attendance of some major senior cadres of the SPC such as Wang Yipping, Song Richang, Song

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.47.

⁵⁷ *Yingjie gongkuang qiye wenhua dageming de gaochao (Welcome the Upsurge of the Great CR in the Factories and Mines)*, in *People’s Daily*, Dec.26, 1966.

Jiwen, Zhang Chengzong, Wang Ke, a special yet secret meeting was held and a 5-point guidance to promote workers' wages and welfare was passed in accordance with Chen Pixian's instructions of "relaxing on economic issues".⁵⁸ The key goal of this meeting was to "please the masses and stabilize the situation". Mayor Cao even said, "As with the current issues, it is no use to ask instructions from the Center and the State Council. Let's do it first."⁵⁹

This meeting exerted decisive influence upon Shanghai's economy. After this meeting, all the city authorities were busy promoting wages and giving away bonus and compensations to the underprivileged workers and other people. Take the East China Electrical Management Bureau for example, the total monthly amount of wages paid out had been 330,000 yuan; but at this point, the Bureau disbursed 1.28 million yuan as compensation wages to workers—equivalent to about 4 months of the original payments.⁶⁰ The rebels even called the Director and Party secretary of this Bureau, Chang Peichi, the "King of Signing".⁶¹ In another case, when a sampan rower Wu Chunhua and her 17 workmates went to the Shanghai Communication Bureau to inquire why the power holders reduced their wages from 70 yuan per month before

⁵⁸ The 5-point guidance was: 1. All workers sent down as part of the streamlining campaign after 1958 must be given work in their original factories. 2. Unemployed youths must be assigned jobs. 3. Street industries can wear the "hat" of the state enterprise and augment their insurance and welfare systems appropriately. 4. Grade-five suburban wages may be raised to the level of grade-eight. 5. Long-term temporary and contract workers can become regular workers. See *Yaofeng hechu qi, "yanwangdian li" chu: jie yiyue yiri shiwei heihui neimu (Where is the Evil Wind [of Economism] From? It is From the "Palace of Hell": Disclosing the Low-down of the Black Meeting of the SPC on Jan. 1)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 4, Jan 25, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.23-24. The English translation of the 5-point guidance here was quoted from Perry and Li Xun, 1997, p.114.

⁵⁹ *Yaofeng hechu qi, "yanwangdian li" chu: jie yiyue yiri shiwei heihui neimu (Where is the Evil Wind [of Economism] From? It is From the "Palace of Hell": Disclosing the Low-down of the Black Meeting of the SPC on Jan. 1)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 4, Jan 25, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.23-24.

⁶⁰ *Jingji zhanxian shang de yichang zhengzhi zhan (A Political Fight at the Economic Battlefield)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 4, Jan 25, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. p.27.

⁶¹ *Chouqian mai budao geming zaofanzhe de hongxing (The Stinking Money Cannot Buy Off Revolutionary Rebels' Red Hearts)*, *Ibid.* p. 30.

1956 to 40 yuan per month after 1956, out of blue, the deputy director of the Shanghai communication Bureau, Zhou Yifan, proposed on his own initiative that they pay the workers ten years' compensatory wages since 1956. Therefore, the 18 workers received 22,600 yuan altogether and Wu Chunhua and her husband, both sampan rowers, received 4,128 yuan, which was a large amount of money at that time.⁶² According to incomplete statistics, in just the first seven days in 1967, due to the wind of economism, thirty eight million yuan was withdrawn from Shanghai banks.

The policy in rural areas was even worse. At the end of 1966, in accordance with the so-called “grand democratic way of distribution,” the slogan of the Shanghai authorities was to “grant all the funds to peasants”. Thus, within a short time, many rural brigades in Shanghai ran out of funds for production in 1967. Obviously, these actions directed by cadres in effect threw the whole city into a state of financial crisis and disrupted the market. With such a financial deluge, the money flow for production would soon be drained dry. But the market appeared to be booming. In the first 8 days of January, for example, the sales amount of the No.1 Chinese Department Store increased 36.3% compared with the same period last year. As numerous workers rushed into the stores, the stocks of much merchandise ran out. On January 8, the store had just opened its door when more than three hundred workers dashed in to buy bicycles. Even many super-luxury commodities such as imported watches, though priced at four to five hundred yuan (almost equal to one year's wage of a common

⁶² Wu Chunhua, *Chaopiao shoumai buliao women gongren (We Workers Cannot Be Bought By Money)*, in *Worker's Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No.3, Jan.14, 1967.

worker), were swiftly cleaned out and went to the wrists of happy customers. Sales of high-class nylon materials increased many fold. People worried not about money, but about what to buy in case the shops ran out of stock.⁶³ If nothing was done to check this trend, it seemed that the market would soon have a scant supply of commodities.

Running into a great gamble, the cadres soon found that there would be more to lose than to gain in this devastated financial deluge. On the one hand, it made clear that underprivileged laborers were not willing to be ruled over without redressing their grievances; on the other hand, the Shanghai authorities could not rule the people in the same old way, which oppressively decided the workers' fate without consensus between the ruled and the ruler. Yet what the authorities did dealt a heavy blow to Shanghai's economy and in fact drove it into a politically suicidal condition: promoters of the CR in Beijing would never tolerate the ongoing economic bankruptcy of China's biggest city, and the rebels would lose no chance of carrying out a power seizure. In the face of the chaotic economic and political situation, for both the Center and the rebels, the SPC could no longer be trusted as a responsible political entity to run the city. With this in mind, the rebels began to think of seizing power. Because those in power not only did not sincerely carry out the CR further, but seemed to put the normal operation of the city at risk, the issue of power seizure occurred to the rebels for the first time. On December 23, the Liaison Post of the WGH at Shanghai Port was expanded and renamed as the Port Headquarters of the

⁶³ See the pamphlet "Annals of Opposing the Economism in Shanghai During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (For Discussion, Nov.1966- March 15,1967)" (*Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming zhong shanghai fandui jingji zhuyi dashiji (taolun gao*, 1966.11-1967.3.15), Compiled by the Liaison General Headquarters of Opposing the Economism, Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, March 17, 1967.

WGH. At its founding inauguration, the rebels, different from those economic organizations, swore to seize power: “The seals of proletarian dictatorship should be in the firm hands of proletarian revolutionaries.”⁶⁴

The situation in Shanghai worsened with the advent of a general strike which the cadres sympathized with, anticipated, and to some extent directed. On December 24, Mayor Cao signed an eight demand petition requested by the Scarlet Guards at their rally of “Criticizing the Bourgeois Reactionary Line of the Shanghai Municipal Committee,” and proclaimed that the Scarlet Guards was a revolutionary mass organization. Moreover, he went so far as to announce that whatever commitments the SPC made to the WGH were null and void. The next day, in response, the WGH and its allies held a huge rally to “Criticize the Bourgeois Reactionary Line of the Shanghai Municipal Committee Headed by Cao Diqui”. Present at this rally, Mayor Cao had to apologize for meeting the demands of the Scarlet Guards and vehemently proclaimed that it was the time to exert “proletarian dictatorship” over them, which, in the vocabulary at that time, meant to announce that the Scarlet Guards were counter revolutionary and should be demolished, and the major leaders of it should be jailed. Mayor Cao’s quickly shifting stance, without a doubt, caused the relationship between the WGH and the Scarlet Guards to deteriorate. Mayor Cao’s call for exerting “proletarian dictatorship” over the Scarlet Guards instigated the armed struggle between the two workers factions. To protest against Mayor Cao’s new stance, the Scarlet Guards decided to send a huge number of workers to Beijing to make an

⁶⁴ See “Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution” (*Yiyue geming shengli wansui*), from *Workers’ Rebel News* (*Gongren zaofan bao*), by the WGH, Jan. 12, 1968.

appeal. On December 25, the rebel Port Headquarters seized “black files” (that is, some evidence that could later be used to retaliate against rebel workers) secretly collected by the Party branch of Shanghai Port. In response to this, the Scarlet Guards of the Shanghai Port formed their own Port Headquarters, intensifying the struggles between two gigantic worker rivals day by day. At the same day, arranged by power-holders in the Railway Bureau of the Shanghai Municipal Committee and leaders of the Scarlet Guards, two trains loaded with conservative workers set off to Beijing to indict the SPC. Meanwhile, to force the SPC to rehabilitate its reputation, to teach a lesson to the rebels, and to exert pressure upon the rebels’ supporters in the Center, the Scarlet Guards called its leaders for a meeting and decided to take a long shot gamble. Their new strategy was to make the whole greater Shanghai grind to a halt. Since the majority of the Scarlet Guards consisted of members of the Communist Party and Communist Youth League, who usually were model workers or skilled permanent workers and held most of the management and administrative posts in enterprises, they got support, overtly or covertly, from authorities at most levels. The Scarlet Guards thus had the capacity and will to shut down the city of Shanghai. After the meeting, part of Shanghai Port was shut down with a general strike by the Scarlet Guards.

December 28 witnessed the outbreak of the Kangping Road Incident. In order to settle scores with Mayor Cao’s label that the Scarlet Guards (hence all the 800,000 Scarlet Guards members) were “counter revolutionaries”, several tens of thousands of Scarlet Guards flooded into Kangping Street, where the SPC was located. Even

though their main target was Mayor Cao and was not to bring down the SPC, they demanded that the SPC re-validate the “8 demands” that Mayor Cao had betrayed. Provided the SPC made Mayor Cao apologize or even had Mayor Cao dismissed, the Scarlet Guards would be on the side of the SPC again. Nonetheless, because of this demonstration, many factories stood still and sustained huge losses in production. As the Shanghai authorities could not appease the enraged workers, out of discontent with the pro-rebel Zhang Chunqiao, many Scarlet Guards took their angry demonstration to Zhang’s residence in the same street, shouting that “it is right to rebel against Zhang Chunqiao”. For them, Zhang Chunqiao was the man behind the scenes who manipulated the rebel movement in Shanghai, and they wanted to argue with him. Because some of them went directly to Zhang Chunqiao’s house, it was widely rumored that the Scarlet Guards ransacked Zhang’s home, and even the house of the late Shanghai mayor Ke Qingshi, who had been a sturdy Maoist and a strong supporter for Jiang Qing’s model operas before his death in 1965.⁶⁵ At the time, the Scarlet Guards openly proclaimed to Zhang’s wife at home that if no responsible people from the Center showed up and solved the issues before 18:00 pm, all the water and electricity supply and transportation would be totally shut down in the whole city. Meanwhile, a large number of Scarlet Guards laid siege to some rebel workers from the nearby six provinces (and Shanghai) which were under the jurisdiction of the East China Bureau of CCP, who staged a sit-in outside the Chinese Department Store. Furthermore, the WGH rebels and students clashed with many

⁶⁵ According to Scarlet Guards leaflets authored by Zhang Chunqiao’s daughter Zhang Weiwei, who was a loyalist, some Scarlet Guards did mistakenly enter into Zhang Chunqiao’s and Ke Qingshi’s houses, but they did not do house searching in either place.

more Scarlet Guards outside the Hengshan Hotel. Low-intensity conflicts of violence erupted across the city. Upon learning of the Kangping incident, Ma Tianshui, a secretary of the SPC, informed Zhang Chunqiao in Beijing via phone of the rumored house-searching of his residence by the Scarlet Guards and their threat to shut down the whole city.⁶⁶ Possibly encouraged by Zhang Chunqiao, the WGH immediately sent out contingents of propaganda teams and loudspeaker vans to launch a political offensive and debate with the Scarlet Guards, though still outnumbered by their adversaries. But the situation changed dramatically when 200,000 rebels led by Geng Jinzhang, the obstinate and unruly commander of the Second Corps of the WGH arrived at Kangping Street – since Geng’s rebels did not hesitate to use force. Under attacks from 200,000 rebels, the Scarlet Guards were utterly and quickly disheartened since most of them were merely motivated by cadres within a short time thus had neither a strong fighting will nor battle experiences like the rebels had in Anting. Moreover, severely castigated by rebels and common citizens, the rumored unreasonable yet fruitless house-search in Zhang Chunqiao’s residence in fact led to their own demoralization. When ferocious rebels descended on the Scarlet Guards swinging punches, understandably, many of them took off their arm bands and escaped the battle field. The gigantic loyalist workers’ organization in Shanghai collapsed due to this battle. After that, there were no major loyalist organizations defending the SPC and challenging the rebel forces. Furthermore, the SPC could not resort to the PLA for support either because the Shanghai garrison, in keeping with

⁶⁶ Wang Nianyi, *Da dongluan de niandai (Years of Great Turmoil)*, Zhengzhou: He’nan renmin chubanshe, 1988, p.169.

Mao and Lin Biao's directive of non-involvement in the local CR, had refused the SPC's request of taking over the SPC and stabilizing the situation on the SPC side in the early days of December 1966. The PLA had not yet been ordered to support "leftists". With the loss of solid support from the masses and the army, the power of the SPC was hence dramatically reduced. Naturally, the wholesale defeat of the Scarlet Guards led directly to the January Revolution.

The actions of the Scarlet Guards in effect paralyzed the whole city. As the Kangping Street battle wore on, at two o'clock on December 30, a commander of the Railway Liaison Post of the Scarlet Guards called relevant members through related railway control rooms to go to the rescue in Kangping Street. Almost all workers belonging to the Scarlet Guards in railway sections walked off from their working stations. As a result, all trains were stuck on the tracks and no inbound or outbound railway transportation was available. On the same day, all post offices stopped working as well.⁶⁷ But all these mobilizations could not prevent the Scarlet Guards from a debacle. Their defeat in the Kangping Incident directly triggered the Kunshan battle between the two workers' factions. Enraged with the harsh treatments they received from the WGH-affiliated rebels, the defeated Scarlet Guards staged a mass exodus from Shanghai which involved 60,000 to 100,000 workers' (numbers vary according to different sources) beginning on Dec. 30 – the superficial reason they gave was that they aimed to "reach Peking and protest the rebels to the Central

⁶⁷ For the planning and practice of the general strike by the Scarlet Guards, see *Qingkan chiweidui yixiaocuo lingdaoren de yige fangeming dayinmou (Please Have a Look of the Great Counterrevolutionary Conspiracy manufactured by a handful of leaders of the Scarlet Guards)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 4, Jan 25, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.31-33.

Committee about the violence they had suffered at the hands of the Rebels.”⁶⁸ But obviously, it was not necessary to send a 60,000 to 100, 000 workers’ protesting team to Beijing while leaving an entire city abandoned behind. And they also knew very well that in the five rebel demands signed by Zhang Chunqiao and later approved by the Central Committee and the CCRG, one article of it clearly stated that “for similar cases in the future, workers should send their representatives instead.” Nevertheless, nobody cared about this stipulation. In more than 300 trucks (or simply on foot), thousands of Scarlet Guards drove off, heading for Beijing. Their action received full logistic support from local authorities. For example, “They got gasoline from a factory store, and the Kunshan County Committee gave them 100,000 yuan.”⁶⁹ At 2:00 pm, more than 100 rebels decided to chase the departing Scarlet Guards and tried to persuade them to come back to work. When the handful of rebels arrived at Kunshan, facing the resistance of numerous Scarlet Guards, fights broke out. Aiming to rescue the outnumbered rebels in Kunshan as well as out of the anxiety of damaging production in Shanghai, the WGH sent a formidable 200,000 force to Kunshan. Once again, the Scarlet Guards suffered a disgraceful defeat. Countless Scarlet Guards had to pick off their arm bands and hide in local sympathizers’ houses.

**The Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production:
New Power Organ and Self-governance of Workers in Shanghai
Glass Factory**

⁶⁸ Neale Hunter 1969, p.197.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.198.

Eventually, by January 9, several tens of thousands of loyalist workers, with the encouragement and assistance of the Shanghai power holders, successfully arrived in Beijing.⁷⁰ The general strike of the Scarlet Guards severely affected Shanghai's production. Between Dec 25, 1966 and the middle of Jan. 1967, at the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory—a public-private joint enterprise that employed more than 1,200 workers—a good many loyalist Scarlet Guards stopped going to work. Where were they? They were busy protesting against Mayor Cao's betrayal of the Scarlet Guards, as well as against the factory rebels' detention of and struggle with Yu Zixiang, one of the power holders at the Factory. A large number of lower-middle cadres, who were members of the Scarlet Guards and supposedly in charge of production, walked off their posts as well. As a result, the working drawings were kept locked, production schedule was totally disrupted, and production virtually stopped in this factory.⁷¹

Take the casting shop of the factory for example. During the Kunshan exodus, 35 out of 140 casting workers left their working stations, about two-thirds of the foundry workers and half the production team leaders walked off; and among 4 technicians, only one remained in the factory. As for the three cadres in the casting shop, two of them who supported the walkout, were busy feeding steamed bread to those departing

⁷⁰ Sun Weifan, *Qinghua wenge qingli: Sun Weifan riji (Experiencing the Qinghua's CR: The Dairy of Sun Weifan)*, Hong Kong: Xianggang xinshiji chubanshe, 2008, p.104. Among this figure, at least 1,500 workers were in the official "fu zhongyang gaozhuang tuan" (The Complaining Team to the Center), which was organized by the Shanghai Scarlet Guards. See *Jinggangshan zengkan (Jinggangshan supplementary issue)*, in January 10, 1967, ed. by Jinggangshan Editorial Department of Qinghua University.

⁷¹ The Regiment of Learning the Industry of the Shanghai Kongjiang Middle School's Mao Zedong Thought Revolutionary Committee Stationed at Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory (*Shanghai Kongjiang zhongxue Mao Zedong sixiang geming weiyuanhui zhu Shanghai boli jixiechang xuegong bingtuan*), *Weida de chuangu: relie huanhu geming shengchan weiyuanhui de dansheng (The Great Creation: Warmly Hailing the Birth of the Committee of Grasping the Revolution and Promoting the Production)*, Jan.12, 1967. A Leaflet.

people every day. Production was simply ignored and machines were at a standstill.

Out of such a difficult situation, as early as Dec. 27, a wall poster calling for power seizure was put up, stating that as the original leading group in the factory no longer paid much attention to production, it was necessary to replace them with a “Workers’ Committee of Production Management” (later renamed the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production, *geming shengchan weiyuanhui*). This wall poster attracted a great number of workers and over one hundred workers signed their names to show their approval of this poster right on the spot. According to an investigation of this factory by some Red Guards from the Shanghai Kongjiang Middle School who were stationed there, this poster provoked heated debates and drastic struggles among rebel activists,

Some people said: “The old leadership is wily, and we can use them to manage the technological issues.” But some vigorously opposed this idea, and held that they should thoroughly make the revolution without any compromise with them. To rebel means to make new roads, not borrow an [old] road. It is not creditable to rely on the old leadership. As the masses could tell the truth clearly, a hot debate was held in the factory. And 80 percent of the masses agreed that all the four section managers of the old leadership should step down and work in plants. “Grasping revolution and promoting production” or the idea of pure production? During the preparatory stage of the committee, one comrade who was in charge of liaison work in the committee talked only about shop drawings and production plans with other committee members. That was an example of narrowing things to pure production. Contrary to this, some others proposed to mobilize the masses for “grasping revolution and promoting production” and refused to be swayed over to the side of pure production. They put forward a sharp-cut slogan “all powers go to the revolutionary left!” To do revolutionary work we must follow the mass line. One comrade who was originally responsible for liaisons worked four days and achieved nothing, as he did not follow the mass line. Once he put politics in

command and followed the mass line, his section was quickly established.⁷²

After the debates, some rules of the proposed new power organ were established: cadres taking part in collective productive labor; putting politics in command and rejecting the idea of only paying attention to production; giving all powers to the revolutionary left; and applying the principle of from the masses, to the masses. As hundreds of the Scarlet Guards in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory walked off to join the protest against the SPC, the rebels who kept working in the factory decided to take responsibility for running the whole factory, even with a shortage of hands. On Dec. 30, when the battle between the Scarlet Guards and rebel workers roared in Shanghai, initiated by the rebels and in accordance with the principle of the Paris Commune, the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production—a brand new power organ—was officially established through a “Paris Commune-style general election” in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory. Through secret ballots, workers in the factory elected 10 people at the levels of the work team, workshop, and section office. A striking feature of this “Paris Commune style” election was that all the “chief” (*zhang*) titles were discarded. All the elected people were called “servants” (*fuwuyuan*) as the rebels maintained that they were not rebelling for personal or private interests, but in order to eliminate revisionism and build socialism. Every elected “servant” should dedicate themselves to “serving the

⁷² The Regiment of Learning the Industry of the Shanghai Kongjiang Middle School and Journalists of Red Guards Battle News, *Weida Mao Zedong sixiang buyu xia de you yi xinzheng shiwu: Shanghai boli jixiechang geming shengchan weiyuanhui diaocha baogao, kongjiang zhongxue xuegong bingtuan, hongwei zhanbao jizhe* (Another New Thing Nurtured by the Great Mao Zedong’s Thought: An Investigation Report of the Committee of Grasping the Revolution and Promoting the Production in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory), quoted from *People’s Daily*, Jan. 23, 1967.

people.” Some people had confidence in the Party but not in the rebels. They were not convinced by the rebels’ power seizure and criticized the agitators for showing off and just trying to ambitiously usurp the power for themselves: “You want to take power? (It is because) someone wants to be section chief himself! ” And the committee explained to the masses,

It is necessary for the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production to seize power. The committee has contended for power for the CCP, for the people, for Mao Zedong Thought. It would not work if we do not contend. It is a must. This counts for much for our nation’s destiny and future. To let some revolutionary leftists take power is not equal to putting the power merely in the hands of a bunch of individuals who are in office. Servants of the Committee are not in the slightest sense the old power holders. The committee will endeavor to break with the four olds and establish the four news, and form a brand new mode of relationships among the people.⁷³

More or less, this was a real attempt to revolutionize the socialist management and relationships among the people in the factory in accordance with with the view Mao had expressed in his enthusiastic affirmation of the so-called Constitution of the Anshan Iron and Steel Complex (the “An’gang constitution,” for short) (1960). In the pre-CR years, most enterprises in China just followed Fordist and Taylorist ways of running factories, which were introduced from the USSR— characterized by hierarchical order and a rigid division of labor. Just as William Hinton astutely pointed out:

⁷³ Ibid. The "four olds" means the old ideas, culture, customs and habits; and the "four news" means the new ideas, culture, customs and habits.

At every step of the way, however, Mao's line met opposition and resistance, primarily from a more "orthodox" group at the center that considered the party to be above external supervision and capable of self-rectification without immersing itself in great mass movements of the people. This group, disregarding the masses as creators of history, relied on planners; instead, stressed technology and expertise, hierarchy and one-man management. It one-sidedly pushed material incentive as the key to progress and neglected groundwork for the building of socialism.⁷⁴

But during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), a period of boosting technical innovations and political revolutions in Chinese enterprises, Ma Bing, the Party secretary of the Anshan Iron and Steel Complex, based on revolutionary experiences in promoting production, submitted *A Report of Technical Innovations and Revolutions on the Industrial Front* to the Central Committee in Beijing. This industrial report was named and hailed by Mao as "An'gang constitution", characterized by "Two Participations, One Reformation, and Three Combinations", that is, cadres participate in production labor and workers participate in management; replacing those unreasonable with reasonable rules and regulations; and combining leading cadres, technicians, and workers together in carrying out technical innovations and revolutions. In his comments on Ma Bing's report, Mao praised that "the An'gang Constitution has emerged in the Far East, in China." The Soviet style Fordist and Taylorist way of industrial management was in fact vertical and hierarchical, under which managers were usually appointed by direct leaders, not through general elections by the masses, hence they only bore responsibility for leaders, not for workers, and could hardly include the initiatives of the workers. This happened in the

⁷⁴ William Hinton, "Mao, Rural Development, and Two-Line Struggle", in *Monthly Review*, February 1994, vol. 45, issue 9, pp. 1-15.

Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory, too. In Feb. 6, 1955, the Party organ, the *People's Daily*, publicized a letter from a worker in this factory, complaining that factory leaders ignored a worker Jiang Shanhong's invention, which could improve productivity at least ten times in ampoule-production. Even though the power holders of the factory acknowledged that his invention was good, when Jiang Shanhong urged factory leaders to adopt his invention, they simply ignored him. Even Jiang's attempt to put up a wall poster to criticize the leaders was stopped. Similarly, in the same factory, another worker Shi Luguan invented a speed changer. It suffered the same fate as Jiang Shanhong's invention. At the end of the letter, the author claimed that there were numerous similar cases in his factory that "not only frustrated creativity, but also made the country suffer unnecessary losses."⁷⁵ Even though Mao gave a high evaluation on the "An'gang Constitution" during the Great Leap Forward, some years later, most enterprises still did not adopt Mao's industrial policy in line with the An'gang Constitution until Mao put forward a strong call for "learning from Daqing in industry" in 1964. Nevertheless, so long as the cadres and managers did not revolutionize their minds to serve the people, and factory workers could not freely elect their managers from their own ranks, gains from new industrial reformation of management would be limited.

In 1965, Mao wrote a poignant criticism of the emerging "capitalists" in the socialist education movement, which touched upon the issue of management and the risk of managers becoming bureaucrats,

⁷⁵ A Worker from the Shanghai Glass Factory, "The Shanghai Glass Factory Does Not Pay Much Attention to Reasonable Advices of the Workers", *People's Daily*, Feb. 6, 1955.

Management is a kind of socialist education as well. If managerial staff don't go to workshops to eat, live, and labor together with workers (*santong*), and learn from master workers one or several skills, they will stay in a state of tense class struggle with the working class forever; and they can only be seen as bourgeois and will finally be brought down by the working class. If one doesn't learn technology and stay a layperson over a long period of time, one will not be good at any management. It's no good to try to enlighten others while remaining in darkness and confusion oneself.

The class of bureaucratists stands in sharp opposition with the working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants. These people have become or are becoming bourgeois elements who suck the workers' blood. How can they realize this? They are the objects of struggle and revolution. Never depend on them in the socialist education movement. What we can depend on are those cadres who are not hated by workers, and are imbued with a revolutionary spirit.⁷⁶

Apparently, if managers and experts disengaged themselves from manual labor, it would be very hard for them to know the feelings and wishes of common workers. Detaching themselves from the masses and privileged by high salaries and perks, those bureaucrats and technocrats were prone to form their own interest group, which was identified by Mao as the bureaucratist class. This dangerous inclination really concerned Mao. Once the interest group was formed, in order to consolidate the status quo and expand more interests, the bureaucratist class would try their best to institute a vertical system of management, emphasizing the "technology and expertise, hierarchy and one-man management", as William Hinton pointed out above. This mode of management not only stifled the initiatives of workers, as seen in the Shanghai Glass Factory in pre-CR years, but also and more importantly suppressed

⁷⁶ Mao Zedong, "Comments on Comrade Chen Zhengren's Report of His On-the-spot Investigation" (*Dui Chen Zhengren tongzhi dundian baogao de pishi*), Jan. 29, 1965, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.227, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968, for details about this collection, see note 27.

workers' democratic rights. Where there is oppression, there is resistance. Mao warned that once the workers' hatred for these vampires got to be too much to bear, then this bureaucratist class could be quickly overthrown. That is exactly what happened in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory with the January Storm in the last days of 1966, when the cadres and conservative workers who followed them went on strike for the Kangping and Kunshan battles. The rebel workers of the Glass Factory, grasping a rare historical chance, kicked out all the old bureaucratic cadres since they believed that "these cadres have already been degraded to be the objects of the revolution. You can neither grasp revolution, nor promote production without removing them."⁷⁷ In carrying forward the extensive democracy of the proletariat and a Paris Commune-style general election, the glass factory formed a self-governance entity, a workers' power organ that effected a kind of flat system of management that ran counter to the hierarchical and vertical system of management instituted by the old bureaucrats and technocrats. For the first time in this factory, the right to manage and run a factory were entirely in the hands of common workers. This was considered the most important way to prevent the restoration of a privileged class. The action in the Shanghai Glass Factory was in fact one part of the January Storm. The January Storm, sometimes also called the January Revolution, refers to the power seizure movement by Shanghai rebels from the end of 1966 to the early February of 1967 that made possible the establishment of the Shanghai Commune. This mass-initiated movement was legitimated by a message of greeting from the Center and the CCRG

⁷⁷ "In Praise of the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production" (*Zan geming shengchan weiyuanhui*), from *Red Guard Battle News (Hongwei zhanbao)*, Shanghai, Jan., 1967, quoted from *People's Daily*, Jan.23, 1967.

on Jan 11.⁷⁸

The seemingly trivial change of abandoning all the “chief” titles in the Shanghai Glass Factory was formal and symbolic, but what it revolutionized in practice went far beyond that. The 10 workers elected as “servants of the people” in the factory could be classified as working in three categories: production, the workers’ union and political life. In line with the principles of the Paris Commune, all of them were subject to be recalled at anytime if the masses were dissatisfied. “This carries forward and guarantees the realization of the extensive democracy of the proletariat in the most adequate and effective way.”⁷⁹ After assuming their responsibilities, all the elected servants of the people decided not to hang around in offices, nor sit on sofas. Instead, they always carried their working tools. Having this position was like a part time job, and their main job being working on the shop-floor with the common workers. But what disappeared was the deep-rooted phenomena of having cadres who stood high above and detached from the masses and practice. Furthermore, the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production solemnly proclaimed:

⁷⁸ See “Message of Greetings to Revolutionary Rebel Organizations in Shanghai, From the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the State Council, the Military Commission of the Party’s Central Committee and the Cultural Revolution Group Under the Party’s Central Committee” (*Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan zhongyang junwei zhongyang wenge xiaozu gei Shanghai shi ge geming zaofan tuanti de hedian*), in *People’s Daily* Jan. 12, 1967, the English version can be found at *Peking Review*, No. 4, January 20, 1967. After the term “January Revolution” was coined in Shanghai and then a People’s Daily editorial on Jan. 31, 1967 used “the storm of January Revolution” to promote Shanghai’s model to the whole country. See “On the Proletarian Revolutionaries’ Struggle to Seize Power” (*Lun wuchan jieji geming pai de duoquan douzheng*), from *People’s Daily* Jan. 31, 1967, and the English version can be found at *Peking Review*, No. 6, February 3, 1967. See also “Zhang Chunqiao’s Speech at the Enlarged Session of the Central Military Committee” (*Zhang Chunqiao zai junwei kuoda huiyi shang de jianghua*), April 14, 1967, from *Research Materials of the Great Cultural Revolution (Wenhua da geming yanjiu ziliao)*, Vol. I, p.424, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun guofang daxue dangshi dangjian zhenggong jiaoyan shi, 1988.

⁷⁹ The Regiment of Learning the Industry of the Shanghai Kongjiang Middle School and Journalists of Red Guards Battle News, “Another New Thing Nurtured by the Great Mao Zedong’s Thought: An Investigation Report of the Committee of Grasping the Revolution and Promoting the Production in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory” (*Weida Mao Zedong sixiang buyu xia de you yi xinzheng shiwu: Shanghai boli jixiechang geming shengchan weiyuanhui diaocha baogao, kongjiang zhongxue xuegong bingtuan, hongwei zhanbao jizhe*), quoted from *People’s Daily*, Jan. 23, 1967.

Our way of developing production is sharply different from those of imperialists and modern revisionists. Number one, we don't rely on coercion. Number two, we don't depend on material incentives. Instead, we depend on putting Mao Zedong thought in command, on political and ideological work, and on the revolutionization of people's mentality. We put the revolution in the first place, and use revolution to command and drive production.⁸⁰

After the establishment of the Committee, factory workers greatly improved their consciousnesses of building socialism and took the initiative to solve serious production problems due to the shortage of workers caused by the Scarlet Guards' strike or due to deliberate sabotage. For instance, when the technical instructions for producing products were hidden by some saboteurs in the No. 4 shop, the lacquerer team consisting of rebel workers in this shop tried very hard to do many experiments, and finally figured out the directions and fulfilled the job with flying colors.⁸¹ When politics were in command, monetary incentives were not a big concern and workers took an active part in creative work. Workers volunteered to take on extra work and stay overtime without any demand for extra bonuses. Take the lathemen in the Glass Factory for example. After completing their own work in the shop, they enthusiastically helped other workshops. Wang Weitai, an apprentice, brimmed with vigor and more than doubled his workload every day from machining 26 to 64 machine bases, ensuring those in the assembly section could complete their task. The

⁸⁰ The Regiment of Learning the Industry of the Shanghai Kongjiang Middle School's Mao Zedong Thought Revolutionary Committee Stationed at Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory (*Shanghai Kongjiang zhongxue Mao Zedong sixiang geming weiyuanhui zhu Shanghai boli jixiechang xuegong bingtuan*), *Weida de chuanguo: relie huanhu geming shengchan weiyuanhui de dansheng* (*The Great Creation: Warmly Hailing the Birth of the Committee of Grasping the Revolution and Promoting the Production*), Jan.12, 1967. A Leaflet.

⁸¹ *Mao Zhuxi de geming luxian youyi xin de shengli! Gongkuang wenhua dageming zhong yige chuanguo!* *Shanghai boli jixiechang jianli geming shengchan weiyuanhui* (Another New Victory of Chairman Mao's Revolutionary Line! A Creation amid the Great Cultural Revolution in Factories and Mines! Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory Established the Committee of Grasping the Revolution and Promoting the Production), in *People's Daily*, Jan. 14, 1967.

rigid division of labor regulated by the old bureaucrats and technocrats was shaken up as well. When there were no hands to take care of 800 scroll wheels, Wang Ying, a locksmith, changed his type of work and shouldered this heavy burden overtime, leaving his children at home unattended. Yan Jiazhong, a mechanical worker, fixed the long-broken pneumatic hammer on his own initiative, and so forth.

The Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production was ebulliently hailed by the Red Guards as a great socialist new thing,

It is the best new organizational form for the masses in industrial and mine enterprises to educate themselves under the leadership of the Party. It is the best bridge for our Party to closely connect to the masses. It is the power organ of the industrial and mine enterprises to carry out the GPCR, construction and production. It is a school of enforcing, defending and propagating Mao Zedong Thought. It is a great creation of the working class in our country. The Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production is a brand new organizational form in keeping abreast of the three big revolutionary movements in factories, viz. class struggle, production struggle and scientific experiment. This organizational form will exert far-reaching influence upon the great CR in factories.⁸²

The de facto self-governance of workers in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory also got high praise from the rebels and the Maoist leadership in Beijing. On Jan. 14, 1967, the Central Party organ of CCP, the *People's Daily* put out an article hailing the formation of the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production.⁸³ On January 23, the *People's Daily* reprinted two more articles that

⁸² The Regiment of Learning the Industry of the Shanghai Kongjiang Middle School's Mao Zedong Thought Revolutionary Committee Stationed at Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory (*Shanghai Kongjiang zhongxue Mao Zedong sixiang geming weiyuanhui zhu Shanghai boli jixiechang xuegong bingtuan*), *Weida de chuanguju: relie huanhu geming shengchan weiyuanhui de dansheng* (*The Great Creation: Warmly Hailing the Birth of the Committee of Grasping the Revolution and Promoting the Production*), Jan.12, 1967. A Leaflet.

⁸³ *Mao Zhuxi de geming luxian youyi xin de shengli! Gongkuang wenhua dageming zhong yige chuanguju! Shanghai boli jixiechang jianli geming shengchan weiyuanhui* (Another New Victory of Chairman Mao's Revolutionary Line! A Creation amid the Great Cultural Revolution in Factories and Mines! Shanghai Glass

glorified the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production, which was originally published in a Shanghai rebel students' tabloid, the *Red Guard Battle News*, hailing the Committee as representing the rudiments of a brand new communist organizational form and a "great creation", to use the phrase Lenin had used in the title of one of his articles. One of the articles in the *People's Daily* read,

It is a committee that grasps revolution as well as promotes production, a political, production and workers' committee spontaneously and consciously organized by the masses; it crystallizes the wisdom of the masses enlightened by the Mao Zedong Thought; it is a product of the general election system of the Paris Commune; and it is a committee that will give the four-olds and the revisionism a swinging attack and thorough opposition.⁸⁴

Seen as an embryo of communist organizational form, the Committee was said to point the way to revolutionize all factories and mines throughout the country. It heralded, to some degree, the coming of the Shanghai People's Commune. Nevertheless, this committee was constitutionally flawed because it excluded a good many conservative Scarlet Guards and almost all the old cadres who the rebels considered "capitalist roaders". And so did the Shanghai People's Commune. Later, the Committee in the Glass Factory had to incorporate representatives from rival workers as well as old cadres.

Wild Fire Spreads: A Counter-offensive of Economism and Mass

Machinery Factory Established the Committee of Grasping the Revolution and Promoting the Production), in *People's Daily*, Jan. 14, 1967.

⁸⁴ "In Praise of the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production" (*Zan geming shengchan weiyuanhui*), from *Red Guard Battle News (Hongwei zhanbao)*, Shanghai, Jan. 1967, quoted from *People's Daily*, Jan. 23, 1967.

Takeover during the January Storm

The power seizure in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory exerted enormous influence on all factories in Shanghai, serving as a model for rebel workers to follow and a threat to those cadres and loyalist workers who defended the pre-CR order. It in effect anticipated power-seizures on a greater scale and the final total take-over by the masses in Shanghai, which reached its climax in the inauguration of the Shanghai Commune two month later.

On January 1, 1967, the Party organs the *People's Daily* and the *Red Flag* jointly released an editorial titled *Carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Through to the End*, which proclaimed:

1967 will be a year of all-round development of class struggle throughout China.

It will be a year in which the proletariat, united with other sectors of the revolutionary masses, will launch a general attack on the handful of persons within the Party who are in authorities and are taking the capitalist road, and on the ghosts and monsters in society.

It will be a year of even more penetrating criticism and repudiation of the bourgeois reactionary line and elimination of its influence.⁸⁵

Encouraging people to wage an “all-round” class struggle against the bureaucrats who were taking the capitalist road, this editorial did not, however, say anything about “power seizures”. But in face of the workers’ ferocious rebellions, old cadres and their supporters went on strike out of their political instinct, attempting to

⁸⁵ Quoted from *Peking Review*, No. 1, January 1, 1967.

exert pressure on the Maoists' leadership. At the time, a power vacuum and an opportunity for the rebels to seize power was created. When and where the old rulers did not take their responsibility for running society, their authority and legitimacy was seriously jeopardized and it became possible for their power to be transferred to other political forces. That was what happened in Shanghai in the January Storm.

Let me now go back to the Scarlet Guards' exodus and spate of monetary incentives that continued in the beginning of 1967. On January 4, the first secretary of the SPC, Chen Pixian advocated making it easier to offer material incentives to the mass organizations. In line with this, the SPC prepared 50 propaganda vans and 3,000 bicycles to be distributed upon request. Moreover, Chen Pixian approved many demands proposed by groups organized around economic issues and this resulted in the formation of many more of these types of organizations. During the January Storm in Shanghai, there were at least 354 such economic-centered organizations such as the "Rebel Revolutionary Headquarters for Housing Difficulties," "Rebel Headquarters for Revolutionary Bachelor Workers", "Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters for Permanent Residents with Temporary Household Registration", and so forth. "Their focus was not centrally concerned with the issue of attacking or defending party leaders. Their focus was directed instead on redressing socioeconomic grievances."⁸⁶ Even though their economic demands could be justified, the formation of so many economic organizations within a very short period of time complicated the economic and political situation at the time, and contributed greatly and quickly to the

⁸⁶ Perry and Li Xun 1997, p.97.

monetary deluge and economic disruption in Shanghai. Meanwhile, overtly or covertly encouraged by cadres, large numbers of Scarlet Guards kept going north to “lodge complaints” about the Kangping Street and Kunshan battles, and many teams organized around “lodging complaints” were in fact led by party secretaries. When the party secretary at the No. 7 district of the Port was about to sail the “Battle No. 34” ship with nearly 1,000 Scarlet Guards on board heading for Beijing, an old rebel worker risked his life to climb onto the ship and drag the party secretary off the ship and struggled with him, Yet many ships, with the cooperation of the Port authorities, succeeded in their trips to the north. The party secretary of the Shanghai Port Bureau, Li Guang, who was called a “specialist on signing” (*qianming zhuanjia*) because he was ready to sign any economic demands from people, also encouraged several hundred loyalist workers to embark on the “No. 17 Worker-Peasant-Soldier” ship to Beijing.⁸⁷

In walking off their jobs, the Scarlet Guards effectively disrupted Shanghai’s production and communications. As mentioned earlier, they even deliberately attempted to cut off the city’s water and electricity and throw the transportation system and the Shanghai Port into chaos, which they were partly successful. The Shanghai Port, for example, was almost brought to a standstill. Statistics available are incomplete, but due to the port authorities’ generous distribution of state funds for travel subsidies, compensatory wages and bonuses to workers, the Shanghai Port paid out more than 1,480,000 yuan to workers between Jan.1 and Jan. 9 in a planned wind

⁸⁷ *Li Guang pohuai haigang yunshu de taotian zuixing (Li Guang’s Towering Crimes to Sabotage the Port Transportation)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 4, Jan 25,1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. p.26.

of economic “anarchy”.⁸⁸ As Neale Hunter personally observed in Shanghai at this conjuncture,

There can be little doubt that the run on the banks was organized. Whether the orders came from Liu Shaoqi himself is debatable; but they seem to have come from as high as the Municipal Party Committee, which still controlled the loyalty and sympathy of the Shanghai Party. The timing and the extent of the phenomenon precluded spontaneity. In this case, the Rebels, who saw plots everywhere, were probably right in blaming the Party leaders.⁸⁹

As a result, at the wharves along, nearly 6,000 workers left their posts. Some headed north to lodge complaints, while others simply went shopping with the money they had just received from the authorities. Consequently, from New Year’s day to the eighth of January, there was a daily average of more than 70 national and international cargo ships stuck at the port due to the shortage of stevedores to unload, and on one day the number even reached 140. Of the 198 ships of the Shanghai Fisherman’s Company, only 5 or 6 ships went out to sea everyday, reducing the daily hauls of fish by more than 90 per cent. Just in the first 9 days of January, the port had to compensate foreign ships several hundred thousand pounds for their losses – in addition to compensations that were paid to national ships. To protest the chaos at the Shanghai port, some foreign ships even intentionally hung the Chinese national flags upside down.⁹⁰ Railway transportation was equally disrupted:

⁸⁸ Ibid.p.25.

⁸⁹ Neale Hunter, 1969, p.216.

⁹⁰ *Li Guang pohuai haigang yunshu de taotian zuixing (Li Guang’s Towering Crimes to Sabotage the Port Transportation)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 4, Jan 25,1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.26-27. Also see *Yiyue geming shengli wansui (Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution)*, in *Workers’ Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, Jan. 12, 1968; also Perry & Li, 1997, p.115.

At that time, the four gates of the North Station were opened wide, but there was no one to collect tickets. From the first to the eighth, the passenger trains from Shanghai to Nanjing and Hangzhou—which according to schedule should have numbered 21 per day—totaled only 17, and were, moreover, all late. The freight trains were supposed to number 23 a day, but in actuality numbered only 3. Measured in tonnage, only about 11% of the planned freight was actually hauled.⁹¹

The nearly paralyzed port and railway transportation made it difficult to move goods necessary for daily life to Shanghai, so Shanghai was poorly supplied. Under the strike by the Scarlet Guards, the city was running out of coal for industry and would soon run out of coal for family use. Unfortunately, this was a severely cold winter with some snow, and citizens had to wait in long lines to purchase much-needed heating materials. Due to the lack of coal, the largest power plant in Shanghai, the Yangshupu plant, was unable to generate electricity for the whole city for three days. Obviously, the huge strike led by Shanghai's power-holders not only paralyzed the city's production, but also threatened the maintenance of daily life.⁹²

On January 1, facing the threat of a total economic collapse in Shanghai, some rebel leaders gathered at the East Lake Rest House, with the presence of the first secretary of the SPC Chen Pixian, to discuss how to save Shanghai from possible economic bankruptcy. At this meeting, they unanimously agreed to stabilize the economy by applying the principle of “grasping revolution and promoting production”. At this crucial moment, if the revolution could not eventually enhance production, and merely brought about the paralysis or bankruptcy of the city, how could the rebels win the support they needed from the Maoist leadership and the masses? On January 3, the

⁹¹ Perry and Li 1997, p.115.

⁹² See *Yiyue geming shengli wansui (Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution)*, in *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, Jan. 12, 1968.

WGH convened the responsible leaders from a variety of rebel organizations at No. 922, Hua Mountain Street for a meeting titled “Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production, Defending the Socialist Shanghai”. Late at night, some workers and Red Guards, led by Shu Zechi and Wang Liping from the Central Conservatory of Music, drafted an article of the utmost importance entitled “Take Firm Hold of the Revolution, Promote Production and Utterly Smash the New Counter-Attack Launched by the Bourgeois Reactionary Line— Message to All Shanghai People”, urging the masses to promote production while grasping revolution, and fiercely attacking the slow-downs and strikes of the Scarlet Guards.⁹³ The message was immediately printed into 200,000 leaflets and circulated by the rebels throughout the city.⁹⁴ But no major newspaper, all of which were still in the Party’s hands, agreed to reprint this rebel message. At the end of 1966 and the beginning of 1967, although the rebels moved to seize power from the old power holders at all levels of administration, they did not have a major newspaper as a mouthpiece to voice their demands and expand their influence. The WGH’s newspaper “*Worker’s Rebel News*” (*gongren zaofan bao*) was first published on Dec. 28, 1966 and had a circulation of only 30,000 per issue, which did not even cover the WGH’s own members. Therefore, *Wenhui Daily* and *Liberation Daily*, the two largest and influential newspapers of the SPC that seldom brought out rebel news even in this turbulent period, naturally became targets of power seizures. On January 3, 1967, a rebel group within the *Wenhui Daily* named

⁹³ Jin Chunming, *Wenhua dageming lunxi (Discussion and Analysis of the 'Great CR')*, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1985.p.95.

⁹⁴ Yang Xiaobing, “The Writing of ‘Message to All Shanghai People’ and ‘Urgent Notice’” (“Gao quan shi renmin shu’ he ‘jinji tonggao’ de chansheng jingguo”), in *January Storm*, joint issue of No. 5 and No. 6, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai. Yang Xiaobing was a Red Guard of the “Rebel to the End” Corps of the Shanghai Jiaotong University and one of the members of the draft team of the “*Message to All Shanghai People*”.

“the Spark that Starts a Prairie Fire” launched a power seizure of the paper. And after this, the SPC was pushed aside from any authoritative role in this major party organ.⁹⁵

In the first issue of the newborn *Wenhui Daily*, rebels claimed that it should be a revolutionary rebel newspaper; that it should be a battle position for the leftists to wage all-round class struggles; and that its general policy would follow a “leaning-to-one-side policy”, that is, one in favor of the rebels. The same issue also reprinted an old article by Mao titled “*The Bourgeois Orientation of the Wenhui Daily should be Criticized*” (*Wenhuibao de zichan jieji fangxiang yingdang pipan*) written in 1957, when the *Wenhui Daily* had been severely criticized by Mao for its sympathy with bourgeois intellectuals. The *Wenhui Daily* was the first major party organ seized by the rebels as their own ideological propaganda weapon during the January Storm.

On January 4, the CCRG sent Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan back to Shanghai. The next day, Zhang and Yao convened a meeting of rebel leaders from the railway, the port, and all bureaus to discuss how to check the spread of economic disorder. Zhang astutely pointed out that it was necessary to disclose that signatures and promises, which the old power-holders randomly made to economic demands, actually disrupted production and sabotaged the CR in Shanghai, and was, in fact, a new manifestation of the bourgeois reactionary line. All rebel leaders, Zhang stressed, should educate the masses not to rebel merely for economic reasons; if economic reasons were the people’s sole aim in rebelling, they would thwart the process of the

⁹⁵ The power seizure of the *Wenhui Daily* happened on January 4, 1967, before Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan returned to Shanghai. According to the study of a Party historian Jin Chunming, there is not enough evidence to prove that Zhang and Yao directed the first power seizure in Shanghai. See Jin Chunming, *Yiyue duoquan wenti mingbian (Clarifying the Problems Related to the January Power Seizure)*, in *Jin Chunming zixuan wenji (Jin Chunming's Selected Essays)*. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe. Jin Jichun, ed. 2002, p.473.

CR and make it possible for China to change its color from socialism to capitalism.

Also at this meeting, the rebel group “The Spark That Starts a Prairie Fire” of the *Wenhui Daily* proposed to Yao Wenyuan, that the above mentioned “*Message to All Shanghai People*” leaflet be reprinted in the new newspaper. To this Yao just said that neither he nor Zhang Chunqiao could give them an answer since they had just arrived in Shanghai and were not clear about the situation; and it was up to the rebels to decide whether or not to publish it on this major newspaper.⁹⁶

On January 5, 1967, the *Wenhui Daily* seized by the rebels put out the “*Message to All Shanghai People*”, which signaled a crucial move for the power seizure on a larger scale in Shanghai and in the entire country. With the signatories from 11 rebel organizations led by the WGH, the message made the accusation that,

A handful of persons within the Party who are in authorities and taking the capitalist road and those who obstinately follow the bourgeois reactionary line have a bitter hatred for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. They have been trying by every means to resist the policy of “taking firm hold of the revolution and promoting production” put forward by Chairman Mao. Their schemes and devices may be summarized in the following ways:

At the beginning of the movement, they used the pretext of "taking firm hold of production" to repress the revolution and oppose taking firm hold of the revolution. When we workers of the revolutionary rebel groups wanted to rise up in revolution and criticize and repudiate the bourgeois reactionary line, they used the tasks of production to bring pressure to bear on the workers and tagged us with the label of “sabotaging production.” Did they really want to "take firm hold of production"? No, they wanted to defend their own positions and attempted to obstruct our revolution. We exposed their schemes

⁹⁶ See Chen Pixian, *The Memoir of Chen Pixian: at the Center of January Storm* (*Chen Pixian huiyilu: zai yiyue fengbao de zhongxin*), p.123, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2005. Clearly, from this case we could see that “*the Message to All Shanghai People*” was a product of the mass-initiated movement, rather than a movement from above closely and tightly controlled by Mao or others, such as Zhang Chunqiao or Yao Wenyuan, as some scholars have claimed.

and rose up bravely in rebellion.

Then they resorted to another trick, that is, they played with high-sounding revolutionary words, giving the appearance of being ultra "Left" in order to incite large numbers of members of the Workers' Red Militia Detachments whom they had hoodwinked to undermine production and sabotage transport and communications under the pretext of going north to "lodge complaints." They did this to attain their aim of undermining the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. More recently, a handful of reactionary elements were even plotting to cut off water and electricity supplies and bring public transport to a standstill. We must drag out these reactionary elements and exercise proletarian dictatorship over them, punish them severely, and never allow them to succeed in their criminal schemes.⁹⁷

For the rebel workers in Shanghai, this was in fact an official call to arms to fight against the spate of economism and the old party bosses who were from behind the scenes, egged on and manipulated the conservative workers' movement. At that time, Mayor Cao Diqu had already lost his credibility and prestige in the eyes of both the rebel and loyalist workers, and the first secretary of the SPC Chen Pixian was also under ferocious attack from the rebels since the beginning of the new year. But to some extent, they still controlled the Party system of Shanghai. For instance, Chen and Cao called for a meeting of administrative directors and director generals at all levels to give a green light to the wind of economism. If Shanghai's economy did collapse, the rebels had everything to lose and the old Party apparatus would have restored their power again using the excuse trying to revive the economy with the help from administrative bureaucrats, experts and loyalist workers. This was the background that underlay the issuance of the "*Message to All Shanghai People*". As

⁹⁷ See *Wenhui Daily* Jan. 5, 1967. It was reprinted in *People's Daily* on Jan. 9, 1967, and its English version could be found at *Peking Review*, No. 3, Jan. 13, 1967.

Premier Zhou Enlai called and urged the first secretary of SPC, Chen Pixian, to run the business of Shanghai at the time, Chen participated in the discussion of this message and signed the order to print it in leaflets. But it was the rebels who, in the hope of stabilizing order in Shanghai and giving Chen one more chance to rectify his errors, drafted the message and then circulated it in leaflets and also spread it through the *Wenhui Daily* later on January 5, 1967.⁹⁸ But the resistance the *Message* encountered from the still influential party apparatus was strong. Another major Shanghai newspaper *Liberation Daily* in the party hands refused to publish the *Message* under the pretext that it explicitly criticized the SPC by name and that it would incur struggles among the masses because it referred to the Scarlet Guards.⁹⁹ After intensive struggles, the rebels within the newspaper office seized the *Liberation Daily* and released the message on January 6, 1967.

Mao Zedong paid close attention to the process of the CR in Shanghai since it, being the largest city, occupied a pivotal position in the entire country. At a talk with the CCRG members on Jan. 9, 1967, he confirmed that the mass takeover of *Wenhui Daily* and *Liberation Daily* by leftists represented the correct direction, and stressed that whenever one wanted to make revolution, one had to invoke the vox populi first.

Mao clarified that:

Internal rebellions are fine. In a few days we can make a general report on them. This is one class overthrowing another. This is a great revolution. Many papers in my opinion would be better closed down. But newspapers must still come out. The question is by whom they are

⁹⁸ See Chen Pixian 2005, p.123.

⁹⁹ See “Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution” (*Yiyue geming shengli wansui*), *Workers’ Rebel News* (*Gongren zaofan bao*), Jan. 12, 1968.

brought out. It is good that the *Wenhui Daily* and the *Liberation Daily* have changed management. As soon as they come out these two papers will certainly influence East China and every province and city in the country... The seizure of power in two newspapers is a national question and we should support their rebellion... The upsurge of revolutionary power in Shanghai has brought hope to the whole country. It cannot fail to influence the whole of East China and all provinces and cities in the country. ‘*Message to All Shanghai People*’ is a rare example of a good article. It refers to the city of Shanghai but the problem it discussed is of national significance.¹⁰⁰

At the same talk, Mao was very much conscious that the wind of economism, if not stopped, could do fatal harm to the CR and the construction of socialism in China since it was by no means limited only to Shanghai. Rather, it was a national phenomenon that was rampaging in other parts of China, not only the cities, but also rural areas. For example, in Nanjing, all factories stopped production and all ferryboats ceased running due to the economist wind. In Beijing, many factories practically stopped production. In Beijing Station, as the workers and conductors went on strike and petitioned the State Council, only five trains were dispatched per day, whereas in normal times, there would be more than 300 trains dispatched per day.¹⁰¹ Reading through all of the new issues of *Wenhui Daily* published after the power seizure, Mao was so delighted with the “*Message to All Shanghai People*” that he suggested that the *People’s Daily* reprint it immediately. He continued,

In making revolution these days people demand this and that. When we made revolution from 1920 onwards we set up first the Youth League

¹⁰⁰ Mao Zedong, “Talk at a Meeting of the Central Cultural Revolution Group” (*dui zhongyang wenge xiaozu de jianghua*), January 9, 1967, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, pp.282-83, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968. The English translation is modified from *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, ed. by Stuart R. Schram, Pantheon Books, 1974, pp.275-76.

¹⁰¹ See Jianxun jize (Some Short News), in *Jinggangshan zengkan* (Jinggangshan, supplementary issue), in January 10, 1967, ed. by Jinggangshan Editorial Department of Qinghua University.

and then the Communist Party. We had no funds, no printing press, no bicycles. When we ran newspapers we were very friendly with the workers and chatted with them as we edited articles... We must speak of grasping revolution and promoting production. We must not make revolution in isolation from production. The conservative factions do not grasp production. This is a class struggle. You must not believe that 'When Chang the Butcher is dead, we'll have to eat pork bristles and all', or that we can do nothing without them. Don't believe that sort of rubbish.

Yet Mao admonished that it was not necessary to overthrow and dismiss all the old cadres. "We should establish links with all sorts of people, left, right and center. I have never agreed with a unit being all that pure in its approach." Someone then mentioned that Wu Lengxi, a dismissed old cadre who was once the chief editor of People's Daily, was so comfortable that he had put on weight. To this Mao responded, "We have allowed Wu Leng-hsi [Lengxi] to become too comfortable. I am not in favor of their dismissal. Let them remain at their posts to be supervised by the masses." ¹⁰²

That was Mao's persistent evaluation of and general attitude toward the cadres, as clearly stated in the *Sixteen-point Program* of August 8 1966, which basically embodied Mao's approach to the CR overall. The cadres, the *Sixteen-point Program* pointed out, could roughly be classified into four categories: (1) good; (2) comparatively good; (3) those who have made serious mistakes but have not become anti-Party, anti-socialist rightists; (4) the small number of anti-Party, anti-socialist rightists. The final goal of the CR, in accordance with Mao's wishes, was to unite 95

¹⁰² Mao Zedong, "Talk at a Meeting of the Central Cultural Revolution Group" (*dui zhongyang wenge xiaozu de jianghua*), January 9, 1967, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, pp.282-83, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968. The English translation is modified from *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, ed. by Stuart R. Schram, pp.275-76, Pantheon Books, 1974.

percent of cadres and 95 percent of the masses.¹⁰³ After a close reading of *The Sixteen-point Program*, Alain Badiou also discerned this striking premise that underlay the CR,

First of all, it is held, as if axiomatically, that in essence the party is good. Point 8 (“The Question of Cadres”) distinguishes four types of cadres, as put to the test of the Cultural Revolution (let us remember that in China, a “cadre” is anyone who dispenses authorities, even if minimal): good, comparatively good, those who have made serious mistakes that can be fixed, and lastly “the small number of anti-Party and anti-socialist Rightists.” The thesis is then that “the two first categories (good and comparatively good) are the great majority.” That is, the state apparatus and its internal leadership (the party) are essentially in good hands, which renders paradoxical the recourse to such large-scale revolutionary methods.¹⁰⁴

For Mao, the party on the whole was good because the problems of most cadres were not rooted in their class positions, but came from being under the influence of the wrong Liu-Dengist line— following a servile philosophy of “always being a tool of the Party” proposed by Liu Shaoqi in his book *How to be a Good Communist*.” As long as these cadres returned to the correct line of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought, they could be saved and serve the people again. Mao insisted on giving these old cadres and revolutionary veterans ample chances to make revolution and render new contributions again. Mao’s comments on Wu Lengxi and similar cadres prefigured his attitudes toward the coming Shanghai Commune.

¹⁰³ See “Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Adopted on August 8, 1966)” (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui guanyu wuchan jieji wenhua da geming de jue ding*), in *People’s Daily*, Aug. 9, 1967, and the English translation is from *Peking Review*, Vol. 9, No.33, Aug. 12, 1966, pp. 6-11.

¹⁰⁴ Alain Badiou, “The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution?” *Positions*, 13:3 (2005), p.492.

The *Sixteen-point Program* and Mao's general evaluation of the cadre team before the CR, in the eyes of the masses, could also be justified. At least, the communist cadres were far better than the corrupt Guomindang officials twenty years before. And there did exist a large number of Jiao Yulu-style cadres before the CR, who devoted their lives to serve the people.¹⁰⁵ This was why there were so many loyalist and conservative people during the CR, especially during the early stage of the CR, who defended the pre-CR order and, concretely speaking, defended the pre-CR cadre team. For example, the Scarlet Guards possibly recruited nearly one million members in its heyday, which greatly outnumbered its rival rebels in the last days of 1966. This is by no means an exception. Another loyalist workers' organization in Wuhan, a big industrial base in Hubei Province, claimed to recruit more than one million workers, hence the name of its faction, the "Million Heroes" (*baiwan xiongshi*)¹⁰⁶. Even if the numbers of "Million Heroes" might be a bit overstated, it definitely significantly outnumbered any single rebel faction in Wuhan at the time. But in the eyes of the Maoist leaders, the fact that the general cadre team was good for the time being could not guarantee it would be good in the future. Mao himself was very worried about the possible emergence of Khrushchev-style high ranking officials in the Center. Once a Chinese Khrushchev took power in the Center, Mao believed, China would soon change its color from socialism to capitalism, as had happened in the USSR after Stalin's death. Therefore, to prevent capitalist restoration in China, it was necessary to launch a CR to combat the revisionism embodied in

¹⁰⁵ See "Revolutionary Leadership: County Party Secretary Chiao Yu-lu", in *Peking Review*, No. 9, February 25, 1966.

¹⁰⁶ It was officially formed in May 16, 1967 in Wuhan, with backbone militia (*jigan minbing*) as its core.

some Chinese cadres, even if the current cadre team was generally good. The ultimate aim of the CR was not to bring down many cadres, but to train capable revolutionary successors, including those cadres who were willing to continue the revolution, and to educate the masses in how to combat revisionism, especially after the old veteran revolutionaries passed away. Therefore, Mao himself preferred to call the CR a rehearsal for possible future revolutions if the capitalist system was restored in China. To prepare for such revolutions in the future, it was necessary to organize millions upon millions of masses and move a mighty revolutionary army into action right away. Only a force of such magnitude could crush the revisionists who controlled a major portion of the state power. In this kind of rehearsal, the masses would get tempered and grow into capable successors for the revolution. That was why the Maoist leaders had to resort to such large-scale revolutionary methods even though the cadre teams were considered generally good. This seeming paradox is what confused Alain Badiou. But once the masses were widely mobilized, the revolutionary momentum could crush all plans, no matter who had set the agendas. In Shanghai, thanks to the general strike by the Scarlet Guards and cadres, the original plan to seize power from a handful of “capitalist roaders” set by the Maoist leaders became a full-scale mass take-over from almost all the power holders. The Maoist leadership in Beijing had to face and acknowledge the new political landscape.

January 6 saw heavy snow. In the morning more than 100,000 rebels attended a huge rally in People’s Plaza which was called “Raising High the Great Banner of Mao Zedong’s Thought, Thoroughly Bringing Down the SPC Headed by Chen and

Cao”. This was televised by a closed circuit television network to the whole city and broadcast via 14 relay stations to ten neighboring counties. Altogether in Shanghai more than 2 million people were involved in this event at 369 places where rallies took place. At the main gathering in People’s Plaza, Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu were brought to account for the Kangping Street-Hengshan Hotel Incident. Meanwhile, several hundred upper-middle Shanghai cadres were taken onto the platform to accept “accompanying struggle”. The rally issued three formal demands. First, a telegram was sent to the Center and Chairman Mao to request that the old SPC be reorganized, that Mayor Cao be dismissed from office, and that Mayor Cao be denounced by name in Shanghai’s newspapers. Cao himself would be ordered to do manual labor under the rebels’ supervision. Second, the rebels said that the first party secretary Chen Pixian must write a confession within 7 days to the rebels to make clear how he had manipulated the old SPC to oppose Chairman Mao, the CCRG and the CR in general; and that he must disclose his close relationship with the Liu-Dengist headquarters. Third, the rebels said that other top officials in Shanghai and the East China Bureau of CCP must present their confessions to the rebels; during the period of writing confessions, if these top officials did good deeds to the Party and the people, then their punishments would be reduced. Otherwise, punishments would be doubled.¹⁰⁷ If the rebel takeover of the *Wenhui Daily* and the *Liberation Daily* officially started the wind of power seizures at the city level in one particular field, then this rally could be seen as a turning point of the January Revolution in Shanghai. After that, the SPC

¹⁰⁷ “The Chorography of the Chinese Communist Party of Shanghai” (*Zhonggong Shanghai dangzhi*), see <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node4523/node28957/node28967/node60685/userobject1ai13910.html>, cited June 28, 2009.

which had been manipulating the conservative mass movement was on the decline, and the rebel movement gathered its momentum and strength day by day.

At this interim period, even though the authorities of the SPC were still officially recognized by the rebels, after the public disgrace of major Shanghai cadres, more and more rebels did not take the old power holders' words seriously. When asked by the rebels about how to handle the critical situation at the Shanghai Port, Chen Pixian still insisted on immediately satisfying the workers' economic demands, if they were reasonable. He even openly declared his full support for salary compensations for those rebelling for economic reasons. But this time, nobody obeyed him. Regardless of Chen's objections, the rebels were bound and determined to take control of the Port. Very soon, all the control rooms were in the hands of rebels, and no ships were allowed to sail without their permission. The mass takeover of the Shanghai Port was a big success for the rebels as it demonstrated that they held power over production in a key economic unit. And this meant that no other political powers could use it as an effective weapon to exert pressure on the Center and hold Shanghai citizens as hostages for political bargaining. The power seizure of the Port partially prevented the Scarlet Guards from leaving by sea and put a stop to the old port authorities' generous distribution of state funds. But it could not stop the economist wind and put a stop to the people who were leaving from other parts of the city, e.g., from river, by railway and public transportation. On January 7, rebels from the WGH and other rebel organizations simultaneously visited the Shanghai branch of the Chinese People's Bank. United with the rebels working within the bank, they

negotiated with the bank heads, demanding that they not distribute money to any units without the Center's approval. After the negotiations, a notice was issued to the city, stating that from then on, until further notice from the Center, no banks were allowed to give away salary and welfare compensations; all union outlays, factory funds and collective funds were to be frozen. The rebels gave all party branches instructions to strictly enforce these regulations. But contrary to rebels' wishes, some power holders still issued big checks and asked for cash from a branch of the People's Bank. In order to put a stop to this transaction, many rebels from the Inland Navigation Company rushed to the bank to struggle against the power holders there. On the same day, the rebels also stopped an attempt in the Zhabei section of the People's Bank to withdraw 1,000,000 yuan.¹⁰⁸ From then on, the flow of cash in the Shanghai's banks was under the rebels' stern supervision. Even though they had not yet seized power from the old power holders in the banks, the rebels were able to supervise all the bank transactions. In the past, this kind of power was unimaginable for the common workers. Tellingly, the rebels began to control the economic lifelines of Shanghai.¹⁰⁹ The same day, the WGH's paper *Rebel Workers' News* brought out an article entitled "Never Allow the Main Direction of the Struggle to be Diverted", which pointed out that the SPC led by Chen and Cao had tried to shift the main direction of the masses' struggle from political to economic, egging on the masses to rebel only for pure economic reasons, not for serious political causes.

¹⁰⁸ *Jingji zhanxian shang de yichang zhengzhi zhan (A Political Fight at the Economic Battlefield)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 4, Jan 25, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. p.28..

¹⁰⁹ See *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, edited by the Shanghai WGH, January 12, 1968.

To address the pressing challenge of economic disorder, the WGH and some Red Guards student organizations held a joint emergency meeting the night of January 8 to discuss how to rescue Shanghai from paralysis. They unanimously agreed to form a coordinated group consisting of rebel forces in major work units in Shanghai to recover production. The same night immediately after the meeting, rebel representatives from the railway, port, post office, communication and transportation services, the Long River Shipping Company, and the Ocean Shipping Bureau convened at the Shanghai Custom Building to set up an city-wide economic power organ called “Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production in Shanghai.” The “Frontline Headquarters” was composed of 7 workers, 2 cadres, and 35 Red Guards. They jointly took the view that an important task for rebels was to be model workers themselves at this critical moment and they tried to persuade the conservative workers to go back to their machines.

Rebel students and teachers were fully mobilized to go to stations, wharves, factories and other places to do the propaganda work of “grasping revolution and promoting production.” Due to the shortage of manpower, many students went to do manual labors as substitutes for the workers who had walked off the job. Many did so even before January 4 when the issue of the newspaper that had the *Message to All Shanghai People* came out.¹¹⁰ The propaganda campaign launched against economism by rebel workers and students was overwhelming and their messages of opposing economism were taken out to almost every corner of Shanghai. At the

¹¹⁰ Cao Weiping, *Ping He Shu “wenge zhong suowei de ‘Shanghai yiyue geming’ ” yiwen* (Comments on He Shu’s “The So-called ‘Shanghai January Revolution’ During the CR—A Manufactured CR Model by Mao Zedong), see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=12396> cited on Dec. 5, 2009.

Shanghai Slide Fastener Factory, for example, rebel workers put up many posters. One poster read: “The system is unreasonable and needs to be overthrown, and rebel for oneself is not right.” Another stated: “Whenever we demand welfare from the power holders, they are more than pleased to sign. In fact they took advantage of our mental backwardness to serve themselves, and made use of the deceived to get rid of their enemies, thus endangering the CR.” And the third declared: “We have better wages than peasants, but now the power holders want to compensate us several ten or hundred yuan per person. Their aim is to break the alliance of workers and peasants.” Three old rebel workers at the No. 5 District of the Shanghai Wharf composed a big-character poster titled “Disclose the Arch-scheme of the SPC” that proclaimed: “We want socialism, not the stinking money from Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu.”¹¹¹ This was aimed at educating workers to not accept money even though the power holders were ready to make offers. Meanwhile, the walls near the banks were fully covered with posters such as “Put politics, not money in command,” “To make revolution is not for money,” “When you receive compensational cash, you are caught with chaff.”¹¹² This kind of appeal had a huge influence over the workers as, in essence, “it was an appeal to the better instincts of those who had been deceived by gifts of money and privileges.”¹¹³ In this campaign, many workers returned their windfalls back to the state. To counter the nationwide crisis of the wind of economism, on January 9, the “*Message to All Shanghai People*” was reprinted in the *People’s*

¹¹¹ See *January Storm*, joint issue of No. 5 and No. 6, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai.

¹¹² See “Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution” (*Yiyue geming shengli wansui*), *Workers’ Rebel News* (*Gongren zaofan bao*), Jan.12, 1968.

¹¹³ Neale Hunter 1969, p.223.

Daily and broadcast to the whole country. And the same day, led by the WGH again, 32 rebel organizations issued a new appeal entitled “*Urgent Notice*” to the Shanghai people, which strongly condemned the SPC,

At present, when the great proletarian cultural revolution in Shanghai is entering the moment of decisive battle between the two lines, when the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, which stubbornly clings to the bourgeois reactionary line, is being defeated, the handful of persons in the Party who are in authorities and are taking the capitalist road are once again hatching new schemes. Colluding with the capitalist forces in society, they are making use of economic benefits to divert the general orientation of the struggle and to incite one group of people against another, causing breakdowns in factory production and railway and road traffic. They have even incited dockers to stop work, causing difficulties in running the port and damaging the international prestige of China. They are making free with the state's money and property, arbitrarily increasing wages and material benefits, and granting all kinds of allowances and subsidies without limit, stirring people up to take over public buildings by force. These are the latest forms under which the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee perseveres in carrying out the bourgeois reactionary line.

In resorting to such base and treacherous means, the handful of persons in the Party who are in authorities and are taking the capitalist road aim at none other than: (1) Setting themselves against Chairman Mao and the Party's Central Committee, and putting pressure on the Cultural Revolution Group under the Party's Central Committee, by sabotaging production, interrupting communications and jeopardizing the national economy and the livelihood of the people, to attain their purpose of undermining the great proletarian cultural revolution; 2) Making use of economic benefits to divert the general orientation of the struggle in the attempt to turn the serious political struggle into an economic struggle, and at the same time to corrupt the revolutionary will of the masses by material gains, and to promote peaceful evolution and allow bourgeois ideas to run riot.

We hereby solemnly warn the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee that no schemes aimed at shifting the line of struggle through disrupting production, interrupting communications and increasing wages and material benefits will ever succeed. The revolutionary rebels who are armed with Mao Tse-tung [Zedong]'s

thought firmly expose this conspiracy and resolutely repulse the attacks by the bourgeois reactionary trend of thought. We must firmly implement the policy of "taking firm hold of the revolution and promoting production" put forward by Chairman Mao and, on the one hand, take an active part in the great proletarian cultural revolution while on the other hand remain fast at our posts of production and construction, persist in the eight-hour workday, strive to fulfil and overfulfil production plans, and do our best to turn out high quality products. We believe that the masses of revolutionary workers have a high sense of political responsibility toward their great socialist motherland; they will certainly be able to put the public interest at the fore, and, proceeding from the overall interests of the state, correctly handle the questions mentioned above and seize a double victory in the cultural revolution and in production.¹¹⁴

To get Shanghai out of its paralysis and back to operating normally, this *Urgent Notice* included a ten-point proposal that directly addressed current problems. The key principle it emphasized—which was in fact stipulated by the Center—was that “To avoid shifting the general orientation of the struggle, matters related to the readjustment of wages, back payment of wages, and material benefits, shall in principle be dealt with at a later stage of the movement (special cases shall be handled otherwise after asking the central authorities for instructions).”¹¹⁵ This time, the rebels had more venues by which they could give voice for their new appeal, as the two largest Shanghai newspapers *Wenhui Daily* and *Liberation Daily* had already been taken over and was now under their control. Moreover, just two days later, on January 11, a congratulatory telegram “*Message of Greetings to Revolutionary Rebel Organizations in Shanghai*”, signed jointly by the Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Committee and the CCRG, was sent from Beijing, praising the

¹¹⁴ See “Urgent Notice” (*Jinji tonggao*) in *Wenhui Daily*, Jan.9, 1967, its English version “32 Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Organizations Issue ‘Urgent Notice’” is from *Peking Review*, No. 4, January 20, 1967.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Shanghai rebels' guiding principles and their efforts in opposing the economist trend. In this way, the highest authorities clearly put their imprimatur on the rebels' actions saying that the "revolutionary actions have set a brilliant example for the working class and all laboring people and the revolutionary masses throughout the country."¹¹⁶ The same day, based on the Shanghai rebels' experiences of defying economism, Beijing officially issued a *Circular of the CPC Central Committee Concerning the Opposition to Economism*, calling for propaganda to be disseminated "generally among workers, peasants, and students, and may also be posted in factories, rural villages, and schools."¹¹⁷ This congratulatory telegram, coupled with the Mao's praise for the *Message to All Shanghai People* days before, indeed signaled a formal recognition of the Shanghai rebel organizations represented by the WGH and an official affirmation of their activities to politically challenge the old power holders and to economically restore order in Shanghai. The time was finally ripe for great societal changes.

As the *Sixteen-point Program* suggested, it was necessary to "dismiss from their leading posts all those in authorities who are taking the capitalist road and so make possible the recapture of the leadership for the proletarian revolutionaries."¹¹⁸ A wave of mass takeovers of power surged throughout Shanghai in January. On January

¹¹⁶ See "Message of Greetings to Revolutionary Rebel Organizations in Shanghai, From the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the State Council, the Military Commission of the Party's Central Committee and the Cultural Revolution Group Under the Party's Central Committee" (*Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan zhongyang junwei zhongyang wenge xiaozu gei Shanghai shi ge geming zaofan tuanti de hedian*), in *People's Daily*, Jan. 12, 1967, the English version is from *Peking Review*, No. 4, January 20, 1967.

¹¹⁷ *Chinese Politics, Documents and Analysis*, Vol. 1, pp.313-314, ed. by James T. Myers, Jurgen Domes and Erik Von Groeling, University of South Carolina Press, 1986.

¹¹⁸ "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Adopted on August 8, 1966)" (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui guanyu wuchan jieji wenhua da geming de jue ding*), in *People's Daily*, Aug. 9, 1967, and the English translation is from *Peking Review*, Vol. 9, No.33, Aug.12,1966, pp. 6-11.

9, assisted by other rebel groups, such as East Is Red Regiment of Tongji University, the Railway United Headquarters of the WGH seized the power of general control rooms of the Shanghai Railway Bureau as well as the Shanghai Station.¹¹⁹ As these two departments had always been seen as strongholds of the loyalist Scarlet Guards, the meaning of the takeover could be comparable to that of the two largest newspapers in Shanghai. It not only effectively prevented any further exodus of the Scarlet Guards by train, but also saved the greater Shanghai region from economic devastation. Right after the power seizure, 5 freight trains fully loaded with coal, were arranged to set off to the power plant for generating the much needed electricity for the whole city in the cold, snowing winter. On January 11, nearly 1,000 members of “the Third Headquarters of Shanghai Red Guards” led by An Wenjiang rushed into the city’s Public Security Department and captured power.¹²⁰ The next morning, after a long suspension of railway service, the No. 14 express train run by the rebels set off from Shanghai to Beijing on time. Moreover, a bunch of crucial Shanghai units were taken over by the rebels that day. First at noon, unlike earlier instances of supervision by rebels, the Shanghai branch of the People’s Bank and all of its subordinate entities were seized by the rebels from within. Next it was the Shanghai Labor Bureau and its subordinate entities, where a supervision committee of production was formed instead, followed by the Shanghai Ocean Shipping Bureau. At night, the power of the Long River Shipping Company was seized. Right after that, the rebels sailed 37 ships that

¹¹⁹ For the role of East Is Red Regiment of Tongji University in taking the power of the Shanghai station, see *Zai duoquan zhong qianjing (Advance in Power Seizure)*, in *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, Nos. 5-6 (combined issue), Feb 2, 1967. Ed. by the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of *Zhibu shenghuo*, Shanghai. pp.33-35.

¹²⁰ An Wenjiang, “I Would Not Confess” (*Wobu chanhui*), in *1966: Recollections of Our Generation (1966, women na yidai de huiyi)*, pp.99-103, ed. by Xu Youyu, Zhongguo wenlian chuban gongsi, 1988.

should not had been idle at the docks for several days. Within several days from January 11 to 14, 49 city, district and county level units of Shanghai were taken over by the rebels: some of these power seizures were the result of internal rebellion, while others involved cooperation from within and without.¹²¹

¹²¹ See Chen Pixian 2005, pp.143-44.

Chapter Five: The Rise of the Shanghai Commune

The Dual Power in the January Storm

After the rebel workers took over, they were empowered and had endless enthusiasm for labor and production. For example, two teams at the port were unloading a cargo ship full of coal, the major source of energy for the city. After studying Mao quotations and discussing security issues and technical procedures, they launched a friendly campaign of socialist competition to promote model workers. As a result, the two teams, even with the absence of more than twenty Scarlet Guard workers, successfully unloaded 10,866 tons of coal and delivered it to the designated coal field – 6 hours ahead of schedule. On January 16, with a new, revolutionary power in charge, rebel workers in the No.2 converter workshop at the Shanghai Steel Mill strove to promote production and they dramatically increased their daily output 1.8 times. By the middle of January, the loading and unloading amount of cargo at Shanghai wharves, where there was still a shortage of capable workers, reached more than 80,000 tons per day – which was close to the normal rate. On January 18, the rebels at Shanghai's Yanshupu Power Plant seized control of production, ensuring the functioning of the whole city. And by January 19, the Shanghai railway system, after the mass takeover, recovered its operations with 22 trains departing from Shanghai every day. This was equal to what railway transportation had been before the CR in

Shanghai.¹

At this moment, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenxuan and other rebel leaders in Shanghai were seriously thinking of establishing a kind of power organ as the highest power entity to replace the nominally still existing SPC. On January 12, in celebration of the congratulatory telegram “*Message of Greetings to Revolutionary Rebel Organizations in Shanghai*” from the Center, the Shanghai rebels held a mammoth rally to pledge resolute and mass efforts in “smashing the new counteroffensive of the bourgeois reactionary line.” At this rally, a proposal to form a city-wide revolutionary rebels’ liaison post, which would consist of various Shanghai rebel organizations and out-of-town rebel organizations stationed in Shanghai, was officially passed. The purpose of this “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Organizations’ Liaison Post”, according to the proposal, was to “help to understand, learn, and support each other among rebel organizations” and to “strengthen the solidarity and fight together based on the Mao Zedong thought.” Actually, it aimed to replace the old SPC with a new organizational form. Apparently, the Maoist leadership in Beijing had high expectations for the proposed “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Organizations’ Liaison Post”, as the official New China’s News Agency released the complete text of this proposal to the whole country the next day.²

The next ten or so days did see frequent and intensive negotiations among various rebel organizations about the establishment of these kinds of liaison posts.

¹ See *Weida de yiyue geming shengli wansui* (“Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution”), from *Workers’ Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, by the WGH, Jan. 18, 1968.

² New China’s News Agency, Jan. 12, 1967, *Guanyu jianli Shanghai shi geming zaofanpai zuzhi lianluozhan de changyi* (A Proposal of Setting up Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Organizations’ Liaison Post), in *Ningbo Masses (Ningbo dazhong)*, Jan. 14, 1967.

Led by the WGH, a “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Workers' Liaison Department”, which consisted of 15 rebel workers’ organizations, was set up around January 16, 1967.³ Unfortunately, the bigger “Liaison Post” based on the broadest unity among rebel factions, including all rebel students, workers, peasants and functionaries in Shanghai was not established because of internal conflicts among various factions. Under such circumstances, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and other rebel leaders played a mediating role among various rebel factions and had to strengthen the existing functional joint rebel power organ functioning mainly in the economic and production sphere-- the Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production. The night of January 19, Zhang Chunqiao met with rebel representatives from six major bureaus and some responsible persons from the Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production. Zhang praised the Frontline Headquarters as a big miracle and an economic soviet, and informed the representatives that he had already told Chairman Mao about it Frontline Headquarters. The representatives were confident that they were ready to help establish a power structure at the city level. After the meeting, assisted by the Frontline Headquarters, the Committee of Defending the Great Proletarian Revolution, which consisted of representatives from 12 rebel organizations, was formed. It functioned, the Committee proclaimed, to “take part in receiving and mediating disputes between two factions in factories, enterprises, and schools, and oversee

³ *Shanghai gongren geming zaofan zongsilingbu deng shiwuge tuanti zucheng Shanghai gongren geming zaofanpai lianluobu (The WGH and Other 14 Organizations Formed the Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Workers' Liaison Department)*, in *Shanghai Wanbao (Shanghai Evening News)*, January 16, 1967.

city-level rallies and maintain law and order.”⁴ Clearly, it meant to replace Shanghai’s old public security organs, procuratorial organs as well as the people’s courts, that is, the policing organs in general. Efforts to set up the "Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Organizations' Liaison Post" which would include all the rebel factions in Shanghai had not been successful. And eventually, the coming new power organ would take the shape of the Shanghai Commune based on an alliance that included many, but not all of the rebel factions.

Around the time of the January Revolution, there was dual political power in Shanghai. When talking about the Russian revolution of March 1917, Lenin writes,

The main feature of our revolution, a feature that most imperatively demands thoughtful consideration, is the dual power which arose in the very first days after the triumph of the revolution. This dual power is evident in the existence of two governments: one is the main, the real, the actual government of the bourgeoisie, the "Provisional Government" of Lvov and Co., which holds in its hands all the organs of power; the other is a supplementary and parallel government, a "controlling" government in the shape of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which holds no organs of state power, but directly rests on the support of an obvious and indisputable majority of the people, on the armed workers and soldiers.⁵

Amid the January Revolution in Shanghai, there also existed a similar dual power: one was the old SPC, which still nominally held the Shanghai local state apparatus in its hands – even though it had been greatly discredited by the disgruntled rebels because of the oppressive activities it had carried out against the mass

⁴ “The Chorography of the Chinese Communist Party of Shanghai” (*Zhonggong Shanghai dangzhi*), see <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node4523/node28957/node28967/node60685/userobject1ai13910.html>, cited July 8, 2009.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, “The Tasks of The Proletariat in Our Revolution”, from V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, pp.60-62, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964.

movement and had reportedly “completely collapsed” at the huge struggle rally on January 6, 1967.⁶ Just as Chen Pixian recalled in his memoir about the mammoth struggle meeting against major top cadres of Shanghai on January 6: “No matter how the rebels declared to ‘dismiss’ us from ‘posts’, before the official order of dismissal announced by the Center, I was still a leader of Shanghai, the first party secretary of the SPC who was supposed to take charge of Shanghai’s affairs.”⁷ Since the rebels had no direct access to state funds, and were keeping Mao’s words “be frugal to make revolution” in mind, they needed financial subsidies from time to time. And they had to seek permission from the old bureaucrats to get funds. A former Red Guard in Fudan University, Cao Weiping, recollected that amid the wind of economism, the “dismissed” deputy Party secretary Wang Ling, who still worked in Fudan, had provided his signature to people for the distribuion of funds. Pointing to the fact that people could still get money from the Finance Office of Fudan University with Wang Lung’s signature, some said that the officials of the Fudan Party committee had not actually been dismissed. And more generally, the proclaimed “dismissal” of the Shanghai mayors and Party secretaries at the January 5 rally was not thoroughly and seriously enforced – for example the seals symbolizing power remained in the hands of the old power holders.⁸ The two most important documents opposing economism were the *Message to All Shanghai People* and the *Urgent Notice*. The rebels who had drafted this hoped it was being fully followed by all workers under the instructions of

⁶ Yao Wenyuan, *Qingkuang jianbao (A Brief Report of Situation)*, quoted from Wang Nianyi, *Da dongluan de niandai (Turbulent Decade)*, Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1988, p.173.

⁷ See Chen Pixian 2005, p.132.

⁸ Cao Weiping, *Ping Xu laosan shi nian yi meng (Comments on Xu laosan’s “Ten Years A Dream”)*, see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=2614> cited on Dec. 5, 2009.

every Party branch in Shanghai. To reach this goal, the rebels insisted that Chen Pixian sign them on behalf of the discredited SPC. Before the CR, all major provincial top cadres were not directly elected by local citizens, but were instead appointed by the Center, mainly the Central Committee of the CCP and the state council. Therefore, Chen Pixian and his colleagues had reason to treat themselves as power holders regardless of the rebels' oral or written "dismissal". As a matter of fact, it was not until January 16 that Mao Zedong ratified the seizure of power from the old Shanghai authorities.⁹ Generally speaking, the Maoists in the Center repeatedly stressed the importance of the "mass line". But out of strong belief in the Party itself, many cadres insisted on being responsible to their direct leaders, that is, they were following a vertical organizational line. But when their direct leaders or some leaders in the Center were not Maoists and did not serve the people, following a vertical organizational line meant that they would end up ignoring the people's interests. During all the CR years, most cadres held such a deep-rooted belief that "I would rather make political than organizational errors." If one cadre erred in the political line, so long as his direct leaders protected him, things would be fine in terms of his political career. But if he erred in terms of organizational line, the cadre would be degraded or even expelled from the party for good.

The other pole of the dual power structure in Shanghai's January Revolution was the rebels' organizational creation. After the formation of three crucial "controlling" power organs, that is, the "Frontline Headquarters of Grasping

⁹ Wang Nianyi, *Da dongluan de niandai (Turbulent Decade)*, Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1988, p.178.

Revolution and Promoting Production in Shanghai,” “The Committee of Defending the Great Proletarian Revolution” , and the “Shanghai Rebel Organizations’ Liaison Center”, rebels basically took control of the city’s economic lifelines and established their own security forces and organizational forms to take charge of city affairs. Furthermore, to the end of January, more and more conservative workers lost their faith in the discredited SPC. Many shifted their stand and joined the rebel ranks. Mao was very pleased to find that from the end of 1966 to the January Revolution, the number of Shanghai rebels grew tremendously – from only several thousand to over one million. In the middle of January, self-proclaimed rebels already outnumbered the disheartened loyalist workers. In fact, at this point, the Scarlet Guards as an actual workers’ faction was totally disintegrated. Many of the Scarlet Guards sincerely or insincerely joined the rebels. Others could only pack their armbands and hide their true political stance, waiting and seeking out a chance to counterattack. Even though loyalist workers had to give up the organizational title of the “Scarlet Guards”, some loyalist leaders claimed they would resume the title when the time was ripe.¹⁰ And still others just lost any interests in political activities and faded into the background of history. Consequently, compared with the old SPC, the other side of the dual power, the rebel’s power, as “a supplementary and parallel government”, appeared to be much more solid, more “controlling” and authoritative. This was because the Shanghai rebels “directly rested on the support of an obvious and indisputable majority of the people, on the armed workers and soldiers,” – just as Lenin had

¹⁰ *Yong xianxue he shengming baowei Shanghai renmin gongshe* (Defend the Shanghai People's Commune with Blood and Life), in *Dongfanghong (East Is Red)*, Feb. 14, 1967, ed. by Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing Shanghai shi dongfanghong zongbu and Tongji daxue dongfanghong bingtuan.

characterized the workers' government of the Russian revolution in March 1917.

During the January Revolution, whatever the Shanghai rebel government asked for from the SPC, the latter had no other choice but to cooperate.

The class nature of the workers' power organs in the January revolution, in accordance with Lenin's analysis, was an entity of working class self-governance that emerged mostly from workers' creativity, spontaneity, and initiatives, rather than from instructions from Beijing. This was especially so in the first days of the January Revolution when rebel workers took the initiative, In the face of a difficult situation in which the loyalist workers had walked out of the factories, the rebels promoted production under the severe conditions of labor shortages; they consciously opposed economism to "defend socialism"; and they elected their own committee based on the Paris Commune model to take care of production and revolution. As the revolution went on, the Maoist leadership in Beijing, and Zhang Chunqiao, who was a top cadre in local authorities as well as a commissar from the CCRG, intervened and got more and more involved. Sometimes these involvements and interventions were constructive and worked in cooperation with the rebel movement in Shanghai. But sometimes they were not. Even though the other pole of dual power, the SPC, was regarded by the rebels as executing a "bourgeois reactionary line," no one at that time called it a completely "bourgeois government". According to the *Sixteen-point Program*, most of the cadres acting in line with Liu-Dengist policies were still good, as they were acting, not from their true class positions, but from an incorrect understanding of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and state affairs. When

the real revolution unfolded, however, this assessment of the old cadre teams stirred up intense debates among rebels. Some insisted that the old government was bourgeois in nature, and hence deserved to be thoroughly toppled over, while others believed that most cadres were still curable, and what the rebels needed to do was empowering the workers themselves to supervise the “rectification and re-revolutionization” of the cadres. In this regard, whatever the case, according to the rebels and Maoist leadership in Beijing, the old Shanghai power organ had to be dramatically reformed and reorganized. But as there were not many Shanghai leading cadres who openly expressed support for the rebels, the reformist plan to re-organize the old SPC had to be re-considered.

As Lenin stated, “the dual power merely expresses a transitional phase in the revolution's development,”¹¹ – and one power organ between the two poles had to be eliminated. For the January Revolution in Shanghai, a brand new organizational form of state power modeled upon the Paris Commune of 1871 would soon be created. That was the Shanghai People’s Commune (Shanghai Commune for short). Nonetheless, even after the January Storm and the formation of the Shanghai Commune at the beginning of the next month, a lot of power was still not in the rebel’s hands. Precisely because of this situation, the *Manifesto of the Shanghai Commune* called for waging a campaign of further power seizures.¹²

The Shanghai rebels did not consider forming the Commune on a mere whim. To a significant extent, there was consensus among rebels throughout the country in

¹¹ V. I. Lenin 1964, p.61.

¹² See *Jiefang ribao* (*Liberation Daily*), Feb.7, 1967.

terms of the commune as an ideal. This had been inspired by Mao and his disciples' frequent and glowing references to the Paris Commune before and after the CR (If we trace things further back, we find that the commune was in fact a dream among Chinese revolutionaries even since the 1920s). But the road to Shanghai Commune, as we will see, would be long and arduous.

Due to the Shanghai cadres' huge strike, the rebels had to launch waves of mass takeovers on their own initiative. The rebels controlled some crucial sectors of society after the initial and partial power seizures. But as time wore on, and the economic crisis deepened, the debate about the nature of the old SPC, and about which cadres deserved to be labelled as true capitalist roaders, became more and more irrelevant. The key issue of the struggle changed to the normal operation of the city. Obviously, in order to save Shanghai from collapse, a new rebel power organ at the city level had to be formed while at the same time, the existing SPC had to be completely taken over. At this point, some top Maoist leaders in Beijing worried about the wholesale takeover of the old state apparatus in Shanghai. On January 15, at a "Grasp Revolution and Promote Production" rally attended by Beijing and provincial revolutionary organizations, Chen Boda, the director of the CCRG, said that letting rebels stage mass takeovers of factories was a new trick of capitalist roaders. The reasoning offered here was that the secret agenda behind these takeover was embarrassing the rebels when they failed to lead and manage production. So Chen suggested that it was better for the rebels to supervise existing units than to take them over. He emphasized that in some cases it was fine to carry out takeovers, but not on

a large scale, because this would end up swallowing the bait of the capitalist roaders. At the same rally, Premier Zhou Enlai also warned against mass takeover and said he preferred to have the old cadres of Shanghai supervised by the rebels in order to stabilize production.¹³ Even though Mao advocated the idea of “getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh” (*tugunaxin*) and hoped to dispose of the so-called capitalist roaders within existing establishments while keeping revolutionary cadres on their posts, he himself admitted that for the masses it was hard to tell who should be struggle objects in peacetime, and the rebels had no way to tell who were true capitalist roaders and who were not. Mao did not clearly state that many existing establishments should be toppled. But he might anticipate that large scale power would become inevitable. Learning that Chen Boda and Zhou Enlai discouraged mass takeovers, immediately after the rally, Mao called for a meeting to criticize Chen Boda and make it clear that he openly favored power seizures. Without delay, Mao’s viewpoints were expressed and incorporated by Wang Li and Guan Feng, two members of the CCRG, into an article. Titled, “*Proletarian Revolutionaries, Unite!*” this commentary praised Shanghai’s experiences of seizing power and was published in the *Red Flag* the next day. Although their experiences were manifold, the focal point, according to the article, was that the Shanghai proletarian revolutionaries united to seize power from a handful of persons within the Party authorities who were taking the capitalist road, thus firmly holding and taking the political, economic and cultural

¹³See “Speeches by Zhou Enlai and Chen Boda at the Rally of Beijing and Provincial Revolutionary Organizations to ‘Grasp Revolution and Promote Production’” (*Zhou Enlai Chen Boda zai shoudu he waidi zaijing geming zaofan tuanti zhua geming cu shengchan dahui shang de jianghua*), in *Speeches of the Central Leaders* (*Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua*), Vol.1, ed. by the Red Guard Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

power of Shanghai municipality into their own hands.¹⁴

This was, in fact, the first public official document in which Mao openly called for power seizures based on the ongoing events. The *Sixteen-point Program* had granted permission to “dismiss from their leading posts all those in authorities who are taking the capitalist road and so make possible the recapture of the leadership for the proletarian revolutionaries”. But it still limited the extent that some cadres could recapture power.¹⁵ The mass-initiated power seizures from below driven by and a result of the struggles between the rebels and the emerging bureaucratist class, that is, the so-called capitalist roaders, were endorsed by Mao. The main experiences of Shanghai, this commentary emphasized, were that the proletarian revolutionaries of Shanghai formed a great alliance to seize power from the capitalist roaders, and were thus able to establish a new order of the great proletarian revolution. As the previous power shift that had taken place in Shanghai had been partial, only involving some major departments and units, this characterization in the article had the propaganda effect of encouraging further rebel actions. For all practical purposes, the power of the old SPC had already been taken over by the rebels’ spontaneous actions as the discredited power holders could not freely wield their power as before. And major officials, such as Chen Pixian and Cao Diqui, were taken into custody by some rebel factions after the rally of “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Hailing the Congratulatory Telegram from the Center and Thoroughly Smashing the New Counteroffensive of the Bourgeois Reactionary Line” on January 12. But the old SPC had not actually been

¹⁴ See “Proletarian Revolutionaries, Unite!” (*Wuchan jieji geming pai lianhe qilai*), *Hongqi (Red Flag)*, 1967, No. 2, and its English translation can be found at *Peking Review*, No. 4, p.15, January 20, 1967.

¹⁵ See Wang Li, *Wang Li's Reflections (Wang Li fansi lu)*, pp.595-99, Hongkong: Beixing chubanshe, 2001.

abolished – the rebels did not have the right to do this and had to wait for approval and permission from Beijing. In other words, the old Shanghai government still existed, at least in form. Moreover, some “controlling” power organs did come into being as entities of the dual power system. But the established new order of the great proletarian revolution was far from stable. It was just transitional and temporary and sometimes could not exert strong leadership in the turbulent chaos. Last but not least, in the face of the old power holders and their gruesome conservative supporters, all the rebels managed to unite together and bring down their common enemies. But once the obvious enemies were defeated and had surrendered, discrepancies and divergences among different rebel factions loomed larger and larger. In fact around the time that the *Red Flag* article appeared on January 16, the once united great alliance that had seized power from the old power holders fell apart.

The disintegration of the rebels’ solidarity, as will be discussed below, was partially due to the old SPC’s deliberate manipulation and sabotage of the movement. During the transitional period of dual power in Shanghai, even though the old SPC was seriously discredited and in the process of gradually falling, it still commanded a great deal of sympathy from the skilled and model workers and common citizens. What is more, the old SPC had many experienced and trusted cadres who knew how to run a government smoothly, [and how to purposely let a government down—what does this mean??]. Most of the skilled workers and experienced cadres, under the influence of the old SPC, chose not to cooperate with the rebels. Some others, even though they joined the rebel ranks after the debacle of the Scarlet Guards and even

acted as upper-middle leaders in the rebel factions, then showed their true colors by actively opposing the formation of the WGH-led new power organ, that is, the Shanghai Commune. Compared to the old SPC, the proposed new power organ by the rebels was still in its infancy and needed to be explored and take further shape.

The Split, Internecine Struggles and Anti-Zhang Campaign: The Tortuous Road to the Shanghai Commune

As early as January 1, 1967, the *People's Daily* and the *Red Flag's* joint editorial *Carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Through to the End* prescribed guidelines for the new year that identified the proletariat, namely, the rebel workers as the main power player – while other “revolutionary masses,” such as rebel students, should play the role of supporters of the working class in the CR. It clarified,

All cultural revolution movements in contemporary Chinese history have begun with student movements and led to the worker and peasant movements, to the integration of revolutionary intellectuals with the worker-peasant masses. This is an objective law. This was true of the May Fourth Movement which marked the beginning of China's contemporary history of revolution and is true also of the great proletarian cultural revolution which has brought the country's socialist revolution to a new stage. In 1967, China's great proletarian cultural revolution will continue to develop in line with this objective law.¹⁶

But it seemed that many rebel students in Shanghai did not understand what was indicated in this editorial. The editorial expressed the hope that rebels students would assist rebel workers. But the three largest and oldest rebel Red Guard

¹⁶ Quoted from *Peking Review*, No. 1, January 1, 1967.

organizations in Shanghai, the Red Revolutionaries, Bombarding Headquarters, and Red Third Headquarters, positioned themselves as stubborn opponents of Zhang Chunqiao, who played a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between the Shanghai rebels and the Maoist leadership in Beijing in all-round class struggles and power seizure in the January Storm and later in the operation of the Shanghai Commune. These three largest rebel student organizations naturally did not get along with the WGH, the oldest and largest city-wide rebel workers' organization which firmly backed Zhang Chunqiao and saw him as a revolutionary cadre who symbolically embodied Chairman Mao's leadership in the Shanghai CR.¹⁷ Moreover, the bitter opponents of Zhang Chunqiao and the WGH-led rebel forces were by no means limited to the three Red Guard groups. Immediately after the collapse of the conservative Scarlet Guards, internal conflicts among rivals of the rebel workers ran all the way through the preparation and operation of the new power organ. The road to the Shanghai Commune was tortuous.

As mentioned above, the *Red Flag* article "*Proletarian Revolutionaries, Unite!*" acknowledged that the Shanghai rebels had already seized power from the SPC before the statement was released on January 16. But the old power structure still existed and needed to be actually and officially taken over at the city level. The article also referred to the Shanghai rebels as a whole. But there was a question of who should get the biggest share in the new power organ that was being formed? Many

¹⁷ A typical case of conflicts between organizations of rebel students and rebel workers during the period of power seizures took place in Sichuan. With the backing of the military forces, the rebel students' organization "8.15" based in Chongqing University took power from the old power holders yet they excluded the largest rebel workers' organization "Rebel to the End" from entering into the new power organ. The armed fightings between the two rebel organizations was among the bloodiest during the CR. Compared to Sichuan, similar conflicts among rebels in Shanghai during the same period were so mild that they could almost be considered insignificant.

rebel forces thought that since they contributed a lot in past battles, they were justified in taking initiative to gain more control in the new power structure. Therefore, right before and after the *Red Flag* announced and legitimized the victory of the seizure of power from the old Shanghai authorities, Shanghai saw at least five more attempts of power seizures at the city level carried out by different rebel forces.

In the middle of January, truckloads of rebels, from a contingent of small rebel organizations, led by an obscure “Worker Rebel Eighth Headquarters”, drove into the courtyard of the SPC located at Kangping Street. They soon occupied all the departments except for the rooms containing archives and confidential materials and then proclaimed a takeover of the city government. Upon learning of this, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyao had Xu Jingxian, the head of the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, call the leader of “Worker Rebel Eighth Headquarters”. Xu Jingxian simply passed Zhang and Yao’s message on, telling the “Worker Rebel Eighth Headquarters” that since they did not negotiate with major rebel groups about their actions in advance, they had no right to take over the old government. Accordingly, the “Worker Rebel Eighth Headquarters” had to withdraw their forces from the Kangping Street. In this way, the first attempt to take the city’s power ended up as an abortive one.¹⁸

On the early morning of January 15, members from the Shanghai Red Guard Third Headquarters¹⁹ were joined by the “Second Corps of Shanghai Workers

¹⁸ Xu Jingxian, *Ten Years a Dream (Shi nian yi meng)*, p.47. Hongkong: Shidai guoji chuban youxian gongsi, 2003.

¹⁹ The Shanghai Red Guard Third Headquarters (Shanghai third headquarters [*shang san si*] for short) was founded on December 20, 1966 when it split from the Third Headquarters of Shanghai’s Red Guards (Red Third Headquarters [*hong san si*] for short). An Wenjiang from Fudan University was the head of the Red Third

Returned From the North” (Second Corps for short) led by its determined leader Geng Jinzhang. These rebels rushed into building of the SPC, Shanghai People’s Committee, and the East China Bureau of the CCP which was in charge of party affairs of 5 provinces and the Shanghai city in Eastern China. With this raid, the rebels soon announced that they have successfully seized power from the SPC. They sent a telegram of congratulations to Chairman Mao and the Center, asking for Beijing’s recognition and proposing Zhang Chunqiao as the first and Yao Wenyuan as the second party secretary of the new Shanghai government. Their move got support from 11 other small organizations, such as the Shanghai Liaison Centre of the Red Rebel Regiment of the Harbin Military Engineering Institute, some of whose members had participated in this action. Afterward, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan wanted to talk with them. But Zhao Quanguo, from the Shanghai Drama Institute and the major leader of the Shanghai Red Guard Third Headquarters, and four other student leaders had already taken a flight to Beijing to announce the good news to Chairman Mao and the Center. Zhang and Yao had to negotiate with rebel workers from the Second Corps and pointed out that a seizure of power of the old government by only two big organizations did not represent the majority of Shanghai rebels; and that if they insisted on taking power as such, then who else would follow their orders? Zhang and Yao argued that it would be much better to seize power under the banner of great alliance of all the rebels.²⁰ Without anticipating such a difficult situation, the Second

Headquarters.

²⁰ According to Xu Jingxian’ recollection, Zhang Chunqiao asked only Geng Jinzhang to meet with him and did not negotiate with Zhao Quanguo, the student leader. After Geng Jinzhang had been persuaded to withdraw his rebel forces from the premises of official establishments, Zhao Quanguo and his rebel student forces were isolated. Unsatisfied with this arrangement, Zhao Quanguo and four other students took a flight to Beijing to lodge a

Corps had to leave the SPC's premises and agreed not to publicize their announcement of the seizure of power in Shanghai. After the workers withdrew, the rebel students had to give up their plan as well.

When recounting this scenario several months later, Zhang Chunqiao made fun of the second power seizure by the Shanghai Red Guard Third Headquarters and its worker allies, saying that they merely captured some telephones with this move.²¹ But Zhao Quanguo's telegram did reach Mao. Upon receiving the congratulatory telegram from the Shanghai Third Headquarters, Mao himself did not express his opinion of this particular power seizure, but he praised the way of nominating new Shanghai leaders by the masses from below, as the Shanghai Third Headquarter had done.²² In Beijing, Zhao Quanguo and his fellow rebels did not seem to have strong support. But when they learned that the *People's Daily* would release an editorial supporting the capture of power as the general orientation of struggle for the whole country, they felt that their action of seizing power would be justified. Therefore, after flying back to Shanghai, they began to distribute leaflets in the city, claiming that they had been received by Zhou Enlai and the CCRG director Chen Boda who supported their actions and given them a four-point instruction. Later, this was proved to be a forgery and Zhang Chunqiao said that he called the premier and Chen Boda several times every day and never heard of such an instruction from his superiors.²³

complaint. This is different from Zhang Chunqiao's narrative. See Xu Jingxian, 2003, pp.52-57.

²¹ See "Speeches by Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Du Ping to the Proletarian Revolutionaries from Jiangsu Province and Nanjing Area" (*Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan Du Ping dui Jiangsu he Nanjing diqu wuchan jieji geming pai de jianghua*), May 14, 1967, from <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=21281&keyword=%B6%C5%C6%BD>, cited July 7, 2009.

²² Xu Jingxian, 2003, p.57.

²³ "CCP Leaders' Speeches at the Third Reception for All the Representatives from both Factions in Anhui Province" (*Zhongyang shouzhang di san ci jiejian Anhui shuangfang quanti daibiao shi de jianghua*), Oct. 22,

Nevertheless, on January 22, in the company of some small rebel groups, the Shanghai Third Headquarters, led by Zhang Quanguo, occupied the premises of some official establishments at the Kangping Street. They again, proclaimed the official takeover of the SPC. This time, however, no major rebel workers' factions took part in this action. The same day, a joint meeting, proposed by the "Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production", was held at Yuqing Road Rest House at Lane 152, Kangping Street. The meeting, which included the WGH as its core and rebel leaders from dozens of major revolutionary organizations in Shanghai, discussed the formation of an all city rebel organizations' liaison center on the condition that all participating organizations could form a great alliance. If this succeeded, it could become the new supreme organ of power in Shanghai. Learning that Zhao Quanguo's faction seized power again, the joint meeting called Zhao Quanguo to attend the meeting to negotiate the formation of great alliance. But unexpectedly, Zhao Quanguo announced that he would not go to the meeting. And Zhao also said that all the rebel organizations should go to his place, that is, the old city hall – as it was his organization that had led the power seizure – to hold another meeting to discuss related issues. Enraged by this response, Pan Guoping, the chairperson of the meeting and major director of the WGH, jumped up and cried: "This guy wrecked the joint power seizure of the Shanghai rebels, and last year he even tried to convene a rebel rally of all the six provinces and Shanghai in Eastern China...he forged Premier Zhou's instruction...Let's go for him!" The meeting was

1967, from *East Is Red Battle News (Dongfang hong zhanbao)*, no. 104, Nov. 3, 1967, ed. by the Political Department of the East Is Red Agricultural University, Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province.

adjourned and attendees from scores of rebel organizations, including rebel leaders from the “Revolutionary Committee in Public Security Sectors” within Shanghai’s police system, drove all the way into the compound of the official establishments at Kangping Street. Predictably, Zhao Quanguo was seized and sent to the public security bureau.²⁴ The third power seizure was thus ended.

On January 23, the joint meeting at Yuqing Road Rest House resumed. The attendees unanimously agreed that the situation in Shanghai was favorable and the time was right for a further move. This was because, first of all, the rebirth of *Wenhui Daily* and *Liberation Daily* enabled the Shanghai rebels to have two powerful ideological weapons. Secondly, the founding of the “Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production” insured that the rebels would put a stop to the spate of economism and general strikes instigated by the power holders and conservative workers – thus preventing Shanghai from running out of daily supplies. Thirdly, a great number of rebel workers had seized power from power holders at various government levels and all this laid a solid foundation for the rebels to form a supreme organ of power at the city level.²⁵ Wang Hongwen believed that targeting and attacking the handful of capitalist roaders within the party required strong unity among the Shanghai rebels based on Mao Zedong’s thought. Naturally, all the representatives reached a consensus in forming a city-level power organ based on the broadest unity of all proletarian factions. As for what the new power organ should be called, there were many names proposed. Some suggested the General

²⁴ Xu Jingxian, 2003. pp.57-58.

²⁵ Yang, Yougen and Shi, Zhongkang, *Shi geweihui chengli qianxi shushi* (“Some Things on the Eve of Shanghai Revolutionary Committee”), in *January Storm*, joint issue of No. 5 and No. 6, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai.

Liaison Post of the Great Alliance of Shanghai Proletarian Revolutionaries (*Shanghai wuchan jieji gemingpai dalianhe zong lianluozhan*), and some preferred the Committee of the Great Alliance of Shanghai Proletarian Revolutionaries (*Shanghai wuchan jieji gemingpai dalianhe weiyuanhui*). At the time, one worker from the WGH proposed: “The most cherished thing of Chairman Mao is the Commune. Why don’t we call it Shanghai Commune?”²⁶ His idea got a lot of support from other people. And a Red Guard from the East Is Red of Beijing Sports Institute added the word “new” before the proposed name, Shanghai Commune. In this way, the title, “New Shanghai Commune” (*xin Shanghai gongshe*) was set for the proposed power organ. When briefed by attendees of the meeting about the chosen name, Zhang Chunqiao suggested that it be modify to be the “Shanghai People’s Commune” (*Shanghai renmin gongshe*, later known as “Shanghai Commune”).²⁷ After the meeting, a team

²⁶ Mao had been enthusiastic with the idea of communes. When he visited the first people’s commune at Qiliying People’s Commune of Xingxiang city, Henan Province on Aug. 6, 1958, Mao hailed it, saying: “it’s perfect to call it a people’s commune.” On Aug. 13th, 1958, the *People’s Daily* published an editorial titled “The People’s Commune is perfect.” Since then, the communization of rural areas surged throughout the country and also, almost every Chinese knew that Chairman Mao loved communes.

²⁷ Yang Yougen and Shi Zhongkang, “Some Things on the Eve of Shanghai Revolutionary Committee” (*Shi geweihui chengli qianxi shushi*), in *January Storm*, joint issue of No. 5 and No. 6, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai. There are various narratives about the origin of the title of the Shanghai Commune..According to a confession by rebel leader Wang Minglong after the 1976 coup, in the middle of January, Wang Hongwen convened a meeting to discuss the power seizure from the old SPC. At this meeting, the issue of a name for the proposed new power organ was discussed. The proposed titles included “The Committee of the Supreme Power of Shanghai municipality” (*Shanghai shi zuigao quanli weiyuanhui*), “The Headquarters of the Supreme Power of Shanghai Municipality” (*Shanghai shi zuigao quanli zhihuibu*), “The Supreme General Headquarters for Power Seizure of the Shanghai Proletarian Revolutionaries (*Shanghai shi wuchan jieji gemingpai duoquan zuigao zong zhihuibu*), and so forth. Finally, Huo Da, a Red Guard from East China Normal University mentioned that in his university, the Red Guards were preparing to form a “New East China Normal University Commune” (*xinshida gongshe*) in keeping with the principles of the Paris Commune. Inspired by Huo Da, those at the meeting suggested forming the Shanghai power organ modeled upon the Paris Commune. At this meeting, Wang Hongwen agreed to name the proposed power organ “New Shanghai Commune” (*xin Shanghai gongshe*). Zhu Yongjia, a rebel intellectual, gave a similar recollection in his confession to the coup regime on October 15, 1979. Zhu Yongjia stated that the title of Shanghai People’s Commune was proposed by Huo Da at a meeting of “Frontline Headquarters” convened by

was formed to draft a manifesto and announcement of the Shanghai People's Commune. This team consisted of members from the WGH, the "Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production," the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, the "Rebel to the End" Corps of the Shanghai Jiaotong University, the Shanghai Liaison Centre of the Capital's Red Guard Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters (The Third Headquarters), the Shanghai Liaison Centre of the Red Flag Fighting Detachment of the Beijing Aeronautical Engineering Institute, among others.²⁸

Shanghai's proposal to call the new power organ a commune was by no means incidental. After Mao praised Nie Yuanzi's wall poster in July 1966, calling it the manifesto of a 1960s' Paris Commune—like bamboo shoots after a spring rain—many mass organizations named after "commune" emerged.²⁹ What was attractive to both the masses and the Maoist leadership was not just that the name commune was used,

Zhang Chunqiao. At this meeting, Zhang Chunqiao approved Huo Da's proposal, naming the proposed Shanghai power organ the Shanghai People's Commune (*Shanghai renmin gongshe*). But according to a memoir by Wang Li, a member of the CCRG, it was Mao Zedong who decided that the title of the proposed Shanghai power organ should be the Shanghai Commune. See Gu Xunzhong, *Guanyu 1967 nian 1 yue Wang Hongwen jinjing ji Shanghai quanlu jigou mingchen bianhua de shishi kaoding* (A Historical Research on the Issues of Wang Hongwen's Visit of Beijing in January 1967 and the Nominal Shift of the Shanghai's Power Organ.), <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=16365>, cited on August 22, 2009.

²⁸ Yang Yougen and Shi Zhongkang, "Some Things on the Eve of Shanghai Revolutionary Committee" (*Shi geweihui chengli qianxi shushi*), in *January Storm*, joint issue of No. 5 and No. 6, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai.

²⁹ To name a few in Beijing: Beijing Commune of the Central Conservatory of Music, East Is Red Commune of Beijing Geosciences Institute, East Is Red Commune of Beijing University of Technology, Beijing Commune of Beijing No.6 High School, East Is Red Commune of Beijing Institute of Light Industry, East Is Red Commune of Beijing Institute of Posts and Telecommunications, Sparkle Commune of the Guangming Daily, East Is Red Commune of the Central Department of United Fronts, Beijing Commune of the Central University of Finance and Economics, the Commune of Politics and Law of Beijing Institute of Political Science and Law, the Revolutionary Rebel Commune of the Central Overseas Chinese Commission, East Is Red Commune of Beijing Mining Institute, New China Commune of the Xinhua News Agency, the Commune of New Beijing University, Jingtang Mountain Commune of New Beijing University, etc. In Shanghai, using "commune" as part of the name was also popular among mass organizations --such as East Is Red Commune of Fudan University, May 7 Commune of Tongji University, New East China Normal University Commune, and so on. The list merely represents my random survey from various resources and google search. I have found many more mass organizations during the CR that were named after the Paris Commune.

but rather the organizational and operational principles and possibilities this name indicated and stood for. As early as December 27, 1966, at the capital mass rally titled “thoroughly criticizing the Liu-Deng bourgeois reactionary line,” Nie Yuanzi, one of the authors of “the first Marxist-Leninist wall poster” and leader of the Commune of New Beijing University, suggested forming a Beijing Commune based on a great alliance of various Beijing Red Guards factions, which “was to have democratically elected office-holders and was to resemble the Paris Commune of 1871.”³⁰ On January 30, in a discussion with representatives from two factions of the Beijing Broadcast Station, Wang Li, a member of the CCRG, commented on power seizure: “You evaluate the Paris Commune as perfect? Then how many Commune members were Marxists? In as much as what they did, it’s good. Marx did not agree with many things of the Paris Commune. But since the Commune was revolutionary, Marx supported it...In Beijing we should unite. In accordance with Chairman Mao’s instructions, people from three sides should form the core: the revolutionary masses, the armed forces, and those who persisted in Chairman Mao’s side within the Beijing Party Committee. Quite possibly, the future form of the power organ would still be Beijing People’s Commune.”³¹ On February 1, when talking with Beijing Red Guards and public security cadres, another CCRG member Qi Benyu indicated,

Recently people are considering forming a joint organization—the Beijing Commune. The Center also has this intention. It needs to be

³⁰ Neale Hunter 1969, p.222.

³¹ See “Wang Li’s Talk with Comrades from the Two Factions of Beijing Broadcast Station” (*Wang Li yu Beijing guangbo diantai liangpai tongzhi de jianghua*), transcribed by the Mao Zedong’s Thought Red Guards Battle Regiment of the Beijing Broadcast Station and the East Is Red Commune of the Beijing Geosciences University, Jan.30, 1967, from <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=21666>, cited June 28, 2009.

prepared and elected according to the principles of the Paris Commune. And the CCRG is discussing it. Premier Xie (Fuzhi) is trusted to see to the preparation of the Beijing Commune. Premier Xie is the first minister who supports leftists, and he supports the Commune of Politics and Law, hence having high prestige among leftist organizations. Fu Chongbi and Li Zhen will [also] be in charge of the preparatory works of the Beijing Commune. Do you need some time for the preparation?...³²

Jiang Qing, the deputy director of the CCRG, also suggested forming communes on the same day. Talking with the representatives of mass organizations at the Central News and Documentary Film Studio, she instructed: “There are too many bureaucratic organs. Why not establish some people’s communes?”³³ Tellingly, she posited the commune as the antithesis of the bureaucratic establishment. As the WGH and other rebel organizations were busily preparing the new power organ, the Shanghai People’s Commune, the fourth takeover of the SPC, initiated by the Red Revolutionaries, the largest and legendary rebel student organization in Shanghai, which achieved glorious revolutionary deeds during the fights against the authorities in past months, was also in the process of being formed. It was the Red Revolutionaries that initiated the famous *Liberation Daily* Incident. Even though rebels gained victory in that battle, this action was still criticized among rebels, for it began as an “opportunist and adventurist” action and ended with an “escapist” action.³⁴ The Red Revolutionaries was originally an all-city Red Guard student group

³² “Xie Fuzhi and Qi Benyu talk with Beijing Red Guards and Public Security Cadres” (*Xie Fuzhi Qi Benyu dui Beijing shi Hongweibing he gongan ganbu de jianghua*), Feb.1, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guards Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, March, 1967.

³³ *Jiang Qing Qi Benyu dui zhongyang xinwen jilu zhipian chang qunzhong daibiao de jianghua* (Speeches by Jiang Qing and Qi Benyu to the representatives of mass organs at the Central News and Documentary Film Studio), Feb.1, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guards Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, March, 1967.

³⁴ *Cong honggehui mouxie toutou paoda zhongyang wenge kan wuzhengfu zhuyi de fandong benzhi (The Reactionary Nature of Anarchism Seen From some Heads of Red Revolutionaries' Bombardment of the CCRG)*, in

consisting of representatives from various Shanghai universities. But later, due to internal conflicts and fighting among some student leaders, some colleges, such as Shanghai Fisheries Institute, Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute, Shanghai Railway Institute, Shanghai Sports College, and Shanghai Textiles Institute, withdrew from the group. The remaining major universities were Fudan University, Shanghai Normal Institute and Shanghai Jiaotong University, among which Fudan took the lead.³⁵ On January 23, representatives from some major rebel organizations, including the Red Revolutionaries, held a preparatory meeting for establishing the Shanghai People's Commune two days later. At the same time, some top members of the standing committee of the Red Revolutionaries met at their own place. The Red Revolutionaries, became infuriated when they learned that they had not been elected into the draft committee for the Shanghai People's Commune Manifesto, and discussion of the group's internal issues was called off. Guan Yuchao, a standing committee member from Shanghai Normal Institute shouted: "Let's argue with them next time." That night, while participating in the preparatory meeting for the Shanghai People's Commune, in keeping with the secret decision that had been made at their own meeting, the Red Revolutionaries seized the official seals of the Shanghai universities and colleges. On January 24, representatives of various rebel

The Special Issue of the Rally "Raising High the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong's Thought, Thoroughly Criticizing the Anarchist Reactionary Thought, and Beating Back the Reactionary Counter-current." (Gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi, chedi pipan wuzhengfu zhuyi fandong sichang, jitui fan geming niliu dahui zhuankan), p.8, jointly ed. by the WGH, The Revolutionary Rebel United Committee of City Level Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (Shanghai shi shiji jiguan geming zaofan lianhe weiyuanhui), the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Post of Red Revolutionary Fighters, and the Shanghai Broadcasting Station Headquarters of Smashing the Reactionary Counter-current, April 12, 1967.

³⁵ See "This is By No Means Accident" (*Zhe jue bushi ouran de*), from the joint issue of "Advance Express News" (*Tingjin kuaibao*) and "Frontline News" (*huoxian bao*), ed. by the Revolutionary Rebels' Committee of Shanghai Institute of Machinery, Feb. 24, 1967.

organizations and representatives of PLA from the Shanghai garrison continued to assemble at Shanghai Party School to discuss the issue of power seizure, during which they worked out a manifesto of power seizure and an announcement to be published on newspapers the next day. Meanwhile, countless wall posters were put up throughout the city to celebrate the coming Shanghai People's Commune.³⁶ On January 24, only two days after the third power seizure by the Shanghai Third Headquarters, and after making careful plans and preparation at a daytime meeting of responsible people from all of its branches, the Red Revolutionaries organized more than ten Red Guard contingents and dispatched them to different agencies of the SPC. In one night, they swept all official seals from 23 major government and party offices, including the SPC, the Shanghai People's Committee (i.e. the city hall), the East China Bureau of CCP, and the Party Committees and People's Committees of ten lower districts.³⁷ They even occupied one building of the Shanghai Exhibition Hall as their headquarters, requesting that soldiers from the Shanghai Garrison guard it for them.

After this seizure of power by the Red Revolutionaries, some rebel factions were infuriated because the Red Revolutionaries had pushed other rebel groups aside and taken action by themselves. Some factions even stated that they were considering physically attacking the Red Revolutionaries. The Red Revolutionaries, under a lot of

³⁶ See "Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution" (*Yiyue geming wansui*), from *Workers' Rebel News* (*Gongren zaofan bao*), Jan. 12, 1968.

³⁷ Another source says that the WGH led by Pan Guoping also took part in the action of capturing seals, See "Annals of the Reactionary Activities of Bombarding the CCRG by Some Red Revolutionaries Heads" (*Dashiji: honggehui toutou paoda zhongyang wenge fangeming huodong yilanbiao*), from the joint issue of "Advance Express News" (*Tingjin kuaibao*) and "Frontline News" (*huoxian bao*), ed. by the Revolutionary Rebels' Committee of Shanghai Institute of Machinery, Feb, 24, 1967.

pressure because of such public opinion, had to deal with this situation. They invited the three other largest and most influential rebel organizations for a negotiation meeting to discuss the possibility of forming a coalition government which would be centered around the Red Revolutionaries. These organizations were the WGH representing rebel workers, the Shanghai Revolutionary Peasant Rebels' General Headquarters (Preparatory Committee) representing rebel peasants, and the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee representing literati rebels. Influenced by Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan's insistence on building the broadest unity rather than a small alliance with only four organizations, Xu Jingxian and Wang Chenlong, the leaders of literati rebels, tried their best to persuade the Red Revolutionaries not to capture power merely for the four groups. There were at least 32 rebel organizations which usually held meetings and took coalition actions together – so how could these friendly rebel factions be pushed aside? If the Red Revolutionaries insisted on their original plan, a civil war among rebels would be unavoidable.

During the meeting that night, Yao Wenyuan called the four groups several times. After talking with Yao, the leaders of the WGH Pan Guoping were leaning to not support the plan suggested by the Red Revolutionaries. Moreover, all three other organizations were inclined to go along with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan's proposal to convene a large joint meeting that included different rebel factions to negotiate and discuss how to cooperatively seize power and how the new power organ, that is, the proposed Shanghai People's Commune, would operate. These three

organizations also said that the Red Revolutionaries should hand over the official seals they held to the proposed Shanghai Commune, because if they could not guarantee the security of these seals, there might be some bad results – such as passports being unofficially issued for people to go abroad. This unexpected scenario and arrangement challenged and offended the Red Revolutionaries. Li Gongzuo, one of its leaders, shouted: “it’s the Red Revolutionaries who captured the seals, why should we turn it over to the Shanghai Commune?” She even hinted that the Shanghai Commune was nothing more than a disorganized mixture of different rebels.. In the end, however, the rebels agreed to send all of the official seals they had just seized from the old Shanghai government to the garrison, who would give them back to their original holders who could then continue functioning.³⁸ But the Red Revolutionaries still insisted on issuing their own “Announcement of Power Seizure” in major newspapers and they threatened to not to recognize the Shanghai Commune if they were not allowed to do this. But the announcement was not released the next day. In order to leave room for negotiations with the largest rebel student body—the Red Revolutionaries, and due to resistance and defeiance also coming from the Geng Jinzhang-led Second Corps (more on this below), the actual formation of the proposed Shanghai Commune was postponed until January 28. This postponement of the Shanghai Commune’s inauguration, however, would not be the last delay.

This aborted power seizure really hurt the prestige and pride of the Red Revolutionaries. It also led to deep discontent and dissent directed toward Zhang

³⁸ Xu Jingxian 2003, pp.47-51.

Chunqiao, the pivotal figure who had been responsible for the other three rebel organizations withdrawing their support. The Red Revolutionaries began to probe deep into the family background and private life of Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, a move likely suggested and supported by some power holders from the old SPC who knew Zhang and Yao very well. This probe unearthed the fact that Zhang's wife Li Wenjing was a traitor during anti-Japanese wartime and that Yao Wenyuan's father Yao Pengzi withdrew from the CCP during the White Terror Period. But this information was obtained from the CCP archives, which indicated that there was actually no serious blot on their character, and that according to the CCP's official regulations, they had been qualified for promotions after strict examinations of their family backgrounds. Thus, these materials were far from enough to bring down Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan. The Red Revolutionaries, therefore, put on the agenda the inquiry of Zhang and Yao's political blunders or possible crimes.

Together with some other Red Guard student organizations, they began to target Xu Jingxian, the leader of the literati rebels and seemingly a close friend of Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan. Xu Jingxian and all of his colleagues who worked in the Writers' Group of the SPC, a unit under the direct leadership of Shanghai Propaganda Department which Zhang Chunqiao headed before the CR, rebelled collectively on November, 1966. Their rebellion was encouraged by Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan.³⁹ This kind of "collective rebellion" was unprecedented

³⁹ Similarly, Jiang Qing personally urged the first secretary of the SPC Chen Pixian several times to rebel, but got no positive response from Chen. See Chen Pixian 2005, pp.72-82. The attempt to bring down Zhang Chunqiao by investigating his Writers' Group of the SPC was not a new tactic. In the middle of November, 1966, the first Party secretary Chen Pixian encouraged a conservative Red Guard group in Fudan University-- The Fudan University Brigade of the Red Guards' Headquarters of the Shanghai Universities and Colleges (*hongweibing shanghai shi*

because in other places, intensive struggles had always emerged between two rival groups—between the rebels and the conservatives. So this appeared to be a rare case, as one unit had never rebelled collectively. Before their “collective rebellion”, Xu Jingxian and his colleagues, such as Zhu Yongjia, were very active in helping the Shanghai authorities to suppress the rebel movement. On the night right before the Writers’ Group’s “collective rebellion,” Xu Jingxian was even busy writing an insincere “self-criticism” for Chen Pixian, the first secretary of the SPC. In the eyes of the young Red Guards, the rebellion by Xu Jingxian and his colleagues seemed fake and it appeared that Xu himself might be one of the secret members of the old SPC which had gone underground for the time being to set up an alternative Shanghai government that could function in an urgent situation such as the ongoing CR.

In the same vein, if Xu Jingxian could be a secret agent of the collapsing old Shanghai government, why could this not be also true of Zhang Chunqiao? In the eyes of some Red Guards, if Zhang Chunqiao was in fact a secret agent, then this would explain why he had vigorously opposed the seizure of power by the Red Revolutionaries. Thinking that this was in fact the case, some Red Guard groups decided to take actions against Zhang Chunqiao. As early as January 23, “Monkey King” led by Hu Shoujun, a small branch of Fudan’s Red Guard organization Bombarding Headquarters, put up many anti-Zhang Chunqiao wall posters at the Bund, the old colonial park near the Huangpu River in Shanghai. Some of the titles of

dazhuan yuanxiao zongbu fudan daxue daduibu) to attack Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan through making accusations of Zhang-led Writers’ Group of the SPC. See the pamphlet *Yi honggehui mouxie fuzeren wei daibiao de paoda zhongyang wenge de fandong niliu jiyao* (*A Summary of the Reactionary Countercurrent of Bombarding the CCRG Represented by Some Red Revolutionaries’ Responsible Persons*), Ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, March 1967.

these posters read “Be careful of Tao Zhu and Wang Renzhong style figures!”⁴⁰”

“Zhang Chunqiao is not equal to the CCRG!” “Firmly oppose the formation of New SPC Headed by Zhang Chunqiao at the present time!” Another small Fudan student faction called “Kai Xin Yu” (Creating New World) started to gather information about Zhang Chunqiao that could be used against him.⁴¹

The Shanghai Liaison Center of the Jinggang Mountains Headquarters of Qinghua University, another faction that opposed Zhang Chunqiao, was from Beijing. A regiment of the Jinggang Mountains Headquarters in Beijing led by Kuai Dafu turned against Premier Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng, a key member of the CCRG and a standing committee member of the CCP politburo. Its influence soon reached its Shanghai liaison post, which decided to follow its Beijing general headquarters and launched a campaign against Kang Sheng’s counterpart in Shanghai, i.e. Zhang Chunqiao, who was a major member of the CCRG as well. A Red Guard paper bluntly presented a causal link: “By devious routes, this Peking reaction against Premier Zhou and Comrade Kang Sheng affected the situation in Shanghai, where there was a similar reaction against Comrade Zhang Chunqiao.”⁴² Campaigns against major members of the CCRG had successful precedents, as the former No. 5 Chinese leader Tao Zhu and the governor of Hubei Province Wang Renzhong were also major members of the CCRG and were brought down during 1967.

⁴⁰ Tao Zhu and Wang Renzhong were the ex-members of the CCRG who were later brought down. After their downfall, both of them were seen as bogus leftists or double-dealers by the rebels.

⁴¹ See “Annals of the Reactionary Activities of Bombarding the CCRG by Some Red Revolutionaries Heads” (*Dashiji: honggehui toutou paoda zhongyang wenge fangeming huodong yilanbiao*), from the joint issue of “Advance Express News” (*Tingjin kuaibao*) and “Frontline News” (*huoxian bao*), ed. by the Revolutionary Rebels’ Committee of Shanghai Institute of Machinery, Feb, 24, 1967.

⁴² Neale Hunter 1969, p.231.

On January 24, the Shanghai Liaison Center of the Jinggang Mountains Headquarters of Qinghua University put up a wall poster, denouncing as a manifestation of economism, the parading of allegedly guilty old Shanghai government officials through the streets in 4-ton trucks for ten days.⁴³ Even though Zhang could not totally control these kinds of mass-initiated actions conducted by different rebel factions, the poster hinted that Zhang Chunqiao was responsible for this humiliating treatment of old cadres and this new kind of economism,. For instance, even the WGH, which was led by the strong-headed Pan Guoping and usually seen by its political rivals as Zhang Chunqiao's political instrument, sometimes did not listen to Zhang and took actions on its own initiative, not to mention the unruly Geng Jinzhang, the head of the Second Corps. The Jinggang Mountains Headquarters of Qinghua University had a lot of prestige throughout the country. Even though its members in Shanghai were few, their attitudes toward Zhang Chunqiao gained a lot of influence among Shanghai Red Guards. What motivated these student factions to oppose Zhang Chunqiao was vividly manifested when the "Monkey King" leaders went to the office of the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and debated with Xu Jingxian, the leader of the intellectual rebels. When Xu why they attacked Zhang Chunqiao, Hu Shoujun answered,

The goal of our rebellion is to bring down the SPC. Zhang Chunqiao was a secretary of the old SPC's secretariat. Now the SPC is a black

⁴³ Neale Hunter 1969, pp.231-232.

bourgeois headquarters and all other secretaries have grave problems, why not Zhang Chunqiao? We think that the internal class front of the SPC is still not clear, so we oppose forming a new SPC at present, and especially oppose selecting Zhang Chunqiao and others to act as the leaders of the new SPC!⁴⁴

It was understandable for young Red Guards, such as Hu Shoujun, to think that Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan might be hidden capitalist roaders obeying the orders of the falling SPC, because Zhang Chunqiao was a senior official of the SPC. But Hu Shoujun and his like-minded Red Guards might have forgotten that Zhang Chunqiao was the first senior Shanghai official to stand out and decisively supported the rebel workers after the Anting Incident; and that Yao Wenyuan was the main ideologue of the CR who had written, with the help of Zhang Chungqiao, the famous treatise, "*On the New Historical Play Dismissal of Hai Rui*" in November 1965 – which triggered the outburst of the CR. Moreover, except Zhao Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, no other senior Shanghai officials had sincerely expressed and lent their support to the rebels at the time. If Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan were brought down as well as their superior officers Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu, where would the proposed new power organ find its experienced and revolutionary high ranking cadres? Also, the method and practice of the radical Red Guards, such as Hu Shoujun, of “dismissing and bringing down all cadres”, was obviously, contrary to the statement in the *Sixteen-point Program* which had stated that the majority of cadres were good, or relatively good, and could be saved. For Hu Shoujun and the like, all Shanghai senior cadres were out-and-out capitalist roaders. Nevertheless, with unsubstantiated suspicions and ungrounded wild guesses, Hu Shoujun and other

⁴⁴ Xu Jingxian 2003, p.59.

ultra-leftist Red Guards launched a fierce attack on Zhang and Yao, accusing them of being “capitalist roaders”.

The attack against Zhang Chunqiao was at least in part rooted in a significant trend of thought throughout the CR, the political line of “doubting everything” and “striking everything down”. Although “doubting everything” (*De omnibus dubitandum est*) came from Descartes, it was widely quoted as one of Marx’s motto and understandably, few people could challenge it due to Marx’s prestigious status in Communist theory.⁴⁵ By invoking Marx’s old soul, almost everybody quoted it as the reason for one’s actions. It was used to partially and theoretically justify the actual practice of “striking everything down” in the CR. Just after the *People’s Daily* published Nie Yuanzi and her colleagues’ first wall poster in Beijing University on June 2, 1966, some people spoke out about “doubting everything” and argued that “doubting everything is good.”⁴⁶ This attitude soon became fashionable among the masses. In fact, Red Guards and rebel workers were not the only ones who used Marx’s motto as their principle – some “big-shots” among top cadres in the Center of CCP also appropriated it for their own purposes. Tao Zhu, for example, the third party boss in the so-called Liu-Dengist headquarters, a major member of the CCRG and a standing committee member of the CCP politburo, enjoyed this slogan so much that he introduced it to many Red Guards on various public occasions. Tao Zhu received a letter from Gu Ruihua, a student from the China Medical University in Beijing, in

⁴⁵ When responding to the questions of his daughters Jenny and Laura in 1865, Marx stated that his favorite motto was Descartes’ “*De omnibus dubitandum* [doubt everything].” See Karl Marx, *Confessions*, in *MECW*. Volume 42, p.568.

⁴⁶ *Gu Ruihua tongzhi gei Tao Zhu de xin* (“The Letter from Comrade Gu Ruihua to Tao Zhu”), in *Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming cankao ziliao* (*Reference Materials for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*), Vol. 1, compiled by the Red Propagandist Fighting Team in Beijing Institute of Chemical Technology, et al., 1966.

which Gu expressed his deep concern about the spread of this “doubt everything” thought and emphasized that Chairman Mao had never been for this slogan. Tao Zhu publicly criticized this at a rally speech at Gu’s university,

Now it’s the time for you to disclose everything and everybody. Try your best to do it. Gu Ruihua’s responding letter exerted a bad influence. In the Great Cultural Revolution, it is correct to doubt everyone. But you cannot doubt Chairman Mao...you cannot doubt the Chinese revolution led by the CCP; you cannot doubt that we follow a socialist path toward communism. Except for those mentioned above, you can doubt everything. If cadres lead well, doubt a while and then stop; if cadres lead badly, doubt them to the end and bring them down.⁴⁷

On other occasions, Tao Zhu said: “I am all for bombardment in general . . . nobody knows what the headquarters really represents, and that goes for every headquarters,” or even “You can oppose anybody.”⁴⁸ Marshal Ye Jianying, a conservative in the army and one of the main players in the coup d’etat of 1976, also asserted that “it should be permitted for people to doubt, boldly doubt and doubt everything.”⁴⁹

As early as January 18, 1967, a small faction *Fanfupi* (“Against Restoration”) in Fudan University reposted the wall poster “there must be a second chaos in Fudan”, which claimed to “carry forward the proletarian spirit of doubting everything.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ “Tao Zhu’s Speech at the China Medical University” (*Tao Zhu zai zhongguo yike daxue de jianghua*), Aug.23, 1966, in *Reference Materials for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming cankao ziliao)*, Vol. 1, compiled by the Red Propagandist Fighting Team in Beijing Institute of Chemical Technology, et al., 1966.

⁴⁸ Yao Wenyuan, “Comments on Tao Zhu’s Two Books” (*Ping Tao Zhu de liang ben shu*), in *People’s Daily*, Sep. 8, 1967, its English version can be found at “Comments on Tao Chu’s Two Books”, *Peking Review*, No. 38, Sep. 15, 1967.

⁴⁹ “Speech By Ye Jianying at The Mass Rally of Revolutionary Teachers and Students From Beijing PLA Military Academies” (*Ye Jianying zai zhongyang junwei zhaokai de zaijing junshi yuanxiao geming shisheng dahui shang de jianghua*), Nov. 13, 1966, in *Various Reactionary Thoughts During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, ed. by the Writing Group of the SPC, 1970.

⁵⁰ See the pamphlet *Yi honggehui mouxie fuzeren wei daibiao de paoda zhongyang wenge de fandong niliu jiyao*

When discussing the bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao that started at the end of the January Storm in Shanghai, An Wenjiang, the former leader of Third Headquarters of Shanghai' Red Guards Red Guard who actively participated in it, candidly admitted that at that time a good segment of Red Guards was indeed driven by the line of "doubting everything".⁵¹ He recalled:

After the collapse of the capitalist roaders, the still fanatical Red Guards looked for new objects on which to vent. The first way they found was the civil war that intensified day by day. The second way was to turn the spearhead of the struggle against suspicious figures in the new regime. "To doubt everything" became the most fashionable slogan. At the time, we don't have enough materials to verify the doubts about Zhang Chunqiao, but once we began to doubt him, then bombardment naturally ensued. Isn't Zhang a secretary of the old SPC? How come Zhang is so good yet the old SPC followed a revisionist line? Didn't Zhang's wife have a history of problems?⁵²

Tao Zhu was later brought down by the Maoist camp in January 1967 because of his support for the Liu-Dengist line. Yao Wenyuan, a writer and ideologue, wrote a book titled *Comments on Tao Chu (Zhu)'s Two Books* in September 1967 to condemn Tao. In this book, Yao argued that Tao Zhu was "Left" in form but Right in essence, and that he "creatively" developed the bourgeois reactionary line of "hitting hard at many in order to protect a handful." Tao's purpose, Yao sharply pointed out,

was to blur the distribution between the proletarian headquarters and the bourgeois headquarters, and direct the spearhead of attack at the

(*A Summary of the Reactionary Countercurrent of Bombarding the CCRG Represented by Some Red Revolutionaries' Responsible Persons*), Ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, March 1967.

⁵¹ According to An's recollection, the Anti-Zhang Camp also put up wall posters titled "Long Live the Revolutionary Spirit of Doubting Everything" in Shanghai in January 1967, from An Wenjiang, "I Would Not Confess" (*Wobu chanhui*), in *1966: Recollections of Our Generation (1966, women na yidai de huiyi)*, p.106, ed. by Xu Youyu, 1988.

⁵² *Ibid.* pp.104-105.

proletarian headquarters headed by Chairman Mao so that the handful of Party persons in authorities taking the capitalist road could sneak away in the confusion. “To doubt everyone” and such like are designed to deal with the proletarian headquarters. “To doubt everyone” except himself, “to overthrow everyone” except himself – isn't there something fishy here? Comrades, please note that there are now a handful of counter-revolutionaries who are adopting the same method. Using slogans that sound extremely “Left” but in essence are extremely Right, they have stirred up evil gusts of “doubting everyone,” while bombarding the proletarian headquarters, creating dissension and exploiting confusion. To achieve their sinister ulterior aim, they have vainly attempted to shake and split the proletarian headquarters headed by Chairman Mao.⁵³

While the *Sixteen-point Program* noted that the majority of cadres were good or relatively good, some high-ranking officials in the Central government and the army, such as Tao Zhu and Ye Jianying, openly encouraged and advocated the line of “doubting everybody” and “striking everything down.” Quite possibly, such encouragement from these top leaders resulted in a lot of uncertainty, complexity and conflicts in the CR.

Let us now return to Shanghai at the end of January Revolution of 1967. At the time the Shanghai Red Guards were split into at least two camps. Before January 23, “Monkey King” of “Bombarding Headquarters”, “Kai Xin Yu” (Creating New World), and Shanghai Liaison Center of the Jinggang Mountains Headquarters of Qinghua University were small rebel factions that fell into the camp that opposed Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan. And many other bigger Red Guard factions, such as All the Way Rebels at Jiaotong University and East Is Red Regiment at Tongji University, supported Zhang and Yao. But what about the largest Red Guard faction, the Red

⁵³ Yao Wenyuan, “Comments on Tao Zhu's Two Books” (*Ping Tao Zhu de liang ben shu*), in *People's Daily*, Sep. 8, 1967, its English version can be found at “Comments on Tao Chu's Two Books”, *Peking Review*, No. 38, Sep. 15, 1967.

Revolutionaries who had about 40,000 members? What was the predominant line here?

The Red Revolutionaries never issued a formal declaration in favor of Zhang Chunqiao as some other factions did – even though the Red Revolutionaries and Zhang Chunqiao benefited enormously from each other in the course of previous struggles to bring down the old SPC. But for some reasons, around the middle of January, the Red Revolutionaries started to take an increasingly hostile stance toward Zhang Chunqiao's supporters, as described above, and even charged them with Trotskyism. With regard to this label, however, as Neale Hunter sensibly pointed out, “the students are unlikely to have thought of it by themselves, which means that their attack probably was suggested by someone else.” Possibly, the bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao might have been a result of interconnections between some student factions and disgraced Party bosses like Chen Pixian, though such an hypothesis requires more evidence.⁵⁴

As Lenin had pointed out, anarchism was frequently a sort of punishment for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement.⁵⁵ So it was for the student movement in Shanghai. Beginning January 24, some leaders of the Red Revolutionaries, such as Lao Yuanyi and Zhao Jihui, got actively involved in the bombardment of Zhang. This was at least in part stimulated by the attacks on Zhang Chunqiao by the “Monkey King” group led by Hu Shoujun, which aimed to score new “revolutionary” points and show that the Red Revolutionaries were not lagging in

⁵⁴ Neale Hunter 1969, p.233. On January 26, 1967, Chen Pixian told the Red Revolutionaries that Zhang Chunqiao was a double-dealer. See the pamphlet *Yi honggehui mouxie fuzeren wei daibiao de paoda zhongyang wenge de fandong niliu jiyao (A Summary of the Reactionary Countercurrent of Bombarding the CCRG Represented by Some Red Revolutionaries' Responsible Persons)*, Ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, March 1967.

⁵⁵ V. I. Lenin, *“Left-Wing” Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, p.17. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1970.

the struggle and were not new conservatives and loyalists.⁵⁶ The bombardment of Zhang delayed, once again, the formation of the proposed Shanghai People's Commune. In order to secure this attack, the Red Revolutionaries formed a special team called "Carrying Out The Revolution To The End" to secretly collect materials to use against Zhang Chunqiao and the Writing Group of old SPC. The next day, the Red Revolutionaries drafted a wall poster titled "A Second Big Chaos was Necessary in Shanghai," openly directing its target of struggle at Zhang Chunqiao.⁵⁷ On January 26, in addition to the Red Revolutionaries and Bombarding the Headquarters, the Red Third Headquarters, led by An Wenjiang, officially joined in the bombardment of Zhang as well. At a Red Revolutionary meeting that morning, a Red Guard leader, Yu Dingjin attacked Zhang Chunqiao, saying that after Zhang had arrived in Shanghai, the city's movement did not advance very much and that Zhang just staged publicity stunts and campaigns. Another leader conveyed the words from "Monkey King" that to bombard Zhang Chunqiao was to seize power. After this, a great deal of anti-Zhang wall posters similar to "A Second Big Chaos was Necessary in Shanghai" flooded the city.

At midnight on January 28, four days after the attempt to seize power by the

⁵⁶ In Cao Wenping's memoir, Lao Yuanyi, a rebel leader of the Red Revolutionaries, is depicted as an opportunist and capitulationists before the bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao. One important reason for Lao Yuanyi and other opportunist leaders' bombardment of Zhang was that they needed to save face and recover the good reputation they lost because of their betrayal of Red Guards' interests in the past. To bombard Zhang was to show that Lao Yuanyi and his fellows were still revolutionary. See Cao, Weiping, *Gan geming weishenme zheme nan? wo qinli de Shanghai liangci paoda Zhang Chunqiao* ("Why was It So Difficult to Make Revolution?—The Two Bombardments of Zhang Chunqiao in Shanghai I Experienced"), from <http://wg1966.com/bbs/ziliao/index.php?dirpath=./%CE%C4%B8%EF%D1%D0%BE%BF%D1%A7%D5%DF&order=0>, cited June 3, 2009.

⁵⁷ See the pamphlet *Yi honggehui mouxie fuzeren wei daibiao de paoda zhongyang wenge de fandong niliu jiyao* (*A Summary of the Reactionary Countercurrent of Bombarding the CCRG Represented by Some Red Revolutionaries' Responsible Persons*), Ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, March 1967.

Red Revolutionaries was aborted, the Red Revolutionaries of Fudan dispatched more than 30 Red Guards to “make a reconnaissance of Zhang Chunqiao by firing,” and storm the Shanghai Party School where “*Jilianzhan*”, led by Xu Jingxian, was stationed. In this storm, the Red Revolutionaries kidnapped Xu Jingxian, a determined supporter of Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, and a staff person who argued with them. When another intellectual rebel leader, Wang Chenglong, wanted to argue on the spot with the dispatched Red Guards, the Red Guards attacked Wang and threw him to the floor, causing him to go into a coma. They also wanted to kidnap another leader, Guo Renjie, but were intercepted by other staff persons of the Liaison Centre and especially the vice leader of the powerful Second Corps of the WGH, who happened to also be there. They even went to the home of Zhu Yongjia, the third leader of Liaison Centre and a responsible representative of “Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production in Shanghai” who had been sent by the Liaison Centre, and dragged Zhu from his sick bed and carried him away. Then, when Guo Renjie went to Fudan to negotiate with the Red Revolutionaries about the kidnapping, he was also grabbed and detained. The Red Revolutionaries hoped to obtain useful information that they could use against Zhang Chunqiao by interrogating of Xu Jingxian and other kidnapped intellectual rebel leaders.⁵⁸

After these abductions, invoking orders issued by the Center in Beijing that army forces should aid the rebel leftists, people from the Liaison Centre immediately called the Shanghai garrison three times to request protection. When the garrison

⁵⁸ See “The Truth of Kidnapping Incident on January 28” (*1.28 bangjia shijian zhenxiang*), reported by the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, from <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=3891&keyword=%B0%F3%BC%DC>, cited on July 3, 2009.

called the Fudan's Red Revolutionaries and tried to confirm the kidnappings, the rebels resolutely denied what had happened and then quickly transferred Xu Jingxian to another hiding place. The Shanghai garrison first asked for instructions and permission from Nanjing Military District, who was in charge of the Shanghai army, and then upon Zhang Chunqiao's agreement, they sent a detachment of police and soldiers to look for the kidnapped Liaison Centre rebel leaders. The troops finally found the place where the rebels were hiding Xu Jingxian that night. But they only briefly questioned the Red Guards, and then withdrew quite early in the morning. The Red Guards felt strong that the army should not be used to suppress the student movements and the Red Revolutionaries took two PLA officers of the dispatched troops and held them hostage.⁵⁹ While they were being held, Xu Jingxian and Guo Renjie wrote a "Seven Questions" poster. The first question addressed the issue of what underlay the anti-Zhang Chunqiao trend, and asked why some people were so fanatically bombarding Zhang when it was Chen Pixian who was falling, but not yet completely down. Another question asked how some people could claim that Zhang's appearance in Shanghai started the wind of economism when this had actually been initiated by the SPC meeting on January 1 in accordance with Chen Pixian's instructions, and it wasn't until January 4 when Zhang Chunqiao arrived in Shanghai as an inspector of the CCRG?⁶⁰

By morning, all of Shanghai's anti-Zhang Chunqiao Red Guard factions began

⁵⁹ But according to narratives of Red Revolutionaries, these two officers stayed of their own free will, see Hunter, 1969, p.240.

⁶⁰ Xu Jingxian and Guo Renjie, "Seven Questions" (*Qi wen*), in *Red Guards Battle News (Hongwei zhanbao)*, ed. by Shanghai Headquarters of Red Guards, Feb. 6, 1967.

to demonstrate their solidarity in the battle to bombard Zhang, even though internecine wars among them continued. An Wenjiang of the “Red Third Headquarters” claimed, “I resolutely took the stance of the Red Revolutionaries. Now it’s time to unite.” And the “Red Third Headquarters” sent some Red Guards to the neighboring Zhejiang Province to investigate Zhang’s past. Meanwhile, the “Kai Xin Yu” faction of Fudan Red Guards was busy putting up anti-Zhang Chunqiao wall posters.⁶¹ Zhao Jihui, a leader of the Red Revolutionaries, expressed his solidarity with the East Is Red—Bombarding the Headquarters faction: “Don’t mention New Shanghai Commune. It could not be staged. After the anti-Zhang wall posters of East Is Red—Bombarding the Headquarters [were on display], Fudan shows a good new atmosphere. Now we can form our own New Fudan Commune.” The anti-Zhang rebel faction, as well as the conservative Red Guard factions, such as the “Beijing Commune” of Fudan, were also excited to hear this big news of the bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao. They actively gathered negative materials on Zhang, too.

The night of January 28, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyan were summoned by several hundred Red Revolutionaries, to the Sino-Soviet Friendship Building, and subjected to inquiries about the so-called “The Incident of Dispatching PLA Troops to Fudan”. At the meeting presided over by Zhao Jihui of the Red Revolutionaries, Zhang and Yao had to undergo a 6-hour grilling that went on until two o’clock, the next morning. And both of them had to stand the whole time because the Red Guards

⁶¹ See the pamphlet *Yi honggehui mouxie fuzeren wei daibiao de paoda zhongyang wenge de fandong niliu jiyao* (*A Summary of the Reactionary Countercurrent of Bombarding the CCRG Represented by Some Red Revolutionaries’ Responsible Persons*), Ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, March 1967.

took their seats away. Some students shouted: “Zhang Chunqiao cannot represent the CCRG.” “Since Kang Sheng was caught in Beijing, we need to catch Zhang Chunqiao correspondingly.” “Uncover the black underground SPC.”⁶² They ordered Zhang and Yao to recite a Mao quotation, “picking up a rock to drop it on one’s own feet” to make fun of them and even tried to turn Yao Wenyuan against Zhang Chunqiao by urging Yao “not to be a slave.” They also demanded that Zhang and Yao sign a statement, declaring that the pro-Zhang rebel student organizations were fraught with “Trotskyist and anarchist tendencies.”⁶³ To humiliate Zhang, Lao Yuanyi, the leader of the “Red Third Headquarters” added two lines to a leaflet that had the slogan, “Zhang Chunqiao is an unswerving revolutionary left.” One line quoted from a famous poem of the Song Dynasty, “Flowers fall down reluctantly while swallows come back like an acquaintance”, and another was “This slogan is now blanked out” The rebels then handed this “amended” leaflet to Zhang.⁶⁴

The next night, the Fudan Red Revolutionaries held a rally to pledge mass efforts to bombard Zhang Chunqiao. At midnight, the standing committee of the Red Revolutionaries decided to organize 100,000 people to attend a rally to bombard Zhang Chunqiao at the Culture Plaza the next day. The main slogan set for this rally was, “Ten Thousand Cannons Bombard Zhang Chunqiao.” Lao Yuanyi even notified people to control the Shanghai airport in case Zhang Chunqiao attempted to escape by

⁶² “Look, to What Extent have the Heads of Red Revolutionaries Degenerated!” (*Kan, gonggehui toutou duoluo dao hedeng dibu!*), in *Red Guards Battle News (Hongwei zhanbao)*, ed. by Shanghai Headquarters of Red Guards, Feb.6, 1967.

⁶³ Neale Hunter, 1969, pp.237-238.

⁶⁴ See “Annals of the Reactionary Activities of Bombarding the CCRG by Some Red Revolutionaries Heads” (*Dashiji: honggehui toutou paoda zhongyang wenge fangeming huodong yilanbiao*), from the joint issue of “Advance Express News” (*Tingjin kuaibao*) and “Frontline News” (*huoxian bao*), ed. by the Revolutionary Rebels’ Committee of Shanghai Institute of Machinery, Feb, 24, 1967.

air. Ma Lixin, another major leader of the Red Revolutionaries tracked down the addresses of Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan so that they could parade Zhang and Yao in the streets the next day. This was seen as a way of humiliating Zhang and Yao by parading them through the streets. The bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao was intended to bombard the proposed Shanghai Commune that had been planned by various rebel organizations such as the WGH, the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, and other pro-Commune Red Guard factions. So it was anticipated that once the anti-Zhang rally took place next day, the WGH et al. would not hesitate to dispatch rebel workers to break up the rally. If the rally had been held on time, a bloody conflict mainly between anti-Zhang Red Guards and the pro-Zhang rebel workers would have probably been unavoidable.

But an urgent telegram dated January 29 from Beijing dealt a heavy blow to the Red Revolutionaries and shattered the dreams of the anti-Zhang Chunqiao Red Guards. The telegram read:

1. Some Red Revolutionary leaders have recently turned the spearhead of the struggle against Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and the Central Cultural Revolution Group instead of against Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu, the Shanghai representatives of the bourgeois reactionary line and the main Party authorities taking the road back to capitalism. This is quite wrong.

2. They have arbitrarily arrested some revolutionary comrades in the Shanghai Municipal Committee's administration. They must release these men at once, and apologize to them.

3. The action of the People's Liberation Army in defense of a mass revolutionary organization was entirely correct; that of the Red

Revolutionary leaders, who forcibly detained a political commissar and a staff officer, was completely mistaken and will certainly not be tolerated.

4. Arguments between mass organizations must be settled by discussion and negotiation, not by such illegal methods as arrest and detention.

5. We trust the comrades of the Shanghai Red Revolutionaries will help their leaders correct these mistakes straight away. If the leaders persist in their errors, the ordinary members should break with them. We will do whatever else has to be done.

The leaders who provoked this incident, and those who are manipulating them from behind the scenes, will be held responsible for any consequences that arise.⁶⁵

Once the telegram reached Shanghai on January 30, the WGH and the Red Guards who were pro-Zhang Chunqiao and in favor of the proposed Shanghai Commune, such as East Is Red Regiment of Tongji University, sent out many propaganda vans and put up a lot of wall posters to publicize the telegram. The Red Revolutionaries now became the target of fierce attacks from all kinds of political organizations. Then, in the early morning of January 30, the WGH closed off the Culture Plaza where the anti-Zhang rally was supposed to be held. Under a lot of political pressure from Beijing and fearing possible bloody fight with the WGH, the planned rally of 100,000 people to bombard Zhang Chunqiao at the Culture Plaza was cancelled. Claiming the telegram was a forgery, three major leaders of the anti-Zhang camp, Lao Yuanyi, Zhao Jihui, and An Wenjiang went to Beijing to find out if the telegram was genuine and to seek support for their line. To their great disappointment,

⁶⁵ From a leaflet titled "Urgent telegram from the CCRG to the Red Guards Revolutionary Committee of Shanghai Colleges concerning their move to bombard Zhang Chunqiao" (*Zhongyang wenge gei Shanghai hongge hui guanyu tamen paoda Zhang Chunqiao de teji dianbao*), from *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.1, ed. by the Red Guards Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967; the English translation is from Neale Hunter 1969, pp.240-241.

however, they found out that the telegram was authentic. Nevertheless, even though the large scale anti-Zhang rally was called off, one branch of the Red Revolutionaries in the Shanghai Normal Institute still held a rally on Feb. 2 to pledge resolutions and mass efforts aimed at bombarding Zhang Chunqiao. At this rally, Chi Dongming, a leader of the Red Revolutionaries, swore to carry out the anti-Zhang activity to the end even if he ended up in jail.⁶⁶ After gathering, they marched through the streets, winding their way to the Institute of Chemical Technology and eventually to Shanghai Jiaotong University. Here they encountered firm resistance from pro-Zhang student factions, such as the All the Way Rebels and the Zunyi Regiment.⁶⁷ These kinds of conflicts between the two camps burst out here and there for several days in the city. Given the overwhelming propaganda campaign by the pro-Zhang forces, the unity of the anti-Zhang camp began to collapse. Many common student rebels of anti-Zhang organizations demanded that their leaders explain the recent events. Eventually, the anti-Zhang leaders had to organize rallies where they made public apologies and requested amnesty from Chairman Mao.

At a meeting on February 1 when Zhang and Yao talked with rebel students, and refuted the Red Revolutionaries' accusation that Zhang Chunqiao used the PLA to suppress the student movement. Yao Wenyan stated that it was actually the Red Revolutionaries themselves who first used army forces to deal with other rebel

⁶⁶ *Yi xiaocuo honggehui toutou paoda Zhang Chunqiao tongzhi zuixiang zhaiyao* (A Summary of the Crimes of Bombarding Comrade Zhang Chunqiao by a Handful of Honggehui Heads), in *Dongfanghong (East Is Red)*, Feb. 14, 1967, ed. by Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing Shanghai shi dongfanghong zongbu and Tongji daxue dongfanghong bingtuan.

⁶⁷ See the pamphlet *Yi honggehui mouxie fuzeren wei daibiao de paoda zhongyang wenge de fandong niliu jiyao* (A Summary of the Reactionary Countercurrent of Bombarding the CCRG Represented by Some Red Revolutionaries' Responsible Persons), Ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, March 1967.

factions. For example, Yao pointed out,

Red Revolutionaries twice requested troops from the Shanghai garrison, with a threatening tone. On January 24 when Red Revolutionaries seized power from the East China Bureau of the CCP and the SPC, the Shanghai garrison had to send troops [upon Red Guards' request]. On January 26 when they wanted to hold a meeting of their standing committee, they requested troops again to protect the meeting. On January 30, when they planned to hold a rally for bombarding Zhang Chunqiao, they said: "We are going to hold a big rally, so you should send troops to protect us. In addition, the vice-commander, the division commissar and the troops which took part in the previous action should be on the spot to be subjected to our disclosure and accusation." How could a revolutionary organization use troops to deal with other organizations? What would happen if this kind of thing develops? ... One organization feared debate, hence used armed forces to press other organizations. How come the Red Revolutionaries developed to such an extent?... Some of their leaders very much feared that others would rebel against them...Red Revolutionaries didn't want to present the facts and reason things out.⁶⁸

On the eve of the establishment of the Shanghai Commune, some intellectual rebel leaders of the *jilianzhan*, one of the major initiators of the Shanghai Commune, were jailed by another participating organization, the Red Revolutionaries. The *jilianzhan* had to resort to the "aiding revolutionary leftist" troops to be rescued. This was, clearly, a typical case of internecine struggles which shifted the general orientation of struggles away from the old power holders led by Chen Pixian and Cao Diqui. The underlying reasons that this happened, Yao Wenyuan pointed out, was that there were capitalist roaders who were unwilling to admit their downfall and tried their best to find new ways to use the rebels to further their cause. According to Yao,

⁶⁸ See "Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan talked about the Red Revolutionaries in Shanghai Universities" (*Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan tan Shanghai Gaoxiao honggehui*), from *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guards Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

one practical reason for the Red Revolutionaries to hate Zhang and Yao, was that Yao had phoned the Red Revolutionaries and asked them to join the broadest unity rather than take the action of capturing official seals by themselves. And the bombardment of Zhang further made it impossible to build the broadest unity in order to carry out larger seizures of power.

Similarly, Zhang Chunqiao also suspected that the old Shanghai Party cadres had been behind the move against him and against the proposed new power organ – for this catered to the wishes of Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu. Zhang mentioned that he received a letter from Cao Diqu requesting a personal meeting with him when the students' anti-Zhang campaign was still going on. Zhang realized this request by Cao Diqu was not a mere coincidence. Zhang recalled that Cao Diqu once told him, “When you were at the Central Committee in Beijing, you issued instructions left and right. Now you are here in Shanghai, and it's your turn to taste it.”⁶⁹ To Zhang Chunqiao's surprise, the Red Revolutionaries who struggled against him claimed almost the same thing: “In the past, you just issued orders from Beijing, now you can have a taste of us in Shanghai.”⁷⁰ Zhang brought people's attention to the facts that in the streets of Shanghai, there were only anti-Zhang and no anti-Chen and Cao wall posters. He admonished the students telling them that only by struggling against the old capitalist roaders, could the rebels form a great alliance, and that only by going deep into the ranks of the workers could the students develop into genuine

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See *Paoshi Geng Jinzhang kan beishang fanhu er bingtuan zongbu* (“Look at the General Headquarters of the Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North Through Geng Jinzhang”), in *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No. 8, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 12, 1967.

Marxist-Leninists. To end his talk, Zhang criticized the line of “doubting everything”,

The editorial of the third issue of the *Red Flag* is very important. We need to pay attention to the policies and strategies. With regard to cadres, we need to hold an “one-divides-into-two” attitude. Don’t struggle against too many people. At some places all the cadres were ordered to kneel down during meeting sessions. Now the situation is changed. We must put emphasis on differentiating cadres. In the *Red Flag* editorial, the same method was proposed. In the beginning it’s hard to differentiate, yet when the revolutionary masses grew into the majority, it will be quite wrong not to differentiate. “Doubting everything” is an erroneous slogan, a slogan of anarchism and anti-Mao Zedong’s Thought. Chairman Mao said: “The official Foreign Language Press English translation of this quote is: “We must have faith in the masses and we must have faith in the Party. These are two cardinal principles. If we doubt these principles we shall accomplish nothing.” “Doubting everything” is an anti-Marxist-Leninist’s slogan. In the past no one criticized this slogan because the power holders, such as Wang Renzhong and Zhang Pinghua, used it to suppress the masses.⁷¹

On February 4, there was a big rally of “Red Revolutionary Fighters Making Headway Against the Reactionary Current of Opposing the CCRG”, jointly convened by 38 units of the Red Revolutionaries. With this, the historical role of Red Revolutionaries, Red Third Headquarters, and Bombarding the Headquarters came to an end, even though their organizations still lasted, in form, for a while. They were all permanently excluded from the proposed Shanghai Commune and in the eyes of the pro-Zhang and Shanghai Commune organizations, for good reasons.

Nevertheless, troubles and tensions with regard to the establishment of the Shanghai Commune did not come only from the Red Guards represented by the Red

⁷¹ See “Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan talked about the Red Revolutionaries in Shanghai Universities” (*Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan tan Shanghai Gaoxiao honggehui*), from *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guards Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

Revolutionaries who had several tens of thousands of members. Much more powerful challenges actually came from dissident rebel worker factions within the WGH. There were at least five internal dissident factions in WGH: The First Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North Led by Dai Zuxiang⁷², The Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North led By Geng Jinzhang⁷³, The Third Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North, The Revolutionary Rebel Steel Corps of Shanghai Workers led by Chen Hongkang⁷⁴ and The Revolutionary Rebel Field Corps of Shanghai Workers. The first three subsidiary organizations had come about as a result of the Anting Incident when the WGH rebel workers, who went northward to Beijing to lodge their complaints, were broken into three groups by the old SPC. The group that was detained at Nanjing formed the First Corps. The group that formed the Second Corps was based on the “Suzhou Brigade”, and consisted of nearly 500 workers who refused to return Shanghai. These workers rushed to Suzhou

⁷² The head of the First Corps Dai Zuxiang, a self-proclaimed "revolutionary ambitionist", was a dismissed standing committee member of the preparatory committee of the WGH. Dai Zuxiang later accused one of the leaders of the WGH Pan Guoping as a "revisionist", another leader Wang Hongwen as "right-leaning", and the WGH as an "empty shell" without solid power. See *Ba zhengzhi pashou Dai Zuxiang jiu chulai shizhong (Uncover the Political Pickpocket Dai Zuxiang and Show Him in Public)*, in *Collected Leaflets (chuandan huibian)*, ed.by the Propaganda Team of the WGH), No.3, Feb. 28, 1967.

⁷³ Geng Jinzhang's Second Corps was claimed to have 400,000 to 500,000 members in Feb. 1967. See *Jingji huyu: gao "erbingtuan" quanti duiyuan shu (Emergent Appeal: To All the Team Members of the Second Corps)*, issued on Feb. 23, 1967, in *Collected Leaflets (chuandan huibian)*, ed.by the Propaganda Team of the WGH), No.3, Feb. 28, 1967.

⁷⁴ The Revolutionary Rebel Steel Corps of Shanghai Workers led by Chen Hongkang later split off from the WGH and formed the independent Workers' Third Headquarters on two pretexts. They held that: 1. the personnel regimentation was too big as the members of Steel Corps had greatly expanded; 2. there was not enough outlays. When Steel Corps was renamed as the Workers Third Headquarters, many of the rank and file team members of Steel Corps did not even know that their faction was to be split from the WGH as an independent organization. In order to expand the team, the Workers Third Headquarters even included wholesale many conservative factions in some units such as the Repair Shop for Pen Components, the Real Estate Bureau of Hongkou District, the Gas Company, etc. Even the heads of those ex-Scarlet Guards factions were not replaced when those factions merged into the Workers Third Headquarters. In some cases, the ex-Scarlet Guards factions clashed with the WGH factions in the same units. Furthermore, disregarding the Central injunction not to recruit members trans-regionally, the Workers Third Headquarters recruited a lot of members in the suburbs or even in areas outside of Shanghai such as Suzhou, Wusong, Baoshan, Chongming, Mingxing, Jingshan County, Luodian, Kunshan, and Anting. As a result, within a short period of two months, on the eve of the establishment of the Shanghai Commune, the Workers Third Headquarters claimed to have 4,000,000 members. See The "Rebel To The End" Fighting Team of The Rebels' Liaison Post Inside the Workers Third Headquarters, *Gongsansi zongbu dafangxiang jiushi cuole (The Big Direction of the Workers Third Headquarters is wrong)*, in *Collected Leaflets (chuandan huibian)*, ed.by the Propaganda Team of the WGH), No.3, Feb. 28, 1967.

at the time of the Anting Incident in November 1966, after Zhang Chunqiao arrived at Anting and started negotiating with the WGH. The third group consisted of the WGH workers who set off from Shanghai for Anting on foot. These three different Corps, made up three separate divisions within the WGH. And as Zhang Chunqiao clearly discerned on January 29, these groups had come about because the railway power holders had divided up and dispersed the rebel workers in the Anting Incident.⁷⁵

When discussing the armed battles in Shanghai among rebel factions after April, 1967, Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun commented: “Despite a thin veneer of ideological debate (with rival leaders accusing one another of ‘rightist opportunism’), these struggles had more to do with power and personalities than with political principles.”⁷⁶ What is being described here was still true, more or less, in terms of the internecine struggles around the establishment of the Shanghai Commune. What should be noted is that the strategies of the old SPC toward the rebel factions, one of which was the manipulation of fund appropriation to rebel workers, might have also contributed to the split of the WGH and the worker movement. One case in point was the Steel Corps:

WGH Steel Regiment [Corps] leader Chen Hongkang had for some time harbored desires of setting up an independent kingdom and planned to hold an inaugural meeting for the Workers' Third Headquarters. Notices had already been printed up, but later he feared criticism from various mass organizations, so he temporarily called a halt to the plan. Chen Pixian saw an opportunity which he hoped to seize by saying, "It's all right for you to want money, but you have to have an independent organization and name with which to sign for it." Thereupon the Steel Regiment split off from the WGH and established

⁷⁵ See “Look at the General Headquarters of the Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North Through Geng Jinzhang” (*Paoshi Geng Jinzhang kan beishang fanhu er bingtuan zongbu*), in *Workers' Rebel News* (*Gongren zaofan bao*), No. 8, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 12, 1967.

⁷⁶ Perry and Li, 1997, p.119.

the Workers' Third Headquarters.⁷⁷

The Shanghai power holders applied a similiar strategy toward Geng Jinzhang's Second Corps. At one point, Geng demanded several thousand WGH armbands from the general headquarters. But his request was refused because the general headquarters was very tight with money at that time due to intentional oppression from the old SPC. Geng then threatened that if he did not get the armbands he wanted, he would rebel against the general headquarters. Later, for some reason, Geng managed to get a great deal of money from the SPC and thus made many WGH armbands. He then openly claimed that if workers wanted to join the WGH, it was better to go to his Second Corps, since the general headquarters might not be able to give newcomers armbands. The SPC was later charged with an intentional crime in that it had tried to split the Shanghai rebel movement by playing this game of divide-and-conquer.⁷⁸ With this method, Shanghai power holders, such as the first secretary of SPC Chen Pixian, not only effectively contributed to the spate of economism and exerted pressure on the Center, but also helped to split and divert the Shanghai workers' movement –killing two birds with one stone.

The most potent internal challenge to the WGH from a worker faction came from Geng Jinzhang's Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North. The Second Corps, similar to the other four Corps, was supposed to be a branch of the WGH led by Pan Guoping and Wang Hongwen. But when the Second Corps returned to Shanghai from Suzhou after Zhang Chunqiao signed another 5-point demand from

⁷⁷ Perry and Li, 1997, pp123-24.

⁷⁸ See *Paoshi Geng Jinzhang kan beishang fanhu er bingtuan zongbu* ("Look at the General Headquarters of the Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North Through Geng Jinzhang"), in *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No. 8, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 12, 1967.

Geng's branch, it refused to merge into the general headquarters of the WGH. After the Anting Battle, Geng Jinzhang told the general headquarters that the Second Corps "resolutely obeyed the WGH's orders" and was "responsible to the WGH".⁷⁹

Thereafter, Geng rapidly expanded his branch in the name of the WGH. For some time major leaders of the general headquarters, such as Pan Guoping and Wang Hongwen, were chased by conservative workers and had to hide here and there everyday. So it was hard for common workers who were ready to join the WGH to seek them out. Being a non-essential target of struggle in the eyes of conservative workers, the intrepid Geng Jinzhang frequently went to his branch headquarters and was ready anytime to accept workers' applications to join the WGH. Very soon, Geng's Second Corps attracted huge numbers of workers. Especially along with the collapse of the conservative Scarlet Guards, a big bulk of the Scarlet Guards simply shifted their side and conveniently joined Geng's Second Corps. Ostensibly under the name and aegis of the WGH, within three months, Geng's Second Corps managed to build its force from a 474-member Suzhou Brigade into a staggering membership of 500,000.⁸⁰ The Second Corps was hence able to set up not only its own sub-branches throughout Shanghai's factories, mines, and other enterprises, but also a separate liaison center other than that of the WGH in Beijing. With its rapid and big growth, the Second Corps came to outnumber its parent organization which Geng Jinzhang eventually disregarded completely. Geng even called the WGH just an empty shell and tried to take power from the general headquarters. Sometimes the Second Corps

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Perry and Li, 1997, p.122.

simply grabbed the general headquarters' office stationery, typewriters as well as other things, such as bicycles, without permission. The relationship between the Second Corps and the general headquarters of the WGH, naturally, became more and more tense. When the *Urgent Notice* was issued on January 9, the Second Corps, as a subsidiary faction of the WGH, insisted on an independent signature, secondary to that of the WGH. At 3:30 am on January 15, without informing the WGH and other major rebel organizations, the Second Corps joined together with the Shanghai Red Guard Third Headquarters to raid the SPC compounds and they declared they had captured power from the Shanghai authorities.

In line with the requirement set by the Maoist leadership in Beijing, of combining and incorporating revolutionary cadres, Geng Jinzhang chose Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan as the objects of incorporation. To Geng Jinzhang's disappointment, Zhang refused and insisted on the broadest unity in seizing power. To seek an alternative, Geng Jinzhang ordered that the major power holders of the SPC— Chen Pixian, Cao Diqu and Ma Tianshui (a secretary of the old SPC) — be grabbed from the WGH and that these three big shots be held under his “protection”. As was later revealed by the WGH's rebuke, the Second Corps themselves not only did not struggle against these power holders, but was also reluctant to allow other organizations to struggle against them. If other organizations wanted to struggle against Chen and Cao, they had to borrow from Geng. During the struggle meetings conducted by other factions, Chen Pixian et al. were put under the direct and exclusive protection of Geng's men. Once the struggle sessions were over, Chen

Pixian et al. would be quickly sent back to the Second Corps, safe and sound. Even Wang Hongwen, a commander of the WGH, could not get permission from Geng to struggle with Chen Pixian et al. The Second Corps in effect became the bomb shelter and sanctuary for the old Shanghai power holders.⁸¹ According to Chen Pixian's recollection after the CR, Geng Jinzhang offered this "protection" in the hope that in exchange, he would get Chen Pixian's support of the Second Corps. When the time came, Chen Pixian et al. could act as "revolutionary cadres" in the new power organ led the Second Corps. Even though Geng Jinzhang treated Chen Pixian very nicely and greatly reduced and alleviated the suffering inflicted on him under the Second Corps' protection, in his memoir, Chen still viewed Geng Jinzhang as a Huang Jinrong-like ruffian and a bandit.⁸²

After the failure of the second power seizure on January 15, mentioned above, within which the Second Corps played an important role, conflicts between the Second Corps and the WGH became increasingly tense and finally, armed struggles broke out. Since nonviolence would be the last thing that Geng and his Second Corps resorted to, as had been demonstrated in the Kangping and Kunshan battles against the Scarlet Guards, they began to assault branch posts of the WGH in southern Shanghai. Under the personal command of Geng Jinzhang, 14 anti-WGH organizations, including the First Corps, the Second Corps, the Third Corps, the Workers Third Headquarters, and Fight to the End, etc, participated in this bloody

⁸¹ See "Look at the General Headquarters of the Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North Through Geng Jinzhang" (*Paoshi Geng Jinzhang kan beishang fanhu er bingtuan zongbu*), in *Workers' Rebel News* (*Gongren zaofan bao*), No. 8, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 12, 1967.

⁸² Chen Pixian, 2005, pp.168-174. Huang Jinrong ("Pockmarked Huang") was an infamous gangster in old Shanghai before 1949.

raid.

On January 24, when the rebel *Wenhui Daily* requested that each major rebel organization submit one article to praise the proposed Shanghai People's Commune, Geng Jinzhang said that the Second Corps was not willing to write such an article. Instead, they opposed the Shanghai Commune as it stood. On January 26, infuriated by the alleged persecution of his men by the WGH, the boisterous Geng Jinzhang led all of his 14 friendly rebel factions to burst into a meeting that was preparing for the formation of the Shanghai Commune. Geng wrangled with Wang Hongwen and other representatives, face to face, causing the preparatory meeting to take a recess. Later, Geng openly declared that this meeting was meant to discredit his Second Corps, so he set out to totally wreck it. But the most important reason underlying Geng Jinzhang and his factions' ruining the preparatory meetings for the proposed Commune was that they believed that they were stronger than the WGH-led political forces. That was indeed partly true, since almost all the anti-WGH forces had congregated around Geng Jinzhang and might have outnumbered the WGH-led forces. In the view of Geng Jinzhang and his men, the Second Corps, rather than the WGH, should be the organization to lead the new power organ, or at least hold the biggest share of power in the new government. But obviously, in the view of the WGH and Zhang Chunqiao, the Second Corps was just a subsidiary faction of the WGH; to realize the broadest unity, it was better for the Second Corps to be integrated into its parent organization. Since the WGH-led forces could not satisfy Geng's groups, Geng and his factions carried out their own plan, that is, they organized their own preparatory meetings as

an alternative to the Shanghai People's Commune. Very soon, Geng Jinzhang mustered no less than 48 organizations to form a "Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels' Committee of Broad Unity" (*Shanghai geming zaofanpai dalianhe weiyuanhui*) and tried to establish a "New Shanghai People's Commune". They even sent a telegram informing Mao and the Center in Beijing of what they had done. Geng Jinzhang was so confident about his political forces that he boasted: "Let them establish the broadest unity they can, and we will do the same. Then we shall see whose unity is genuine."⁸³ To wipe out the grass-roots forces of the WGH, on January 30, at the height of the anti-Zhang Chunqiao campaign – motivated by the Red Revolutionaries, Red Third Headquarters and Bombarding the Headquarters, among others Geng's Second Corps, together with the International Red Guards, and Fight to the End, stormed the general headquarters of the WGH. That night, three grass-root headquarters of the WGH—Nanshi, Changning, Yangpu branches were also raided by them.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, the anti-WGH activities of Geng Jinzhang and his allies backfired. On January 24, some rebels within the Workers Third Headquarters who were dissatisfied with the leader Chen Hongkang's "revisionist" way of life and were inclined toward the WGH, made a coup against Chen. Even though Chen Hongkang's underground command post was stormed by his subordinates, Chen managed to

⁸³ Neale Hunter 1969, pp. 235-237.

⁸⁴ See "Look at the General Headquarters of the Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North Through Geng Jinzhang" (*Paoshi Geng Jinzhang kan beishang fanhu er bingtuan zongbu*), in *Workers' Rebel News* (*Gongren zaofan bao*), No. 8, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 12, 1967.

⁸⁴ Perry and Li, 1997, p.122. According to Xu Jingxian's memoir, on learning that the Red Revolutionaries were bombarding Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, the WGH and the Second Corps stopped attacking at each other and agreed to jointly deal with the Red Revolutionaries. See Xu Jingxian, 2004, p.64.

escape and ruthlessly retaliated against those who had participated in the coup. The next day rebels who were against Chen Hongkang and representatives of the Revolutionary Rebel Column of the Going-to-south Students from the Capital convened at a rolling mill. Chen raided the gathering and arrested all the attendees. All prisoners received harsh treatments. During one week's imprisonment, the leader of the coup Shen Bingrong was brutally beaten and almost lost one leg. But the suppression of rebels only triggered more and more rebellions against Chen Hongkang and his lieutenants. Many of his branch posts were raided by some rebels within his faction. From then on, the Workers Third Headquarters never regained its earlier strength.⁸⁵

Another powerful, or the strongest so to speak, ally of Geng Jinzhang's Second Corps, was the Red Guard Army which consisted of mostly transferred and demobilized soldiers throughout the country. They had achieved glorious records from the Kangping and Kunshan battles against conservative Scarlet Guards. The Red Guard Army was an independent signatory of the *Urgent Notice* as well. But it also had a difficult status. Since the Central Committee of the CCP feared that a formidable national body of paramilitary force would compete with the PLA, as early as on December 3, 1966, Mao Zedong and Lin Biao issued a notice forbidding the transferred and demobilized soldiers from forming independent national organizations. As a result, the Red Guard Army was ordered to disband.⁸⁶ To save itself from

⁸⁵ Neale Hunter 1969, pp. 235-236; Shen Bingrong, "My Charge and Disclosure to the Command Center of the Workers Third Headquarters" (*Dui Gongsansi zongbu de kongsu he jiefa*), in *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No. 8, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 12, 1967.

⁸⁶ Hongweijun shi fangeming jituan caozong de fupi gongju (The Red Guard Army is a Restorationist Tool Manipulated by a Counterrevolutionary Group), in *Huoxian Bao (Frontline News)*, No. 16, Feb. 26, 1967, ed. by the

becoming extinct, the Red Guard Army had to unite with anti-WGH forces, and were thus attracted to Geng's Corps. But they were an illegal faction in the eyes of Premier Zhou Enlai and Marshal Lin Biao, and so their days were numbered.

With all the internal rebels and weak links, nevertheless, Geng Jinzhang's forces still managed to launch a big propaganda campaign in the Shanghai streets to promote their "Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels' Committee of Broad Unity". Their slogans included "Welcome to the new Committee of Broad Unity!" and "All Power to the Committee of Broad Unity!"⁸⁷ When Geng Jinzhang was busy with a meeting about the formation of the "New Shanghai People's Commune" based on the "Shanghai Revolutionary Committee of Broad Unity," Zhang Chunqiao sought him out and showed him a telephone record from Chairman Mao, which confirmed Mao's support of Zhang Chunqiao. Zhang emphasized that if Geng insisted on forming a New Shanghai People's Commune, that would represent a departure from the line of Chairman Mao; and if he could abandon his alternative plan, Geng could act as a standing member in the Shanghai People's Commune and be invited to be seated at the front platform at the inauguration. On second thought, Geng Jinzhang agreed.⁸⁸ In this way, Geng Jinzhang and his 500,000 workers were at last won over to the WGH-led Shanghai People's Commune, at least temporarily. On February 4, one day before the formation of the Shanghai Commune, Geng Jinzhang convened a meeting of the Second Corps, at which he announced that the Second Corps had withdrawn

Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Machinery Institute (Shanghai jixie xueyuan geming zaofan weiyuanhui).

⁸⁷ Neale Hunter, 1969, p.246.

⁸⁸ Ye Yonglie, *Zoufang Geng Jinzhang* ("Interview with Geng Jinzhang"), in Ye Yonglie, *Seeking for the Historical Truth—My Writing Career (Zhuixun lishi zhenxiang: wo de xiezuo shengya)*, Vol. 2, pp.781-87, Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2001.

from the “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels’ Committee of Broad Unity”, and hailed, “long live the Shanghai People's Commune” and “warmly welcomed the formation of the Shanghai People's Commune.”⁸⁹ But the cooperation between the WGH and the Second Corps under the banner of the Shanghai Commune turned out to be short-lived.

The reasons for the split and internecine struggles among the rebels in Shanghai, and in the whole country, were manifold. As can be seen, the old power holders in Shanghai, who were reluctant to give up their power and privilege and subject themselves to the masses’ supervision, did their best to sustain a powerful conservative worker and student movement and undermine the rebels’ solidarity. When the loyalist movement was strong, the strategy of the power holders was to manipulate the movement and incite the loyalists to fight against the rebels. After the loyalist movement disintegrated because of the compelling attacks from the rebels, the power holders’ strategy shifted to looking for new inroads among the rebels. They had the most resources to utilize, among which the most powerful weapon was funds. The power holders’ basic approach toward influencing the rebel movement was to divide and conquer. By recognizing this, one could see through and understand the complicated phenomena in the Shanghai rebels’ movement. This was an important reason why some subsidiary branches of the WGH, represented by the Second Corps led by Geng Jinzhang, not only could not merge into their parent organization, but

⁸⁹ *Touguo yici heihui kan Geng Jinzhang zhiliu fandui Shanghai renmin gongshe de fandong benzhi (The Reactionary Nature of Geng Jinzhang and His ilk to Oppose the Shanghai People's Commune Seen Through a Black Meeting)*, in *Collected Leaflets (chuandan huibian)*, ed. by the Propaganda Team of the WGH, No.3, Feb. 28, 1967.

also impetuously defied and fought against the WGH—the earliest, widely acknowledged and most influential rebel workers’ organization in Shanghai.

Another important reason the Shanghai rebels’ failure to unite around forming the new power organ, can be found in the rebels themselves. Many rebel organizations, such as Red Revolutionaries, the Second Corps, and even the WGH, thought that since they accomplished a lot in bringing down the old SPC, they had every right to lead, or at least take a big share in the new government. More or less, all rebel factions were obsessed with the thought of “centering on self”; and it was not unpopular among rebel ranks to think that “only we are leftists” and “only I am revolutionary.” Due to this kind of egoism, after the downfall of old common enemies, many rebel factions always found faults in other rebel organizations. The big orientation put out by the Maoist leadership, of struggling against the collapsing “capitalist roaders” represented by Liu Shaoqi in the Center and Chen Pixian in Shanghai, was greatly disregarded.⁹⁰ In addition, the above mentioned line among the rebels of “doubting everything” and “bringing down everybody” also contributed to splits and internecine struggles in Shanghai.

⁹⁰ To solve the stubborn issue of the split and internecine struggles among the masses, Mao Zedong, when he was inspecting Northern, Central Southern and Eastern China between July and September of 1967, called for "combating self-interest, criticizing and repudiating Revisionism." Lin Biao, passing on this latest instruction of Mao at the rally celebrating the 18th anniversary of the founding of the People'-Republic of China on October 1, 1967, pointed out: "By combating self-interest, we mean using Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought to fight selfish ideas in one's own mind. By criticizing and repudiating revisionism, we mean using Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought to combat revisionism and struggle against the handful of Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road. These two tasks are interrelated. Only when we have done a good job of eradicating selfish ideas, can we do better in carrying through to the end the struggle against revisionism." The phrase "combating self-interest and criticizing and repudiating revisionism" was said to "summarizes the basic content of the great proletarian cultural revolution and of 'criticism and repudiation of the bourgeoisie' during the entire historical period of socialism. This is a fundamental principle in ensuring the complete and thoroughgoing victory of China's great proletarian cultural revolution. It is a fundamental principle for preventing the restoration of capitalism, and for strengthening and consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat and turning the whole country into a great, red school of Mao Tse-tung's thought." (See "Combat Self-interest, Criticize and Repudiate Revisionism" Is the Fundamental Principle of The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, in *Peking Review*, No. 42 (October 13, 1967), pp. 14-15.)

The Founding of the Shanghai Commune

Even though there still existed pockets of resistance from some defiant Red Guards and workers at the end of January and the beginning of the new month, the tortuous road to the Shanghai People's Commune finally straightened out. On January 31, the *People's Daily* published the *Red Flag* editorial "*On the Proletarian Revolutionaries' Struggle to Seize Power*". This had been drafted by two members of the CCRG, Wang Li and Guan Feng, revised by Mao himself on January 30, and scheduled to appear in the third issue of the *Red Flag* on February 3.⁹¹ In this editorial, Shanghai was ardently hailed as a model by the Maoist leadership for initiating the seizure of power. It declared:

Proletarian revolutionaries are uniting to seize power from the handful of persons within the Party who are in authority and taking the capitalist road. This is the strategic task for the new stage of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. It is the decisive battle between the proletariat and the masses of working people on the one hand and the bourgeoisie and its agents in the Party on the other. This mighty revolutionary storm started in Shanghai. The revolutionary masses in Shanghai have called it the great "January Revolution." Our great leader Chairman Mao immediately expressed resolute support for it. He called on the workers, peasants, revolutionary students, revolutionary intellectuals and revolutionary cadres to study the experience of the revolutionary rebels of Shanghai and he called on the People's Liberation Army to actively support and assist the proletarian revolutionaries in their struggle to seize power...The storm of the

⁹¹ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao (The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC)*. Vol. 12. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988. p.210.

"January Revolution" is now sweeping the whole country.⁹²

In the editorial, some aspects and characteristics of the power seizure were emphasized: First, to form a great alliance and seize power from the handful of capitalist roaders was the general orientation at the current time. Secondly, the most important condition that would secure the success of the power seizure was to build the great alliance of the proletarian revolutionaries and unite the broad masses. In order to achieve that, it was necessary to rectify such erroneous tendencies as departmentalism, "small group" mentality (prioritizing the interests of a particular group over general interests), excessive decentralization, disregard for organizational discipline, ultra-democracy, liberalism, and subjectivism and individualism in people's minds and in their organizations. Thirdly, since the overwhelming majority of ordinary cadres were good and willing to make revolution, adequate attention had to be paid to the role of revolutionary cadres in the struggle to seize power. Fourthly, reactionaries such as the bourgeoisie and its handful of agents within the Party would not be given either extensive democracy or limited democracy; only dictatorship would be applied to such people. Moreover, this editorial made it crystal clear that the current seizure of power was not effected by dismissals or reorganizations from above, but by the mass-initiated movement from the bottom up that was called for and supported by Chairman Mao. Only in this way could the state apparatus be regenerated and the old bourgeois practices thoroughly eradicated. In this regard, the mass-initiated Chinese practices reaffirmed the principles of the Paris Commune

⁹² See "On the Proletarian Revolutionaries' Struggle to Seize Power" (*Lun wuchan jieji geming pai de duoquan douzheng*), from *People's Daily*, Jan. 31, 1967, the English translation can be found at *Peking Review*, No. 6, February 3, 1967.

concerning the power seizure, as the editorial clarified,

In summing up the experience of the Paris Commune, Marx pointed out that the proletariat must not take over the existing bourgeois state machine but must thoroughly smash it. Practice in the international communist movement has proved this to be a great truth. Since a number of units, in which a handful of persons within the Party who are in authority and taking the capitalist road have entrenched themselves, have been turned into organs for bourgeois dictatorship, naturally we must not take them over ready-made, resort to reformism, combine two into one and effect peaceful transition. We must smash them thoroughly.⁹³

The editorial claimed that the principles of the Paris Commune, would be applied to only a number of units –that is, they would be smashed up. But in practice, there was basically no way to differentiate which units should be toppled and which should not. Shanghai rebels, therefore, virtually toppled all the upper-middle power holders of every unit. And in the entire country, apart from some Central organs in Beijing and most national military units, almost all party and governmental organs came under attack from the rebels.

Yet the mass takeover was merely one step of the revolution as “it is absolutely impermissible to merely take over power while letting things remain the same and operating according to old rules.” To take up the responsibility of leading the struggle of seizing power, the editorial called for establishing provisional organs of power that combined representatives from three sectors, namely, “through exchange of views and consultations among leading members of revolutionary mass organizations, leading members of local People's Liberation Army units and

⁹³ Ibid.

revolutionary leading cadres of Party and government organizations.” This triple combination, the editorial held, just represented a period of transition since “the wisdom of the broad masses will be brought into full play and a completely new organizational form of political power better suited to the socialist economic base will be created.” Very optimistically, it further predicted that the revolutionary masses would find new organizational forms for the state organs to replace the old rotten state apparatus and enthusiastically welcomed this,

The great mass movement to seize power from the handful of persons within the Party who are in authority and taking the capitalist road has begun to create and will continue to create new organizational forms for the state organs of the proletarian dictatorship. Here, we must respect the initiative of the masses and boldly adopt the new forms, full of vitality, that emerge in the mass movement to replace the old practices of the exploiting classes and in fact to replace all old practices that do not correspond to the socialist economic base....

On June 1 last year, Chairman Mao described the first Marxist-Leninist big-character poster in the country, which came from Peking University, as the Manifesto of the Peking People's Commune of the sixties in the 20th century. Chairman Mao showed his wisdom and genius in predicting even then that our state organs would take on completely new forms.

To arouse hundreds of millions of people from below to seize power from the handful of persons within the Party who are in authority and taking the capitalist road, to smash the old practices and create new forms, opens up a new era in the international history of proletarian revolution and in the international history of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It will greatly enrich and develop the experience of the Paris Commune, greatly enrich and develop the experience of the Soviets, and greatly enrich and develop Marxism-Leninism.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Ibid.

In a conversation about the editorial with editors and journalists in the *Red Flag* on January 31, one of the main drafters, Wang Li, explained its gist and emphasized that the triple combination power organ was only a provisional one. He stated,

This is the time to raise this issue...Representatives from three quarters cannot be loosely organized, but need to negotiate with each other and form provisional alliances of power structures. This is a temporary and transitional government. After this transition, modeled upon the Paris Commune, we should establish Beijing People's Commune, Shanghai People's Commune, etc. We advocate establishing people's communes in cities, which was already envisaged by Chairman Mao in 1958. To reach the full and final shape of people's communes, we have to go through this transitional process, and after that, we may still need preparatory committees.

You should prepare for this issue in theory, studying the history from the February Revolution to the October Revolutionary, as well as learning experiences from the Soviets, our past seventeen years and the Paris Commune. Many aspects of the Soviet Union, in effect, are incomplete.

The current stage centers on seizing power. In different provinces, this means establishing provisional governments. In these provisional power structures, struggles are intricate, involving various problems, which are generally addressed by the editorial [of *Red Flag*]. You should publicize provincial experiences, highlighting their characteristics. You should publish follow-up reports of experiences from places where people have already seized power. The great proletariat alliance needs to be repeatedly promoted...

People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency, and broadcasting stations should also be communes. All should be in accordance with the principles of the Paris Commune. We need creations. This will be the greatest creation in the history of mankind.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ See "Wang Li Talks About the Gist of the Editorial of the No. 3 Issue of the Red Flag" (*Wang Li tan Hongqi di san qi shelun jingsheng*), in *The Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.1, ed. by the Red Guards Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, March, 1967.

Since Mao himself closely revised this editorial, I would argue that Mao would, from a theoretical perspective, approve of these words that Wang Li articulated during the conversation. In other words, Wang Li's illustrations represented, to some extent, the historical transformation and reconfigurations that were taking place and envisaged by the Maoists, who not only had a clear understanding about what was going on throughout the country, but also showed keen foresight in theoretically directing it. And the Maoist leadership's envisioning of the new forms of state organ did not come out of thin air. On the one hand, the significant social and historical course they prefigured did have its forerunners in the West. On the other hand, it was also deeply rooted in and motivated by dynamics and practices of Chinese society and the revolution, especially by the initiative and creativity of the masses on the ground who were mobilized and inspired by the ideal of communism.

Beginning from the end of January, representatives from some major Shanghai organizations set up a writing team to draft the *Manifesto of the Shanghai People's Commune*. In addition to major documents of the CR, such as the *Sixteen Point Program* and *Red Flag* articles, the main reference book for their writing was Marx's *The Civil War in France*, from which the manifesto incorporated the principles of the Paris Commune, such as "smashing the old state machinery" and "all committee members would be elected as the servants of the people". This manifesto was originally entitled "From the October Revolution to the January Revolution—The Manifesto of the Shanghai People's Commune." Xu Jingxian, a writer of the draft team, recollected,

Upon hearing the power seizure of the *Wenhui Daily*, Chairman Mao pointed out that this was a historical creation, a great revolution within which one class overthrew another. According to Chairman Mao's instruction, this revolution that took place in Shanghai in January 1967 was of great historical meaning. This is because the October Revolution in Russia solved the problem of the broadest masses' seizing power from the bourgeois class led by the working class, which was a historical creation. Our January Storm moved one step further, solving the problem of recapturing power when the proletarian power was usurped by revisionists. From power seizure to the consolidation of power, this is indeed a historical creation as well. This is also a great development of Marxism from Mao Zedong Thought. Therefore, our January Revolution could be regarded as a continuation and further development of the October Revolution under new historical conditions.⁹⁶

The draft was submitted to Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan for final touches, and both of them were satisfied with it. But for unknown reasons they changed the title to "Long Live the Victory of the January Revolution!" When the writing team was busy drafting the manifesto, some major rebel organizations were extremely anxious to establish the Commune as soon as possible. The night of February 2, without informing Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, they formed the Committee of the Shanghai People's Commune and decided to hold an inauguration rally the next day. Upon learning of this, Zhang and Yao held an emergency meeting to discuss the founding date of the Commune. At the meeting, even though Zhang Chunqiao argued that it was too early to form the Commune, as there were still many affairs that needed to be prepared for the inauguration, representatives from rebel organizations insisted on forming the Commune immediately. As a compromise, the inauguration day was set on February 5, 1967.

⁹⁶ Xu Jingxian 2003, p.71.

The initiators of the Commune thought that since the Commune was supposed to be a leftist provisional government, it could only be made up of rebel organizations. For convenience and to avoid unnecessary troubles, the preparatory committee of the Shanghai People's Commune decided to take the 32 rebel organizations which signed the "*Urgent Notice*" on January 9 as the constituent units of the Commune, as these 32 units were clearly congratulated and legitimized by the Center on January 11, 1967 as revolutionary rebel organizations.

But several organizations that were listed as signatories of the "*Urgent Notice*" were excluded from being founding members of the Commune for various reasons. For example, the above mentioned Red Guard Army, which was mostly composed of demobilized soldiers, was excluded. The Center of the CCP banned the Red Guard Army around the middle of January, out of fear that it could grow into an uncontrollable paramilitary national body. But the Red Guard Army not only refused to disband, but also continued to recruit new members. When the Red Guard Army learned that it was excluded from the Commune, some of its members were infuriated and forced their way into the *Wenhui Daily's* offices. They claimed that since they greatly contributed to the downfall of the old SPC, they were absolutely entitled to participate in the Commune. While guarding the typesetting room to ensure their faction would be listed in the manifesto of the Shanghai People's Commune, the Red Guard Army declared that if they were not allowed to take part in the Commune, they would storm the preparatory committee. Meanwhile, many factions which were labeled as economist organizations, such as "Shanghai Rebel Revolutionary

Headquarters for Housing Difficulties,” “Rebel Headquarters of Educated Youth Supporting Xinjiang Returned to Shanghai,” “Rebel Revolutionary Headquarters of Temporary and Contract Laborers,” rushed into the building of the Shanghai Sports Committee, where the preparatory committee of the Commune was located, demanding entry into the new power organ. Besides them, at the end of January and the beginning of February, there suddenly emerged more than 600 organizations, all of which claimed to be city-level political entities and they all asked for offices in the proposed Commune.⁹⁷ Even alleged conservative factions, who were loyal to the old SPC, also wanted to enter into and have a share in the Commune. The Revolutionary Rebel Committee of the City Level Agencies of the SPC (*Shanghai shiji jiguan geming zaofan weiyuanhui*), which had vindicated Mayor Cao Diqu when authentic rebel groups had struggled against him, for example, also wished to join the Commune. To its disappointment, it was driven off by the "Rebel to the End" Corps of the Shanghai Jiaotong University, the Shanghai Liaison Centre of the Red Rebel Regiment of the Harbin Military Engineering Institute, and the Rebel Corps of the Machinery Managing Bureau. Among the 32 signatories of rebel organizations on the “*Urgent Notice*” on January 9, Red Revolutionaries and Bombarding Headquarters were excluded from the founding members, as well because they bombarded Zhang Chunqiao and the CCRG at the time.⁹⁸

As every day many factions clamored outside the building of the Shanghai

⁹⁷ Xu Jingxian 2003, pp.72-74.

⁹⁸ Yang Yougen and Shi Zhongkang, “Some Things on the Eve of Shanghai Revolutionary Committee” (*Shi geweihui chengli qianxi shushi*), in *January Storm*, joint issue of No. 5 and No. 6, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai.

Sports Committee and threatened to smash the preparatory committee, it was impossible to continue its works there. On February 4, the preparatory committee, including representatives from Shanghai's three armed services, had to secretly move to another locale. But to their surprise, when they held a meeting at the new place, some uninvited factions, which had learned of the new location through certain avenues, clamored outside the meeting again. What they wanted remained the same, that is, to have their factions' names listed in the manifesto of the Shanghai People's Commune. Hot debates burst out among the organizations that attended the meeting. Some sympathized with those factions that were ruled out, some did not. At this crucial moment, Zhang Chunqiao put forward a proposal to resolve this knotty issue,

Comrades! Now it is not the time for the rebels to split up and fight each other again! Today all the leaders of the 32 organizations who are seated here did accomplish a lot in Shanghai's power seizure. You definitely deserve to be members of the coming Shanghai People's Commune. We together will take charge of the Party, governmental, financial, and cultural power of Shanghai. But we should consider the fact that in a city with a population over 10 million, apart from a handful of landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements, rightists, traitors, spies and capitalist roaders, all Shanghai's revolutionary people should be members of the Shanghai People's Commune! If the forthcoming People's Commune only consisted of 30 or so organizations here, a lot of people would be excluded. As a consequence, many people would be dissatisfied, and hence shaking the authorities of our new power organ...the greater alliance we achieve, the better...Tonight, we therefore declared the formation of the provisional committee of the Shanghai People's Commune as the supreme power organ after the power seizure. All the mass organizations here are the natural members of the provisional committee of the Shanghai People's Commune. In accordance with the principles of the Paris Commune, all organizations can elect your own representatives to join in the provisional committee, and you also have the full right to dismiss and replace your representatives....Just because of this, I suggest that all the 32 organizations here will be

regarded as the originators, rather than constituent units of the Commune. It's not necessary to list all the 32 organizations on the manifesto of the Shanghai People's Commune. We can just sign in the name of a unified power organ, that is, the provisional committee of the Shanghai People's Commune. This can not only represent all the three sides, the armed forces, revolutionary cadres, and the mass organizations that initiated the Commune, but also avoid the nuisance due to the signing matter. As for those organizations outside who want to join the Shanghai People's Commune, all of them can apply. The provisional committee of the Shanghai People's Commune will examine every case for its entry later.⁹⁹

Zhang Chunqiao's witty advice got full agreement from the attendees, thus avoiding, at the last minute, a possible miscarriage of the Shanghai People's Commune and possible bloody conflicts among mass organizations.

On February 5, more than one million people gathered at Shanghai's People's Square to celebrate the founding of the Shanghai People's Commune. Major leaders of the initiators of the Commune, military officers from the armed forces, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan as the representatives of revolutionary cadres, among other celebrities such as Geng Jinzhang, the head of the famous Second Corps, were seated at the platform in front of the huge rally. The masses got extremely excited as two airplanes scattered thousands of colored leaflets over the rally. At the rally, the manifesto of the Shanghai People's Commune was publicly announced,

“The Four Seas are rising/clouds and water raging; the Five Continents are rocking/wind and thunder roaring.” We, the proletarian revolutionaries of Shanghai solemnly declare to the entire country and the world: In the great storm of the January Revolution, the old SPC and the Shanghai People's Committee were smashed, and the Shanghai People's Commune came into being!... A new style of local state organ of the proletarian dictatorship, a new type of Shanghai People's

⁹⁹ Xu Jingxian 2003, pp.71-82.

Commune came into sight with a brand-new appearance on the horizon; it was born near the bank of the Huangpu River and stands to the East of the world.¹⁰⁰

The manifesto reaffirmed the principles of the Paris Commune:

The Shanghai People's Commune, under the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought, is a new organizational form that has thoroughly smashed the state apparatus within which the power of dictatorship has been usurped by counter revolutionary revisionists and re-created the local state organ of proletarian dictatorship. Its organizational principle is the democratic centralism instructed by Chairman Mao. For the people, the most extensive democracy will be carried out by the Commune; for class enemies, only merciless dictatorship should be carried out. The leaders of the Commune, after the victory of the great power seizure from the bottom up, will be elected in accordance with the principles of the Paris Commune by the revolutionary masses. At present, the provisional committee of the Shanghai People's Commune will consist of representatives recommended by different revolutionary rebel organizations through negotiations. The provisional, transitional power organ, which is composed of revolutionary mass organizations, the responsible people of PLA stationed in Shanghai, and revolutionary cadres who stick to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, will carry out the Commune's power of leadership... All the staff persons of the Shanghai People's Commune have the obligation of serving the people, and do not have the privilege of being bureaucrats and lords. Whoever is detached from the masses, doing things in the masses' stead or even suppressing the masses, or making arbitrary decisions, will be subject to dismissal and replacement at any time.¹⁰¹

Zhang Chunqiao, as the director of the newly founded Commune, made a keynote speech at the rally. "All power to the Shanghai People's Commune!" he shouted. The formation of the provisional committee of the Shanghai People's Commune, Zhang indicated, signaled the collapse of the bourgeois dictatorship carried out by the old Shanghai government. Since the old power holders would not

¹⁰⁰ See *Liberation Daily*, Feb.7, 1967.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

be reconciled to their failure, the Commune would continue to seize what power remained in their hands and consolidate power for the people. To prevent the restoration of the old system, the proletarian dictatorship must be strengthened. It was necessary to achieve broader unity of all factions in order to win a greater victory. “Just like the name of our Commune suggests,” Zhang Chunqiao emphasized, “we need to bring down the ‘Private’ while elevating the ‘Public’¹⁰².”

As to what characterized the Shanghai People’s Commune, vice director Yao Wenyuan illustrated it in his rally speech,

What are the characteristics of the Shanghai People’s Commune? We can answer in this way: The Shanghai People’s Commune is a new form of the proletarian dictatorship. Under the instruction of Mao Zedong Thought and the condition of the proletarian dictatorship, led and supported by the Center headed by Chairman Mao, it is a new type of local state organ of the proletarian dictatorship created in a revolutionary storm from the bottom upward, within which the revolutionary masses struggled for power from those Party authorities who are taking the capitalist road. Based on unprecedented far-ranging proletarian extensive democracy, it achieves high centralization through great unity; representatives of the broad masses directly participate in all kinds of works of the proletarian dictatorship, and hence the Commune has great power. It is a new local state power organ rising from the thoroughly smashed state apparatus whose power was usurped by the bourgeoisie, representing the authorities of the proletarian dictatorship. It not only represents the interest of one revolutionary organization, but also represents the fundamental interests and demands of the broad revolutionary rebels and revolutionary masses.¹⁰³

¹⁰² The Chinese words for “commune” are two Chinese characters, that is, *gongshe*, within which *gong* means public and common while *she* means society and community. See “Zhang Chunqiao’s Speech at the Founding Ceremony of the Shanghai People’s Commune” (*Zhang Chunqiao zai Shanghai renmin gongshe chengli dahui shang de jianghua*), in *Workers’ Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No. 7, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 9, 1967.

¹⁰³ See “Yao Wenyuan’s Speech at the Founding Ceremony of the Shanghai People’s Commune” (*Yao Wenyuan zai Shanghai renmin gongshe chengli dahui shang de jianghua*), in *Workers’ Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No. 7, ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 9, 1967.

At the rally, the provisional committee of the Shanghai People's Commune issued the No. 1 circular order. It declared the final end to the old SPC and the Shanghai People's Committee, and proclaimed all power to the Commune. It also cautioned that all revolutionary rebel organizations should exercise revolutionary vigilance, strictly differentiate between two kinds of distinct contradictions, sternly prevent political pick-pockets, and pay attention to those who would play rebel factions off against one another to break the unity of the people, or incite armed conflicts or even random storms. Dissensions among mass organizations should be resolved through negotiations and discussions, and the banner of the great alliance of proletarian revolutionaries must be raised high. The order also stipulated that any revolutionary rebel factions, who wanted to join in the Commune, should submit their applications, and their cases would be collectively discussed and ratified by the provisional committee.¹⁰⁴

“Before a brand-new social system can be built on the site of the old, the site must be swept clean.”¹⁰⁵ After the inauguration, the communards paraded in high spirits to the old Shanghai city hall. The plaques of the SPC and the Shanghai People's Committee were removed and smashed into pieces, and then set on fire. The wooden plaques burst into a yellow and blue flame and then disintegrated. Out of the ashes of the old Shanghai regime, a brand-new “Shanghai People's Commune” plaque inscribed with fine red color characters was put up as there was a wave of jubilant

¹⁰⁴ See “Circular Order No. 1 from the Provisional Committee of the Shanghai People's Commune” (*Shanghai renmin gongshe linshi weiyuanhui di yi hao tongling*), in *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, No. 7, ed. ed. by the WGH, Shanghai, Feb. 9, 1967.

¹⁰⁵ *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, p.33, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966.

cheers from the rebels. The Shanghai People's Commune, as a "new organizational form for the local state organ of the proletarian dictatorship", was thus formed.¹⁰⁶

The Shanghai Commune at a Distance from the State?

Following the decision of the Provisional Committee of the Shanghai Commune, the new power organ of Shanghai set up a delegation system, in which the 38 founding rebel organizations sent respective delegates to the Commune through negotiations among participating organizations of the Commune. In particular, "conforming to Chairman Mao's great teaching of 'lean troops and simple administration' (*jing bing jian zheng*)," the Commune was supposed to adopt an organizational policy that in order to

break with the overlapping and bulk bureaucratic establishments of the old SPC, a mere 7 teams and one office (*qi zu yi shi*) were set up under the Provisional Committee of the Shanghai Commune. The Provisional Committee and a nucleus of different teams were operated under a system of collective committee membership (*jiti weiyuan zhi*). Apart from Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, no other delegates are to join in the Commune serving as individuals. The Provisional Committee preliminarily chose 19 representatives via negotiation: Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, three responsible persons from the three

¹⁰⁶ In the congratulatory editorial of *Jiefang ribao* (*Liberation Daily*) to the inauguration of the Shanghai Commune on Feb. 6 1967, two basic lessons of the January Revolution were summed up by the commentator: First, the proletarian revolutionaries achieved great unity and mobilized millions upon millions of masses to liberate themselves so as to seize power from the power holders taking the capitalist road; the old power organs must be thoroughly smashed. Second, in the process of seizing power from a handful of power holders taking the capitalist road within the party, new organizational forms for the state organs of the proletarian dictatorship must be created. The Shanghai People's Commune, according to this editorial, was a product of the great January Revolution and was "a new organizational form for the local state organ of the proletarian dictatorship under the direction of Mao Zedong thought," which greatly enriched and developed the lessons of the Paris Commune and Soviets. See *Weida de yiyue geming wansui: zhuhe Shanghai renmin gongshe de dansheng* (*Long Live the Great January Revolution! Congratulating the Birth of the Shanghai People's Commune*), in *Jiefang ribao* (*Liberation Daily*), Feb. 6 1967.

armed services stationed in Shanghai, three from the WGH, one peasant, one student, one from the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, and one from each of the seven teams.¹⁰⁷

In setting up the Shanghai Commune the original unit title of “department” (*bu*) from the old SPC was renamed “team” (*zu*) – which was said to be Mao’s idea.¹⁰⁸

The original Department of Industry and Communications, for example, became the Industry and Communications Team, the Department of Organization became the Organization Team, and so forth. This was by no means merely a name change.

Instead, it was part of efforts to streamline administration. Yet the Political Propaganda Team (*zheng xuan zu*) was relatively larger than other teams. The Central Propaganda Department (*zhong xuan bu*), which had been dubbed the Palace of Hell by Mao because it had refused to endorse the Maoist policy and the CR, was disbanded. The Shanghai Revolutionary Committee (RC) did not name the new power organ of propaganda after its disbanded counterpart, but instead called it the Political Propaganda Team. To have a voice in the Shanghai RC, all major mass organizations that constituted the Shanghai Commune such as the WGH, the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, the Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Journalists, the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of Shanghai Publishing Circles, the Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters of Shanghai Medical Circles, the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of the Shanghai Sports Front, and the Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of the Shanghai

¹⁰⁷ *The Chronicle of the Shanghai January Revolution (Draft), Nov.1965-Feb. 24,1967(Shanghai yiyue geming dashiji 1965.11—1967.2.24)*, Compiled by the Writing Group of Revolutionary Mass Criticism in Shanghai, January 1969. After the official inauguration of the Shanghai Commune, the numbers of the teams expanded from 7 to 8.

¹⁰⁸ Xu Jingxian, 2004, p.92.

Literature and Art Circles et. al., sent their own delegates to be part of this Political Propaganda Team within the Commune.¹⁰⁹

On the day after the founding of the Shanghai Commune, most members of the Provisional Committee of the Shanghai People's Commune assumed offices at Waitan Plaza while others held offices at the old SPC compound at Kangping Street and the *Dou-pi-gai* (Struggle-criticism-transformation) building at the No.33 West Yan'an Road.¹¹⁰ But the above-proposed 19-delegate plan, which supposedly assigned 19 different positions to 38 mass organizations based on the negotiation of the 38 originators of the Commune, was actually not carried out since many more mass organizations, which were not included in the Shanghai Commune, hoped to participate in the new power organ as well. As I discussed previously, in order to appease the discontent among the excluded factions, Zhang Chunqiao proposed that all the 38 factions not join the Commune as "constituent units" (*zucheng danwei*) but as "originators" (*faqing danwei*, founding members), thus allowing more factions to take part in the Commune later. In conditions of turmoil, it was hard to run a general election to choose official committee members for the Commune immediately, as the Shanghai Commune refused to permit some hostile factions to join in, and some factions held a wait-and-see attitude toward the Commune as well. They harbored other plans. The head of the Commune Zhang Chunqiao, therefore, provisionally designated four rebel leaders – Wang Hongwen and Wang Minglong from the WGH, Xu Jingxian and Wang Chenglong from the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp.92-93.

¹¹⁰ Xu Jingxian, 2003, p.92.,

Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee -- to be responsible for the running of the Shanghai Commune. Consequently, the Commune in reality effected a convener system (*zhaojiren zhidu*). The conveners, who were appointed or approved by Zhang Chunqiao, took charge of the everyday affairs of all the eight teams and one office in the Shanghai Commune. They included,

Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production Team, in charge of the running of the industry and communication, executed by the Frontline Headquarters; the first convener Xie Pengfei was from the WGH;

Organizational Team, in charge of the registration and investigation of members of the Commune and mass organizations, dominated by the WGH; the first convener Wang Minglong was from the WGH;

Political Propaganda Team, in charge of the propaganda work in news, press and arts, dominated by the Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Journalists; the first convener Zhu Xiqi was a journalist of the *Wenhui Daily*;

Liaison Team, in charge of communication and investigation of various mass organs and rebels of basic-level units, dominated by the East Is Red Corps of Tongji University; the first convener Chen Gangfeng was from the same faction;

Investigation Team, in charge of policy studying and document drafting, dominated by the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee; the first convener Wu Ruiwu was from the same faction;

Security Team, in charge of public security and jurisdiction, dominated by the Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Public Security Bureau and the Shanghai Garrison; the first convener Wang Weizhang was from the same faction;

Reception Team, in charge of accommodating visitors and networking with (*chuanlian*) personnel from outside Shanghai and handling related affairs, dominated by the "Rebel to the End" Corps of the Shanghai Jiaotong University and rebels from the Shanghai

People's Committee; the first convener Yu Xiaobing was from the "Rebel to the End" Corps of the Shanghai Jiaotong University;

Office, in charge of the everyday affairs of the Commune, dominated by the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee; the first convener Zhu Yupei was from the same faction;

Logistics Team, in charge of logistics, dominated by the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee; the first convener Yang Yougeng was from the same faction.¹¹¹

As can be seen, even though rebel representatives were mostly chosen by their own mass organizations in accordance with the principles of the Paris Commune, the Shanghai Commune as a whole did not immediately implement the general election system of the Paris Commune, which was usually seen as a core feature of the Commune model and one of its principles. Rather, the Shanghai Commune professed that it just represented a transitional stage, and would put general election into practice once the social and political conditions matured. However, from its inception and until its supersession, the Shanghai Commune never got a chance to fulfill its promise as such.¹¹² A good many sections of the Shanghai population, not only conservatives, but also dissident rebels, did not participate in the election of the new power organ. The election was not applied to the whole Shanghai society. Even though the Shanghai Commune actually adopted a delegate system of combining elections and appointments, Alain Badiou still indentified the Shanghai Commune,

¹¹¹ Li Xun, *The Leadership and Administrative Set-up of the Shanghai People's Commune and the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee (Shanghai renmin gongshe he Shanghai shi geming weiyuanhui lingdao chengyuan he ban'gong jigou shezhi)*, in electronic magazine "Memory" (*Jiyi*), No.9, March 30, 2009. <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=11250&fpage=0&toread=&page=2>

¹¹² Zhang Chunqiao promised that such general elections might be held at some future point "when conditions become ripe." See Roderick MacFarquhar, John K. Fairbank, Denis Twitchett ed., *Cambridge History of China: The People's Republic, Part 2 : Revolutions Within the Chinese Revolution, 1966-1982*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.164.

along with the 1792-94 phase of the French Revolution, as a defining historical moment (“event”) of an egalitarian, emancipatory politics. For Badiou, the January Revolution and the Shanghai Commune (January/February 1967) was a major and unfinished episode because it “proposes an alternative form of power to the centralism of the party.”¹¹³ John B. Starr also claimed that the Paris Commune and the Commune movement during the CR had much in common:

Both were predicated on some highly idealistic assumptions about the nature of revolution and of the exercise of political power. Both sought to destroy the existing state structure and to rebuild a new one, and in both cases, the ideal for the new structure was the same: it was to be a structure which was highly responsive to its constituents and which would thereby serve to break down the alienation of state from society typical of the old order.¹¹⁴

As with the continuity between the Paris Commune and the Shanghai Commune, Raymond Lotta, a Maoist economist, together with two other authors, argued that the “commune principle” in effect took form in several key ways:

Worker-representatives comprising the staff of the commune served not as individuals within a unified structure but precisely as delegates of the mass organizations from which candidacy lists were drawn, with these representatives subject to mass criticism and supervision, as well as recall.

Delegates were expected to participate in productive labor in order to minimize status differences between them and ordinary members of the mass organizations.

No special role or position was accorded any political force in the Shanghai Commune. The Communist Party did not have any

¹¹³ Alain Badiou, Cécile Winter, *Polemics*, Verso, 2006, p.300.

¹¹⁴ John Bryan Starr, *Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eye*, in *China Quarterly*, No. 49. (Jan. - Mar., 1972), p. 124.

institutionalized leadership within the Commune (although, again, leading communists like Zhang Chunqiao were objectively playing a certain leadership role).¹¹⁵

Indeed, almost every Commune official, or using the rebels' own words, a servant of the people, was elected or recommended by his or her own mass organization through a democratic procedure. Even Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, considered to be two representatives of the old revolutionary Party cadres, were first recommended to the Central Committee during the January Storm by the Second Corps led by Geng Jinzhang, the Shanghai Red Guard Third Headquarters led by Zhao Quanguo, and other mass organizations. Mao also gave his endorsement to the method of nominating leaders of the proposed new Shanghai mass power organ. Trusted by fellow members of given mass organizations, delegates from various organizations would first represent and fulfill the political desires and economic interests of their own factions, and then possibly those of others, such as the Commune, the Party, or the state as a whole. For instance, delegates in the Commune struggled for the interests of their own factions, asking for funds and paper to print tabloids and other things, and some even asked for motorcycles and cargo-transport trucks.¹¹⁶ None of the conveners and staff persons in the Commune were elected by a general election or officially appointed by the Commune. Rather, they were delegates to the Commune. Consequently, to some extent, they lacked authority and a sense of responsibility for the whole Commune and for political entities higher than the

¹¹⁵ Alain Badiou's *"Politics of Emancipation": A Communism Locked Within the Confines of the Bourgeois World* by Raymond Lotta, Nayi Duniya, and K. J. A., from http://www.demarcations-journal.org/issue01/demarcations_badiou.html, cited on October 8, 2009.

¹¹⁶ Xu Jingxian, 2003, p.93.

Commune. As delegates of various factions, all of those conveners and staff were subject to recall and replacement at any time by their own factions. This caused frequent changes of personnel, which, to some extent, undermined the work of the Commune because this meant there was no systematic consideration and evaluation of the overall situation by the Commune functionaries.¹¹⁷ Though there were a few Communist Party members, such as Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen, in the Commune, there were many rebel delegates who were not Communist Party members and there was no official Party committee of the Shanghai Commune. Therefore, it was hard for the CCP to execute effective leadership over the Shanghai Commune. Possibly for this reason, Alain Badiou refers to the Shanghai Commune as a democratic countermodel to the party-state, which is seen by him as intrinsically oppressive.¹¹⁸ Badiou's view of mass democracy as being "at a distance from the state" was represented as well among some of the communards in the Shanghai Commune.

To some extent, the antipathy to the state, the Party leadership, or even any kind of hierarchy, was manifested in the "*February 8 Circular Order*", issued by a rebel faction within the Shanghai Commune called "The Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Foreign Economic Relations Bureau" (*Shanghai shi duiwai jingji lianluo ju geming zaofan weiyuanhui*). This faction was a part of the Revolutionary Rebel United Committee of City Level Organizations of the Shanghai

¹¹⁷ Li Xun, *The Leadership and Administrative Set-up of the Shanghai People's Commune and the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee* (*Shanghai renmin gongshe he Shanghai shi geming weiyuanhui lingdao chengyuan he ban'gong jigou shezhi*), in electronic magazine "Memory" (*jiyi*), No.9, March 30, 2009. <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=11250&fpage=0&toread=&page=2>

¹¹⁸ Alain Badiou, *The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution?* in *Positions*, Winter issue, 2005, p.497.

Municipal Party Committee (*Shanghai shi shiji jiguan geming zaofan lianhe weiyuanhui*, United Committee for short). On Feb. 8, 1967, three days after the formation of the Shanghai Commune, this faction sent an ultimatum-type circular order titled “*Smashing The Old System of Hierarchy and Professional Titles*” (*Zalan dengji zhicheng jiu zhidu*) via cable directly to “Premier Zhou Enlai, the State Council, the CCRG, Comrade Chen Boda, Comrade Jiang Qing and the New China News Agency”. They demanded the abolition of all appellatives of “*zhang*” (meaning directors), all hierarchical levels, and all the titles of administrative officials at various bureaus (*ju*), departments (*bu*), divisions (*chu*) and offices (*ke*). They even declared that “we don’t need any directors; all of us are equal.” “All power holders should be pushed aside as they are nothing great. We can shoulder their tasks.”¹¹⁹ The order read,

With the establishment of the Shanghai People’s Commune, a wholly new form of power organ came into being. Although the old SPC power organ was smashed, remnants of bourgeois right in the Liu-Dengist line still exist in our Bureau. All hierarchy (*dengji*) and professional titles (*zhicheng*) serve as tools for bourgeois dictatorship to rule and suppress the revolutionary masses. For a long time, the bureau directors have always been ruling the division directors, the division directors always ruling the office directors, and the office directors always ruling the masses. The higher levels have always demanded things from and pressed the lower levels. People with “*zhang*” (directors) titles have always placed their own interests above those of the Party and the masses whereas the masses cannot “rebel against orthodoxy” (*li jing pan dao*). The words of the persons with “*zhang*” titles became “directives” that the masses were forced to

¹¹⁹ *Gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi, chedi pipan wuzhengfu zhuyi fandong sichang, chedi qingsuan erba fandong tongling dahui tekan* (*The Special Issue of the Rally “Raising High the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong’s Thought, Thoroughly Criticizing the Anarchist Reactionary Thought, and Thoroughly Liquidating the February 8 Reactionary Circular Order.”*), ed. by The Revolutionary Rebel United Committee of City Level Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (*Shanghai shi shiji jiguan geming zaofan lianhe weiyuanhui*), March 24, 1967.

carry out one hundred per cent, without being allowed to lodge any complaints. In this way, the masses' enthusiasm and initiatives were seriously inhibited. This kind of old system of hierarchy is a superstructure not suitable for our country's socialist economic base, a product of the Liu-Dengist line, and a hotbed to foster slavishness and produce revisionism. It should be completely smashed! For this purpose, this circular order is promulgating the following,

1. Effective as of now, all appellatives of “*zhang*” titles are abolished. All people will be called revolutionary comrades to each other.
2. Effective as of now, the ranking system (*jibie zhidu*) is abolished. The wages will be distributed according to the former standard (not applicable to those power holders taking the capitalist road). In the future, the wage distribution will be enforced in accordance with new provisions set by the Central Committee and Shanghai People's Commune.
3. Rebel fighters and revolutionary comrades shall be urged to observe this order.¹²⁰

Although the “February 8 circular order” was issued by only one faction in the United Committee, it actually got approval and support from some heads of the United Committee when it was sent to the Central Committee. This order was also a natural outcome of the trends of thought coming from the United Committee, which mainly consisted of experienced lower ranking functionaries in the old Shanghai governmental establishments, who tended, when the time came, to rebel against the oppressive hierarchical ranking system. From the very beginning, the United Committee was overrun with the thought of “doubting everything”, “repulsing everything” and “putting down everything”. As early as on January 14, the United

¹²⁰ *The Special Issue of the Rally “Raising High the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong’s Thought, Thoroughly Criticizing the Anarchist Reactionary Thought, and Beating Back the Reactionary Counter-current.”* (Gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi, chedi pipan wuzhengfu zhuyi fandong sichang, jitui fan geming niliu dahui zhuankan), p.6, jointly ed. by the WGH, The Revolutionary Rebel United Committee of City Level Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (*Shanghai shi shiji jiguan geming zaofan lianhe weiyuanhui*), the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Post of Red Revolutionary Fighters, and the Shanghai Broadcasting Station Headquarters of Smashing the Reactionary Counter-current, April 12, 1967.

Committee went through its first major reorganization, at which it established an organizational principle that all cadres who were beyond division directors in bureau-level organs, or who were beyond office directors in the city's professional companies and district-level organs, were not allowed to join the rebel teams. Influenced by this policy, some grass-roots rebel factions even forbade any political cadres, any Party members and any cadres promoted from rank and file workers, to join rebel teams since they were yet to be examined. Because of the exclusion of almost all higher-middle cadres, very often, in many units it was impossible to set up a three-in-one combination (triple alliance) in compliance with the guidance of the Maoist leadership. At one meeting, an office director was even deprived of the right to speak because he was identified as a "power holder". Before long, the United Committee went through a second major reorganization because one of its rebels, who had taken part in a work team in the previous Four Clean-ups Movement, made a bad comment about a fraternal organization. Using this as an excuse, all rebels who had previously participated in work teams during the Four Clean-ups Movement were expelled. This almost led to a political paralysis in the operation of the United Committee. Furthermore, when asked about who the heads of United Committee were, the United Committee people would reply, "We have no heads. We execute collective leadership."¹²¹ In particular, the Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Foreign Economic Relations Bureau effectively rejected any proposal for a 3-in-1 combination, using the pretext that there were no old Party cadres who could be incorporated into

¹²¹ Ibid. p.3.

this.

The “February 8 circular order” struck a chord with many like-minded rebels and exerted immense influence. After receiving this order, some units in Shanghai rejected any bureau directors and decided to take care of things themselves. Some units claimed that they had no suitable cadres for the proposed 3-in-1 combination, just like The Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Foreign Economic Relations Bureau. Some factions even announced the February 8 circular order at mass rallies. Thereafter, quite a few of the masses did not call leading cadres “*zhang*” any more, and the plaques of many offices were smashed into pieces as well. Consequently, virtually all leading cadres in Shanghai were put out to pasture at the time. Later, in order to incorporate some of the old Party cadres back into the new power organs at various levels, on instructions from the Maoist leadership, the “February 8 circular order” was fiercely criticized. The main accusation made against the circular order was that it advocated “ultra-democracy”, anarchism and in effect opposed the proletarian dictatorship. To refute the “anarchical” refutation of the system of hierarchy and professional titles, the critics quoted Mao to back their argument, “All our working cadres, no matter high or low in positions, are people’s servants.”¹²² To rebuff the “anarchical” denunciation of any centralization and authority, critics invoked Engels’ remarks on the Paris Commune that “It was the lack of centralization and authority that cost the life of the Paris Commune...And when people speak to me about authority and centralization as if they were two things to be

¹²² Mao Zedong, *The Task in the Year of 1945 (Yijiusiwu nian de renwu)*, in *Mao Zedong Works (Mao Zedong wenji)* Vol. 3, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999. p.244.

condemned in all possible circumstances, it seems to me that those who talk like this either do not know what a revolution is, or are revolutionaries in name only.”¹²³ What really enraged those critics most was that the February 8 Circular Order said that the professional titles and hierarchy in socialist China were tools of bourgeois dictatorship, and it depicted all the cadres as evil-doing bourgeois lords. For them, this represented the utter and total negation of all the achievements made under Mao’s line which had been dominant in the state structure since the CCP took power in 1949.

Yet is it sufficient and correct to say, as Alain Badiou perhaps idealistically puts it, that the Shanghai Commune represented a counter-model to the “oppressive” party-state? Probably not. First of all, even though the trend of thought that rejected the system of hierarchy and professional titles, and even the local Party leadership, had been fostered in the minds of some rebels in Shanghai, and had achieved a degree of influence, this line by no means represented the mainstream thinking of the Shanghai rebels. Among the 38 rebel organizations that were “originating units” of the Shanghai Commune, only one small faction, “The Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Foreign Economic Relations Bureau” in the “United Committee”, produced a circular order partly in agreement with Badiou’s view that considers the Shanghai Commune a counter-model to the party-state. Secondly, there were plenty of defenders of the old Shanghai establishment among Shanghai cadres, common workers and citizens, who greatly outnumbered the advocates of abolishing hierarchy. Thirdly, nobody among the Shanghai rebels at that moment proposed to

¹²³ *Engels to Carlo Terzaghi*, January 14-[15], 1872. (Second Version), quoted from Frank E. Manuel, *A Requiem for Karl Marx*, p.98, Harvard University Press, 1997.

abolish the Party as a whole, even though many rebels did show their disaffection and indifference toward incorporating the local old Party cadres. Even in the representative “February 8 Circular Order”, the advocates of abolishing the ranking system still showed their willingness to observe the Maoist Party rule, “In the future, the wage distribution will be enforced in accordance with new provisions set by the Central Committee and Shanghai People’s Commune.” Fourthly, even though the Shanghai Commune had fewer, yet more effective, officials than the old SPC and the later inheritor of the Shanghai Commune, the Shanghai RC, developed a contingent of urban workers’ militia during the late years of the Mao era, it is hard to take the view that the Shanghai rebels did not need a bureaucracy, a regular army and a state. Nevertheless, there could be found within the Shanghai Commune some indications of the beginning of the “withering away” of some aspects of the state.

The ultimatum-type telegram of the “February 8 circular order” was obviously received and discussed among top CCP leaders because Premier Zhou Enlai delivered it directly to Zhang Chunqiao, who was supposedly in charge of the CR in Shanghai. Therefore, this circular order not only influenced the CR in Shanghai, but also had a major impact on the Maoist leadership in Beijing – and both Mao Zedong and Zhang Chunqiao would pointedly criticize it, as I will go into more in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: The “Revolutionary Committee is Good”: Supersession of the Shanghai Commune

Factional Disruption within the Shanghai Commune

January 1967 saw a nationwide movement of power seizures. Influenced by the mass takeover in Shanghai, rebels in Shanxi, Shandong, Guizhou and Heilongjiang provinces launched the first wave of nationwide power seizures in the spring. Since Shanghai rebels took the lead in the national storm of capturing power, they were expected to constitute a new local state organ as soon as possible. If the Shanghai Commune had been formed on January 26 according to the original plan, it would have been the first new local state organ arising out of the January Storm as well as the first such power organ publicized by the central authorities. But what the anti-Zhang Chunqiao and WGH forces had done in effect delayed its establishment for almost 10 days. At the same time, the Heilongjiang rebels, who formed a triple alliance with leading members of the PLA and the Provincial Party Committee, such as Wang Jiadao and Pan Fusheng, on January 10, 1967, eventually seized power from the old authorities. The united rebels, after effectively fighting back counteroffensives from conservative forces, set up a new organ of power, i.e. the Red Rebel RC in Heilongjiang Province on January 31, 1967, which was 5 days before the formation of the Shanghai Commune. On February 2, the *People's Daily* published an editorial entitled “New Morning Lights of the Northeast [of China]” to hail the establishment

of the Red Rebel RC in Heilongjiang Province, which was the first such organ sanctioned by the central authorities. “The experiences of the struggle of Heilongjiang proletarian revolutionaries to seize power,” the editorial pronounced, “once again shows that the triple combination of the responsible persons of revolutionary mass organizations, the responsible persons of the P.L.A. units stationed in the locality and revolutionary leading cadres in the Party and government organizations is of crucial meaning to guarantee the victory of power seizure.”¹ Moreover, another *People’s Daily* editorial that hailed the new power organ appeared on February 10, 1967. Titled “A Good Example in the Struggle by Proletarian Revolutionaries to Seize Power,” it summed up some “fairly comprehensive and successful” experiences in the struggle of Heilongjiang as,

1. The revolutionary rebels, acting in accordance with concrete conditions in the struggle here and carrying out the Party's policy in a clear-cut manner, have united with the principal leading members in the Provincial Party Committee who have carried out Chairman Mao's correct line and with the principal leading members of the People's Liberation Army units in the area to weld all three into one in the seizure of power.
2. Before seizing the power of the leadership of a provincial Party committee, the newspapers and radio, as the voice of the proletarian revolution, and the Public Security Bureau, as an organ of dictatorship, should first be seized by the Left so as to prepare public opinion for the final seizure of the core of the reactionary stronghold, resolutely suppress counter-revolutionaries and ensure a successful struggle to seize power.
3. Firmly rely on the Left forces within the units where power is to be seized, unite with the middle forces and resolutely strike at the most stubborn reactionary forces so as to seize power and consolidate it.

¹ *New Morning Lights of the Northeast (Dongbei de xin shuguang)*, *People’s Daily*, February 2, 1967.

4. The fundamental experience in the struggle to seize power boils down to the fact that Mao Tse-tung's thought arms the ranks of the Left which use Mao Tse-tung's thought to guide their struggle to seize power.²

This experience was, according to the editorial, “worth studying by proletarian revolutionaries in other parts of the country. Proletarian revolutionaries in other places should apply this experience creatively in light of the concrete conditions in their own localities.” The triple combination, as it emphasized, was the core of the great alliance of proletarian revolutionaries.

The Shanghai Commune was formed late – compared to the Heilongjiang RC. And the opponents of the Shanghai Commune and dissidents such as Geng Jinzhang’s Second Corps, criticized the Shanghai Commune, comparing it to the Heilongjiang rebels, even though Geng had been invited to sit on the platform at the inauguration of the Shanghai Commune. They said that the Shanghai Commune lacked everything the Heilongjiang RC had achieved. Gradually, many wall posters appeared such as “Firstly Questioning the Shanghai People’s Commune”, “Secondly Questioning the Shanghai People’s Commune”, etc..³ The critics of the Shanghai Commune did not hesitate to publicly point out that the Shanghai Commune did not fulfill the triple combination, with only a twofold combination of some rebel factions and the army. Furthermore, before taking power from the leadership of the SPC, the WGH-led force did not fully control the Public Security Bureaus, where people were fighting among themselves. As for the experience of rebel takeovers from within rather than outside of the mass organizations, opponents claimed that Zhang Chunqiao had tried to impose his WGH

² New China News Agency (NCNA), English news, Peking, February 10, 1967.

³ Xu Jingxian, 2003, p.84.

on everyone. They even accused the Commune of excluding “the major part of” the Left, and so forth.⁴ But all these accusations against the WGH-led Commune, in the eyes of pro-Shanghai Commune forces, were far from convincing. Take the first and most important accusation for example. Before the CR, Shanghai had more than six hundred cadres at the level of deputy bureau directors (*fu juzhang*), more than six thousand cadres at the level of division directors (*chuzhang*), and many more office directors (*kezhang*). The Shanghai Commune did not include most of these old cadres, especially at the level of division directors and higher rankings. Apart from Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, there were no high ranking cadres at the level of SPC secretaries and deputy mayors who supported the rebellion before the Shanghai Commune. But firstly, as Zhang Chunqiao held, it was the old SPC that should be held responsible in the first place for misleading and discouraging higher-middle cadres from rebelling in the early stage of the Shanghai CR. As Zhang stressed, many directives concerning the CR from the Center were not well communicated to the common cadres by the old SPC. And in any event, those cadres should take secondary responsibility for not rebelling on their own initiative. If cadres did not rebel, there would be no way for the rebels to choose suitable cadres to incorporate into the new power organs at various levels. Nevertheless, the rebels and the Shanghai Commune should not be blamed for the problem of the cadres’ role.⁵ Secondly, many middle-lower ranking cadres, represented by Xu Jingxian and his colleagues at the

⁴ Neal Hunter, 1969, p.248.

⁵ See *Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan’s Speeches at the Oath-taking Rally to “Raise the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong Thought and Take Further Steps to Seize Power in the Three-in-One Combination”* (*Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan zai gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi jinyibu zhankai sanjiehe duoquan shishi dahui shang de jianghua*), Feb.24, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders* (*Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua*), Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guard Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

Writers' Group of the SPC, collectively rebelled and formed the Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee. Of course, compared with students and workers, the Shanghai's middle-lower ranking governmental cadres (*jiguan ganbu*) rebelled relatively late and were fewer in number. But they were still among the earliest cadres to rebel in the whole country. And when Mao learned that Shanghai's government cadres had rebelled, he was very glad. With these rebel middle-lower functionaries, therefore, the Shanghai Commune did not seriously lack experienced basic cadres. Thirdly, the Commune always showed its willingness to include any cadres who rebelled against the old regime.⁶ Fourthly, before the formation of Commune, the Maoist leadership in Beijing already agreed to accept Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan as representatives of the principal leading cadres rebelling from the old SPC.⁷ As for the accusation from Geng Jinzhang's force that the Shanghai Commune was "imposing the WGH on everyone and excluding them", the Commune (and its successor the Shanghai RC) responded that the WGH never acknowledged the Second Corps as an independent organization since it was just a subsidiary branch of WGH and never held an inauguration for its independence. From the very beginning, the WGH leaders negotiated tens of times with the Second

⁶ See *Sanjiehe de duoquan caishi zhen duoquan (Only the Three-in-one Style Power Seizure is Authentic)*, in *Worker's Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, Feb.12, 1967; *Wenhui Daily's* editorial on Feb. 18 "It Is Not Necessary to Differentiate Early or Late Rebellion" (*Zaofan bufen xianhou*), urged the broad governmental cadres, especially leading cadres to rebel. In *The Notice Concerning Correctly Treating the Issue of Cadres (Guanyu zhengque duidai ganbu wenti de tonggao)* issued on Feb 20, 1967, the Commune announced that in regard to the cadres who erred in political line, it was necessary to differentiate those who consciously carried out [the bourgeois reactionary line], which was in the minority, from those who unconsciously carried out [the bourgeois reactionary line], which was the majority, and to differentiate those who insisted on making mistakes from those who were willing to rectify and have their mistakes rectified, thus gradually uniting with 95 percent of the cadre team. See *Worker's Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, Feb.23, 1967.

⁷ See "Long Live the Victory of the Great January Revolution" (*Weida de yiyue geming shengli wansui*), from *Workers' Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, by the WGH, Jan. 18, 1968.

Corps trying to achieve unity yet were rebuffed by Geng Jinzhang.⁸ On January 24, the eve of the founding of the Shanghai Commune, Geng Jinzhang's Corps even completely refused the pro-Commune *Wenhui Daily's* request to write an article praising the proposed Commune. Geng told the journalists: "We have no intention of writing such an article; we are opposed to the Shanghai Commune as it stands."⁹ Therefore, it was possibly not the Commune that deliberately excluded Geng's Corps; but rather, the anti-Commune factions refused to unite and cooperate.

Following the establishment of the Shanghai Commune, some economic organizations and the anti-WGH-led Commune forces launched a new campaign to attack and struggle against the lowest rank of cadres in the whole city, i. e. people who were in charge of street and lane committees. Many of them were in fact ordinary citizens and even not Party members.¹⁰ Most of the cadres of the street and lane committees were merely rank and file political activists from the retired staff and workers, family members of the staff and workers, or family members of soldiers, who were not state-authorized personnel. Therefore, in some sense, they were by no means so-called "power holders," let alone "power holders taking the capitalist road". According to the Maoist leadership's plan for the CR, these numerous "mini-cadres" should not have been the targets of struggle. The correct way to deal with those mini-cadres that erred was to criticize them by *sida* (Four Big Rights), that is, to speak

⁸ *Answering Readers' Questions about the Second Corps (Continued)* (*jiu erbingtuan wenti da duzhe wen [xu shangqi]*), in *Worker's Rebel News*, March 4, 1967.

⁹ Neal Hunter, 1969. p.235.

¹⁰ Neal Hunter, 1969. pp.248-249. In fact, this was not a new strategy. As early as June, 1966, the power holders had struggled against some mini-cadres in charge of public security in street and lane committees and some common policemen at local police stations. See *Shanghai gong'an zhi: dashiji* (Shanghai Public Security Gazetteer: A Chronicle) at <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node4476/node58280/index.html> Cited on June 1, 2009.

out freely, air views freely, hold great debates, and write big-character posters; it was not permitted to lay siege to or struggle against them.¹¹ The shift in the targets of struggle – from true authorities, such as a handful of power holders taking the capitalist road in the old SPC, in the old district Party committees, and in the old street Party committees, to ordinary people merely in charge of street and lane committees, -- was for all intents and purposes a typical manifestation of “striking the majority to protect a handful”. This line was harshly criticized by the Maoist leadership as part of the bourgeois reactionary line. The anti-Commune forces, therefore, effectively disrupted the operation of the Shanghai Commune through struggling against the (in fact powerless) “mini-cadres”. The Commune swiftly responded to this and its counteroffensive was to publicize a notice on Feb. 9 titled “The Notice Concerning Firmly Following the Big Orientation of Struggle in the CR at the Street and Lane Level (*Guanyu jiedao linong de wuchanjieji wenhua dageming bixu laolao zhangwo douzheng da fangxiang de tonggao*)”, which was jointly drafted by 23 rebel organizations led by the WGH. The next day, *Wenhui Daily* released a strong editorial titled “To Struggle Against the Cadres in Charge of Street and Lane Committees is Wrong in the General Orientation (*Douzheng linong ganbu, dafangxiang jiushi cuole*)” to condemn this. Contrary to the Commune’s expectations, this article stirred up a great disturbance and caused a 3-day siege of the *Wenhui Daily* offices. Many malcontents demonstrated in favor of having all authorities examined, especially those tens and thousands of “petti-power holders.” To counter this offensive, the

¹¹ *Jianjue datui douzheng linong ganbu de waifeng (Resolutely Repel the Evil Wind of Struggling the Cadres of the Street and Lane Committees)*, in *Jiefang ribao (Liberation Daily)* in Shanghai, Feb. 11, 1967.

pro-Commune organizations held many rallies of solidarity in the streets and at the Commune headquarters. At the same time, Geng Jinzhang's Second Corps mustered its supporters to protest against the Shanghai Commune for "suppressing the mass movement." Clashes between the rivals burst out here and there in the Shanghai streets.¹²

By Feb. 9, both the Commune's leaders and its opponents were confused by the lack of any official acknowledgement or congratulatory telegrams from Beijing with regard to Shanghai's new power organ. For several days there was nothing about the Shanghai Commune in the CCP organ, the *People's Daily*. As mentioned above, when Heilongjiang formed the new local state power organ on January 31, 1967, the Center soon expressed ebullient praise in the *People's Daily* on Feb. 2. The silence in Beijing this time was soon interpreted by anti-Commune factions as a non-supportive gesture toward the Shanghai Commune. Taking advantage of this, on Feb. 9, Geng Jinzhang convened a meeting of the "Committee of Broad Unity" consisting of all his 14 anti-Shanghai Commune factions to discuss the current situation in Shanghai. The main points that came out of this meeting were,

1. The Center did not know of the formation of the Shanghai Commune. Zhang Chunqiao is suspect.
2. The Second Corps plans to smash the WGH headquarters. First smash the WGH headquarters, then the WGH's district branches....If that does not work, it will be necessary to mobilize the [supportive] workers in all factories to walk off their working positions and make an all-out effort to strike.

¹² Ibid.

3. So long as there is a WGH, the Second Corps cannot survive; and so long as there is Second Corps, the WGH cannot survive. Only one of the two parties will survive. And the Second Corps' persons who returned from Beijing said that Chairman Mao did not know about the formation of the Shanghai Commune....

4. It is necessary to seize power; the power should be in the hands of leftists [i.e. the Second Corps. Naturally, the WGH was "rightist" in their perspective]...¹³

The idea that the Maoist leadership in Beijing had not known of the Shanghai Commune was merely an excuse for Geng Jinzhang and his force to muster and rally its own supporters against the Commune. As leading members of the CCRG, how could Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan not report to Mao about the course of the CR in Shanghai? As mentioned in chapter 4, Zhang Chunqiao actually called Premier Zhou Enlai several times a day. Even if Zhang Chunqiao did not personally inform Mao, Mao himself had ample avenues of information on national affairs, one of which was reading thousands of Red Guard and rebel tabloids. Everyday Mao requested his secretaries to provide him with numerous Red Guard publications, including tabloids and leaflets from all parts of the country, and he carefully read quite a few of them. Reading tabloids of both conservatives and rebels was an effective way for Mao to keep a close eye on current events.¹⁴ Accordingly, there was a clear channel of communication between the Maoist leadership in Beijing and the Shanghai Commune, or other major mass organizations.

¹³ *Answering Readers' Questions about the Second Corps (jiu erbingtuan wenti da duzhe wen)*, in *Worker's Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, Feb.23, 1967.

¹⁴ See, *Mao Zedong and the Red Guard Tabloids*, in *The Important Events and Unknown Affairs of the PRC (Gongheguo yaoshi zhenwen)*, pp.1046-1048, ed. by Zheng Yi et al. Also see *Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan's Speeches at the Oath-taking Rally to "Raise the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong Thought and Take Further Steps to Seize Power in the Three-in-One Combination"* (*Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan zai gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi jinyibu zhankai sanjiehe duoquan shishi dahui shang de jianghua*), Feb.24, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guard Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

In order to tighten the screws on the Commune leaders, Geng Jinzhang's force held massive protests on Feb.10 and 11. In the face of this disturbing challenge and lingering uncertainty hanging over the Shanghai Commune, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan flew to Beijing the next day at Mao's invitation.

“We Don't Know the Principles of the Paris Commune”: Resistance from the Army

Even though the Shanghai Commune encountered fierce resistance from rival political forces on the local level, such as the Second Corps, with the potency of the WGH and support from the Shanghai garrison, no local forces – neither the overthrown old SPC, nor the rebel malcontents -- were really able to threaten the Shanghai Commune. The WGH was so powerful that its opponents even accused it of great-nation chauvinism (*daguo shawen zhuyi*).¹⁵ The real threat to the Shanghai Commune lay elsewhere: what was most crucial was the national Army, not just the position and actions of the local Shanghai garrison. To illustrate the Army's role, let me briefly trace the history of its involvement in the CR.

As discussed in Chapter 3, according to *The Sixteen Points* passed on August 8,

¹⁵ *Answering Readers' Questions about the Second Corps (jiu erbingtuan wenti da duzhe wen)*, in *Worker's Rebel News (Gongren zaofan bao)*, Feb.23, 1967. This accusation from anti-WGH forces contradicted their own claim that the WGH was a mere empty “shell” without much prowess and mass support. Even if the Geng Jinzhang-led forces outnumbered the WGH, many of their newly-admitted members were former loyalist workers who had joined after the disintegration of the Scarlet Guards; the WGH had many more “old rebels” (*lao zaofan*), who were devoted and far-sighted revolutionaries, than the Geng Jingzhang forces. For the description of the WGH as a mere “shell”, see Andrew C. Walder, *Chang Chun Ch'iao and Shanghai's January Revolution*, Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The Univ. of Michigan, 1978. p.61, pp.131-1322. Even though the WGH had fewer members than the anti-WGH forces, as Neale Hunter and Andrew C. Walder hinted, the power of a political entity during the CR did not solely depend upon its numbers of members: sometimes organizational discipline, fighting will and continuous external aid, among others, enabled a faction to be more powerful.

1966, with regard to the armed forces, the CR “should be carried out in accordance with the instructions of the Military Commission of the Central Committee and the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army.” Thus, at the outset, the Maoist leadership had no clear-cut visions or plans on the role and function of the armed forces in the CR. “Non-involvement” was the initial official policy and attitude of the Army toward the CR, yet as the CR wore on, local armed forces were first pulled into the CR waters by local power holders on the issue of “black files”. Over the years, after 1949, the Party and police functionaries compiled political dossiers on every citizen. In the early stages of the CR when the rebels heeded the Maoist call to rebel, new political materials about people’s “counterrevolutionary” actions during the CR, referred to by the Maoist activists as “black files”, were added to the rebels’ dossiers, which were later used by the authorities as the basis to carry out economic and political revenge. In order to mobilize the masses to participate in the CR without worrying about possible punishments by the power holders based on the “black files”, the Maoist leadership in Beijing ordered local authorities to destroy all “black files”. But there was a lot of footdragging on this and almost no local power holders were willing to destroy the “black files”. There were very few safe places to hide the “black files” in governmental buildings – where suspected offices could be stormed by the rebels who were trying to enforce the Maoist leadership’s order. And quite a few local power holders, including the old SPC, on the pretext of protecting state secrets, transferred political dossiers to army barracks and related places.¹⁶ Moreover, when

¹⁶ Zanduan fangeming xiuzheng zhuyi fenzi Chen Pixian shenxiang budui de heishou (Chop Off the Counterrevolutionary Revisionist Chen Pixian's Black Hands holding out to the Army), in *Zhibu shenghuo* (Life in

local power holders hoped to get away from the masses' struggles, the first places that came to mind were the army camps since they often had friendships with the local army officers – that sometimes dated back to the times of the revolutionary war. The first secretary of the SPC, Chen Pixian, for example, once obtained a military conference hall for an SPC meeting on the eve of power seizure from his close friend, General Tao Yong. At the time, the general, who was stationed in Shanghai as a vice-commander of the PLA navy, was vice-commander of the Nanjing military district, and the commander of the East China Sea Fleet. When Chen Pixian was held by Shanghai rebels, General Tao Yong even tried to storm the hide-out and bring Chen back to his barrack. Nevertheless, General Tao's mysterious suicide stopped this action.¹⁷ Judged from countless such cases in the entire country, more than a few local armed forces in effect became the "air raid shelters" for the targeted power holders.

On January 19 and 20, 1967, Premier Zhou chaired a meeting of the Military Commission of the Central Committee at Jingxi Hotel, Beijing. At this meeting, Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, and Ye Qun (Lin Biao's wife) insisted on launching *Sida* ("Four Big Rights") in the army, that is, to speak out freely, air views freely, hold great

Party Branches), No. 8, Feb. 20, 1967, Shanghai. pp.19-22. In the Beijing Aeronautical Engineering Institute, a sub-unit of the Defense Science and Technology Committee, upon the order of Marshal Nie Rongzhen who was in charge of the CR of the Defense Science and Technology Committee, the "black files" on the teachers and students of the institute were transferred to General Political Department of the PLA. See Yun Renxiang, *The Two-headquarters Struggle in the Center Seen from the CR of the Defense Science and Technology Committee* (*Cong guofang kewe wenge kan zhongyang liangge silingbu de douzheng*), <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class14/200809/49651.html> cited on Dec.12, 2009.

¹⁷ See Chen Pixian, *The Memoir of Chen Pixian: at the Center of January Storm* (*Chen Pixian huiyilu: zai yiyue fengbao de zhongxin*), Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2005. pp.149-152. For the protection the Shanghai Garrison offered to the Shanghai cadres such as Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu, also see Zanduan fangeming xiuzheng zhuyi fenzi Chen Pixian shenxiang budui de heishou (Chop Off the Counterrevolutionary Revisionist Chen Pixian's Black Hands holding out to the Army), in *Zhibu shenghuo* (*Life in Party Branches*), No. 8, Feb. 20, 1967, Shanghai. pp.19-22.

debates, and write big-character posters. Their proposal was met by bitter opposition from Marshal Ye Jianying, who was in reality, the one principally in charge of the military at that time. Marshal Ye was so infuriated that he pounded the table, directing his anger at Marshal Xu Xiangqian, who was the director of the All-army Cultural Revolution Group and had therefore ordered high Army cadres to subject themselves to criticisms from the masses in accordance with the guidance from Mao and the CCRG's arrangements. Ye's heavy pounding even fractured his left palm. In response, Marshal Xu Xiangqian also struck the table so hard that his tea cup was shaken off the table. In fact, Marshal Xu may have been merely carried out orders from above. And his table-pounding might not necessarily have reflected real support for the CR – and after this episode Xu resigned as the director of All-army Cultural Revolution Group. This was the first face-to-face struggle between supporters and opponents of the CR in the top leadership of CCP. With these kinds of quarrels and conflicts, given Mao and Lin Biao's directive that "The great CR in military regions should be carried out stage by stage and group by group" and that "the great CR movement in the military regions of the first line of defense against imperialism and revisionism ...should be postponed", the CR movement in the armed forces was limited.¹⁸ On Jan. 21, Rebels in Anhui Province were in the final stages of planning to hold a massive rally on Jan. 22 and 23, with one hundred fifty thousand to two hundred thousand attendees, to struggle with the first secretary of the Anhui Party Committee, Li Baohua. Fearing

¹⁸ *Directive of the Central Military Commission Reiterating the Carrying out of the Great Cultural Revolution Stage by Stage and Group by Group in Military Regions (Zhongyang junwei chongshen junqu wenhua dageming fenqi fenpi jingxing de zhishi)*, January 28, 1967, in *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1967*, p.216, Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, 1968. According to this directive, among all the 13 military districts of PLA, 7 of them, i.e., Ji'nan, Nanjing, Fuzhou, Guangdong, Kunming, Xinjiang and Wuhan Military Districts were forbidden to carry out the CR for the time being.

that the opposing factions would storm the rally, the organizers of this event asked local troops to send 300 to 500 soldiers to guard the rally. They claimed that sending out troops was a test to determine whether the local armed forces supported the CR or not, and they ordered the garrison to respond before 14:00 pm on Jan. 21. Since there were directives concerning the army's non-involvement in the CR at the local level, the Anhui military district had to ask Beijing for further instructions.¹⁹ Upon receiving this report, Mao immediately directed,

The PLA should support the broad masses of the Left. From now on, the demands of all true revolutionaries for support and assistance from the army should be satisfied. The so-called "non-involvement" is false, for the army was already involved long ago. The question, therefore, is not one of involvement or non-involvement. It is one of whose side we should stand on and whether we should support the revolutionaries or the conservatives or even the Rightists. The PLA should actively support the revolutionary Leftists.²⁰

Mao took the view that since the armed forces in some places had already become involved in the CR (on the conservative side) –by keeping “black files” or hiding targeted power holders – it was time to openly demand that the troops support the rebels, in order to empower the rebels and weaken the local power holders, in an increasingly intensifying state of two-line struggle.²¹ Mao was so confident in the “revolutionary spirit” of his troops that he assumed that the army would resolutely

¹⁹ Mao Zedong, *Comment on the Report by the Nanjing Military Region Party Committee Requesting Instructions About Whether Military Troops Should be Sent to Support the Rebels*, Jan.21,1967, in *The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC (Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao)* . Vol. 12. p.197. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988.

²⁰ *Decision of The CCP Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Commission of the Central Committee and the Cultural Revolution Group Under the Central Committee Concerning the Resolute Support of People's Liberation Army for the Revolutionary Masses of the Left*, in *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1967*, pp193-197, Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, 1968.

²¹ Mao Zedong, Speech at the Enlarged Session of the Central Military Committee (Zai junwei kuaoda huiyi shang de jianghua), Jan.27,1967, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.285, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

take a stance against counter-revolutionaries and counter-revolutionary organizations who opposed the proletarian revolutionary Leftists. “Should they resort to force, the army should strike back with force.”²² Nevertheless, as can be seen below, even though the armed forces in some places such as Shanghai did by and large support the rebels, generally speaking, this order exposed the Maoist rebels to endless suffering on a nationwide scale. In many cases, the army, supposedly in support of the leftist rebels, in reality took sides with conservatives, power holders, and the pre-CR system in general. What Mao did not see was that the Army, as a hierarchical establishment, had a conservative side, -- even though before the CR, under the orders of Minister of Defence Lin Biao, it had gone through series of revolutionary education campaigns for years, such as the campaign of studying *Mao Quotations* and the movement of learning from “communist fighter” Lei Feng. Without fully launching and carrying out their own CR, it was really hard for the armed forces to take a stand in favor of the CR and lend a hand to real Maoist rebels.

In the case of Shanghai, even though the Shanghai Commune received support from the Shanghai garrison, the actual fate of the Commune would be decided by the whole military and political state machine. On Feb.12, 1967 Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wen Yuan had barely arrived in Beijing by air when they were summoned by Mao Zedong to give a briefing on the Shanghai CR. Apart from meeting with Mao, what they had to face in Beijing was the wrath of high ranking governmental and army officials. Just one day before, on Feb. 11, Premier Zhou Enlai convened a Politburo

²² Ibid.

meeting at Huai Ren Hall to discuss the principle of grasping revolution and promoting production. At this meeting, three vice premiers, Tan Zhenlin, Li Fuchun, Li Xiannian; and four marshals, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian; and Nie Rongzhen, fervently denounced the ongoing CR. Marshal Xu Xiangqian pounded the table indignantly, saying, “The army is the pillar supporting the proletarian dictatorship, and yet you keep destroying it. You don’t need the pillar any more? Are we no longer capable? Should the army be taken over by people like Kuai Dafu?²³”

And Marshal Ye Jianying further assailed Chen Boda, the director of CCRG:

You have thrown the party and the government into chaos. You have thrown the factories and villages into chaos. You are still not satisfied and want to ruin the army. What are you up to by doing this kind of thing? You have launched power seizures in Shanghai and changed the name [of the Shanghai power organ] into the Shanghai Commune. This is a big issue that affects the state system. You have arbitrarily changed the name without prior discussion by the Politburo. Again, what are you up to? ... We read neither books nor newspapers, and we don’t know what the principles of the Paris Commune are. Please explain to us, what the hell are the principles of the Paris Commune? Can revolution be carried out without party leadership, without the army?²⁴

Mao Zedong, who was determined to carry out the CR to the end at that time, believed that only with big chaos could China reach a big harmony—which would then only last for a while—and then new contradictions would arise. Yet Marshal Ye Jianying, like other generals and high Party cadres, was extremely discontent with the big chaos, i.e. the masses’ rebellions against the old state machine that were in

²³ Kuai Dafu (September 13, 1945--), born in Jiangsu Province, was a rebel student leader in Qinghua University, Beijing. He was in the forefront of the campaign to discredit and bring down Liu Shaoqi during the CR.

²⁴ *Ye Jianying nianpu (Chronicle of the life of Ye Jianying)*, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2007, pp.959-960. The English translation here was modified from Gucheng Li and Mary Lok, *A glossary of political terms of the People's Republic of China*, pp.78-80, Chinese University Press, 1995.

response to Mao's call. Clearly, the Generals' refusal to promote big chaos was equivalent to rejecting any major reformation or revolution of the government, the Party, and the Army since there would never be revolution without creating disturbance or chaos. Marshal Ye held that chaos would only jeopardize Chinese socialist construction. The pro-CR Maoists, in sharp contrast, held the revolutionaries would benefit from the CR and that the chaos was only bad for enemies of the people and socialism, that is, those who advocated capitalism. If we take into account the social status of the Army before the CR, it is no wonder that Marshal Ye et al. took such a stance toward the ongoing CR. The PRC was established through armed revolution, "out of the barrel of a gun" and the Chinese Army unprecedentedly defeated American troops during the Korea War. For this reason, generally speaking, the Chinese armed forces commanded high respect among the people. For the common people, it was an utmost honor to enroll in the army. Moreover, even though new China achieved great social progress through the hard work of the masses and the cadres, it was the civilian power holders at various levels of government, not the army, that directly inflicted injustice and sufferings on a lot of people before and in the early stages of the CR. And a lot of these people became resolute rebels in the CR. To a certain degree, the armed forces might be the last group to feel that it was necessary to launch the CR. Faced with double military pressures from both the Soviet Union and U.S.A., the Maoist leadership would have to weigh the demands and feelings of military officials when making any decisions.

It was widely known in China that Marshal Ye Jiangying, who was well

educated and well versed in composing classical Chinese poems, once acted as one of the major leaders of the “Canton [Guangdong] Commune”. This was named after the Paris Commune in the wake of the Communist-organized Guangdong workers’ uprising of December 1927. So why did Ye claim that he had not read about and had no knowledge of the principles of the Paris Commune – so as to oppose the Shanghai Commune? One of his big concerns here, as Marshal Ye himself clarified, was that the power-seizure and the establishment of the Shanghai Commune would definitely lead to major changes in the state political system. Being the largest city in China, Shanghai had a population of nearly ten million, among which were two million workers. If the Shanghai Commune was sanctioned, other places would certainly follow suit, hence incurring a wave of communes germination all over the country. This was indeed true as many places, under the sweeping influence of Shanghai’s organizational creation, had established or were preparing to establish communes . It was not likely that Ye actually did not know the principles of the Paris Commune. As one of the organizers and commanders who led two major regiments in the Guangzhou Uprising in 1927, how could he not know the spirit of the Paris Commune? One of the reasons for his angry attitude and strong repulsive feelings toward the Shanghai Commune could have originated from the fact that he identified with the pre-CR state system and considered it well-performed socialist. The most fundamental principle of the Paris Commune, based on “The Great Lessons of the Paris Commune” penned probably by Chen Boda, that I discussed in Chapter 3, is “the use of revolutionary violence to seize power, smash the state machine of the

bourgeoisie and practice the dictatorship of the proletariat.” For Ye Jianguo and his like-minded, if the pre-CR state machine was already “socialist”, then why would there be a necessity for “revolutionary violence to seize power”? In their eyes, such seizures of power were nothing more than a reactionary bourgeois offensive toward the socialist regime. Understandably, Marshal Ye’s antipathy to the Shanghai Commune reflected his preference of the pre-CR state system and his determination to defend what he considered socialism at any price.

Another core principle of the Paris Commune was to dissolve the standing army. If the communards of the Shanghai Commune decided to carry out that principle to the end, the issue of the regular army of the PLA would eventually be laid on the table, which was, of course, unacceptable or even unimaginable for old Army cadres such as Marshal Ye. In other words, the Shanghai Commune, posing an inherent danger to the standing army, cast a long shadow that struck deep chords of fear in the hearts of the marshals and generals. Before the CR, the Maoist leadership repeatedly stressed the principle of People’s War and actively combated the dogmatic line of regularizing the PLA, modeled on the Soviet Red Army and advocated by most high ranking army commanders. But the Maoist leadership never held that the standing army should be disbanded right away. And during the CR, there was no desire to abolish the standing army – among the Maoist leadership or among the majority of the common rebels either.²⁵ Another possible reason for the opposition

²⁵ Liu Zili, a former Red Guard and current pro-capitalist writer, claims that he wrote two small-character posters (*xiaozibao*) on abolishing the standing army and made a few copies on a mimeograph in the spring of 1967, albeit without major influence at the time. One of them read, “A standing army is the organizational form of a bourgeois army....Undoubtedly, the PLA adopts the organizational form of a standing army.... Although the

from army officials is much less noble. After the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, Marshal Ye, as well as many of his fellow comrades, had enjoyed a privileged and cozy life for many years. Why would he prefer facing potential chaotic changes and choose to continue the revolution in an aggressive, confrontational manner? He could perhaps just forget everything about the Paris Commune. What drove the people in the Party and the army –whom Marshal Ye represented— to vigorously oppose the CR could be that they had a deep concern about maintaining their own status quo, not wanting to transfer the power they wielded to others, and not wanting to give extensive democratic rights to the broad masses. If a Paris Commune style “general election” could mean they might lose their power, then why should they support the distrustful Shanghai Commune? When Marshal Ye commented that he did not “read books or newspapers”, in this sense, it was merely a metaphor that aimed to emphasize his disgust at the CR propaganda campaign-- in other words, he was

political content decides the organizational form, yet we cannot deny that the organizational form gives the political content counterforce. The degeneration of the Soviet Red Army is a good example....Even though the PLA is from the workers and peasants, due to its long detachment from the workers and peasants...its political attitude will change. In order to overcome this shortcoming, it is necessary to replace it with the armed people. Of course, this change should be carried out gradually and conditionally. Marx said: ‘The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.’ Our great leader Chairman Mao insists on the correct principle of the Paris Commune, and creatively develops it. The great May 7 Directive calls for carrying out military-industrial, military-agricultural, military-educational, and military-civilian work. Furthermore, during the CR, Chairman Mao calls on the Army for conducting ‘Three-support’ and ‘Two-military’ (*sanzhiliangjun*). We deeply believe in the victory of the principles of the Paris Commune....The great and trying historical mission of reforming the organizational form of the bourgeois army is an unshirkable duty for us.” Such articles by Liu were probably composed after March of 1967 as the concept of *sanzhiliangju* first appeared in the official document *Resolution of The Central Military Committee on Making All-Out Efforts to Carry Out the Task of Supporting the Left, Helping Farming and Factories, and Exercising Military Control and Conducting Military Training* on March 19, 1967. See Liu Zili, *The Story of the Paris Commune (Bali gongshe de gushi)*, <http://www.tangben.com/Qianzai/paris.htm>, cited on Dec 21, 2009.

actually *unwilling* to read books or newspapers promoting the CR.

Ye Jianying had also participated in the 1927 Nanchang Uprising, the founding event of PLA, and as a senior member in the Party and the army, he had a huge influence on high ranking cadres. To a great degree, Marshal Ye's interests and attitudes represented and interconnected with other high Party and Army cadres. What was revealed from the meetings on January 19 and 20 at Jingxi Hotel and the Huai Ren Hall on Feb.11 was not just Marshal Ye's personal feelings toward the Shanghai Commune and the ongoing CR. His aggressive criticisms, which clearly targeted Premier Zhou Enlai and Chen Boda, the leader of CCRG, represented and revealed the general attitudes and opinions of many high ranking officials in the Party and the army at the time. Tellingly, almost all marshals and vice-Premiers, who had been military commanders during wartime, took a similar stance and bitterly opposed the ongoing movement represented by the Shanghai Commune. This was why Marshal Ye Jianying insisted that the Politburo discuss the issue of the Shanghai Commune. Clearly, the Shanghai Commune at the time would not muster support from most Politburo members. Even if the local state power in Shanghai was transformed into the Commune upon Mao's insistence, it could end up merely as a nominal shift since the reluctant high Party and military cadres would not take this seriously and essentially took the view, that there were no good reasons to make fundamental changes in the state system.

The Huai Ren Hall meeting resumed on February 16, 1967. At the second session of the meeting that day, with the attendance of Zhang Chunqiao and Yao

Wenyuan, the quarrel between the supporters and opponents of the CR intensified. This new round of struggle, more or less, began with the issue of Chen Pixian, the first secretary of the SPC and the target of struggle among Shanghai rebels. Since the major high Party cadres in the country, apart from those in the Army and some in the Central organs of Beijing, had endured hard struggles from the rebels, a lot of discontent about the CR among the old revolutionaries came bursting out. Some high Party cadres in Beijing such as Tao Zhu, Chen Yi and Zhou Enlai, who had personal access to Mao, suggested that selected cadres be protected from the masses' struggle. As a result, Mao agreed to fly those cadres on the suggested list—Chen Pixian included—to Beijing for protection. But when the airplane supposedly flying Chen Pixian to Beijing arrived in Shanghai on Jan. 28 amid the January Storm, nobody handed Chen to the crew members of that plane. Consequently, Chen did not show up in Beijing as planned. Why was that? Chen Pixian himself, after his rehabilitation later, blamed this aborted trip on deliberate sabotage by Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen. Yet in the same memoir, Chen unintentionally disclosed some clues about what really happened to him. According to his recollection, from the middle of January to February 25, Chen Pixian was held in protective custody by Geng Jinzhang's defiant Second Corps, which was fighting a tough war with Wang Hongwen and Zhang Chunqiao's WGH at that time.²⁶ The failure to pick up Chen Pixian from Shanghai, however, enraged vice Premier Tan Zhenlin, who was a fellow commander of Chen's during anti-Japanese war and senior and had been superior to

²⁶ See Chen Pixian, 2005, pp.168-174.

Zhang Chunqiao in Shanghai at one point. Right before the meeting at Huai Ren Hall on 16 February, when Zhang Chunqiao walked into the conference room, Tan Zhenlin assailed Zhang about why he had not allowed Chen Pixian to come to Beijing. Zhang answered that they would negotiate with the Shanghai masses about Chen Pixian's case²⁷ and this answer enraged the vice-Premier. At the meeting, cross-questioning Zhang Chunqiao once again as to the whereabouts of Chen Pixian, Tan Zhenlin burst out with a sharp edge in his voice,

What are the masses? You always talk about the masses, the masses, and the masses! There is still party leadership! Dismissing party leadership, day and night, people liberate themselves, educate themselves, and make revolution themselves. What is this? This is metaphysics. Your purpose is to finish off all the veteran cadres, each and every one of them....What thing is that Kuai Dafu? He is a reactionary! He concocts a picture of one hundred clowns. The aim of them is to put down all the veteran cadres...This struggle [of the CR] is the cruelest one within the Party; it goes beyond any time in the past [political movements of our Party].²⁸

Mao always insisted that “We must have faith in the masses and we must have faith in the Party. These are two cardinal principles. If we doubt these principles, we shall accomplish nothing.”²⁹ For Mao, the relationship between the masses and the Party maintains a constructive dynamic. Yet still, Mao put the masses before the Party. But for some high Party cadres such as Tan Zhenlin, the Party should always take

²⁷ *The Biography of Mao Zedong (Mao Zedong zhuan)*, Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji ed. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 2003, p.1481. Other versions of this conversation about Chen Pixian in different books showed that Zhang Chunqiao directly refused to transfer Chen Pixian to Beijing. Here I follow the authoritative official version in *The Biography of Mao Zedong* composed by Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji. It shows Zhang Chunqiao's cooperative gesture to transfer Chen via negotiation.

²⁸ Tan Zhenlin's protest could be found in various books. My summary of Tan's words is mainly based on two books *The Biography of Mao Zedong* and *The Memoir of Chen Pixian*. See *The Biography of Mao Zedong (Mao Zedong zhuan)*, Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji ed. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 2003, p. 1481; and Chen Pixian, 2005, pp.157-160.

²⁹ *On the Co-operative Transformation of Agriculture*, July 31, 1955, From *the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol.5, p.189, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 1977.

priority, and should take the leadership in everything. What ensued, naturally, was the view that the high ranking officials like him should always wield power and lead the masses. If the masses rebel one day, these officials would be surprised and bear zero tolerance with the rebellion. Contrary to Mao's aphorism "it is right to rebel", after taking power, the dictum for these bureaucrats would be "you have no right to rebel (against me or us)."

After speaking out, Tan Zhenlin refused to stay at the meeting. Putting on his coat and taking his bag, he announced as he walked out, "Let you guys make revolution. I stop here! Chop off my head. Send me to prison. Expel me from the party. I am determined to fight to the bitter end." Marshal Chen Yi appealed to him, "Don't go away. We must fight against them." Vice Premier Li Xiannian joined in,

Our Party has always stressed that most cadres and most masses are good. If we follow this, do we not need to unite 95 percent cadres and 95 percent masses anymore? If all the veteran cadres are overthrown, what should the revolution depend on? There is a nationwide campaign to extort false confessions. All these began with the editorial of the No.13 issue of *Red Flag* in 1966.³⁰

Marshal Ye Jianying could not agree more with Tan Zhenlin and Li Xiannian. He went on, "Veteran cadres are the treasures of the party and state. Where does it say that veteran cadres can be arbitrarily brought down? If this goes on, if no one can expect personal safety, how can you expect to have any work done?"³¹

The rebels later called the outburst of veteran cadres at Huai Ren Hall on Feb. 11 and Feb. 16 "the Tantrum at the Huai Ren Hall". The hot debate and bitter split

³⁰ Chen Pixian, 2005, p.161.

³¹ Ibid, p.161.

among the top leadership that took place at Huai Ren Hall, centered around the issues of the role of Party, the stability of the Army, and rebels' treatment of veteran cadres in the CR. And this struggle was an ominous signal for the Army's suppression of mass movements – when they were later allowed to intervene in the local CR in the name of “supporting Leftists”. It also foreshadowed the far-reaching and rapid spread of bloody factional armed struggles that occurred later. Feeling the seriousness and wrath of those old revolutionaries expressed in the Huai Ren Hall, the pro-CR Maoist leaders Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Li, who attended and witnessed this incident, immediately prepared the "Minutes of the February 16 Meeting at Huai Ren Hall" and presented it to Mao. The open opposition and threats to defy the CR really infuriated Mao. On Feb. 18, Mao convened a Politburo meeting, at which he released the “fire of proletariat”, to quote Kang Sheng's description of Mao's anger at this meeting. Mao cried,

The CCRG executed the policy which was passed at the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Its mistakes account only for one, two, or three percent; 97 percent is correct. I will resolutely fight against whoever opposes the CCRG! You want to negate the CR. No way!... If this CR fails, I, together with Lin Biao, will pull out from Beijing and return to Jianggang Mountain to fight [another] guerrilla warfare. You say that Jiang Qing and Chen Boda don't work well, then let Chen Yi be the director of the CCRG. Arrest and shoot Chen Boda and Jiang Qing. Deport Kang Sheng! And I will step down... You Tan Zhenlin counts an old Party member, why are you speaking for the bourgeois line? ³²

On 21 February, commenting on Chen Boda's report on a “typical case of

³² Chen Pixian, 2005, pp.164-165. See also Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, *The Biography of Mao Zedong (Mao Zedong zhuan)*, 2003, pp. 1482-1483.

capitalist restoration” at Xiaozhan Commune in Tianjing, Mao, wrote, “It is worth while to note that counter-revolutionary restorationists are everywhere, from high to low rank and on every level.”³³ The senior veteran cadres who were involved in the two meeting sessions at Huai Ren Hall, were accused by Maoist rebels of creating a “February Counter-current” (*eryue niliu*). The mainstream historical narratives of the CR after 1976, understandably, negated such a label and named it the “February Resistance” (*eryue kangzheng*) instead. Yet this resistance from the mighty armed forces of the PLA resulted in severely traumatic sufferings among Maoists rebels in the whole country. Far from the verbal clash among the top CCP leadership in Huai Ren Hall, local manifestations of the so-called “February Resistance” at various places operated as a horrible movement of the “February Suppression” (*eryue zhengfan*) of rebels by the authorities, especially the armed forces.

February 1967 witnessed many tragic deaths of Maoist rebels inflicted by the Army. The first shooting of a Maoist rebel happened in Huhehaote, the remote capital city of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region on Feb. 5, 1967. Han Tong, a young Red Guard of the Inner Mongolia Normal Institute, who was only 24 years old, joined a sit-in protest against the local armed forces’ explicit support of conservatives, and was shot to death at the gate of the Inner Mongolia Military District. Just one day before Han Tong’s death, on the pretext of negotiating with the rebels, the local troops trapped 100 rebel representatives in the Military District’s yard; all representatives were brutally beaten up. If the representatives and the enforcing rebels on hearing of

³³ Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, *The Biography of Mao Zedong (Mao Zedong zhuan)*, 2003, p.1483.

the brutal beatings had not immediately retreated from the army yard, a massacre could have happened that very day.³⁴ Feb. 17, the day after the “Tantrum at the Huai Ren Hall”, Marshal Ye Jianying, who was in charge of the daily executive affairs of the Military Commission of the Central Committee at the time, received a request from general Gan Weihan, the Party secretary of the Chengdu Military District, Sichuan province. Gan was seeking permission to arrest the Sichuan rebels. Marshal Ye not only gave him a nod of approval, but also added some words, “if you rebels do not immediately retreat, you will be responsible for all consequences.” This letter, signed by Ye, was soon made into a large number of leaflets and disseminated from airplanes in Sichuan. Twenty minutes after the warning leaflets, the troops began to arrest rebels. The numbers of arrested rebels varied, according to different sources. Yet even according to the official statistics by the Chengdu Military District reported to Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai, at least 32,554 rebels were detained by the Army. Although General Liang Xingchu had to free the detained Sichuan rebels upon Mao and Zhou’s order, until April 20, the Army still held 4,699 detainees.³⁵ From other sources, the numbers were far more than this. Premier Zhou Enlai believed that more than 100,000 rebels were arrested by the Chengdu Military District almost overnight. But Marshal Ye still thought that too few arrests had been made.³⁶ Xu Youyu, a

³⁴ See Gao Shuhua and Chen Tiejun, *The Thunder of CR in Inner Mongolia (Neimeng wenge fenglei)*, chapter 22, Hongkong: Mingjing chubanshe, 2007.

³⁵ The numbers here are from a confidential police (*jingzheng*) file No.861(1967), general serial number of this file is NO.000508. The scanned picture of this file can be found at <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=7992> cited October 7, 2009.

³⁶ *Zhou Enlai’s Remark about the Marshals at the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth CCP CC (Zhou Enlai zai bajie shier zhong quanhui tan jige yuanshuai de wenti)*, October 1968, from *Important Speeches of Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin and Premier Zhou at the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth CCP CC (Zai zhonggong bajie shier zhong quanhui shang mao zhuxi lin fuzhuayi zhou zongli de zhongyao jianghua)*, ed. by Beijing Foreign Trade Institute, 1969. Also see Lao Tian, *To Charge the “Fascist Persecution” During the CR (Zhuanmen kongsu wenge qijian de faxisi pohai)*, see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=11606> cited October 7, 2009.

former Red Guard in Sichuan and a devoted anti-Communist scholar now estimates that several hundred thousand Sichuan rebels were jailed at that time. Because all prison houses of Sichuan province were filled with rebels, the authorities had to convert a big Buddhist Zhao Jue temple into a temporary prison. Since there was a similar movement of suppressing rebels in every province, the total number of jailed rebels in the whole country at the time was at least one million.³⁷ The Sichuan authorities also shot numerous rebels to death in many places such as in Wanxian, Yibing and Ludian. Take Wanxian for example, the Army killed more than 170 rebels, including some children. Premier Zhou argued Marshal Ye should take responsibility for these deaths.³⁸ The most shocking slaughter of rebels in the February Suppression took place in Qinghai Province. Troops dispatched by the Qinghai Military District on orders from the vice-commander Zhao Yongfu besieged the *Qinghai Daily* building controlled by the rebels. Ten days after this, on February 23, a bone-chilling killing happened. Among several thousand rebels staying in the *Qinghai Daily* building, more than 300 were killed, and many more were wounded by gun fire and all the rest were captured as prisoners. Upon learning of the mass killing from Zhao Yufu's report, Marshal Ye Jianying not only got very excited, shouting "Good killing! Good killing!" but also immediately sent a congratulatory telegram to the Qinghai troops for their

³⁷ Interviewing the CR Historian Xu Youyu (Wengeshi zhuanjia Xu Youyu xiansheng dawen Lu), from <http://my.opera.com/szsz/blog/show.dml/272890> cited October 7, 2009.

³⁸ Zhou Enlai's Remark about the Marshals at the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth CCP CC (Zhou Enlai zai bajie shierzhong quanhui tan jige yuanshuai de wenti), October 1968, from *Important Speeches of Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin and Premier Zhou at the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth CCP CC (Zai zhonggong bajie shierzhong quanhui shang maozhuxi linfuzhuoyi zhouzongli de zhongyao jianghua)*, ed. by Beijing Foreign Trade Institute, 1969. But the vice-commander of Chendu Military District Weijie only admitted that they killed five rebels in Wan County. See *CCP Leaders' Speeches At The Reception for The Representatives of Yibin Area of Sichuan Province (Zhongyang shouzhang jiejian yibin daibiao shi de jianghua)*, April 1, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.4, ed. by the Red Guard Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, May, 1967.

“big victory.” He even tried to have General Zhao Yongfu promoted his “experiences” of putting out “counter-revolutionaries” to the whole country.³⁹ Except for the arrests and killings, throughout the country, major rebel organizations, such as the “August 18” in Qinghai Province, “February 7 Commune” in He’nan Province, “Steel Workers’ Headquarters” in Hubei Province, “The Preparatory Committee of Great Alliance” (*dalianchou*) in Jiangxi Province, were branded as “counter-revolutionaries” and ordered to disband. Several rebel-dominated provincial power organs, such as Heilongjiang, Guizhou, and Shanghai, scattered like small patches of oases in a desert.

Around half a year later, speaking about the background and nature of the February Counter-current, Premier Zhou Enlai described,

This January in Shanghai, combined with revolutionary masses, the working class took the lead to fight for seizing power from a few capitalist roaders. After getting approval from our great leader, these struggles spread and surged throughout the country, which further wakened the political consciousness of revolutionary masses everywhere. People realized that they should fall in with the revolutionary line of Chairman Mao and fight for seizing power from a few capitalist roaders, thus forming a January revolutionary upsurge all over the country. To be sure, when revolution progresses well and surges up, those who are hindering revolution and are not reconciled to their defeat will jump out. Capitalist roaders did not take their defeat lying down and secretly manipulated, hence came the February Counter-current. Along the way that was pointed out by our great leader, with the effort of CCRG, we have beaten back this counter-current.⁴⁰

³⁹ Zhou Enlai’s Remark about the Marshals at the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth CCP CC (*Zhou Enlai zai bajie shierzhong quanhui tan jige yuanshuai de wenti*), October 1968, from *Important Speeches of Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin and Premier Zhou at the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth CCP CC (Zai zhonggong bajie shier zhong quanhui shang mao zhuxi lin fuzhuayi zhou zongli de zhongyao jianghua)*, ed. by Beijing Foreign Trade Institute, 1969.

⁴⁰ Premier Zhou on the February Counter-current and the Right-deviationist Wind (*Zhou zongli lun eryue niliu he*

Zhou Enlai here explicitly pointed out that the so-called February Counter-current was in practice a nation-wide violent response of the power holders toward the Shanghai influenced January Revolution. This revolution virtually toppled all the old establishments of local state power organs. Even though Zhou proclaimed that this February Counter-current was beaten back within a short time, the wind did not subside. If truth be told, the worst and most violent aspect of the drama of the CR was yet to come.

Mao's Final Say about the Shanghai Commune

On Feb.12, just one day after the initial tantrum of high ranking veteran cadres at Huai Ren Hall, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan arrived in Beijing. According to a Red Guard's narrative, Zhang and Yao were actually invited by Mao himself, and before their arrival, Mao even anxiously inquired whether they had arrived or not. When people told Mao that Zhang and Yao would soon be at his place, Mao himself was said to wait for them in the doorway. They had no sooner arrived than the Chairman asked, "What about the First, Second and Third Regiments [Corps]? They have come here making accusations against you."⁴¹ This question showed that Mao had closely followed the progress of the Shanghai CR and favored the Zhang Chunqiao-led forces more than the anti-Zhang and anti-Shanghai Commune Corps led

youqing fan'an feng), Sept.20, 1967 in *East Is Red of Beijing Posts and Telecommunications Institute (Beiyoudongfanghong)*, April 3, 1968.

⁴¹ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings with Comrades Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan*, February 1967, in Stuart R. Schram ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People: Talks and Letters: 1956-1971*, Pantheon Books, pp. 277-279.

by the obstinate and unruly Geng Jinzhang. However, this was not to say that Mao was totally satisfied with the new political instrumentalities of power and governance under the name of the Shanghai Commune. From Feb.12 to Feb. 18, just within one week, Mao summoned Zhang and Yao three times and talked with them for hours. The Mao Zedong archives have been sealed by Deng Xiaoping and the current Chinese regime so we have no way to access all of Mao's talks with Zhang and Yao during this week. But they probably talked about how among high Party cadres there was growing intractable disaffection and opposition toward the ongoing CR, and especially, toward the Shanghai Commune. What is available now is Zhang Chunqiao's report and communication of Mao's instructions to the people of Shanghai in a rally after he came back to Shanghai. Mao's directives, reiterated by Zhang, showed that Mao was very concerned about the CR in Shanghai. The directives covered a wide range of topics related to the Shanghai Commune, such as the cadre problems, the issues of triple-alliance, the historical lessons of the Paris Commune, the problem of form and essence, and the position of the Party in the structure of the new power organ rising out of the rebel movement. The central concern, in Mao's talks with Zhang and Yao, was about what would be the role and function of cadres and the Party. In these meetings, Mao gave a final verdict on the Shanghai Commune, saying that it was better to replace it with a kind of RC in the form of a three-in-one combination.

The first thing Mao got into during his talks with Zhang and Yao were theoretical issues, namely, the political and ideological foundation of the ongoing CR.

Holding that “Facts always come first, then concepts”⁴² and observing the flying leap of the current CR, Mao suggested that the CCRG ponder over and write about the theory of “revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.” For him, the nature of Chinese central power was the dictatorship of the proletariat and Chinese society was socialist. Generally speaking, for Mao, China’s power had been in the hands of the proletariat in the previous 17 years, and only “a portion of the structure of proletarian dictatorship [the Department of Culture, the Central Propaganda Department, for example] has been usurped and no longer belongs to the proletariat, but to the bourgeoisie.”⁴³ Thus, the masses had to be mobilized to make revolution in order to take back those sections of power that had been usurped by the bourgeoisie, i.e. the capitalist roaders represented by the Liu-Dengists. Under this theoretical premise, the CR never meant to be a full-scale assault on all officials and the entire existing power structure. The slogan of “thoroughly ameliorate the dictatorship of the proletariat” (*chedi gaishan wuchanjieji zhuanzheng*) put out by some rebel groups in Hu’nan province, Mao said, was wrong and reactionary, as it aimed at toppling the existing dictatorship of the proletariat and replacing it with that of the bourgeoisie. ⁴⁴That is,

⁴² Mao Zedong, “A Talk on the Discussion of the Ten-point Directive Concerning the Great Cultural Revolution in Factories and Mines and the Ten-point Directive Concerning the Great Cultural Revolution in the Countryside” (*Taolun gong kuang shitiao shi de jianghua*), Dec. 6th, 1966, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.280, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

⁴³ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings With Comrades Chang Ch’un-ch’iao And Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

⁴⁴ This slogan could be traced back to October 17, 1966, when Li Wenbo, a physics student in Beijing Normal University wrote a wall poster titled “The Commune was no Longer a State in the Poper Sense of the Word” (*Gongshe zaoyi bushi yuanlai yiyi de guojia le*), in which Li advocated an “innovating socialist system” and “ameliorating the dictatorship of the proletariat”. This was one of the earliest documents of a so-called “new trend of thought” (*xin sichao*). See Yin, Hongbiao, *Shizong zhe de zuji: wenhua da geming qijian de qingnian sichao (Footprints of the Missing: Thoughts of the Youth during the Cultural Revolution)*, Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2009. pp.85-90. Part of Li Wenbo’s poster read: “This kind of leading organ takes the same form as that of the machinery of bourgeois dictatorship in the old society. It is the hotbed and social foundation of bureaucratism and slavism....Since the leading organ still follows the modes of bourgeois society (or underwent some innovation), people carry out social practice under such a social thought.” See *Ba zaofan bingtuan*

the real goal of “thoroughly ameliorating” was to overcome the dictatorship of the proletariat. The correct wording, he suggested, should be “Partially Ameliorate the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” (*bufen gaishan wuchanjieji zhuanzheng*).⁴⁵ In addition, Mao warned that the slogan of “doubt everything and overthrow everything” was equally reactionary. In chapter 4, I discussed the influence of this slogan on the Red Guards in Shanghai during their anti-Zhang Chunqiao campaign. In order to illustrate his viewpoints toward this “overthrowing everything” trend of thought, Mao purposely mentioned the ultimatum-style February 8 Circular Order by some rebels. As I discussed in the beginning of this chapter, a department of Shanghai People's Committee demanded that Premier Zhou Enlai should abolish all heads⁴⁶ On this, Mao commented,

The Shanghai People's Committee demanded that the Premier of the State Council should do away with all heads. This is extreme

“shengwulian” shi de fandong sichao nachulai shizhong (Expose the Shengwulian-style Reactionary Thought of the Rebel Regiment to Public View), in *Jinggangshan*, March 27, 1968, ed. by Beijing shifan daxue Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing jianggangshan zhandou tuan. Moreover, Li held that “the principles of the Paris Commune have two main points: No. 1, the officials’ salaries cannot surpass that of a worker. No. 2, the people have the right to dismiss officials at any time....The goal of the CR is to realize the principles of the Paris Commune.” See Yin, Hongbiao 2009, p.88. In addition, in his notebook, Li Wenbo stated that “the current political system of our country is the bridge and springboard for capitalist restoration,” and that “it is a must to smash the current political system of our country.” See *Bingtuan “xin sichao” de yaohai shi dianfu wuchan jieji zhuanzheng* (The Key Issue of the “New Trend of Thought” of the Rebel Regiment is to Topple the Dictatorship of the Proletariat), in *Jinggangshan*, March 27, 1968. Later, Li Wenbo and others composed another wall poster titled “*Dada gaishan wuchan jieji zhuanzheng, dada gexin shehui zhuyi zhidu*” (Greatly Ameliorate the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Greatly Innovate the Socialist System). See *Zhaohuan niuguisheshen fupi zibenzhuyi de xuanyanshu—ping bingtuan “xin sichao” daibiaozuo “dada gaishan wuchan jieji zhuanzheng, dada gexin shehui zhuyi zhidu*”(A Manifesto for Conjuring up Monsters and Demons to Restore capitalism—On the Representative Work of the Rebel Regiment’s “New Trend of Thought” “Greatly Ameliorate the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, Greatly Innovate the Socialist System”), in *Jinggangshan*, April 6, 1968. Hu’nan’s similar thought could be influenced by the earlier “New Trend of Thought” in Beijing.

⁴⁵ Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan’s *Speeches at the Oath-taking Rally to “Raise the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong Thought and Take Further Steps to Seize Power in the Three-in-One Combination”* (Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan zai gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi jin yibu zhankai sanjiehe duoquan shishi dahui shang de jianghua), Feb.24, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guard Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

⁴⁶ This in fact referred to in the “February 8 circular order” issued by “The Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Foreign Economic Relations Bureau”, which came from a department of the old Shanghai People’s Committee. As I discuss in the foregoing part of this chapter, when this order was released on Feb. 8, this faction in reality was a part of the new power organ of the Shanghai Commune. [Here Mao called this faction with its previous affiliation.??]

anarchism, and it is the most reactionary. If instead of calling someone the “head” of something we call him “elderly” or “assistant”, this would really be only a formal change. In reality there will still be “heads”. It is the content which matters....The slogan of “doubt everything and down with everything” is reactionary. Those who want to doubt everything and overthrow everything are bound to head in the opposite direction, and will be overthrown in a matter of days. We have here some units which won’t even have deputy section chiefs. People who don’t want to have deputy section chiefs cannot last more than a few days.⁴⁷

For Mao, nothing could be accomplished without authority or leadership. Any well-organized modern society, without authority, would fall into disorder or even chaos. That might be one of the reasons that Mao did not strongly oppose *geren chongbai* (the adoration of the individual; or as it is usually referred to in Western society, a cult of the personality or personality cult).⁴⁸ Mao clearly differentiated between *geren chongbai* (the adoration of the individual) and *geren mixun* (the cult of the individual, the superstition of the individual, or personality cult). He expounded that the latter should be opposed as it left no room for criticism, but even though one held an attitude of “*geren chongbai*” toward somebody, one could still criticize him or her if they erred. Later, during the turbulence of the CR, the Maoist leadership strongly promoted Engels’ work “On Authority” in order to combat the “anarchist” tendency in the rebel movement. The thought of “doing away with” all heads among some rebels, in the eyes of Mao, was nothing other than a manifestation of such “anarchism”. This kind of “anarchist” thought was found not only in the Shanghai

⁴⁷ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings With Comrades Chang Ch’un-ch’iao And Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm, cited October 9, 2009.

⁴⁸ In English, “*geren chongbai*” is usually translated as “the cult of personality”. Indeed, the Chinese word “*chongbai*” does have a religious connotation, but in everyday usage, it often merely means “adoration”, “strong love”, or “deep respect”, as people often say that “*wo chongbai ta*”, which just means “I adore (respect) him”.

Commune, according to Mao, but also in some people in Beijing who advocated abolishing deputy section chiefs. Since there must be leaders to get the industrial society running, why should the titles be abolished? The fact that essence is more important than form was always one of the premises of Mao's political philosophy. Mao was so dissatisfied about this ultimatum from the above mentioned Shanghai rebel faction to the Center that he instructed Zhang Chunqiao to set the outstanding account with this faction. For Mao, the issues that were still outstanding and had to be settled included the bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao by the Red Revolutionaries, the opposition of the Shanghai Broadcasting RC against military seizure of the radio stations, and the rebels' opposition toward military control at Longhua Airfield of Shanghai.⁴⁹

When he talked with Zhang and Yao, Mao also expressed a lot of concerns about the Shanghai Red Guards. As I discussed in chapter 4, when conservative workers were incited by the old Shanghai bureaucrats to slow down or walk off their jobs, the Shanghai harbor, and especially the docks, were almost paralyzed, and many rebellious students, together with rebel workers, volunteered to work at the harbor and other crucial places, filling positions that had been left unattended. Against such a background, Mao asked Zhang, "Are Tongji University [Red Guards] still at the stations and docks?" Zhang Chunqiao replied that when he accompanied Kang Sheng to the docks, the students were still there.⁵⁰ "That's excellent," Mao responded,

⁴⁹ Some people such as Cao Weiping believe that these "outstanding accounts" could be made up by Zhang Chunqiao or a distortion of Mao's words. Because the official version of these talks has not been released, I can not reach a conclusion on this. Yet apart from the issue of the Red Revolutionaries, I do not see how Zhang Chunqiao could have benefited at all from settling account with his fellow rebels.

⁵⁰ *Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan's Speeches at the Oath-taking Rally to "Raise the Great Red Flag of Mao*

satisfied with this answer. And he then continued, “in the past the students had not really united with the workers. Only now have they really united with them.” This compliment of Shanghai Red Guards was at the same time a euphemistic criticism of them, pointing out that the future of the student movement lay in its alliance with the workers’ movement. Previous confrontations between the Red Revolutionaries of Shanghai and the pro-Zhang forces led by the most influential rebel workers’ organization, the WGH, were understandably interpreted by Mao as an indication that the Shanghai Red Guards were going on the wrong track. Mao was especially not confident about letting the Red Guards run Shanghai, China’s largest urban and industrial center. He explained,

It would be very difficult for a college student who has just graduated, or one who hasn’t yet graduated, to lead a municipality or to manage the Shanghai municipality. I don’t think he would be qualified to be a college president either. In the case of college president, school conditions are complex, especially to one who has just graduated or hasn’t yet graduated. In my estimation, he may not even qualify to be a department head. A department head must have some scholarship! Since you haven’t yet completed your academic work, or have only just graduated, you have no teaching experience and no experience in administering a department.⁵¹

It was quite understandable that Mao thought that the recently-mobilized rebel students lacked the experience in administrating and operating a municipality, even a college. Even though many rebel students and workers went to key production units

Zedong Thought and Take Further Steps to Seize Power in the Three-in-One Combination”(Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wen-yuan zai gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi jinyibu zhankai sanjiehe duoquan shishi dahui shang de jianghua), Feb.24, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guard Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

⁵¹ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings with Comrades Chang Ch’un-ch’iao and Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

such as docks to replace the loyalist workers who had walked off the job and they did accomplish a great deal, but given the severe shortage of laborers, production in Shanghai unavoidably shrunk. In such a situation, Shanghai's production would not quickly pick up and recover without appropriate and careful political arrangement to stabilize the city. At the moment when Mao talked with Zhang and Yao, even though loyalist workers' organizations were publicly disintegrated, the Shanghai Commune still faced stubborn resistance from the opposing rebel factions that sometimes even threatened to stage a general strike. As a result, there were still quite a few objections, slowdowns, and disruptive activities, openly or secretly incited or influenced by the old bureaucrats and their massive supporters who did not approve of the new political power. Mao was highly concerned with the slowdowns and strikes that had actually paralyzed Shanghai in January. If production in Shanghai did not recover quickly, the power of the opponents of the CR would soon be strengthened, not only in Shanghai but also all over the country. This is because this would give these anti-CR forces an excuse to accuse the revolution of destroying production, an accusation that had the potential to eventually put the whole CR at risk.

Mao's comments about rebel students' not being capable of running the government, however, might not have been so convincing. Nobody can run a government without practice. Nobody is born a politician. What's more, even if the rebel students alone could not run a government smoothly, then how about the rebel workers, and what if the rebel workers and students jointly running a government? Clearly, the true purpose of Mao's concern and criticism of the Shanghai Red Guards

was still related to his viewpoint of the old cadres. He held,

We must trust over 95 percent of the masses, and over 95 percent of the cadres will follow us. China has a sizable petty bourgeoisie, and the number of middle peasants is rather large. In urban areas, the number of petty bourgeoisie, small handicraftsmen, including small business owners, is considerable. If we prove to be adept in leading, they will also follow us. We must trust the vast majority. ... We have already trained a number of assistants and lecturers to serve as department heads. A few persons should be selected from among the original leadership cadres. We cannot completely dispense with the old personnel.... From now on, we should not advocate the slogan of “down with the diehard elements who uphold the bourgeois reactionary line,” but rather “down with those in power taking the capitalist road.”⁵²

The main purpose of the CR, for Mao, did not aim at bringing down all the old cadres and replace them with a group of new cadres rising from the rebel movement -- who could become new revisionists themselves if they rebelled just for their own personal interests and ceased to serve the people. The true goal of the CR, instead, could be a great educational campaign that intended to transform the worldviews of people and cadres fundamentally – to quote Mao’s adage, to “combat self-interest, criticize and repudiate revisionism.” For the cadres who had erred, therefore, Mao’s policy was always to ask them to learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones, and his approach to such cadres was to “cure the sickness to save the patients”. Most of the old Party cadres were not intrinsically bad people and many of them had proven themselves in the past, serving the people during wartime. It was possible for the degenerated cadres to rectify their mistakes and make new contributions for the

⁵² Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings With Comrades Chang Ch’un-ch’iao and Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

people once they returned to Mao's line. This was the reasoning behind Mao insisting that over 95 percent of the cadres was good or relatively good. The targets of struggle, Mao contended, should be set to the big fishes, a handful of power holders taking the capitalist road. It should not be the common cadres, not to mention the lowest rank of cadres in neighborhoods who were in charge of street and lane committees. So in these talks with Zhang and Yao, Mao completely agreed with the *Wenhui Daily's* point of view of not making neighborhood cadres the target of struggle in the CR. Moreover, Mao was also afraid that the slogan of "down with the diehard elements who uphold the bourgeois reactionary line" would shift the spearheads of struggle to numerous common cadres. Therefore, Mao suggested not using this slogan anymore.

Out of the dissatisfaction toward the power structure of the Shanghai Commune, Mao suggested using as a model the Heilongjiang and Shanxi power structure –combining the revolutionary rebels, the army, and the revolutionary cadres into the new power organ. This was Mao's famous "Triple Alliance" (*sanjiehe*) formula. And it seems that Mao wanted to have the masses play a crucial role in the new power organs. He urged Shanghai to learn from Guizhou's new power organ, within which the majority of the representatives were from rebel organizations,

For the purpose of seizing power the 'Three-way Alliances' were essential. Fujian, Guizhou and Inner Mongolia did not present big problems, though there might be a little disorder there. In Shanxi at present 53 per cent were revolutionary masses, 27 per cent army, and 20 per cent cadres from various organs. Shanghai ought to learn from them.⁵³

⁵³ Ibid.

Even though it was the Heilongjiang rebels who first produced the “Triple Alliance” (*sanjiehe*) formula during the CR as a remedy to the old establishment, it was by no means a totally alien thing in the course of Chinese revolution. It was rather a Maoist tradition to empower the democratic rights of the masses by instituting such an organizational structure. As early as the anti-Japanese war time in Yan’an, in order to unite all possible anti-Japanese forces, Mao proposed a three-thirds governmental system (*san san zhi*) in the communist-controlled areas. Beginning from 1940, these kinds of anti-Japan democratic regimes consisted of three kinds of people: one third communists, one third non-communist supporters, and one third wavering forces who were “fence-straddlers” (*zhong jian pai*, including Nationalist Party members). Dong Biwu, a senior cadre of the CCP, elaborated on this in 1945,

The CCP carries out a 3-3 system in liberated areas, no matter in governments, or in Representative Committees (*can yi hui*). What is the 3-3 system? Namely, whether among the representatives elected by the people at various levels’ Representative Committees, or among all levels of governmental committees’ members elected by all levels’ Representative Committees, according to the CCP’s own stipulation, the CCP quota cannot exceed one third. If the CCP members go beyond that among the elected representatives or governmental committees’ members, some of them will resign, giving their positions to those non-communists who get the most votes second to the communists. What is the purpose of this system? It is to oppose the practice of the party doing things on others’ behalf, to oppose one party dictatorship, and to better unite and cooperate with people from all parties and non-party people from all classes. The CCP advocates democratic politics and opposes one party dictatorship. The CCP itself does not do things on others’ behalf, and does not run a one party dictatorship. All the measures above guarantee that the people have democratic rights and that the government is democratic. This is the

best democratic system.⁵⁴

Another senior CCP leader Xie Juezai believed,

Revolution needs a strong party leadership. Yet it is very easy for the dominant party to do things on others' behalf. If so, not only will the broad masses not be satisfied with the ruling party, but it is also not good for the party itself. [Consequently,] such a party cannot get the people's support and is doomed to fail.⁵⁵

In addition to the practical need to unite all possible forces to fight against the Japanese invaders, the 3-3 system, a rudimental form of the triple combination, was nothing less than the logical extension and practice of Mao's theory of the New Democracy. This theory which Mao developed in the spring of 1940 put forward that the New Democratic Revolution should overcome the one-class-dictatorship of the Old Democracy and unite all revolutionary classes (in the sense of anti-foreign invaders at that time) to execute joint dictatorship. This functioned as an effective weapon against Jiang Jieshi's "one party, one leader" policy at the time. And in 1967 amid the storm of rebel power seizure from old authorities, it could have been an inspiration for the Maoists to propose and favor the three-in-one combination, that is, committees which consisted of the masses, the army, and the cadres. After all, the historical 3-3 system in Yan'an not only insured the CCP's leadership in the New Democratic governments, but more importantly, incorporated and united all possible revolutionary political forces to defeat the common foreign enemies. Participation and

⁵⁴ Dong Biwu, *The Basic Policy of CCP (Zhongguo gongchandang de jiben zhengce)*, *Selected Works of Dong Biwu (Dong Biwu xuanji)*, Beijing: Renming chubanshe, 1985. p.112.

⁵⁵ Xie Juezai, *The Theory and Practice of 3-3 System (Sansanzhi de lilun yu shiji)*, in *Selected Research Materials of Yan'an's Democratic Mode (Yan'an mingzhu moshi yanjiu ziliao xuanbian)*, p.142, Xibei daxue chubanshe, 2004.

supervision from non-communist officials in Yan'an and other liberated areas successfully helped the CCP to run local governments smoothly. And this also reduced the phenomena of bureaucratism, commandism, and dogmatism among CCP establishments during wartime.

Other applications of the three-in-one formulation before the CR can be traced back to the four clean-ups movement (*siqing yundong*). In January 1965, upon Mao's insistence, the CCP issued a notice, "*Some Problems Currently Arising in the Course of the Rural Socialist Education Movement*" (usually referred as *23 Articles* as it consisted of 23 main points). This was aimed at redirecting the orientation of the clean-ups movement – changing the target of this from struggling grass-root cadres and common peasants upon whom Liu-Dengists aimed the spearheads, to those who held authoritative positions within the Party and were taking the capitalist road. This notice called for "uniting more than 95 percent of our people and 95 percent of our cadres" since "the great majority of our cadres want to take the socialist road, but there are some among them who have but a hazy knowledge of the socialist revolution, who employ personnel improperly, who are haphazard about checking up on work, and who commit the mistake of bureaucratism." It also called on power seizures if necessary, "where the nature of the mistakes is serious— where leadership authority has been taken over by alien class elements or by degenerate elements who have shed their skin and changed their nature—authority must be seized, first by struggle and then by removing these elements from their positions." One of the principles and work methods, it stressed, was that "within the movement as a whole, provincial,

special district, and county level party committees and work teams, relying on the great majority of the masses and cadres (including cadres who have cast aside their misgivings and doubts), must gradually carry out the ‘3 unifications’ with respect to the masses, cadres, and work teams.” In order to prevent the “capitalist roaders” from resorting to armed force to suppress the mass movement, in places where power must be seized, or under conditions where the peoples’ militia organization was critically impure, it was suggested that “we should adopt the method of turning over the weapons and ammunition of the peoples’ militia to reliable elements among the poor and lower-middle peasants.” To deal with the power transition before the Party branch was reconstituted after a power seizure, it further clearly stated that all power could go to the non-communist yet pro-socialist organizations, “in those places where basic-level organizations have atrophied or become paralyzed, and before a new leadership nucleus has been formed, we may implement [the policy of] all power to the poor and lower-middle peasants’ associations.”⁵⁶

Although the four clean-ups movement was launched in the cities, the major battlegrounds of this movement were in the rural areas. The subsequent CR, instead, set the major battlegrounds in the cities on a much larger scale. In fact, as can be observed, during the CR, the Maoist leadership adopted many concepts, viewpoints and work methods arising from the four clean-ups movement of 1962-1966. However, there are few studies on the relationship between the four clean-ups movement and

⁵⁶ *Some Problems Currently Arising in the Course of the Rural Socialist Education Movement*, January 14 1965, the English translation modified from *Ssu Ching: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966* by Richard Baum and Frederick C. Teiwes, University of California, Berkeley, 1968, the original Chinese text can be found in *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.280, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

the CR. To some degree, the CR embodied, I'd like to argue, an extension, theoretically and practically, of the four clean-ups movement. For example, one popular slogan at the early stage of the CR was to "defend the fruits of the four clean-ups movement, launch the great proletarian cultural revolution." And quite a number of rebels actually came from the four clean-ups movement. Whether common cadres or the masses, many of the would-be CR rebels were actually suppressed by Liu-Dengist work teams or local power holders during the four-clean-ups movement. Nie Yuanzi, for instance, one of the signatories of the first "Marxist-Leninists wall poster" which was praised by Mao as "the manifesto of the Paris Commune in 1960s", was treated as object of struggle set by Beijing University and Beijing Party Committee, as she had raised criticism toward the authorities of Beijing University. In addition, the prescription in the *23 articles* that militia weapons in the places of power seizure should go to reliable elements among the poor and lower-middle peasants was also anticipated in the policy of the Army's "supporting Leftists" and the policy of "arming Leftists" in the storm of power seizures during the CR. More importantly, the triple combination ("3 unifications") of the masses, cadres, and work teams in the four clean-ups movement would reemerge and be directly applied to the new power organ structure in the CR – with in this case the work teams being replaced with the Army since the work teams sent out by the Liu-Dengists in the early stage of the CR became their tools for suppressing the mass movements. Finally, the *23 articles* claimed that although all power could go to the poor and lower-middle peasants' associations in the four clean-ups movement, such an arrangement would only be temporary and

transitional. Once conditions allowed, the rectified and reconstituted Party committees should replace the temporary mass power organs. This stance, as it were, prefigured the destiny of the popular power organs arising from the storm of power seizure during the CR such as the Shanghai Commune and to some degree the RCs at various levels.

Many Shanghai rebel leaders were not communist party members and some of them may not have been socialists or communists at all. Therefore, if the Shanghai rebels insisted on following the Commune model based on general elections, a principle of the Paris Commune, then it was quite possible for the Shanghai Commune to elect a regime in which communists were in the minority. Consequently, a touchy issue would emerge regarding the relationship between the Commune and the CCP. In a general election system, power comes from the voters. If communists were in the minority within such a communal regime, how should the masses follow the CCP? Apparently, the CCP would lose its legitimacy and authority in such a regime in which the communists are in the minority. Of course, Trotskyites, among others, would acclaim it a great thing to replace the “degenerated” Party with a self-governing workers’ regime. But can such a self-governing workers’ regime guarantee a socialist direction and nature of the society? If the working people’s class consciousness is not mature enough to realize that the emancipation of the working class is intimately interconnected with the emancipation of the whole of mankind and instead, the masses only strive for their own interests, the answer to this question is no. Virtually all the so-called self-governing workers’ power organs, from Yugoslavian

workers' self-governance in factories during the Tito era to Poland's Solidarity movement, frankly speaking, eventually became tools of unionism and economism – as Lenin argued in his time about similar cases – or tools of capitalist restoration.⁵⁷ Similarly, in the January Storm of Shanghai in 1967, a huge amount of workers cared nothing about the general orientation of political struggles. They just devoted their efforts to economist demands, disregarding the fact that, these kinds of actions, spread to many different localities within a short time might jeopardize the worker-peasant alliance and the construction of socialism for the whole state. Under such circumstances, if there is not strong leadership, politically and/or organizationally, the whole state economy can collapse and a bloody civil war could be staged. Mao Zedong as a devoted Leninist, at such a critical conjuncture, would not hesitate to fight to retain the Party. He argued,

If everything were changed into communes, then what about the party? Where would we place the party? Among commune committee members are both party members and non-party members. Where would we place the party committee? There must be a party somehow! There must be a nucleus, no matter what we call it. Be it called the Communist party, or social democratic party, or Guomindang, or I-guan-dao [a daoist religion cult], it must have a party. The commune must have a party, but can the commune replace the party?⁵⁸

Mao did not think that the class-consciousness of the Chinese workers had matured enough, at the height of the CR, to dissolve the existing Party. It was too

⁵⁷ Perhaps, unions in the United States seem even more so, as they weirdly retain traces of early 20th century socialist ideals while being fiercely nationalistic and exclusionary.

⁵⁸ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings With Comrades Chang Ch'un-ch'iao And Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

soon for the communist party, as the vanguard of the working class, to fade away in human history. It was true that in the CR, Mao advocated that “the working class must exercise leadership in everything”. But as we can see, this was more a call for the workers to actively participate in and consciously lead society toward the socialist direction, and a wish for workers to foster and raise their acute and strong class consciousness, than a call to degrade and downplay the role of the Party. With regard to the need for the working class to exercise leadership in everything, Mao emphasized, that the workers must improve themselves as well. He said in 1968: “Our country has 700 million people, and the working class is the leading class. It is essential to bring into full play the leading role of the working class in the great cultural revolution and in all fields of work. On its part, the working class should always raise its political consciousness in the course of struggle.”⁵⁹ If the Commune could not replace the Party, then a natural solution would be to put the Commune under the direct leadership of the Party, which could be carried out in two ways. One was to re-introduce the “revolutionary” old Party cadres into the Commune, and another was to have the non-communist-party-member delegates of the Shanghai Commune join the Party. Both ways, to use Mao’s word, meant to *tu gu na xin* (exhale the old and inhale the new) for the purpose of reconstituting the Party committee in the Commune. At the end of 1967, discussing the consolidation and re-building of the

⁵⁹ *The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC (Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao)*. Vol. 12. p.520. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988. The English translation of these words can be found in *Unprecedentedly Excellent Situation in China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, in *Peking Review*, Vol. 11, #44, Nov. 1, 1968, pp. 11-14. In 1975, the year before Mao died, Mao showed that a portion of working class could be captured by the bourgeoisie: “Lenin said, ‘small production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale.’ This also occurs among a section of the workers and a section of the Party members. Both within the ranks of the proletariat and among the personnel of state organs there are people who follow the bourgeois style of life.” See *Study Well the Theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, from *Peking Review*, No. 7, Feb. 14, 1975, p. 4.

Party, Mao expounded,

A human being has arteries and veins through which the heart makes the blood circulate, and he breathes with his lungs, exhaling carbon dioxide and inhaling fresh oxygen, that is, getting rid of the stale and taking in the fresh. A proletarian party must also get rid of the stale and take in the fresh, for only thus can it be full of vitality. Without eliminating waste matter and absorbing fresh blood the Party has no vigor.⁶⁰

But when all local party branches are under fierce attack and “the class front is still not clear” in a turbulent period of power seizure, there is no way to incorporate into the Party the genuine advanced elements of the proletariat who have passed the tests in great storms. The only viable way to form a nucleus of Party leadership, in addition to the communist rebels, was to incorporate those old Party cadres who were pushed aside by previous rebel struggles yet potentially sympathized or supported the rebels. If a cadre successfully went through the procedure of *liangxiang* (which means publically showing their supportive attitude toward rebellion), he or she could be accepted by the rebels and admitted into the new power organ. Once the Shanghai Commune became subordinate to the leadership of the reconstructed CCP, and with the institution of three-in-one committees, the original vision of a Commune based on popular general elections, was altered. Among the triple political forces, the old Party cadres would be recommended by the mass organizations below and then approved by the Party at higher levels; the Army representatives could only be appointed by the armed forces under the orders of higher commanders. Clearly, popular elections only

⁶⁰ Lin Biao, *Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, April 1, 1969, in *Chinese Politics, Documents and Analysis, Vol. 1*, p.75, ed. by James T. Myers, Jurgen Domes and Erik Von Groeling, University of South Carolina Press, 1986.

took place among the mass organizations. Under such circumstances, it was actually impossible to carry out a far-reaching and comprehensive Paris Commune style election in the whole Shanghai Commune. If the principle of the Paris Commune was mainly understood as “the use of revolutionary violence to seize power, smash the state machine of the bourgeoisie and practice the dictatorship of the proletariat,” then the title of Shanghai Commune certainly applies as it did in fact smash the local state machine that had been “usurped by the capitalist roaders” (represented by the old SPC) and this seizure of power was carried out by rebels who proclaimed to uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat. But if the core Paris Commune principle is mainly understood as instituting the “general elections”, then the Shanghai Commune differed greatly from the Paris Commune. For various reasons, Mao suggested to Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan that it was better to rename the new power organ in Shanghai, because practice and content were more important than title and form. Mao expounded on this saying,

In regard to the form of soviet political power, as soon as it materialized, Lenin was elated, deeming it a remarkable creation by workers, peasants and soldiers, as well as a new form of proletarian dictatorship. Nonetheless, Lenin had not anticipated then that although the workers, peasants and soldiers could use this form of political power, it could also be used by the bourgeoisie, and by Khrushchev. Thus, the present soviet has been transformed from Lenin’s soviet to Khrushchev’s soviet. Britain is a monarchy. Doesn’t it have a king? The U.S. has a presidential system. They are both the same, being bourgeois dictatorships. The puppet regime of South Vietnam has a president and bordering it is Sihanouk’s Royal Kingdom of Cambodia. Which is better? I am afraid Sihanouk is somewhat better. India has a presidential system; its neighbor, Nepal, is a kingdom. Which country is better? It would seem that the kingdom is somewhat better than India. This is judging by their present performances. In the case of ancient China’s three kings and five emperors, they were called kings in the

Chou dynasty, emperors in the Qin dynasty. The First Emperor of Qin (Qinshihuang) assumed all the titles of three kings and five emperors. It was called Heavenly King in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, while Tang Taizong also called himself Heavenly Emperor. So you see, titles have changed over and over again. What we want to see is not the changing of titles, because the problem lies not with title, but with practice; not with form, but with content. Titles must not be changed too frequently; we don't emphasize names, but emphasize practice; not form, but content. That fellow Wang Mang of the Han dynasty was addicted to changing names. As soon as he became emperor, he changed all the titles of government offices, like many of us who have a dislike for the title "chief." He also changed the names of all countries in the country. This is like our Red Guards who have changed almost all the street names of Peking, making it impossible for us to remember them. We still remember their former names. It became difficult for Wang Mang to issue edicts and orders, because the people did not know what changes had been made. This form of popular drama can be used either by China or by foreign countries, by the proletariat or by the bourgeoisie. The principal experiences are the Paris Commune and the soviet. We can imagine that the [name] People's Republic of China can be used by both classes. If we should be overthrown and the bourgeoisie came to power, they would have no need to change the name, but would still call it the People's Republic of China. . . . The main thing is which class seizes political power. That is the fundamental question, not what its name is.⁶¹

Here Mao clearly pointed out that it does not matter what kind of title the new political power bears, what really mattered is its nature, which is not determined by its title, but by the class that seized it. But if titles are not so important, why did Mao suggest a name change for the Shanghai Commune? As I have mentioned, Mao certainly liked the name "commune" very much. After Mao excitedly exclaimed that the "People's Commune is good," in the movement of agriculture collectivization, all rural collectives under county level were named as "so-and-so People's Communes". Also under Mao's influence, at the height of the Great Leap Forward, there were even many experimental "City People's Communes" in some big cities, such as Beijing and

⁶¹ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings With Comrades Chang Ch'un-ch'iao And Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

Harbin. Even though those city communes were disbanded because this was premature, all the rural communes in the CR continued and rapidly developed, economically and politically.⁶² If the title of “people’s communes” were acceptable even in villages—which were relatively more “backward” than cities—why not name the new power organ in Shanghai a “commune”? Mao offered another reason for the name change,

I think we should be more stable and should not change all the names. This is because this would give rise to the question of changing the political system, to the question of the state system, and to the question of the name of the country. Would you want to change [the name] to the Chinese People’s commune! Should the Chairman of the People’s Republic of China be called director or commune leader? Not only this problem, but another problem would arise. That is, if there is a change, it will be followed by the question of recognition or non-recognition by foreign countries. When the name of a country is changed, foreign ambassadors will lose their credentials, new ambassadors will be exchanged and recognition will be given anew. I surmise that the Soviet Union would not extend recognition. This is because she would not dare to recognize, since recognition might cause troubles for the soviet. How could there be a Chinese People’s Commune? It would be rather embarrassing to them, but the bourgeois nations might recognize it.... The people of Shanghai like the people’s commune very much, and like that name very much. What should we do? Shouldn’t you go back and do some consultation? There are several methods that we can use: one of them is to make no change, and go on calling it the Shanghai People’s Commune. The advantage of this method is that it could safeguard the enthusiasm of Shanghai’s people, since they like this commune. The shortcoming of this is that yours would be the only one in the entire country, and so won’t you be rather isolated? For now don’t announce in *Renmin ribao* [*People’s Daily*] that everyone wants to call it People’s Commune. If the Central Committee should recognize People’s Commune and publish it in the *Renmin ribao*, then the name will be used throughout the country. Why should only Shanghai be allowed to call it so, and we cannot? This would make it

⁶² Some scholars like Joseph Liu argued that the rural people’s communes had been out-and-out failure since their establishment. See Joseph Liu, *The People’s Communes and the Paris Commune*, in *Studies in Soviet Thought Vol. 12, No. 2 (Jun., 1972)*, pp. 149-165 Such a claim, I believe, needed to be further justified.

rather difficult. Thus, there are both advantages and shortcomings in not changing the name. The second method is to change it throughout the country. This would necessitate a change in the political system and in the country's name. Some people might not recognize it, and much trouble might ensue. Moreover, it wouldn't have any meaning, and no practical significance. The third method is to go ahead and change it, thus conforming with the entire country. Of course, you could change it in the near future or later on, not necessarily right now. But if you people still say that you don't wish to change, then you may just as well call it this name for some time. What do you think? Does it make sense?⁶³

In fact, many places applied to the Center for permission to establish people's communes modeled on the Shanghai Commune. If this trend persisted, the PRC would logically have to be renamed the Chinese People's Commune. In other words, maintaining the title of the Shanghai Commune would have involved complex questions that involved changing the political system or even the state system. For Mao, that was really a big issue. Yet this could by no means be decided solely by the rebels, who might not have been in a position of being the majority even after the January Storm and the first wave of power seizures that surged across the country. This necessitated a great deal of struggles and negotiations with all kinds of political forces. As we saw within the Tantrum at the Huai Ren Hall incident on February 11, before Mao's series of talks with Zhang and Yao, Marshal Ye purposely and angrily put forward this big issue involving the state system to Chen Boda, the director of CCRG and a Commune theoretician. Marshal Ye's attitude toward the Shanghai Commune could have been conveyed to Mao through certain channels. In fact Marshal Ye was represented the kind of disaffection and disapproval toward the Shanghai Commune and the CR as a whole among high Party and army cadres. This

⁶³ Ibid.

was manifested strikingly and cruelly, in the February Countercurrent, in which thousands upon thousands of rebels suffered arrests, beatings, injuries and killings by the authorities and armed forces. As a master strategist who never fought a battle without preparation or without a good chance of winning, from the beginning of the CR Mao had to tackle and deal with emerging changes and rise to the challenges presented by different forces – especially the fierce oppositional attitudes from within the army, which was a force that had usually, in the past, been on his side in the course of the revolution. In this sense, I argue that Mao’s suggestion of changing the name of the Shanghai Commune was also a strategically safe retreat.

Yet the most important reason for Mao’s proposal to replace the Shanghai Commune might lie in his direct comment on the Paris Commune. He said,

The Paris Commune, — did we not all say that to institute a Paris Commune is to institute a new political power? The Paris Commune was founded in 1871, almost 96 years ago. If the Paris Commune had not failed, but had been successful, then in my opinion, it would have become by now a bourgeois commune. This is because it was impossible for the French bourgeoisie to allow France’s working class to have so much political power. That is the case of the Paris Commune.⁶⁴

Clearly, for Mao, inherent shortcomings of the Paris Commune led to its downfall. With regard to the shortcomings of the Commune model, I think there were still differences between the viewpoints of Mao and Marx. In his letter to Dr. Kugelmann concerning the Paris Commune (London, April 12, 1871), Marx pointed out that in this regard there were two great lessons that should be well taken,

⁶⁴ Ibid.

If they are defeated only their “good nature” will be to blame. They should have marched at once on Versailles, after first Vinoy and then the reactionary section of the Paris National Guard had themselves retreated. The right moment was missed because of conscientious scruples. They did not want to start the civil war, as if that mischievous abortion Thiers had not already started the civil war with his attempt to disarm Paris. Second mistake: The Central Committee surrendered its power too soon, to make way for the Commune. ⁶⁵

What is indicated here by Marx is that Paris Commune should have had a strong fist to hit and suppress counterrevolutionaries. In his talks with Zhang and Yao, Mao also expressed his view that the Shanghai Commune had been too soft with regard to suppressing counter-revolutionaries. He noted, “Someone complained to me that when people were apprehended by the bureau of public security, they would enter through the front door and be released through the back door.” Yet for Mao, even if the Paris Commune had had harsher and stronger measures, say, acting upon Marx’s suggestions, to advance to Versailles immediately, and confiscate the banks, it would still have been a short-lived regime as it was impossible for “the French bourgeoisie to allow France’s working class to have so much political power.” Why was that? In the eyes of Mao, the Paris Commune was a premature political entity for the still fledgling proletariat. Indeed, even though several communes appeared in Marseilles, Saint Etienne, Lyon, among others, shortly before or responding to and resonating with the Paris Commune, they were still small isolated islands in an ocean of bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie, and conservative peasantry – thanks to its own historical limitations and the Bonaparte regime’s political propaganda. Without the full support of the predominant population of peasantry, the Paris Commune was

⁶⁵ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.284.

doomed to fail. Even if the Paris Commune had managed to survive in favorable national circumstances, it had little chance of surviving international interventions.

The proletarian Paris commune would, sooner or later, inevitably become a bourgeois commune.

Lenin offered more details on the reasons for the defeat of the Paris Commune:

(1) (First of all) Deficiencies of organization; (2) Defensive attitude; (3)

Thiers-Bismarck deal; (4) Lack of class consciousness (Proudhonists, Blanquists); (5)

Infatuation with nationalistic and revolutionary talk; (6) did not “expropriate the

expropriators” and did not take over such institutions such as banks; (7) excessive

magnanimity toward the enemies.⁶⁶ Why didn’t communards in Paris take necessary

measures to put down enemies? For Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the most critical lesson

of the Paris Commune was the lack of a firm organization, or more precisely, a party.

When the enemies fled to Versailles, it was a great victory and the bourgeois

government could have been crushed almost without the spilling of blood, but it

turned out to be the opposite. Leon Trotsky’s view on this lay in the fact that, as he put

it, “there was no organization of a centralized party, having a rounded view of things

and special organs for realizing its decisions.”⁶⁷ Marx contended that it was too soon

for the Central Committee to surrender its power, but Trotsky noticed that even the

Central Committee of the National Guard actually needed to be led. Trotsky argued,

It was indispensable to have an organization incarnating the political experience of the proletariat and always present—not only in

⁶⁶ *Lenin on the Paris Commune*, Moscow: Progress publishers, 1970.p. 8, p.12. p.21.

⁶⁷ *Leon Trotsky on the Paris Commune*, p.54, Pathfinder Press, 1970.

the Central Committee, but in the legions, in the battalion, in the deepest sectors of the French proletariat....

Electibility, the democratic method, *is but one of the instruments* in the hands of the proletariat and its party. Electibility can in no wise be a fetish, a remedy for all evils. The methods of electibility must be combined with those of appointments. The power of the Commune came from the elected National Guard. But once created, the Commune should have reorganized with a strong hand the National Guard, from top to bottom, given it reliable leaders and established a régime of very strict discipline. The Commune did not do this, being itself deprived of a powerful revolutionary directing center. It too was crushed.

We can thus thumb the whole history of the Commune, page by page, and we will find in it one single lesson: a strong party leadership is needed. ⁶⁸

With regard to the counterpart of the Paris Commune in Shanghai, Mao seemed to hold similar views to Lenin and Trotsky's comments on the Paris Commune. Firstly, even though there were several hundred mass organizations in Shanghai, it was very hard for them to unite and fight their common enemies; too many non-cooperative, even infighting organizations could also be seen as a kind of deficiency of an organization. Secondly, with regard to suppressing the so-called counter-revolutionaries, the Shanghai Commune displayed a relatively soft and sometimes defensive attitude. Thirdly, the split of the Shanghai workers' movement was a telling manifestation of the immaturity of class consciousness among the Chinese workers. Under such circumstances, Mao tended to believe that it was far from the right time to institute a Paris Commune style popular power organ in Shanghai, based on universal suffrage without strong party leadership. While the Paris Commune abolished the standing army, Mao called for the intervention of the

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.54, p.61.

standing army to support the “broad masses of the Left.” This action made the establishment of a Paris Commune prototype in Shanghai impossible. For the Shanghai Commune, Mao brought forward his own solution:

I think we had better not change the name, and not call it commune. It would be better to observe the old method. We still should have the People’s Congress and elect people’s councils in the future. Any change in name is a change in form, and does not solve the problem of content. When we set up temporary power structures, do we not still call them Revolutionary Committees? The controlling organs in schools can become cultural Revolutionary Committees or cultural revolutionary leading teams. The Sixteen Articles specify this. ⁶⁹

In fact, Mao was not the only person who seriously pondered whether the Commune model in its prototype shape was a proper form of a new power organ at the time. Within the so called “proletarian headquarters” in Beijing, Premier Zhou Enlai, a supporter of mass rebellion at least in the early years of the CR, was a staunch opponent of the nascent commune movement. As early as in late January, Zhou Enlai tried to cool the fervor of the potential commune-builders by offering his reasoning for not employing a Paris Commune style general election at the time. At a meeting with rebel representatives on January 26, 1967, Zhou posited that the election preconditioned the “integration of the revolutionary organizations with the masses of the people”: the gradual education and transformation of rightist elements, the isolation of ultra-leftists, and ultimately the “uniting with 95 per cent, of the masses and 95 per cent, of the cadres.” That is to say, only after the battle of the CR was decisively won by the Leftists, could the general election be implemented. Zhou

⁶⁹ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings with Comrades Chang Ch’un-ch’iao and Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

hence reminded the audience that, “We are far from having reached that stage at this point.”⁷⁰ According to the sinologist John B. Starr, it was impossible for the Paris Commune to be realized in its original shape in the wake of the January Storm. He commented:

There was, to begin with, a great deal of truth in Zhou Enlai's comments on the Commune election system late in January. The operation of the Paris Commune - fitful and inefficient as it may actually have been, Marx's description notwithstanding - did depend on the fact that the principal enemies of the Communards were located in Versailles, not in Paris. This balance and placement of forces was clearly not duplicated in China's urban areas in the early months of 1967 - months when the Maoist press itself began to speak for the first time of the forces of the Left as a minority. Once the Commune's election system was seen as inappropriate, the model had, in effect, been emasculated so far as its applicability to the reorganization of Chinese local politics in the wake of the movement to seize power was concerned.⁷¹

The refusal to institute the Paris Commune power organ in its prototype shape—especially the general election—was at the time not only shared by the majority of high Party and army leaders such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Ye Jianying, among others, but also taken for granted by some local rebel leaders, even though they valued and did practice many aspects of the principles of the Paris Commune. For example, on January 28, the new municipal RC in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province passed a declaration, which predicted that, "We firmly believe that in the not too distant future, a completely new form of political organization, based on our

⁷⁰ Zhou Enlai *tan duoquan wenti* ("Zhou Enlai on the Question of Power Seizure"), in *Hongse zhanbao*, 17 February 1967. English translation here is from John Bryan Starr, *Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eye*, in *The China Quarterly*, No. 49. (Jan. - Mar., 1972), p. 119.

⁷¹ John Bryan Starr, *Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eye*, in *China Quarterly*, No. 49. (Jan. - Mar., 1972), p. 124.

richly developed experience of the Paris Commune and more in keeping with the socialist economic base, namely, the Taiyuan Commune, will appear." Yet several days later, the rebel-controlled *Shanxi Daily* issued an editorial on February 2, 1967, which said, "We have proclaimed the Paris Commune election methods. However, only with the revolutionary factions in a superior position, with the handful of those in authority taking the capitalist road completely overthrown, knocked down, and discredited, and only when the conservative forces have been completely wiped out can there be a general election to elect a leadership of the left."⁷² Similarly, on Feb. 12, the 31 Corps of Jinggangshan Regiment in Qinghua University took the view that the Paris Commune-type new power organ should not be established at the time, and that in keeping with the editorial in the third issue of *Red Flag* in 1967, it was necessary to form a provisional power organ based on a triple combination.⁷³ Evidently, at this stage, many supporters of the CR, as well as many opponents of the CR, did not wish to run a Paris Commune style general election. This was possibly due to the fact that both rebels and conservatives felt that the outcome of a general election was unpredictable.

On January 28, 1967, 31 rebel organizations of Heilongjiang province participated in a joint meeting to discuss the issue of forming a new power organ in that province. A hot debate raged revolving around two topics: first, was it the right time to seize power from the old provincial party committee? Second, the

⁷² John Bryan Starr, "Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eye", in *The China Quarterly*, No. 49. (Jan. - Mar., 1972), pp. 118-119.

⁷³ Qiu, Xinwei and Yuan Shuyu ed., *Qinghua wenge qingli: shiliao shilu dashi rizi* (Experiencing the Qinghua's Cultural Revolution: Collected Historical Materials and Chronology of Major Events). Hong Kong: Xianggang wuqi xueshe chubanshe, 2009.

organizational form of power seizure, or precisely speaking, what kind of form would the new power organ adopt? With regard to the second question, some factions, represented by Huang Kecheng, the Red Guard leader of the Rebel Regiment of Harbin Military Engineering Institute (*Hajungong zaofan tuan*), insisted using the experiences of Shanghai to form a Heilongjiang Commune. As we know, Shanghai was busy preparing for the establishment of the Shanghai Commune at that time. Fan Zhengmei was a Red Guard leader at Harbin Normal Institute and the would-be director of the Heilongjiang Red Rebels' RC – which shaped up on January 31, 1967. Ren Wanxin was a young politics teacher at the same Institute. In accordance with what Fan Zhengmei and Ren Wanxin discussed earlier, Fan argued at the preparatory meeting that the proposed Heilongjiang new power organ should not be named after the Paris Commune. He argued,

I disagree with setting up a Paris Commune type new power organ immediately, and I disagree with naming it after the Paris Commune. The reason is very simple, because it is not the right time and conditions are not yet ripe. I propose to name the new organ “Red Rebels' RC”, which will take charge of the Party, governmental, financial and cultural power of the whole province. This will be a transitional organ, and in the future we will form a new power organ through direct general elections. This “Red Rebels RC” consists of representatives from three sections: the Army, the cadres and the mass organizations. The leading nexus, in the name of “Service Team” (*qingwuzu*), is made up of the leaders of the provincial military district and the PLA units stationed locally, the representatives of revolutionary cadres, and the responsible persons of the United Headquarters. We should learn from Shanghai, mainly about their revolutionary spirit, proletarian stance, viewpoints, and working methods, but not what they have specifically done. We should proceed from local reality, carrying forward the spirit of daring to think, daring to do, and daring to be pathbreaker, and try to discover, invent, make creations, and advance. I think that the form of “Red Rebels RC” is in accordance with the gist of *The Sixteen-point Program*, which states that “Many new things have begun to emerge in the great proletarian

cultural revolution. The cultural revolutionary groups, committees and other organizational forms created by the masses in many schools and units are something new and of great historic importance.” Triple combination is a new thing arising from the Socialist Education Movement in the *Twenty-three Articles*. The three-in-one combination is a transitional and temporary power organ established in places where power must be seized and it has revolutionary authority. We run a triple combination of the Army, cadres and masses. With the support of the armed forces, the responsible persons of United Headquarters of Red Rebels’ Regiment, together with the responsible persons of the provincial military district and the PLA units stationed in the locality, and the representatives of revolutionary cadres in the Heilongjiang Party Committee and the Heilongjiang People’s Committee, jointly seized power. This is a development of the *Twenty-three Articles* and a fruit of learning from the experiences of places such as Shanxi and Guizhou, where the armed forces participated in power seizure.⁷⁴

The main reason for not adopting the communal form, according to Fan Zhenmei and his supporters, was that the timing and conditions were not mature. Although in his memoir, Fan did not offer more details about it, one thing is clear. To institute a Paris Commune general election, the rebels in Heilongjiang, or in other places, would not allow conservative masses and most old Party cadres to run for office or to be elected, thus excluding at least half of the Chinese population. A “general election” without the participation of a good many people would seriously undermine the new power organs’ authority and legitimacy. What’s more, even if the power had already been seized at the provincial level, power organs at various levels under the province were still in the process of fierce contention and struggles. When there were still scorching battles everywhere at the grass-root units, how could an election be “general”? Nevertheless, the title of the Paris Commune was so dear to some rebels in the city of Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang Province, that they insisted on naming the new power organ of Harbin city as “Harbin People’s

⁷⁴ Fan Zhengmei, *A Memoir out of An Autumn Dream (Qiu meng zhuisi)*, Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2007. Vol.1, p.161.

Commune.” Huang Kecheng, the Red Guard leader of the Rebel Regiment of Harbin Military Engineering Institute and later the director of the “Harbin People’s Commune”, was one of the strong advocates of naming new power organs after the Paris Commune. Out of disagreement, Fan Zhenmei, who persisted in his view that the name of “RC” was better than “commune” at the given historical moment, refused to attend the inauguration of the “Harbin People’s Commune”. But this did not at all mean that Fan Zhengmei and his colleagues in the new power organ opposed the principles of the Paris Commune. Fan Zhengmei recollected,

... We rebels stressed most on the general election and the operation of this principle both at the top and down below, [while the revolutionary old Party and army cadres] Pan Fusheng and Wang Jiadao stressed most on the free supply system (*gongji zhi*). They thought that the free supply system was the best way to prevent the new bourgeoisie from emerging. Therefore, they talked in high spirits with us about various stories of the free supply system [during wartime and at the beginning stage of the PRC]. I clearly remember their excitement and happiness when reiterating these stories, as if they had returned to that exciting time. Nevertheless, all of us [in the leadership of new power organ] had a strong consensus that the old choose-and-appoint system was not scientific, and it was necessary to institute the general election of the Paris Commune. The Party system and state power had to truly be subjected to the direct supervision of the masses. The best way for leaders to be supervised was the *sida* ("Four Big Rights"): to speak out freely, air views freely, hold great debates, and write big-character posters. All functionaries had to be at the service of the people, not the masters of the people. No matter how high or low in positions, every official could work both at the top and down below. Life tenure [of leading posts] and special privileges would not be allowed.⁷⁵

At the beginning of February 1967, led by Fan Zhengmei, the Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC summarized four experiences of power seizures and published an

⁷⁵ Ibid. Vol.1, pp.181-182.

article titled “The Basic Experience of the Heilongjiang Province Red Rebels in Their Struggle to Seize Power” on Feb. 6 in the rebel-controlled *Heilongjiang Daily*. This article emphasized the three-in-one-combination. In accordance with Mao’s suggestion of promoting the Heilongjiang model of power seizure, the *People’s Daily* soon reprinted this article and composed an editorial titled, “A Good Example in the Struggle by Proletarian Revolutionaries to Seize Power” on Feb.10 to hail and salute the Heilongjiang rebels’ creation.⁷⁶ Pleased with this development, Mao Zedong suggested that this article be broadcast nationwide.⁷⁷ Right after Mao’s three talks with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan between Feb.12-18, the CCP Central Committee issued a circular to Party committees at all levels on February 19. It stipulated,

What are the provisional organs of power for conducting the struggle to seize power in various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions called? Are they really based on the three-in-one combination (that is, formed by those responsible for the mass organizations who really represent the broad masses, the representatives of the PLA stationed in the place concerned, and the revolutionary leading cadres who are truly representative characters in the Party and government organs)? From now on, reports must be made to the Central Committee, and such reports must be approved by the Central Committee before they are published in local papers. In regard to the form of organization of political power in various provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions and cities, with the exception of Shanghai to which the Central Committee has issued separate instructions, the name of people's commune shall as a rule not be adopted.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ New China News Agency (NCNA), English news, Peking, February 10, 1967.

⁷⁷ Mao Zedong, *Comments on Broadcasting and Publishing The Basic Experience of the Heilongjiang Province Red Rebels in Their Struggle to Seize Power (Guanyu bofa Heilongjiang sheng honges zaofanzhe duoquan douzheng de jiben jingyan)*. In *The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC (Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao)*. Vol. 12. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988.p.224.

⁷⁸ *Circular of the CCP Central Committee Concerning the Question of Propagandizing and Reporting on the Struggle to Seize Power (Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu duoquan douzheng xuanchuan baodao wenti de tongzhi)*, in

Mao's favored organizational form of the new political power was the three-way alliance with which Henglongjiang rebels first set up their RC. And in "On the Revolutionary "Three-in-One" Combination", an editorial in the No.5 issue of the *Red Flag* released on March 30, Mao clearly put forth that,

In those places and organizations where power needs to be seized, the policy of the revolutionary "three-in-one" combination must be carried out in establishing a provisional organ of power that is revolutionary and representative and has proletarian authority. This organ of power should preferably be called a Revolutionary Committee.⁷⁹

Many people hence claimed that Mao retracted his promise to establish a "Chinese Paris Commune" modeled on the Paris Commune. Some political formations even denounced Mao as a "traitor" to the interests of the working class since Mao more favored a revolutionary Committee than the Commune. But what needs to be clarified is: *when* and *where* did Mao say that the Paris Commune model as such, that is, the exact shape of the prototype, should be institutionalized in China without modifications during the CR? It is true that Mao mentioned a "Chinese Paris Commune". But he never hinted that this "Chinese Paris Commune" should mimic all the aspects of the original Paris Commune. For Mao, what one should learn from the Paris Commune was mainly its principles and spirit, but not emulate every single specific action of the Paris Commune. Therefore, it is more reasonable to say that the Paris Commune should be considered as establishing a precedent in terms of the

CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1967, p.326, Union Research Institute, Hong Kong, 1968. According to some Red Guard publications, while talking with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan before February 18, Mao mentioned that the Central Committee had ordered that apart from Shanghai, other places could not form Peoples' Commune. If this was true, then even before talking to Zhang and Yao, the Central Committee had already reached some consensus for not instituting people's communes in the country.

⁷⁹ *On the Revolutionary "Three-in-One" Combination (Lun geming de sanjiehe)*, in *Hongqi*, No. 5, 1967, translated in *Peking Review*, No. 12, March 17, 1967.

smashing of the old bourgeois state machinery by proletarian power. Mao never stated that amid the storm of the CR, all the officials, the standing army, and the police should be totally abolished – like what happened in the Paris Commune. If Mao himself never proposed that a Paris Commune regime should necessarily be the exact prototype of the Shanghai Commune, then, why is it legitimate to conclude that Mao abandoned the model of the Paris Commune? Moreover, after the Shanghai Commune was renamed the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, it underwent major organizational changes compared to the pre-CR Shanghai power organs. Those changes were, it seems, partly inspired by the principles of the Paris Commune.

Nominal Shift: The Staging of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee

In the middle of February, while Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan faced tremendous opposition to the Shanghai Commune from top Party and army cadres in Beijing, some good news came to them from Shanghai. There were some signs that the solidarity of the anti-Shanghai Commune forces seemed less stable than before. Geng Jinzhang's own propaganda team was said to be demanding that he "examine certain faults in his orientation". And Geng's ally Chen Hongkang, the head of the Workers Third Headquarters, was also said to be "deposed and downgraded" by his lieutenants. They then proposed to reconcile with the WGH but were rebuffed. The WGH figured out that Chen was still in power and demanded that he step down

completely. As a result, Chen Hongkang's Workers Third Headquarters launched lightning yet concerted assaults on many district branches of the WGH throughout Shanghai. During these attacks, Chen was said to issue orders to "close down all liaison centers of groups from outside Shanghai and impound all Rebel propaganda vans," since those liaison centers were mostly in support of the Shanghai Commune. Chen claimed, "The name of Zhang Chunqiao is by no means synonymous with the CCRG. This is no time to be superstitious about one individual."⁸⁰ Imaginably, the offensive of the Workers Third Headquarters was beaten back by an equally belligerent WGH. On February 17, to deal a severe blow to the anti-Commune forces, for the first time since the establishment of the Shanghai Commune, the *People's Daily* released an New China News Agency's report of Shanghai's CR titled "The All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels Calls All Revolutionary Rebel Fighters and Revolutionary Masses to Seriously Study and Apply Mao Zedong Works in a Creative Way, and Cater to the New Circumstances of the Struggle to Seize Power". By covering the news about the "All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels" instead of the "Shanghai Commune" as its official name, this report apparently implied that the Center in Beijing had acknowledged the legitimacy and authority of the Shanghai Commune, but was just not in favor of the Commune's title. Even if not naming specific factions, this report decidedly condemned the Geng Jinzhang-led forces,

Making full use of the weak points of some people among the

⁸⁰ Neale Hunter, 1969, pp.253-254.

revolutionary rebel ranks who are imbued with bourgeois thoughts such as small-groupism, anarchism, and individualism, a handful of persons in authority taking the capitalist road and the diehards who persist in following the bourgeois reactionary line are trying their best to find agencies and make divisions among revolutionary rebels, wrecking the power seizure by proletarian revolutionaries, and trying in vain to crumple the team of revolutionary rebels in the hope that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution will die on the vine at a crucial moment of winning a decisive victory....The creation of the All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels is just a continuation of the struggle of the power seizure under new conditions; it's never an end of the struggle of the power seizure. Therefore, after the formation of the All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels, revolutionary rebels should press on with comprehensive power seizures from below upwards without any laxness or let up....Some current parlance, such as "struggling against any cadre in sight and striking any power holders" "All cadres are not trustful", is wholly nonsense. These kinds of viewpoints in reality indiscriminately oppose everything, exclude everything and bring down everything, and they are typical manifestations of reactionary thought that is "Left" in form yet Right in essence.... Get rid of all these non-proletarian thoughts among current revolutionary rebels such as small-groupism, anarchism, parochialism, sectarianism, unionism, disregard for organizational discipline, ultra-democracy, mountaintopism, and individualism!...⁸¹

But the Geng Jinzhang-led Second Corps remained on the same track of opposing the WGH. On February 20, the Second Corps convened a closed meeting limited to the members of the Second Corps at Friendship Theater. The standing member of the Second Corps Lu Jiabing claimed at the meeting that debts of blood had to be paid in blood and the Second Corps must fight back in response to the WGH's offensive. Lu Jiabing also stressed that they should not conduct organizational unification too hastily, and that the power they currently wielded should not be easily handed over. Another standing member, Fang Zhihua laid out steps for the next stage:

⁸¹ *The All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels Calls All Revolutionary Rebel Fighters and Revolutionary Masses on Seriously Studying and Applying Mao Zedong Works in a Creative Way, and Catering to the New Circumstances of the Struggle of Power Seizure*(Shanghai geming zaofanpai quanshi linshi zuigao quanli jigou haozhao quanti geming zaofanpai zhanshi he geming qunzhong renzhen huoxue huoyong Mao zhuxi zhuzuo, shiying duoquan douzheng xin xingshi),in *People' Daily*, February 17,1967.My translation.

1. Launch a general counter offensive in the field of public opinion; 2. Prepare to take back power with calculated plans. 3. Unite with other organizations and concentrate forces to deal the opponent a crushing blow. At the meeting, Geng Jinzhang encouraged all the members of the Second Corps to hold on steadfastly to the end.⁸² Yet at this moment, the unity of the anti-WGH and the Shanghai Commune deteriorated. Geng Jinzhang arrested some defectors for their betrayal. Meanwhile, after fabricating a document saying that Premier Zhou supported them, one of Geng's strongest allies, the Red Guard Army, which consisted of transferred veterans, incurably and unquestionably came to a dead end. At the time, Geng Jiangzhang called for a series of meetings of all of his men to urge a full-scale attack on the WGH, the pillar of the Shanghai Commune. Geng's proposal, this time, did not get approval from most of his men. Under such circumstance, Geng still declared, "I am in the right and I'm going to stick it out! Even if everyone deserts me, I won't be scared off!" At last, the anti-Commune factions, agreed to hold a mass demonstration in People's Plaza on February 22. This turned out to be the last such massive anti-Shanghai Commune rally. Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan returned from Beijing the next day. And after this Geng Jinzhang was never favorably mentioned in Red Guard publications and was always referred to as "the man who tried to wreck the Shanghai Commune."⁸³

After "several months of uncertainty and reams of exaggerated, contradictory,

⁸² See Ruci "heihui": *beishang fanhu di'er bingtuan yici heihui jiyao* (What a "Black Meeting": The Summary of a Black Meeting of The Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North), in *Collected Leaflets (chuandan huibian*, ed. by the Propaganda Team of the WGH), No.3, Feb. 28, 1967.

⁸³ Neale Hunter, 1969, pp.253-259.

and stereotype descriptions of plots and counterplots, sieges, and skirmishes”,⁸⁴ in the snowy afternoon of February 24, a huge oath-taking rally with more than ten thousand people, titled “Raise the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong Thought and Take Further Steps to Seize Power in the Three-in-One Combination”, was held at Cultural Plaza of Shanghai. Presided over by Yao Wenyuan and televised all over the city, this rally set as one of its main tasks explaining to the Shanghai rebels the reasons for the name change of the Shanghai Commune. With a good sense of confidence and humor, and using his capacity to explain profound things in simple terms, Zhang Chunqiao dynamically communicated Mao’s instructions about the CR in Shanghai to the enthusiastic audience. While detailing Mao’s recent directives, Zhang succinctly summed up the main gist of Mao’s talks: why it was necessary to make the CR under the proletarian dictatorship; that carrying out the CR necessitated a great alliance; and that the best way to reach a great alliance was through the three-in-one combination. To win over the audience, Zhang mentioned that there were many failed cases of power seizures due to factional fights and the lack of a great alliance. For instance, a unit was said to have seized power, but seized only one print shop. Yet they refused to let other units to print things there. This kind of power seizure, Zhang commented, was a take-over based on small-groupism. This in fact converted the ownership by the whole people into the ownership by a small group and thus wrecked the building of socialism. This is the kind of thing, Zhang said, that was advocated by the Yugoslavian revisionist regime. Zhang stressed that the so-called workers’ control in

⁸⁴ Ibid. p.260.

Yugoslavia and small-groupism were in essence capitalist ownership. For Zhang, the triple combination was not only a way to help young rebels to learn from the revolutionary old cadres, but also an effective way to foster revolutionary successors. And only with the triple combination could Shanghai's power be transferred in a safe and sound way, and be further strengthened and enhanced. Zhang then explained Mao's idea of why it was better in changing the name of the provisional power organ of Shanghai. According to Mao, it was too early to institute a Shanghai Commune mainly because Shanghai was far more advanced with the CR than other places in the country, and if the Center openly approved the Shanghai Commune, other cities would definitely follow. Yet "this could short-circuit the movement by clamping a premature formula on a process that should reach its own conclusion through free and open debate between divergent opinions."⁸⁵

At this rally, Zhang also refuted some wrong views, one of which was the above mentioned "February 8 circular order" that demanded the Center get rid of all directors. It was by no means impermissible to make such a suggestion to the Center, Zhang posited, yet it was not suitable for this faction to cable the Center with a circular which amounted to an ultimatum. Moreover, abolishing all formal titles for "zhang" (directors) was just a formal change, Zhang maintained, when what really mattered was the essence. Take the title "secretary" (*shuji*) for example. In the time of the Nationalist regime, this was just the lowest rank for an official, but in the Communist government, it became the title of the biggest power holder. Zhang

⁸⁵ Here I quote from Neale Hunter's *Shanghai Journal*, p.261. But I have only been able to find such viewpoints of Mao about the Shanghai Commune in this English source. This is yet to be verified according to possible original Chinese sources.

exposed the reactionary nature of the argument made by this faction that all the people with the titles of “*zhang*” (directors) were riding the Party and people's necks. For example, the dismissed defense minister Peng Dehuai was a defense minister, and Lin Biao was a defense minister, too. One could say that Peng Dehuai rode the Party and people's necks, but one could not say that comrade Lin Biao was riding the Party and people's necks. Zhang Chunqiao hypothesized that these two ministers belonged to two different classes. Without class analysis, there was no way in reality to practice the three-in-one combination. In refuting some people's opposition to the slogan of “all power to the Shanghai People's Commune” and these opponents' claim that the Commune was merely set up by “a handful of people”, Zhang emphasized that the political foundation of the Shanghai Commune was firmly based on the January Revolution, a great revolution in which one class overthrew another and involved many Shanghai rebels. Seeing the power seizure from beginning to end, the Center, especially Chairman Mao himself, approved “A Letter to the People of the Whole City” and the “Urgent Notice” issued by the Shanghai rebels. After this, the Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Committee, and the CCRG jointly sent a congratulatory telegram “Message of Greetings to Revolutionary Rebel Organizations in Shanghai”. How could one say that the Shanghai Commune was set up by only a handful of people when it had so profound mass support? In regard to some individuals' accusation that Zhang singlehandedly set up the Shanghai Commune, Zhang first humorously expressed his thanks to them and then said that he did not have such magic powers. As for those who were driven by personal ambition, and

those with a small-groupist mentality, Zhang clarified that the new power organ would not share the power with them, as they were actually the enemies of the proletariat.⁸⁶

The Shanghai People's Commune, therefore, was renamed the Shanghai RC. The plaque of the Shanghai Commune was sent to a museum and a new plaque with "Shanghai RC" was put up at the Waitan office building. Some scholars, such as Raymond Lotta, held that the Shanghai Commune was "disbanded",⁸⁷ which, I believe, is inaccurate because the ensuing Shanghai RC consisted of the original team of the Shanghai Commune and stipulated that "All the manifestos, circular orders, announcements, decisions, resolutions and other documents issued by the former Shanghai People's Commune will continue to be valid. All Shanghai citizens should observe and carry out in earnest."⁸⁸ (Of course, the Shanghai RC changed a lot in the subsequent years of the CR.)

In some sense, the newly-formed Shanghai RC observed the principles of the Paris Commune. In order to better understand the features of the Shanghai RC, allow me to first spell out more about what characterized the Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC as Mao called on the Shanghai rebels to learn from the Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ See Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan's *Speeches at the Oath-taking Rally to "Raise the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong Thought and Take Further Steps to Seize Power in the Three-in-One Combination"* (Zhang Chunqiao Yao Wenyuan zai gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi jinyibu zhankai sanjiehe duoquan shishi dahui shang de jianghua), Feb.24, 1967, in *Speeches of the Central Leaders (Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua)*, Vol.2, ed. by the Red Guard Liaison Post of the General Beijing Glass Factory, Beijing, March, 1967.

⁸⁷ Alain Badiou's "Politics of Emancipation": *A Communism Locked Within the Confines of the Bourgeois World* by Raymond Lotta, Nayi Duniya, and K. J. A., from http://www.demarcations-journal.org/issue01/demarcations_badiou.html, cited on October 8, 2009.

⁸⁸ *Shanghai shi geming weiyuanhui guanyu Shanghai renmin gongshe lingshi weiyuanhui gaicheng Shanghai shi geming weiyuanhui de jue ding (Resolution of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee Concerning the Change of the Temporary Committee of the Shanghai People's Commune into the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee)*, February 23, 1967, from *Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches)*, No. 9, March 6, 1967, Shanghai. p.51.

⁸⁹ See *Shanghai geming zaofanpai quanshi linshi zuigao quanli jigou haozhao quanti geming zaofanpai zhanshi he geming qunzhong renzhen huoxue huoyong Mao zhuxi zhuzuo, shiying douquan douzheng xin xingshi (The All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels Calls All Revolutionary Rebel Fighters and Revolutionary Masses on Seriously Studying and Applying Mao Zedong Works in a Creative Way, and Catering to the New Circumstances of the Struggle of Power Seizure)*, in *People's Daily*, February 17, 1967.

At the beginning of January 1967, Fan Zhengmei, the director of the Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC, presided over an enlarged meeting of a service team and drafted *The No.2 Announcement of Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC* [penned by Ren Wanxin et al.], which clearly stated the doctrines, organizational form and cadre policies of the new power organ. The doctrines were,

1. The construction of the RC must follow Chairman Mao's essential thinking of maintaining the color of our country. Based on the experiences of the Paris Commune and the Soviet Union, the RC should be a more advanced, new power organ which can help to accelerate the transition to communism. Therefore, it is necessary to fully trust the masses, depend on the masses, and respect the initiatives of the masses, and to greatly carry out destruction as well construction. Never allow any patch-up reformism rooted in the old power organ.
2. The RC must strengthen the [state] machine of dictatorship. Historical lessons from the international communist movement tell us that after the proletarian power seizure, should people forget class struggle, proletarian dictatorship, and the sharp and complicated struggle of power seizure during the socialist period, the state power will be covertly taken over by class enemies, the heads of hundreds of thousands people will be chopped off, and capitalism will be restored.
3. The RC must be sharp, nimble, frugal, and pragmatic. And it shall be based on five (*wu ge zui*) principles: most be close to the basic-level units (*jiceng*), most be close to the masses, must have a most revolutionary rebel spirit, must be most efficient in handling affairs, and must be most capable of serving the people. Therefore, it is necessary to destroy the old bureaucratic establishments which are redundant, overstaffed, fighting among each other over trivial things, not capable of handling affairs yet incubating bourgeois nobles and lords.
4. The RC must carry out the policy of the "three-in-one" combinations.
5. All the staff persons will have no official titles and extra welfare treatments. If conditions are ripe and the Central Committee ratifies it, the RC will abolish the high salary system and carry out the communist

style of a free supply system (*gongji zhi*) plus allowance. The RC will uncompromisingly smash all conditions and foundations that would become soil for the growth of a new bourgeoisie and privileged class. All the staff persons need to be elected through Paris Commune style elections based on an extensive democracy. Those welcomed by the masses can be re-elected whereas those unqualified can be recalled any time. Every staff person is required to be able to work both at the top and down below. The RC shall be built into a big school of Mao Zedong Thought.⁹⁰

According to Fan Zhengmei's memoir, these five articles embodied their trend of thought and political ideals, and expressed the social vox populi and ideal goals that the masses pursued with their whole hearts at that time. Fan indicated that these five points are mainly based on two passages from Engels' "The 1891 Introduction to *The Civil War in France*". Fan purposely asked his comrades in the draft team led by Ren Wanxin to put Engels' words there as the guideline of writing. Engels wrote:

Against this transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society – an inevitable transformation in all previous states – the Commune made use of two infallible expedients. In this first place, it filled all posts – administrative, judicial, and educational – by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, with the right of the same electors to recall their delegate at any time. And in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers. The highest salary paid by the Commune to anyone was 6,000 francs. In this way an effective barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding mandates to delegates to representative bodies which were also added in profusion.

...And from this follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything connected with it, which takes roots the more readily as people from their childhood are accustomed to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be looked after otherwise than as they have been looked after in the past, that is, through the state and its well-paid officials. And people think they have taken quite an extraordinary bold step forward when they have rid themselves of belief in a hereditary monarchy and swear by the

⁹⁰ Fan Zhengmei, *A Memoir out of An Autumn Dream (Qiu meng zhuisi)*, Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2007. Vol.1, pp.180-181.

democratic republic. In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy.⁹¹

As for the organizational structure of the Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC, the announcement stipulated that the new power organ consisted of 17 committee members, including one director (*banzhang*) and one deputy director, thus reducing the total amount of the staff to one fourth of the former officials in the old power organ. Among all committee members, five core members were elected to be members of a service team, whose task was to offer advice and suggestions on major issues to the RC for discussion. The RC only had four subunits: one political committee, one production committee, one mass work committee, and one office, and each of them had several function groups.

It is difficult to figure out who is influencing who in a seething yet turbulent period of power seizure. There were quite a few striking similarities between the Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC and the Shanghai RC. Both of them, for example, converted departments into teams in order to streamline personnel, and stressed the triple alliance, strengthening the proletarian dictatorship, and suppressing counter-revolutionaries. There were difference between the Shanghai Commune and the Shanghai RC which followed it. A major difference lay with the Shanghai RC was the broadening of its foundation of governance, especially in that it incorporated many old Party cadres who had supposedly rectified their errors and returned to Mao's line. This, of course, reaffirmed the Party leadership. And the Shanghai RC

⁹¹ Engels, Postscript of *1891 Introduction to the Civil War in France*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/postscript.htm>, cited on October 15, 2009.

also eventually admitted not a few anti-Commune rebels, and even previously loyalist representatives into the revamped power organ. Moreover, the Shanghai RC differentiated itself from the old Shanghai power organ in that it united the Party and the government into one single administrative structure. As the old SPC and the old Shanghai People's Committee were combined into one unified structure under the framework of the Shanghai RC, there was a lot of overlapping and overstaffed offices which were eliminated or streamlined. Another major difference between the Shanghai Commune and the Shanghai RC was that the Shanghai RC suspended the general election that had been vaguely promised by the Shanghai Commune. Under the framework of the RC there were still, nevertheless, extensive democratic elections held in later congresses of the Red Guards, workers, peasants, employees, among other similar establishments. Yet the Maoist leadership posited that all the RCs were just transitional. The next political arrangement in the future could be a Commune state based on a general election.

As illustrated above, the Shanghai RC neither represented a disruption nor a discontinuation of the Shanghai Commune. The Shanghai RC, instead, maintained core features of a Commune style power organ. For instance, it legalized and instituted the mass movement. In March 1967, in order to manage the city effectively, some people in the Shanghai RC proposed to adjust the original teams from the Shanghai Commune. The original plan was to set up 12 teams and one office, namely, the Shanghai RC office; the Economic Team; the Industry Team; the Village Work Team; the Financial and Trade Team; the Culture, Education and Health Team; the

Regional Work Team; the Political and Law Team; the Science and Technology Team; the Foreign Affairs Team; and the Labor Wages Team. Former teams in the Shanghai Commune such as the Liaison Team, Investigation Team, Political Propaganda Team, and Reception Team were listed to be cancelled. In addition, the former Grasp Revolution and Promote Production Team in the Commune, as a contingency power organ, was replaced by corresponding teams. Obviously, as all these to-be-cancelled teams were related to the mass movements, this plan would inevitably weaken the mass movement and strengthen the administrative functions of the Shanghai RC. But when this new plan was laid out, fierce and overwhelming objections were voiced from the rebel representatives in the Shanghai RC. As a compromise, the Liaison Team and Reception Team in the Commune were incorporated into a new “Mass Movement Team” and the Political Propaganda Team remained untouched as the rebels had insisted. Rebel leaders were appointed to be the head of all the teams, yet the operation of those teams were put on the shoulders of the common middle-lower ranking cadres who had rebelled against the old SPC and were experienced in administering the city.⁹² With all the people’s efforts, Shanghai’s undermined economy picked up very quickly. In the year of 1968, the industrial development of Shanghai exceeded that of 1966.

In addition, looking at the original structure of the Shanghai Commune, the Shanghai RC planned to put the role and function of the rebel forces at the forefront. They assigned a quota for the mass organizations, insuring that the rebels would be a

⁹² Li Xun, *The Leadership and Administrative Set-up of the Shanghai People’s Commune and the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee (Shanghai renmin gongshe he Shanghai shi geming weiyuanhui lingdao chengyuan he ban’gong jigou shezhi)*, in electronic magazine “Memory” (*jiyi*), No.9, March 30, 2009.

dominant force in the new power organ. The rebel intellectual representative Zhu Yongjia recollected, “Initially, the Shanghai RC was planned to be made up of 155 committee members, within which the responsible persons of mass organizations, including representatives of [rebel] workers, peasants, students and government functionaries, accounted for 50 percent, the representatives from the three armed services stationed in Shanghai 19 percent, and revolutionary cadres 31 percent. The standing committee of the Shanghai RC would consist of 13 to 15 persons...all the committee members were not fixed.”⁹³ That the Shanghai RC put the quota of mass organization representatives around 50 percent was not coincidental. As I mention above, in Mao’s talks with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, when they discussed the case of the new power organ in Shanxi after the seizure of power during the January Storm, 53 per cent delegates were rebels, 27 per cent army members, and 20 per cent cadres. And Mao praised these proportions of different political forces in the new power organs so highly, arguing that “Shanghai ought to learn from them [Shanxi].”⁹⁴ The stress on the rebels’ role in the new power organ reflected Mao Zedong and the Maoist rebels’ vision of a wholly new form of state structure, within which the broadest masses could directly manage the state affairs under the leadership of the Party.

At the end of the rally of February 24, Xu Jingxn, the leader of intellectuals

⁹³ From *Zhu Yongjia’s Memoir*, cited from Li Xun, *The Leadership and Administrative Set-up of the Shanghai People’s Commune and the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee (Shanghai renmin gongshe he Shanghai shi geming weiyuanhui lingdao chengyuan he ban’gong jigou shezhi)*, in electronic magazine “Memory” (*jiyi*), No.9, March 30, 2009.

⁹⁴ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings with Comrades Chang Ch’un-ch’iao and Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

and rebel functionaries of government agencies, announced the draft of “The Current Situation and the Tasks of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Shanghai” -- , which actually served as the founding document of the Shanghai RC. It specified that, “All basic-level mass organizations, in a general way, cannot retain working personnel not engaged in production. The numbers of working personnel of revolutionary mass organizations at the city, district, county and enterprise levels must be reduced to a minimum by all means.” In addition, this decision appealed to all mass organizations to conduct open-door rectification, to be more democratic, and to be frugal.⁹⁵ Explicitly showing commitment to the Paris Commune as a model, all rebel worker leaders who assumed top posts, such as bureau chiefs, or other leading cadre positions in the Shanghai RC, earned a salary equal to what they originally received as workers, only 50 to 60 yuan a month. “This salary restriction was in stark contrast to the former cadres, who garnered three to four times as much for comparable assignments,”⁹⁶

In the pre-CR era, from 1949 to 1966, the Chinese legal system was basically at the disposal of three organs, that is, the police, the procuracy, and the courts. Together with the army, they were the most important and formidable state organs of dictatorship. They were also common establishments of the modern state. But during the CR, the masses accused these three organs of taking the Liu-Dengist line, failing to carry out the mass line, abusing their power, and even suppressing the revolution.

⁹⁵ *The Current Situation and the Tasks of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Shanghai* (*Dangqian Shanghai wenhua da geming de xingshi he renwu*), in *Hongqi*, No.4, March 1 1967.

⁹⁶ Perry, Elizabeth, *From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back Workers As Citizens in Modern Shanghai*, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1999), p. 363.

Mao repeatedly urged Xie Fuzhi, the Minister of Public Security, to "smash *gongjianfa*" (public security organs, procuratorial organs, and people's courts). On August 7, 1967, in a mass rally to struggle with the former Minister of Public Security Luo Ruiqing, Xie Fuzhi expressed that it should be the masses who supervise the public security organs, not, as it was with the Soviet KGB, where the public security organs supervise the masses. The Soviet-style public and internal security organs, by seeking privilege and detaching themselves from the masses, became revisionist tools that suppressed the masses. The power of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, Xie insisted, was too big and it needed to be greatly reduced to a level that the common people could handle. In this rally, Xie Fuzhi officially and publicly called on the masses to rebel against and smash the old state power apparatus of the police, procuracy, and courts.⁹⁷ Thereafter, these old pillars of the state were under fierce attacks from the rebels and hence underwent major changes. "In order to simplify, improve and transform the structure which was not suitable to a socialist economic basis, and to simplify the procedure in the jurisdictional sphere for the convenience of the masses", the functions and powers of the original public security organs and courts were greatly contained, and the procuracy was even abolished with its functions and its powers were transferred to the public security agency.⁹⁸ In December 1968, simultaneous with the dismantling of the procuracy, it was proposed that the other two Central organs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*neiwubu*) and the Office of Internal

⁹⁷ *Xie Fuzhi zai gong'anbu douzheng luo Ruiqing dahui shang de jianghua* (Xie Fuzhi's speech at the rally of the Ministry of Public Security to struggle against Luo Ruiqing), August 7, 1967, in the *Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming tongxun* (the Newsletter of the Great Proletarian CR), No.3, reprinted by *duoqizhi* commando of the East Is Red Commune in the Supreme Court, August 12, 1967.

⁹⁸ Shao-Chuan Leng, Hungdah Chiu ed., *Criminal Justice in Post-Mao China: Analysis and Documents*, SUNY Press, 1985, p.18.

Affairs (*neiwuban*), be abolished as well, while the Ministry of Public Security and the Supreme Court only kept very few staff.⁹⁹ Mao and Xie Fuzhi strongly argued that it was not a good method to arrest people; that the government, the public security organs, and the army should arrest as few people as possible; and that arrests should be done on the demands and with the aid of the masses. As for the few bad people, it was better to have them arrested by the masses themselves, not by the state organs of dictatorship.¹⁰⁰ Mao called this principle the “dictatorship of the masses” (*qunzhong zhuanzheng*).¹⁰¹ He explicitly said that: “the dictatorship should be the dictatorship of the masses.”¹⁰²

During the CR, the Shanghai RC by and large followed Mao and Xie Fuzhi’s instructions about the dictatorship of the masses. On March 21, 1967, at a meeting of the Shanghai RC, Zhang Chunqiao urged that the Shanghai Public Security organs be smashed.¹⁰³ At the time, many organizations of the dictatorship of the masses were set up in various units and places in Shanghai, especially at the level of lanes and streets. A speech given by one of the Party secretaries of the Shanghai RC Xu Jingxian at a mass rally on June 24, 1968 stipulated that with the exception of a few

⁹⁹ Wanzhong Sun, Shaohua You, Yongchang Wang ed., *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo falu dashidian (Book of Major Legal Events in PRC)*, Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 1993, p.283.

¹⁰⁰ Xie Fuzhi *zai gong'anbu douzheng luo Ruiqing dahui shang de jianghua (Xie Fuzhi's speech at the rally of the Ministry of Public Security to struggle against Luo Ruiqing)*, August 7, 1967, in the *Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming tongxun (the Newsletter of the Great Proletarian CR)*, No.3, reprinted by *duoqizhi* commando of the East Is Red Commune in the Supreme Court, August 12, 1967.

¹⁰¹ On August 4, 1967, in one of his letters to Jiang Qing, Mao said: "One of the most important issues to be solved in the current CR is the dictatorship of the masses" (Wang Li, *Chronicles of the Cultural Revolution*, pp. 90-91). According to Xie Fuzhi's speech three days later, Mao had mentioned to Xie at least eight times that it was necessary to smash the police, procuracy, and courts. Judging from Xie's talk, such thoughts of Mao can be traced back to earlier months.

¹⁰² Mao Zedong, *Shicha huabei zhongnan he huadong diqu shi de tanhua (Mao's Talks During the Inspection Tour of the North China, Central-South, and East China Regions)*, in July-September of 1967, in *The Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Foundation of the PRC (Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao)*, Vol. 12. p.386. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1988.

¹⁰³ See *Shanghai gong'an zhi: dashiji (Shanghai Public Security Gazetteer: A Chronicle)* at <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node4476/node58280/index.html> Cited on June 1, 2009.

cases of active counter-revolutionaries who conducted murder, arson, poisoning, sabotage of state secrets who needed to be arrested, most other wrongdoers should not be arrested but instead should be put back into their own units. And they should be subjected to the supervision of the masses – as it was the masses in their units that knew them best. To expound the efficiency of the dictatorship of the masses, Xu Jingxian gave an example of a wrongdoer in a Shanghai unit who asked the public security force to arrest him because he could not bear the all-around supervision of the masses.¹⁰⁴ Of course, for the wrongdoers who were willing to reform themselves, the masses would be willing to help at any time. In such a way, the amount of money that had been spent in the past on the police, procuracy, and courts was greatly reduced. More importantly, the crime rate was dramatically reduced. During the CR, under the guidance of the thought of the dictatorship of the masses, in many places, including in Shanghai, a large number of prisons were abandoned and a large portion of the inmates were released to their original units and subject to the masses' supervision.¹⁰⁵ During the CR, generally speaking, every rural commune only had one special commissioner from the public security organ (*gong'an tepaiyuan*) stationed. In the cities, below the basic people's courts, there were approximately two hundred thousand People's Mediation Committees (*renmin tiaojie weiyuanhui*) during the CR, which, “along with other extrajudicial organs, performed the functions of settling civil

¹⁰⁴ Xu Jingxian zai Shanghai shi gewei gongjiaozu he gongzongsi lianhe zhaokai de “shenru kaizhan duidi douzheng dahui” shang de jianghua (Xu Jingxian's Speech at the “Rally of Thoroughly Fighting Against the Enemies” Jointly Convened by the Industry and Communication Team of the Shanghai RC and the WGH), in *Xuexi ziliao (Study Materials)*, No. 7, ed., by the Political Propaganda Team of the He'nan Workers' Congress, July 15, 1968.

¹⁰⁵ Lao Shi (Yuan Yuhua), *Women buyao yige jingcha shijie: wenge zhong de kanjianfangfan yu Mao Zedong de “qunzhong zhuanzheng” qiantan* (We don't Need a World of Police: A Plain Remark on the Campaign of Cancelling the Prisons and Releasing the Inmates During the CR and Mao Zedong's Thought of the Dictatorship of the Masses), see <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class14/200712/29496.html>, cited on February 4, 2010.

disputes and disposing minor criminal cases at the grassroots level.” “The informal process of dispute resolution enjoyed its heyday under Mao when the societal model of law overshadowed the jural model.”¹⁰⁶

Such measures of the new power organ arising from the January Storm during the CR, whether it was done in the name of commune, or in the name of RC, to quote Marx, “made that catchword of bourgeois revolutions – cheap government – a reality.” One of the necessary “evils” and greatest source of expenditures by a proletarian state—the standing army—was yet to be abolished and replaced by a people’s militia in the future.¹⁰⁷ But the heavy burden of state administration and bureaucracy were considerably relieved by streamlining things and by the workers’ active participation in running the RCs.

Partially out of distrust of the regular army, the Shanghai rebels, under the leadership of Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen in the Shanghai RC, tried to eventually use the armed workers’ militia to replace or at least balance the regular military forces. This led to the rapid development of the so-called “a second armed forces (*di'er wuzhuang*)” in Shanghai, which mainly consisted of militias of the urban workers under the rebels’ control. To replace the regular army with the militia was seen by Marx as one of the major hallmarks of the Paris Commune. This was considered by the Maoists as another way of exercising the dictatorship of the masses.

¹⁰⁶ Shao-Chuan Leng, Hungdah Chiu ed., *Criminal Justice in Post-Mao China: Analysis and Documents* SUNY Press, 1985, p.68.

¹⁰⁷ What needs to be clarified is that the standing army in the Mao era is very different than the bourgeois standing army. For example, the socialist standing army is in close touch with the masses in order to serve the people, whereas the bourgeois standing army basically serves the interests of the exploiting class. Especially in China, strange as it may seem, the socialist standing army partially earned their own living through productive labor whereas the bourgeois standing army totally depends on state funds for their expenditures. Nevertheless, the socialist standing army still retained vestiges of the old armies and needed to be replaced eventually by people’s militias.

In August 1967, echoing Jiang Qing's viewpoint that the rebels should be armed, Zhang Chunqiao said: "It's better to organize and arm the workers, going from small to large, from bare hands to weapons, gradually building an armed force of the people with the rebels as its basic component." On September 1, 1967, the Shanghai Headquarters of *Wengong Wuwei* (attacking with words and defending with weapons) was set up. This was the first rebel militia entity in Shanghai. Wang Hongwen even ordered two Shanghai factories to manufacture rifles for the rebel militia. Meanwhile, many heavy weapons from the army's supply were distributed to the workers' militia. Until January 1968, 28 Shanghai factories set up contingents of *wengong wuwei*, with the total number reaching 7,900 fighters. In 1970, all Shanghai factories set up *wengong wuwei* teams, with the total number reaching 29,000 fighters. The deputy director of the Shanghai RC Wang Hongwen stipulated that the militia teams should be led by the old rebels and the positions of officers above battalion level should be given to the rebels. In May 1970, the Shanghai Headquarters of *Wengong Wuwei* was renamed as the "Shanghai Militia". At that time, Wang Hongwen instructed: "From now on, the militia must be run by the local people (*minban*), not governmental organs (*guanban*). If officially operated, the militia would be run by the army, but if run by the masses, the militia should be under the jurisdiction of the Shanghai RC."¹⁰⁸ By 1973, more than a hundred thousand workers' militia, including numerous ground forces, five artillery battalions, three antiaircraft machine gun companies, and a motorcycle regiment, were set up in Shanghai. And the Shanghai rebels also prepared

¹⁰⁸ *Yangpu qu zhi* (Records of Yangpu District in Shanghai), see <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node4/node2249/yangpu/node46155/node61198/index.html> , cited on February 5, 2010.

to establish a corps of engineers, an anti-chemical warfare corps, a signal corps, and a radar corps. Wang Hongwen even tried to institute a “National Militia Command Post” under rebel control. On Dec. 15, 1974, the Ministry of Public Security issued “The Notice of Printing and Distributing Two Materials by the Party Committee of the Shanghai No. 17 Mills Concerning Implementing the Triadic Integrated Entirety of the Militia, Public Security and Fire Fighting Work”, which greatly enhanced the status of the militia under the dominant control of the rebels.¹⁰⁹ On January 17, 1975, the legal status of the people’s militia was written into the new constitution. The people’s militia was considered as important as the standing army. Article 15 of the 1975 constitution stipulated: “The Chinese People's Liberation Army and the people's militia are the workers' and peasants' own armed forces led by the Communist Party of China; they are the armed forces of the people of all nationalities.”¹¹⁰ On September 18, 1975, when meeting with the leaders of the Shanghai Militia Command, Wang Hongwen stressed, “Some people say that it is not orthodox for the militia to take care of the class struggle; some people accuse us of establishing a second armed forces in Shanghai. What is orthodoxy? We must serve the needs of the class struggle, the needs of socialist revolution and socialist construction. . . . If somebody strikes down the militia twenty years later, I will straighten it up again if I'm still alive then.” When learning that the weapons were stored in the regular army’s warehouse, Wang suggested distributing them to the militiamen as they were not safe

¹⁰⁹ Lao Shi (Yuan Yuhua), *Women buyao yige jingcha shijie: wenge zhong de kanjianfangfan yu Mao Zedong de “qunzhong zhuanzheng” qiantan* (We don’t Need a World of Police: A Plain Remark on the Campaign of Cancelling the Prisons and Releasing the Inmates During the CR and Mao Zedong’s Thought of the Dictatorship of the Masses), see <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class14/200712/29496.html>, cited on February 4, 2010.

¹¹⁰ *The Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975.

in the armed forces' warehouse. Wang said, when war breaks out, "We should get ready to go to the mountains and fight as guerrillas," and added that the workers' militia could "fight against enemies inside and outside simultaneously."¹¹¹ On March 30, 1976, the People's Armed Forces Department (*renwubu*), which was originally under the leadership of the army, was incorporated into the new militia headquarters controlled by the rebels.¹¹² This on the one hand, weakened the traditional standing army, and on the other hand, strengthened Shanghai's "Second Armed Force" under the masses' control. Approaching the end of the CR, the rebel-controlled Shanghai militia had 3,000,000 soldiers equipped with 226,000 guns, 1,900 cannons, 2,600 rocket launchers, 500 tanks, and a warship, which was capable of challenging the regular military.¹¹³

Marx said that with regard to the Paris Commune that "neither cheap government nor the 'true republic' was its ultimate aim; they were its mere concomitants." The true secret of the Shanghai Commune, the Heilongjiang Red Rebel RC, and the Shanghai RC, in terms of this remark by Marx, was that they were essentially forms of workers' powers during the CR. Never before were there so many true worker rebels represented in the power organs; never before were there so many Chinese workers armed with guns and artillery; never before were Chinese workers so proud to be workers and their conscious mastering of the state and society so greatly

¹¹¹ Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, "*Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*", translated and edited by D. W. Y. Kwok, University of Hawai'i Press in 1996.pp.476-478.

¹¹² *Yangpu qu zhi (Records of Yangpu District in Shanghai)*, see <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node4/node2249/yangpu/node46155/node61198/index.html> , cited on February 5, 2010.

¹¹³ Perry, Elizabeth, *From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back Workers As Citizens in Modern Shanghai*, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1999), p. 362.

strengthened. With the advancement of the CR, Mao cried in 1968 that “the working class must exercise leadership in everything.” As Raymond Lotta et al pointed out, “The Cultural Revolution and the creation of new revolutionary organs, like the Revolutionary Committees, involved masses of people and their representatives on a dramatically enlarged scale at every level. It involved unprecedented means for ensuring that the participation of the masses was genuine and profound; through extremely widespread debate and discussion, through continuing political-ideological struggle, and through direct leadership responsibility. By 1973, an estimated forty thousand workers in Shanghai held leading positions in factories, other work units, and higher level municipal organs.”¹¹⁴ By the close of the CR decade, at various levels, Shanghai units were fully saturated with workers’ Mao Zedong Thought propaganda teams, workers’ theory troops, workers’ Party members, workers’ new cadres, workers’ writers, and so forth. After the PRC resumed membership in the United Nations in 1971, Shanghai even trained 113 worker diplomats who would have been stationed all over the world should the so-called “gang of four” not been arrested; and Zhang Chunqiao even specifically instructed that more female diplomats from the workers’ ranks be trained.¹¹⁵ With the leadership of the proud working class, Shanghai achieved tremendous political and economic success during the CR years. As with the Shanghai’s economy, even according to the Deng Xiaoping regime’s national statistics in the De-Maoization Era (*qumaohua shiqi*), during the third

¹¹⁴ Raymond Lotta, Nayi Duniya, and K. J. A., *Alain Badiou's "Politics of Emancipation": A Communism Locked Within the Confines of the Bourgeois World*, from http://www.demarcations-journal.org/issue01/demarcations_badiou.html, cited on October 8, 2009.

¹¹⁵ *The Aim of “Training Worker Ambassadors” is to Usurp Party Leadership and Seize State Power (Peiyang gongren dashi jiushi weile cuandang duoquan)*, compiled by the Editorial Team of the “Materials of International Issues” in Shanghai (*Shanghai “guoji wenti ziliao” bianjizu*), January, 1977.

Five-year Program from 1966 to 1970, the gross output value of industry and agriculture of Shanghai increased 10% per year on average; during the fourth Five-year Program from 1971 to 1975, the gross output value of industry and agriculture of Shanghai increased 41.9% and increased 10% per year in average.¹¹⁶ Such glorious achievements of Shanghai were made even given that the Shanghai working class had been selflessly supporting other regions, even the development of international communities. For example, “Shanghai had posted over half a million skilled workers to the interior and poorer regions of the country—sharing expertise and learning from other segments and sectors of society. Further, during the years of the Cultural Revolution, Shanghai retained only 10 percent of its locally generated revenue, the rest going to the national budget, helping to subsidize the spending requirements of the poorer regions, like Xinjiang and Tibet.”¹¹⁷ After the Reform era, Deng Xiaoping authorized Shanghai retaining the major portion of its revenue. Consequently, Shanghai has grown into a booming major international metropolis within a short time. Yet this has happened at the price of the underdevelopment of Chinese inland regions. In a sense, since the Deng era, Shanghai (and Shenzhen, among other cities) has been responsible for the underdevelopment of many other places in China. The coup d'etat in 1976 put an end to the “socialist new things” in their blooming stage. Even though the Shanghai RC kept its name until December 1979, all the rebel representatives were put in jail and almost all the worker

¹¹⁶ Sun Huairang ed., *A Short History of the Development of the Shanghai's Socialist Economic Construction, 1949-1985* (*Shanghai shehuizhuyi jinji jianshe fazhan jianshi, 1949-1985*), Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1990, pp.472-489.

¹¹⁷ Raymond Lotta, Nayi Duniya, and K. J. A., *Alain Badiou's "Politics of Emancipation": A Communism Locked Within the Confines of the Bourgeois World*, from http://www.demarcations-journal.org/issue01/demarcations_badiou.html, cited on October 8, 2009.

representatives were dismissed. As Mao foretold in his talks with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan in the spring of 1967,

The principal experiences are the Paris Commune and the soviet. We can imagine that the [name] People's Republic of China can be used by both classes. If we should be overthrown and the bourgeoisie came to power, they would have no need to change the name, but would still call it the People's Republic of China. . . . The main thing is which class seizes political power. That is the fundamental question, not what its name is.¹¹⁸

With the demise of the Shanghai RC, a glorious history during which the Chinese masses struggled for extensive democracy, characterized by the workers seizing power from seemingly powerful yet degenerated authorities, was not only silenced and deeply buried, but also deliberately distorted and demonized. This is the era that ended in 1976.

¹¹⁸ Mao Zedong, *Talks at Three Meetings With Comrades Chang Ch'un-ch'iao And Yao Wen-yuan*, February 1967, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*: Vol. IX, published in India by Kranti Publications, Secunderabad, and Sramikavarga Prachuranalu, Hyderabad. Available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_73.htm , cited October 9, 2009.

Conclusion

A Revolution, not a Farce

When remarking on Hegel's statement that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occurred twice, Karl Marx added, "the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."¹ Marx further depicted this kind of reoccurrence as a caricature. Even though later commentators applied Marx's depiction to serve various purposes, it is obvious that Marx, taking sides with the exploited classes, was commenting on the personages and events related to the exploiting classes, especially the bourgeois class. Marx would never sneer at the revolutionary cause of working people as a "farce" or "caricature". Those who jeer at the struggle of the working class against the enslavement of labor by capital, if not being manipulated or deceived by the elite, are usually from the ranks of the exploiting classes. One class's tragedy becomes a farce in the eyes of its rival classes. This is exactly what happened to the revolutionary power organ of Shanghai born out of the January Storm during the CR. After the historical curtain was brought down on the CR in 1976, the narratives of the triumphant restorationists who had waged a Thermidor coup depicted both the Shanghai Commune patterned after the Paris Commune and the following Shanghai Revolutionary Committee under workers' control during Mao's time, as a monstrous still-birth. The rebel workers' seizure of power and the operation of the more

¹ K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte in *MECW*, Vol, 11, p.103.

democratic government of Shanghai were jeered at as creating a “farce”. The Shanghai rebel leaders were labeled as “new bourgeois elements” and demonized as “gangsters”. But 40 years later, it has become crystal clear who the real “new bourgeois elements” were and who instrumentalized the farce. The real farce, first of all, lies in that the post-Mao regimes upheld the socialist and communist banner when they were in fact carrying out a sweeping bourgeois CR². They waved red flags to oppose the red flag. When there was no authentic worker representation at any level of state power, the post-Mao regimes still claimed that they were governments of the working class. But they never intended to be a government run by the workers and they could not be considered a working people’s regime. Hypocrisy, as always, is a typical characteristic of the bourgeois class.

The Shanghai Commune and its legal successor, the Shanghai RC – which tragically ended in 1976 in a ruthless coup that was against millions of pro-CR activists – was not a farce at all. It was the working class’ powerful and heroic struggle to retake state power from those power holders who no longer served the people. It was an organic continuation of the proletarian revolutions in China and elsewhere in the world, notably the Paris Commune and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution. Of course, similar to every revolution, the Shanghai January Revolution

² Arif Dirlik thinks that simultaneous with the Chinese proletarian CR, there was also a bourgeois CR, in some sense a postmodernist CR that took place in the global capitalist society. Inspired by Dirlik but disagreeing with his assertion that “Thanks to its revolutionary legacy, rather than the antirevolutionary authoritarian propensities of the current Communist regime, in other words, Chinese society not only continues to offer a model of alternative modernity that challenges the hegemony of capitalism, but also offers concrete resolutions to problems that are products of the reconfiguration of global relations under contemporary capitalism,” I am inclined to think that the post-Mao China, which have been virtually stripped of all its socialist color, has been undergoing a far-reaching bourgeois CR with some characteristics of postmodernism due to its re-linking with the capitalist world order and the Liu-Dengist antirevolutionary authoritarian propensities. Arif Dirlik’s view could be found in his article “The Two Cultural Revolutions: The Chinese Cultural Revolution in the Perspective of Global Capitalism”, in Arif Dirlik, *Marxism in the Chinese Revolution*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, pp.165-182.

of 1967 simultaneously entailed historical contradictions of possibility and impossibility, continuity and discontinuity, and contingency and necessity. As Marx said,

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.³

Marx's remarks about how men make history were a comment on the bourgeois revolutions. But it could be perfectly applied to the Shanghai Commune. For the Chinese Maoist rebels, the Chinese revolution was in crisis on the eve of the CR because of the degradation of parts of the state bureaucracy and even the Party itself. From the very beginning, the socialist advance toward communism was interrupted and sabotaged by the "capitalist roaders taking authority within the Party", represented notably by the Liu-Dengists. When the Chinese revolution was in crisis, i.e. in a period of revolutionary crisis, revolutionary chaos had to be fomented in order to transform and reconstruct the society according to the Maoists' long-cherished revolutionary values and spirit. At this moment, the specter of the past, conspicuously the Paris Commune, was conjured up. As I have argued here, the values and spirit of the Paris Commune have been continuously transmitted for nearly one hundred years

³Marx, Karl, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *MECW*, Vol.11, pp.103-104.

from Paris, Russia, among other places, to China. Inspired by the Russian Soviet revolution that continued the cause of the Paris Commune, Chinese revolutionaries established Commune regimes twice in 1927. Their defeat was a tragedy, but not a farce. Several decades later, the Chinese dream of the Paris Commune was conjured up and put into practice again in the later 1950s when tens of thousands of agricultural People's Communes were established throughout the nation. When the Liu-Dengists within the Party tried to disband the People's Communes on the pretext of the partial failure of the Great Leap Forward, the Maoists in the Party, as guardians of the Chinese dream of the Paris Commune, resolutely fought against them. On the eve and during the early stage of the CR, the Maoists, "under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past", notably, under the Chinese vision and practice of the Paris Commune, called on the masses to seek a brand-new form of state structure modeled upon the Paris Commune to replace the existing one. The Maoists did not revive the Paris Commune from their wild fantasy, nor did they make history as they pleased. Rather, they conjured up models from their revolutionary heritage. The claim that Mao and his followers' call to build upon the Paris Commune was merely a ruse, or "flirting", as Harry Harding suggested,⁴ is more or less misleading. When the Maoists were busy revolutionizing themselves their surroundings in "creating something that has never yet existed", and in the quest for a new state structure, the most convenient and attractive political resources they could resort to and employ were not from the allegedly degenerated revisionist Soviet Union,

⁴ See Roderick MacFarquhar, John K. Fairbank, Denis Twitchett ed., *Cambridge History of China: The People's Republic, Part 2 : Revolutions Within the Chinese Revolution, 1966-1982*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.162.

but from the first working people's government—the Paris Commune that Marx, the greatest mentor of communist movements, had praised.

Since the Maoist leaders had called on the masses to learn from the Paris Commune, when the name of the Shanghai Commune was changed to the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, Mao and his followers were understandably denounced as the “betrayers” and “arch criminals” of the working people's cause by some people. But as I discussed in previous chapters, Mao himself never advocated a strict implementation of the original shape and configuration of the Paris Commune in socialist China. Rather, he saw the Paris Commune as something to use as a model for China in terms of its principles and spirit. Above all, “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.” The old must be smashed whereas the new should be established, but the new did not necessary have to assume the same shape as past models such as the Paris Commune. Again, Marx's further remarks on the bourgeois revolution were applicable to the working class revolution:

The resurrection of the dead in those revolutions served the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, not of parodying the old; of magnifying the given task in imagination, not of fleeing from its solution in reality; of finding once more the spirit of revolution, not of making its ghost walk about again.⁵

The Maoist rebels' resurrection of the Parisian communards in Shanghai was not to replicate all aspects of the Paris Commune in the past century, but to uphold and celebrate the ongoing new struggles in the storm of the CR. The new struggles

⁵ Marx, Karl, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in *MECW*, Vol.11, p.105..

aimed to cast aside the degenerated parts of the bureaucracy and those parts of the Party that were onto the track of a capitalist road. It attempts to urge the degenerated power holders to return to the socialist and communist line of serving the people.

When the Liu-Dengist power holders put the Maoist revolutionaries under pressure and rejected their petition for re-revolutionizing by encouraging the wind of economism and carrying out general strikes, the Maoists had to upgrade their struggles to a full scale power seizure from the power holders. Therefore, the intensified new struggle was first of all not designed to establish a revolutionary democratic power organ similar to that of the Paris Commune, but to establish a new revolutionary socialist power organ by adopting a wholly new form of state structure.

As I have argued before, even though in classical Marxist interpretations, the Paris Commune is a concrete example of a dictatorship of the proletariat, it is just a rudimentary one and not a dictatorship of the proletariat under socialism. It was more, as Lenin labeled it, a revolutionary democratic dictatorship that did not abolish private property. As we know, the anti-Paris Commune bourgeois forces and their followers were largely excluded from Paris. Moreover, the Paris Commune did not produce a visible political agenda to expropriate the expropriators, even though it might have such intentions in keeping with Marx's hypothesis. Therefore, by winning the healthy parts of the bourgeoisie over, the Paris Commune was able to institute a general election and functioned as a revolutionary democratic power organ in 1871. But to date a socialist government has never been successfully elected through universal suffrage at the state level, which abolishes class-property that makes the labour of the

many the wealth of the few.

In China, after Mao retired to the second front to focus on theoretical studies and left day-to-day state affairs to the Liu-Dengists in the late 1950s, the Liu-Dengists within the CCP (who tended to manage China in a capitalist way) had control of the major state and Party resources. As a result, they gained tremendous influence among the people. This was mainly due to the high prestige of the Party as a whole that was gained through the defeat of the Japanese invaders, the Nationalist armies, and the United Nations' troops in the Korean War; and with the achievements in nation building and socialist construction. After the ruthless suppression of outspoken critics of the Party in the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Liu-Dengist faction actively preached a philosophy of "being servile tools for the Party" leading to the condition before the CR that ordinary people dared not question the official Liu-Dengist policies. Due to the nontransparent nature of policy-making process in the Liu-Dengist bureaucracy, people had no way of knowing whether policies with capitalist tendencies were merely experimental and expediential, or if they were forays aimed at capitalist restoration. Therefore, when the Liu-Dengists propagated *san zi yi bao* aimed at dismantling the Peoples' Communes, the masses did not stage major resistances. Without the opposition from the Maoists, China might have dissolved the collective economy before the CR. In fact, regardless of Mao's repeated call for rebellion, the major bulk of the masses supported Party committees at various levels, which mean objectively supporting the pre-CR order and the Liu-Dengist bureaucracy. Under such circumstances, coupled with the internecine struggles among the rebels which were

partly instigated by the power holders, any attempt to copy, or wholesale, the old struggles in the Paris Commune (e.g. the simple institution of a general election aimed at faithfully setting up a Chinese Paris Commune in Shanghai), could lead to the return of the pre-CR order and deepen the degeneration toward capitalism for the whole society. To invoke the Parisian communards in the 1960s in Shanghai, or to use Marx's words, was to "magnify the given task" of developing the dictatorship of the proletariat and to continue the revolution from socialism to communism. It was not to "flee from its solution in reality", which is subjecting power holders to the strict supervision of the politically-conscious masses so as to prevent the power holders from forming any vested interest groups and detaching themselves from the masses. The spirit of revolution of the Paris Commune, that is, the spirit of smashing the old and establishing the new, surely should be invoked. But it was not necessary to let the ghost of the past walk about again.

In fact, when discussing the proletariat revolution, Marx averred that it could not draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future:

It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition about the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to dull themselves to their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. There the words went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the words.

These words were written by Marx in 1851-1852. In all the previous revolutions, the working class did not aim at seizing state power and establishing its own government. Every time, the workers had willingly subjected themselves to the

leadership of the bourgeoisie and hence surrendered their weapons to the latter.

Without any hesitation, the bourgeoisie used the surrendered weapons to butcher the working people. Given such a history, Marx solemnly warned the working people not to dull themselves with recollections of the past, and urged them to overcome all superstition about past class wars. When Marx said that the working class should draw its poetry only from the future, he was talking about fighting for the creation of unprecedented things in history; that the struggle of the working class should be future-oriented, toward abolishing class property, toward emancipating labor from capital, and toward the withering away of all previous state forms. Twenty years later, in keeping with Marx's admonition, the Parisian communards realized their aim by setting up the first working people's government in the world. Thereafter, Marx never again reiterated his previous admonition. Rather, he repeatedly urged the working people to draw lessons from the Paris Commune and predicted that the Commune model would be established in the whole world. From this historical event, the working people should draw its poetry from both the future and the past.

On the one hand, the Shanghai rebels in 1967 smashed the old ready-made state apparatus operating since 1949, and replaced it with a three-in-one combination by invoking the name of the Paris Commune and inheriting the legacy of the past proletarian revolutions in China and the West. On the other hand, it was by no means a faithful replica of the Paris Commune, nor was it a dogmatic implementation in all of its concrete aspects. The Shanghai rebels did not conduct a general election because at that moment the masses were still confused about what capitalism was and

who the real capitalist roaders were. Under such circumstances, the general election might not have been an efficient way to prevent those with a capitalist worldview from taking power. Instead, the Shanghai Commune adopted a preliminary form of a triple combination of rebels, revolutionary cadres and representatives from the army. This was a new socialist entity and a product of class struggle at the time. First of all, it was not possible to win the struggle by overthrowing all the veteran cadres who were mostly and basically good, having made great contributions during the war and socialist construction. Secondly, since the PLA troops were ordered to support the “Leftists”, they had to be given their share of power in the new government, at least during the turbulent period that required the authority of the troops to restore the order. Thirdly, since the power seizure was basically initiated by the rebels, they had every right to act as the major player in the new power regime. As a matter of fact, by setting the quota of rebel representatives at more than 50 percent, the leftist elements from the masses began to exert overwhelming influence on the new popular power organ of Shanghai.

The Shanghai Commune was not a Chinese replica of the Paris Commune; the Paris and Shanghai Communes were not mirror images. The Shanghai Commune neither abolished the regular troops, nor did it have a visible agenda to run a general election within a short time. Many critics used the *Sixteen-point Program* (in which the Paris Commune-type general election was mentioned) as evidence to accuse the Maoist leadership of betraying their initial promise. But the cultural revolutionary groups, committees and congresses—which were authorized as power organs of the

CR and were stipulated by the *Sixteen-point Program* to institute a general election (like that of the Paris Commune)— were just mass organizations that supposedly supplemented, not supplanted, the Party and the state power organs. In this sense, the mass organizations that consisted of the Shanghai Commune, more or less obeyed the rule to democratically elect leaders and delegates into the new power organ of Shanghai. (In fact, as I argued here, in some sense it is even hard to regard the Paris Commune as running universal suffrage since a major part of the Parisian population, those who fled to Versailles or those who were women, did not participate in the general election at that time.) Furthermore, the official CCP documents never stated that the mass organizations should replace the whole Party or state power organs. Instead, they had to be under the leadership of the Party. After the January Revolution in 1967, the power of the old SPC was taken over by an alliance of mass organizations. But these organizations still acknowledged the Party leadership from the Center, and they did not have any intention of sharing the power they had seized with other political forces through the agency of a general election. Furthermore, to simply equate the Shanghai Commune to the Paris Commune is misguided and misleading. Similarly, to charge Mao with the nominal shift of the Shanghai Commune to the Shanghai RC as telling evidence for his betrayal of the rebels and the spirit of the Paris Commune, was a wild and misguided conjecture. Firstly, I argued that virtually nobody in the Shanghai Commune proposed to abolish the regular army and the party. Secondly, after the nominal shift, almost all delegates from various rebel factions which constituted the Shanghai Commune remained unchanged in the

new Shanghai RC. Thirdly, all the official decrees, notices, and decisions issued by the Shanghai Commune still functioned under the Shanghai RC. Fourthly, the biggest difference between the Shanghai Commune and the Shanghai RC was that the latter incorporated more old Party cadres who publicly expressed support for the rebels than the Commune, but their role remained secondary compared to that of the Shanghai rebels until the end of the Maoist era.⁶ In summation, the Shanghai Commune was not “disbanded” as many commentators have claimed; at the most, its name was changed. By renaming it the Shanghai RC, the Shanghai Commune basically continued with a new title. In this sense, the Shanghai RC should not be considered as a *total* negation of the Shanghai Commune.

The January Storm in 1967 was by no means “not a revolution in any sense”, as the post-Mao Chinese regimes claimed. Compared to the pre-CR local state power organ, the Shanghai Commune and the Shanghai RC posted major differences in many ways. As the fruits of the January Storm, they were wholly new forms of revolutionary state structure. On the one hand, the Shanghai Commune was not a total negation of the Party and the state, as some thinkers such as Alain Badiou or Slavoj Žižek idealized. The Shanghai Commune and the ensuing Shanghai RC, on the other hand, had some characteristics of the communal semi-state power organ. With the formation of the Shanghai Commune and the ensuing Shanghai RC, the old state machinery with the strong support of the regular army, police, judicature and bureaucratic systems, which originated from systematic and hierarchical division of

⁶ In many other places, the rebels’ role in the new power organs was usually secondary compared with those of the army and the old Party cadres. This was decided by the previous power struggles among the three parties, in which the rebels were usually the weakest force.

labor in modern society, underwent major changes. To some extent, the old state machinery started the long process of withering away. The two greatest sources of expenditure—state functionarism (bureaucracies) and the standing army—were reduced greatly under the political framework of the Shanghai Commune and the Shanghai RC. The standing army was urged to participate in production and transform into a big school of revolution. As the army partially earned its own bread, the state expenditure on it was greatly reduced. As with the state functionarism, first of all, the Shanghai Commune simultaneously abolished the old SPC and the old Shanghai People's Committee. The two local state power organs were combined to form one unified structure under the framework of the Shanghai Commune, thus getting rid of redundancy and bulky bureaucratic establishments. This unification of the Party and the government within one single administrative structure was closer to Marx's ideal Communal state within which the working people's power organ was a working body, "executive and legislative at the same time."⁷ Under the new framework of the Shanghai Commune, in addition to representatives from the army and old Party cadres, all the administrators were drawn from ordinary people, especially common workers, who were elected or recommended by their affiliated mass organizations. Even the old cadre had to be initially recommended by the mass organizations. This meant that if a cadre was not recommended by any mass organizations, he or she could immediately lose the chance to be chosen as a leader in the new power organ. In addition, all the rebel delegates in the Shanghai Commune were required to report to their own

⁷ *MECW*, Volume 22., p.331

factions regularly, and were subject to the supervision and recall by their own factions at any time. All worker representatives, no matter what positions they held in the the Shanghai Commune and Shanghai RC, were roughly paid the same salaries as they had previously received in their original units. Furthermore, participation in manual labor was compulsory for all administrators in the Shanghai Commune and the ensuing Shanghai RC. The gap in terms of differences in status between the leaders of the power organ and the broad masses was therefore narrowed.

During the CR, the Chinese legal system even in Shanghai underwent major revolutionary changes. The functions and powers of the original public security organs and courts were greatly reduced. The procuracy, along with some other Central organs, was even abolished. These measures, according to Marx's views, were to rescue the society from the state, and to diminish the influence of the state and hence to gradually wither it away. The development of the militia under the control of the masses in Shanghai, and downplaying the role of the standing army through such things as incorporating the People's Armed Forces Department into the Shanghai Militia, should also be seen as a significant advancement toward the construction of the semi-state, and ultimately the stateless communal society.

Mass Organizations as Socialist Guardians

Now I would like to explain why the Chinese socialist cause suffered major setbacks after the death of Mao. This is so complicated that it is far beyond the scope

of this dissertation to explain it in a comprehensive manner. Here I will approach it from only one perspective: the mass organizations.

The CR was a social revolution with the goal of empowering the masses. As Mao, Xie Fuzhi and other Maoist leaders believed, the pre-CR state apparatus, especially those organs of “proletarian dictatorship”, such as the police, the procuracy, the courts, and even the army and the Party, held too much power. Without strict supervision of the masses, this kind of “proletarian dictatorship” might do much harm to the masses. To some extent, the CR attempted to reduce some of the power that was originally entrusted to the special state power organs. During the CR, some of the functions of the standing army and the police were transferred to the people’s militia. Many courts works were handled by thousands of People’s Mediation Committees. Many bureaucratic state institutions, such as the procuracy, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Department of Central Propaganda, were even abolished. Furthermore, a large portion of the state power was devolved to the grass-roots mass organizations. These organizations mushroomed in the hundreds of thousands among the students, workers, peasants, lower-middle functionaries, and even soldiers. Even one single person could form a one-man faction.

Before the CR, even though the majority of the CCP members could keep their revolutionary zeal and serve the people, some of them only intended to extend their personal interests. They joined the Party merely organizationally, not spiritually, that is, they did this without any real belief in and commitment to communism. These opportunists who were more interested in protecting and furthering their own interests

did not hesitate to suppress the democratic rights of the masses in the name of revolution and the Party, if it served their aims. The formation of the mass organizations and the entry of the mass organizations into the new power organs during the CR, to a great degree, had far-reaching historical significance. Only through the mass organizations that were relatively independent from the Party and played active role in the government, could the common people effectively enjoy their democratic rights and supervise the state and Party. Without this organizational form, it was very hard for the common people to defend their rights and prevent the revolutionary Party and the state from devolving into the enemy of the masses. During the CR, for the first time, the governmental officials were under the direct supervision of the masses within and outside the state power organs. With the powerful backing of the mass organizations, the masses, especially those from the working class backgrounds, could not only run the factories, but also directly run the state power organs. This was a solid measure of “immediate introduction of control and supervision by *all*, so that *all* may become ‘bureaucrats’ for a time and that, therefore, *nobody* may be able to become a ‘bureaucrat’.”⁸ To a certain degree, the mass organizations were the revolutionary vehicles of the continuous revolution. The mass movements based on the dynamics of the mass organizations were the embodiments of the continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

To be sure, various political forces, from the leftists to the rightists among others, could make use of the mass organizations and mass movements to further their

⁸ Vladimir Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *V. I. Lenin Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Vol.2, International Publishers, 1967, p.351, emphasis original.

own interests. The first mass organizations to emerge from the CR were actually the pro-establishment and The first mass organizations to emerge from the CR were actually the pro-establishment and pro-Liu-Dengist old Red Guards (*lao hongweibing*). In order to highlight their own role and defend their parents who were high Party and army cadres, they took up and promoted the “bloodline theory” (*xuetong lun*) that placed extreme importance on a person's class origin. And they used this as a weapon to monopolize the “revolution”, thereby excluding many students who did not have good class backgrounds. The old Red Guards’ activities, which targeted those with bad family backgrounds, effectively diverted the general orientation away from the struggle against “the power holders in Party taking the capitalist road”. Therefore, when the rebels arose from the rank and file students without prominent family backgrounds and set the target on the power holders, they clashed bitterly with so-called old Red Guards on the issue of whether to defend the pre-CR order and establishments. But the decisive turning point of the CR was the stage of the large-scale workers’ movements at the end of 1966. It was the rebel workers’ organizations that functioned as a blow to the old bureaucracy in the January Revolution.

After the defeat of the pro-establishment loyalist worker organizations, the only card left in the hands of the power holders was the use of economic sabotage and general strike, which resulted in an unexpected full-scale power seizure by the rebel organizations. After that, new power organs were formed based on the triple combination of rebels, revolutionary cadres and army representatives. Within the new

power organs that were formed after the authentic power seizure by the rebel factions, the delegates from the mass organizations usually accounted for the largest body in the triple combination framework. In Shanxi and Shanghai, for example, the delegates from the mass organizations occupied more than 50 percent of the functionaries in the new power organs after power seizure. This is the kind of proportion Mao favored. For Mao, a better political solution to the degeneration of the Party and government bureaucracy was to include more delegates directly from the ranks of the masses in the new power organs. In fact, the Maoist leadership repeatedly stressed that the triple alliance, that is, the RC, was just a temporary political arrangement during the CR. It was by no means a fixed form of the new power organ. Among the three parties in the triple combination, the role of the army was transitional. When the new power organ began to fully function, the troops would withdraw from the civil power organ. In fact, after the Lin Biao Incident in 1971, the army representatives were pulled back to the barracks. As for the representatives of the old veteran cadres, they would eventually fade out from the triple combination due to the inevitable biological reasons – that is that they would get old and eventually die. In due time, the representatives of the old veteran cadres would be replaced by the common and younger Party representatives promoted from the rank-and-file people. At some point, with the withdrawing of the army from the triple combination, there would emerge a more stable power structure in which the representatives from the mass organizations and from the party compete and cooperate with each other. At the same time, this kind of more stable power organ would still be under the leadership of the Party possibly for a long time. Therefore,

the triple combination would be changed into a double combination, namely, the Leftist representatives from the rebel mass organizations and the Party representatives. Or, the triple combination could change in a different way, where it is a combination of representatives from the Party and the two rival mass factions: the conservative one and the radical one. With the enhancement of the class consciousness of the representatives from the mass organizations, the differences in status between the Party members and the non-Party members from the mass organizations could be eventually narrowed, and the Party's role in this kind of power structure could be progressively reduced.

Records showed that during the CR, in places that the pro-socialist and communist mass organizations exerted dominant influence such as in Shanghai, the democracy of the working people was greatly expanded and production developed rapidly. The history of the CR proved that the leftist mass organizations could competently fight against revisionism and bureaucracy in the Party and the state, substantially dislodge the rightist elements, and ardently rekindle and continue the revolution. Therefore, I surmise that the new working people's power organ based on the alliance of a communist party and numerous mass organizations can be a more viable organizational form for a socialist society, which can be gradually transformed into communism. Based on the practice of the mass organizations during the CR, the political arrangement in the future socialist society should include the following aspects: any mass organization should be allowed, as long as it claims to support socialism and communism, and are willing to subject itself to the leadership

of the communist Party. The mass organizations should be the advocates and guardians of socialism and communism. They can be established on their own initiative without notifying the Party in advance. Mass organizations should be encouraged to be established in all colleges, schools, factories, mines, governmental agencies, urban districts and villages, among others, yet the scale and the scope of operation of the mass organizations has to be stipulated by the communist party. This is because the purpose of those mass organizations is to enable the masses to actively learn and participate in politics, and to closely supervise the ruling revolutionary party – not to replace the party, as long as the party continues the revolution. The leaders of the mass organs should be democratically elected through voting by their own members. Through due procedures, the mass organizations have the right to send political delegates to the power organ, which is led by the party, and they have every right to propose that the party dispel pro-capitalist opportunist party members, or those who are “Leftists in form but Rightists in essence”. Unless the mass organizations degenerate into criminal groups, or if they wage armed struggles against socialism and communism, or against other mass organizations, the Party cannot disband them. They should not be temporary, but permanent, as long as they do not declare to dissolve on their own initiatives. The mass organs have the right to be subsidized by the state, and the mass organizations, as the material vehicles of the mass movements, have the right to go on strike and realize the Four Big Rights (*sida*) of speaking out freely, airing views freely, holding great debates, and writing big-character posters. To ensure the semi-independence of the mass organs, it is not

necessary to set up party committees to exercise leadership within these organs. Furthermore, the revolutionary party has the responsibility to admit new communist members from those mass organs. Meanwhile, every existing communist member has the right to join any mass organ. In sum, the party and the mass organs maintain a dialectical dynamic relationship.

Last but not the least, every mass organization has the right to organize an armed militia, which should simultaneously be a military, labor, education and sports unit. As long as the ruling communist party continues the revolution and serves the people, the armed mass organs can aid the party in defending socialism and communism, and helping the world revolution of the working people. Conversely, if revisionists control the party and betray the people's interests, transforming the socialist means of production into the capitalist means of production, and the public ownership into the private ownership, then the armed mass organs can take up arms to topple this degenerated "communist" regime. This is why Mao said "to rebel against reactionaries is justified", and advocated "going against the tide" (*fan chaoliu*).

Seen from these viewpoints, then, a major lesson of the CR is why after running for a while, almost all mass organizations were disbanded after the establishment of the RCs. Due to the lockup and burning of the official documents of the CR by post-Mao regimes, unfortunately the specific reasons and the procedures of disbanding the mass organs remained unclear. From my research, the attitude of the Maoist leadership toward this issue might have undergone a gradual shift. The dissolution of the mass organs was embodied in the Fold-up-flag (*daoqi*) Campaign

amid the efforts to bring about the revolutionary great alliances to form the RCs. On February 1967 immediately after the January Storm, Mao proposed that the rebels achieve “the great alliances” yet preserve the individual rebel organizations in order to consolidate revolutionary gains. He said: "Right now the situation is very good and the achievements are big. The whole state is progressing. When the situation is to the advantage of the revolutionaries, the great alliances according to individual systems, departments and work-units should be pursued. Pay attention not to have the revolutionaries merged into conservative forces. Don't bring about the great alliances by disbanding organizations.”⁹ In April 1967, when Mao was being briefed he was told that the universities and colleges in Beijing had brought about the great alliances and jointly formed the Congress of the Red Guards on the condition of disbanding the initial three Red Guards' headquarters. Mao was very surprised and asked for the exact reasons for the dissolution of these three student headquarters.¹⁰ For quite a long time, Mao's basic attitude toward the great alliances was to “make alliances without folding up the flags” (*lianhe bu daoqi*), namely, to forge great alliances but not to dismantle the mass organs. As Premier Zhou Enlai expounded on November 9, 1967,

It is not necessary to fold up the flags to bring about the great alliances, and to dissolve the organizations. After the great alliances there will be new issues. The great alliances do not mean to disband the organizations. Only when conditions are ripe, could the organizations

⁹ Mao, Zedong, Guanyu shixing da lianhe de tanhua (Mao's Talk about the Fulfillment of Great Alliances), Cultural Revolution Database. 2006. *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* (CD-ROM). Song Yongyi, ed. Hong Kong: Universities Service Centre for China Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

¹⁰ Mao Zedong, Yu mou tongzhi de yiduan duihua (A Short Dialog with a Comrade), April 4, 1967, from *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought (Mao Zedong sixiang wansui)*, Vol. 5, p.302, printed in Wuhan, 1967-1968.

be dissolved. Unite organizations without abrogating the titles [of the original organizations]. The great unification [by disbanding organizations] does not work. It is necessary to have idiosyncrasies but not to have an idiosyncrasy of "only I am revolutionary". We need both personalities and commonalities. This is not factionalism. Factionalism means to exclude others and is a feature of the petti-bourgeoisie. Even after the great alliances, the titles of the two constituent factions could be kept. The Military Control Committees (*junguanhui*) don't need to persuade them to fold up their own flags. This is just asking for trouble. As for whether or not to form a unified organization in the future, [it depends on the conditions, and] let it be and let outcomes appear naturally.¹¹

From Zhou's talk we could discern that the Maoist leadership did not favor disbanding the mass organizations at least at the initial stage of the great alliances. On December 10, 1967, Premier Zhou even regretted that he did not pay much attention to propagate Mao's initial directive of "make alliances without folding up the flags".¹² But the local Military Control Committees who were in charge of forming the local RCs obviously had other thoughts. They usually pressed the mass organizations to disband after the formation of the great alliances. But eventually, because of the persistent phenomena of bloody armed conflicts among different mass organizations, Zhou Enlai started to stress that it was merely a temporary measure not to dissolve some organizations probably from the beginning of 1968. After the RCs based on triple combination were formed, it was better to fold up the flags, that is, to disband the various mass organizations. To not dissolve these organizations at the time did not mean these organization would never be dissolved" But the Fold-up-flags Campaign

¹¹ Zhou Enlai, Zhou Enlai jiejian ge tieluju canjia tiedaobu Mao Zedong sixiang xuexiban daibiao shi de jianghua (Zhou Enlai's Speech to the Representatives from the National Railway System Mao Zedong Thought Study-class), in The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database (CD-ROM). Song Yongyi, ed. Hong Kong: Universities Service Centre for China Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

¹² Zhou Enlai jiejian moujibu sige chang geming zuzhi daibiao shi de tanhua gaiyao (A Summary of Zhou Enlai's Speech to the Representatives of the Revolutionary Mass Organs from Four Factories Related to National Defense), December 10, 1967, Ibid.

encountered stubborn resistance from mass organizations, especially the rebel factions that had fewer resources than their rival conservative mass organs. When the rebels lost organizational support, they would usually be ruthlessly defeated by their adversaries. As a result, as late as September 1968, the Beijing RC suggested to the Maoist leadership that it was better not to use the slogan of “folding up the flags”. Instead, the parlance should be shifted to “overcoming sectarianism” and “scraping the mountains (*xueping shantou*) by opposing the mountainism (*shantou zhuyi*).”¹³ In the late days of 1968, most mass organizations were dismantled. On August 28, 1969, after several armed conflicts between Chinese and Soviet troops in the border areas, and China faced the looming possibility of a major war with the Soviet Union, the CCP CC ordered all mass organizations that were formed by two different trades be disbanded and rendered illegal any newly formed mass organizations. Without powerful support from the mass organizations, many rebel representatives in the local RCs were gradually and relative-easily dislodged by the military or Party authorities on some pretext or other.¹⁴ Even when rebel representatives were able to hold office in the RCs, they were usually assigned to the deputy positions and hence did not have much actual power. In later political movements, such as the Campaign of Criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius in 1974 and the Campaign of Counterattacking the Right-deviation Wind to Reverse Verdicts between 1975 and 1976, many rebel leaders

¹³ Zhonggong zhongyang zhongyang wenge pifa beijingshi geming weiyuanhui guanyu zhaokai gongren he jiefangjun Mao Zedong sixiang xuanchuandui fuzeren huiyi qingkuang baogao (Issued with instructions from the CCP CC and the CCRG: report by the Beijing Revolutionary Committee on the conferences with the leaders of the “Mao Zedong Thought worker propaganda teams”), September 6, 1968. Ibid. The mountainism basically means provincialism with too much democracy, resulting in the loosening of central control.

¹⁴ The WGH in Shanghai basically survived in the form of the Shanghai General Trade Union during the CR partly due to Wang Hongwen’s promotin to the Party Center.

hoped to launch a counteroffensive against the rightists in the Party and the army. But they did not have the support of the mass organizations. And unlike what happened in 1966 and 1967 when they had the backing of the mass organ, they could not rally the broadest masses. Although the rebel leaders did manage to make use of some official organizational forms such as the Workers' Congress (*gongaihui*) to further their interests, compared with the early mass organizational form of fighting teams, this mode of mobilization, which mainly involved the core members from the former mass organizations was less efficient, and the participation of the broadest common people was lacking.¹⁵ When the rightists staged a coup in 1976, the leftist rebels had no effective way of swiftly organizing potent resistance partially due to the dissolution of the once powerful mass organizations.

After the CR, Deng Xiaoping proclaimed that China would never launch mass movements again. Consequently, in the eyes of Deng, all mass organizations, whether rebel or conservative, were wrong, even if many during the CR did defend his line (though not defending Deng himself), and fought against the Maoist rebels to the bitter end. But Deng making illegal of any independent mass organ turned out to be far-sighted for his class. After 1992, he urged the regime to lay off millions of workers who had experienced the CR and made great contributions to the national construction, of socialist China. When this happened, many former workers loyal to the Liu-Dengist line began to realize that it was a fatal mistake for them to join the conservative mass organizations during the CR to fight for a world that would lay

¹⁵ See Chen, Yi'nan, *Qingchun wuhen: yige zaofanpai gongren de shinian wenge (Youth without Trace: A Rebel Workers' Ten-year CR)*, Chapter 25. Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2006.

them off. They swore that if they could go back to the CR, they would have definitely joined the Maoist rebels, not the loyalist of the Party of Order.¹⁶ Deng Xiaoping knew very well that any former loyalist mass organs would not hesitate to rebel against his regime if these workers knew the regime's hidden political agenda to fire them.

In an article commemorating the 40th anniversary of the CR, the economist Fred Engst summarized possible reasons behind the Maoist leadership ordering that the mass organizations be abolished. The reasons are as follows:

- * Revolutionaries within the Party underestimated the importance of independent mass organizations.

- * The right to organize was granted by the Party, not earned through struggle.

- * Capitalist roaders within the Party vehemently opposed the mass organizations for their ability to challenge the Party's authority and their monopoly of power.

- * Overwhelming resentment of Party officials toward mass organizations limited Mao's ability to carry out the Cultural Revolution to the end, coupled with his failing health.

- * Ordinary people had not learned sufficiently how to exercise their socialist freedom of association in a responsible, peaceful means that also respected dissenting views. Their organizational immaturity undermined their effectiveness. Typically, one sees that the mass organizations were plagued with factionalism, intolerance of other organizations, quickness to criticize others, slowness of self examination, and personal rivalry that often resorted to violence. Chaos and disunity during that period made the movement unsustainable.

- * Ultimately, it was Mao's reluctant retreat (under the threat of a civil war and the resistance of the conservative forces inside and outside of the Party) to the idea of a centralized leadership of the party (to the exclusion of other independent organizations) that terminated

¹⁶ For one of such cases, see Dai Weidi, Wuhan "7.20" shijian ji qita (About the July 20 Incident in Wuhan and Other Things), see <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class14/200501/1205.html>, cited on November 2, 2009.

the experiment in independent mass organizations.¹⁷

It is reasonable to say that the universal and overwhelming opposition from the Party and army cadres toward the mass organizations, especially rebel factions, and the endless bloody factionalism among mass organizations could contribute most to the downfall of mass organs during the CR. As a prominent leader, Mao could have important influence on the historical process, but ultimately, it is the masses who create history. Even Mao was unable to go beyond his times. If the revolutionaries in the Mao era did not fully understand the significance of mass organizations and practice this organizational form well, Fred Engst urged revolutionaries to act better in the future with regard to mass organizations:

On the one hand, the future proletarian parties, after seizing state power, should consciously put themselves under the supervision of the masses, viz. to consciously bring up relatively independent mass organizations, and to train the working class's capability of self-management; on the other hand, the broadest masses of the proletariat should learn to differentiate two kinds of contradictions, overcome the factionalism, respect different viewpoints, and ensure the rights of other mass organizations. Only by this could the proletarian power be consolidated in virtue of the proletarian extensive democracy and could the historical task of the proletariat be fulfilled.¹⁸

Fred Engst's suggestion is worthy of being experimented in the future socialist societies. Nevertheless, I have to reaffirm that any organizational form and any institution – be it the Paris Commune, the Soviet, the Shanghai Commune, or the

¹⁷ Engst, Fred (Yang Heping), "Mass Organizations and Socialism in China". This is an article presented by Engst to the Hong Kong Conference "The Fortieth Anniversary: Rethinking the Genealogy and Legacy of the Cultural Revolution" on June 9-10, 2006. see

<http://chinastudygroup.net/2007/05/mass-organizations-and-socialism-in-china/>, cited February 7, 2010.

¹⁸ Engst, Fred (Yang Heping), *Shilun wuchanjieji de da mingzhu jinian Mao Zedong dansheng yibaiyishiwu zhounian (On the Proletarian Extensive Democracy: In Memory of the 115th Anniversary of the Birth of Mao Zedong)*, see <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class17/200812/63308.html> cites on February 7, 2010.

Revolutionary Committees with the support of mass organizations, or others – cannot guarantee that society will advance toward socialism and communism. As the state has to be maintained possibly for quite a long time in the face of deadly bourgeois intervention at home and abroad, it is dangerous to abolish the vanguard party, the socialist army, and the bureaucracy as a whole. It would be equally risky to institute a Paris Commune-style power organ largely in its original shape and configuration too early. The only way to advance to socialism and communism in a workers' state, while promoting world revolution abroad, is to put politics in command. As Mao put it, by “taking class struggle as the key link” (*yi jieji douzheng wei gang*), “we must combat selfishness and repudiate revisionism” (*yao dousi pixiu*).

The Forgetting and Remembering of the Cultural Revolution

On October 6, 1976, less than one month after Mao Zedong's death, four key rebel leaders, i.e. Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qing, and Yao Wenyuan, were arrested in Beijing in a coup. Shortly after this event, three major leaders in Shanghai, Ma Tianshui, Xu Jingxian and Wang Xiuzhen, were tricked into flying to Beijing to attend a fake “Central meeting”. At this point, some Shanghai rebel leaders learned from the broadcasts of foreign news agencies, such as the BBC and VOA, that Wang Hongwen et al had been apprehended. The night of October 12, the rebel leaders who were left in Shanghai convened a special meeting. During this meeting, they decided that if Ma Tianshui, Xu Jingxian and Wang Xiuzhen did not return to

Shanghai the next day as Beijing had promised, they would lead the Shanghai militia to wage an armed uprising the next night. Ma Zhenlong, a standing committee member of the Shanghai General Trade Union, which was the metabolism of the disbanded WGH, contended that they should immediately revolt without waiting for Ma, Xu and Wang. He was ready to sacrifice his life. Zhu Yongjia, a literati rebel leader and a standing committee member of the Shanghai RC, swore that if Shanghai took the lead, then very soon, other provinces and cities would follow as well. If the uprising was suppressed and failed, Zhu averred, then, similar to the Paris Commune, history would remember their outstanding deeds. In this meeting, Zhu also announced four slogans that he had prepared for the uprising: “return our Jiang Qing”, “return our Chunqiao”, “return our Hongwen”, and “return our Wenyuan”. Together with Wang Zhichang, another intellectual leader, Zhu Yongjia urged the worker leaders to mobilize the Shanghai militia, and he promised that he and Xiao Mu, Wang Hongwen’s secretary, would prepare the manifesto for the revolt. Once the militia took the key Shanghai positions before daybreak, they would announce the manifesto to the world. In the meeting, Zhu Yongjia also recounted the heroic story of the Parisian Communards who fought to the end. Nevertheless, even though all the Shanghai rebel leaders agreed to revolt, many of them wanted to know what really happened before the planned revolt. They suggested that they should wait for several more hours to see whether or not their superiors Ma, Xu and Wang would return to Shanghai on schedule at 11:00 o’clock the next day.¹⁹

¹⁹ Wang, Wenzheng, *Qinli shenpan Zhang Chunqiao (My Experience of Trying Zhang Chunqiao)*, in *Mingren Zhuanji (Life of Celebrities)*, 2006, No.2. pp.63-64; Gao, Ziru, Meng, Xian, *Ershi shiji da shenpan (The Big Trails*

As we know, 1976 did not see the rise of another Shanghai Commune. Ma Tianshui, Xu Jingxian and Wang Xiuzhen returned to Shanghai on schedule the next day. But by then, all the major strategic positions were taken by the coup forces. All rebel leaders were gradually imprisoned and sentenced by the post-Mao regimes. Among the rebel activists, Ma Zhenlong was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment for "the crime of instigating armed revolt" and other crimes. When the judge delivered his verdict to Ma Zhenlong in a prison house, Ma refused to accept it. On the judge's insistence, Ma Zhenlong accepted but immediately threw the verdict out of the iron-barred window without reading a single word.²⁰ Zhu Yongjia, the erudite historian and literati rebel leader, who got no chance to announce the manifesto of another Shanghai Commune in 1976, was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for "the crime of instigating armed revolt" and other crimes. Ma Tianshui was a high Party cadre representative who supported the rebels after the formation of the Shanghai RC. He made a great contribution to the economic development of Shanghai during the CR and cooperated with the Hua Guofeng and Ye Jianying regime right after the coup in 1976. But he was dismissed from the position of Shanghai party secretary and arrested the next year. Due to harsh interrogation, Ma Tianshui became mentally deranged in 1978. In 1988, Ma Tianshui, a senior and outstanding communist who had been a member of the party for nearly 50 years, died alone in a madhouse. As for the four Maoist leaders apprehended in Beijing, Yao Wenyuan, an

in the 20th Century), Shanxi luyou chubanshu, 1993, pp.51-53; Ye, Yonglie, "Sirenbang xingwan" (*The Rise and Fall of the Gang of Four*), Renmin ribao chuban she, 2009, pp.488-493.

²⁰ Wang, Wenzheng, Shen Guofan, *Shenpan "sirenbang" Shanghai yudang* (The Trial of the Followers of "Gang of Four" in Shanghai), in *Bainianchao (A Hundred Years' Tide)*, 2008, No.1.

ideologue, a member of CCP Politburo, and a major leader of the Shanghai Commune and Shanghai RC, was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. Yao died on December 23, 2005 and was buried with his wife. In the center of his tombstone are inscribed two words: "Truth and True Feelings" (*zhenli zhenqing*). On the back of the tombstone, one Yao's poem, dedicated to his wife, was carved. One line of the poem reads: "I will not change my mind." Zhang Chunqiao, the major leader of the Shanghai Commune and the ensuing Shanghai RC, was sentenced to death with a reprieve. During the entire period of the court trial, Zhang Chunqiao refused to cooperate by remaining silent. Zhang died April 21, 2005, shortly before his comrade Yao Wenyuan in the same year. Wang Hongwen, a rebel worker leader and later the vice chairman of the CCP, was condemned to life imprisonment. In 1975, speaking about Deng Xiaoping re-assuming office in the Center, Wang claimed: "let's wait 10 years and see." Wang might have thought that he could live longer than Deng Xiaoping as he was only 41 years old while Deng was 71 at that time.²¹ But on August 3, 1992, Wang died in jail from "serious liver disease" at the age of 57, five years before Deng Xiaoping's death. Jiang Qing, when she was tried in Deng Xiaoping's court, read out loud, "A Point of View of Mine" ("*Wode yidian kanfa*"). She said:

Xiang Zhuang performed the sword dance as a cover for his attempt on Liu Bang's life.²² Those traitors will have their hold caught by the

²¹ Xu Qingquan, Deng Xiaoping wangbuliao de yiju hua (The Words Deng Xiaoping Never Forgot), in *Shehui guancha* (*Observation of Society*), 2005, No.10.

²² Xiang Zhuang, an ancient general under Xiang Yu's command, pretended to perform a sword dance to entertain Liu Bang but really in an attempt to kill him. Liu Bang managed to escape and later became the first emperor of the Western Han Dynasty, ruling over China from 202 BC to 195 BC. Here Jiang Qing stated that the trial of the

people. The key issue is about the two programmes. The class struggle should be taken as the key link. Once the key link is grasped, everything else falls into place [just like once you pull up the headrope of a fishing net, its meshes open], and we can continue the revolution. To take [Deng Xiaoping's] three directives as the key link is to take the meshes as headrope; it is a revisionist anti-party action. [Those revisionists are] extremely vicious and now completely reveal the true colors. In order to cover their crimes, they modified their appearance. To gain fame and authority, they [did not hesitate to] cheat the public. By claiming to do things unorthodoxly, they spread fallacies to deceive people. They manufactured monstrous lies to cover the truth. They viciously perpetrated a gigantic fraud and maneuvered for some evil ends. They forcefully confused one thing with another and furtively grafted one twig on to another. They stealthily shifted the misfortune onto others in order to divert the people's attention. They unashamedly blew their own trumpets in order to clear themselves of opprobrium. They framed cases against the CCRG. They persecuted and killed related witnesses and accomplices. The hands of those revisionists, who throw straws against the wind, cannot cover all the ears and eyes of the people in the world. The motive force to make the world history is the masses of the heroic people.²³

Obviously, Jiang Qing did not think that she was a criminal, and she laid her hope on the masses. But by this time, her supporters could not publicly defend her, because millions of them suffered the same destiny as her, or even worse at the same time. Outside Jiang Qing's trial in Deng's court, a large number of Maoist rebels was jailed, executed, or forced to commit suicide. Moreover, there were still many common people who hated Jiang Qing, as the coup and post-coup regimes gave them official verdicts and documents that included the lie that Jiang Qing intended to murder Mao Zedong, who they hypocritically referred to as the "greatest and reddest sun in people's hearts". Therefore, when it was said that Jiang Qing committed suicide on May 14, 1991, there was not much of a reaction among the common people.

four rebel leaders was in fact the trial of Mao Zedong.

²³ Ye, Yonglie, "Sirenbang xingwan" (*The Rise and Fall of the Gang of Four*), Renmin ribao chuban she, 2009, p.1368.

Even though the official statement of Jiang Qing's "suicide" was full of inconsistencies and questionable "facts",²⁴ not many people wanted to find out the truth regarding Jiang Qing's mysterious death.

But things have greatly changed in recent years. The CR, and woman who fought at the forefront of CR, Jiang Qing, were invoked and remembered in the struggles of the Chinese working people. For instance, on December 26, 2006, in commemoration of the 113th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong, more than one thousand workers, disregarded the opposition from the government and held a rally at the football field of the Chongqing Special Steel Factory in Chongqing city. Above the platform hung a big CR style poster of Mao that said "Let the Socialist New Culture Occupy Every Stage". This was a famous CR slogan advocated by Jiang Qing. As these words usually came with Jiang Qing's pictures during the CR, the re-staging of Jiang Qing's slogan in a workers' rally, though with Mao's picture, was actually a homage publicly paid to her as well.

More significant thing related to Jiang Qing happened in the last days of 2009. In a popular Chinese website *zhonghuawang* (<http://www.china.com>), there is a virtual memorial hall section (<http://jidian.china.com>) dedicated to several hundred deceased people. These various halls were set up by the moderators of this website and the common netizens (*wangmin*) as well. The order of these virtual memorial halls was based on the numbers of the virtual flowers offered by the netizens. The more flowers the netizens offer to a deceased person, the higher status the deceased

²⁴ See Kuduo, *Jiang Qing pingzhuan* (A Critical Biography of Jiang Qing), Hong Kong: Yinghe chubanshe, 2005.

person holds. The most popular memorial hall at the site was that of Mao Zedong, who obtained more than 1.4 million flowers from netizens from March 30, 2009 till February 13, 2010.²⁵ On November 16, 2009, in the virtual memorial hall section of this site, some people set up a Li Yunhe memory hall (Li Yunhe was the original name of Jiang Qing). Since Jiang Qing had been demonized for more than 30 years as a “white-boned demon” (*baigujing*) by the mainstream media, Jiang Qing’s name could not be used in the title of her memorial hall. Almost completely unexpectedly, a mere 6 days later, Li Yunhe (Jiang Qing)’s memorial hall obtained more than 130,000 flowers and more than eight thousand short elegiac addresses. The popularity of Jiang Qing was only second to Mao Zedong in the memorial hall section of this site, far beyond other halls. Astonished by this, the administrators of the *zhonghuawang*, possibly on the direct demand of the regime, deleted Jiang Qing's memorial hall on Nov. 23, 2009. This move from the authorities enraged the netizens who supported Jiang Qing. As a result, the *zhonghuawang* was incessantly bombarded by protests and abuses. At the same time, some new memorial halls dedicated to Jiang Qing, under other names of Jiang, were stubbornly set up by netizens disregarding the repeated deletions. Take the Li Jin (another pseudonym for Jiang Qing) memorial hall, for instance. Just overnight, the rank of her memorial hall was promoted to the second place with more than 120,000 flowers. Again, unfortunately, this Li Jin memorial hall was deleted. Then the netizens set up other new memorial halls of Jiang Qing again and again. The deletion and reconstruction of Jiang Qing's memorial halls have been

²⁵ The site is <http://jidian.china.com/usermemorial.jsp?urlcode=maozedong>, cited on February 10, 2010.

repeatedly and alternately staged for many days. Sometimes the administrators of *zhonghuawang* would keep one or two Jiang Qing's memorial halls for several days, but in order to downplay Jiang Qing's popularity, the flowers and elegiac addresses dedicated to her were frequently cleared away. Moreover, in order to limit the numbers of the flowers offered to her, *zhonghuawang* adjusted the script, and instituted a new restriction that people can only offer one flower every three minutes. But all these measures could not eradicate the love and enthusiasm of the netizens toward Jiang Qing. The numbers of flowers offered to her have been continuously increasing.²⁶

Among the elegiac addresses, many of them were from young people, and quite a few middle-aged and old people, who expressed their deep remorse for not defending Jiang Qing in 1976. In sharp contrast to the official propaganda, Jiang Qing was seen by these netizens as the greatest heroine of the proletariat, the national mother of the PRC (*guomu*), and the most beautiful Chinese woman. Many netizens even directly called Jiang Qing mom in her memorial hall. After many days in which there was a seesaw battle between the common netizens and the administrators of the website, possibly together with the Chinese regime behind the scene, Jiang Qing's memorial hall was finally allowed to stand.²⁷ At this point, including deleted flowers, Jiang Qing might have received more than one million flowers at the site. This was in fact a major battle over Jiang Qing's reputation between the common netizens and the

²⁶ See <http://www.jiangqing.org/files/v/e/bookoneonethreefour.html>, cited on February 10, 2010.

²⁷ The current address of Jiang Qing's memorial hall at *Zhonghuawang* site, under Li Jing's name, is: <http://jidian.china.com/usermemorial.jsp?urlcode=jq>, and a netizen set up a backup mirror site of it at: www.jiangqing.org, cited on February 10, 2010.

Chinese authorities. In this instance, in virtual space, Jiang Qing and her supporters have triumphed.

Interestingly, Deng Xiaoping's memorial hall was also set up there. However, he only obtained fourteen thousand flowers between March 31, 2009 and February 13, 2010. And some netizens have disclosed that these flowers were a sham. The administrators themselves intentionally added a large number of flowers to Deng Xiaoping by employing software—because it was too awkward for the authorities to have Deng Xiaoping get only a few flowers compared to Jiang Qing. But the biggest difference between Deng Xiaoping's and Jiang Qing's memorial hall is not the numbers of flowers they received. Rather, it is the content of the elegiac addresses. In Deng Xiaoping's memorial hall, more than 95% of the comments were negative and abusive. But in Jiang Qing's memorial hall, more than 95% of the comments were positive and full of praise. Since the time it was first set up, Deng Xiaoping's memorial hall has been repeatedly closed down because of too many curse words. Right now, the *zhonghuawang* administrators have to hire extra help to delete the curse words in Deng Xiaoping's hall.²⁸ Jiang Qing's memorial hall has been repeatedly closed down as well. Yet in sharp contrast to Deng's hall, Jiang Qing received far more flowers, and more importantly, she obtained mostly favorable compliments. One elegiac address of Jiang Qing reads: “Rosy clouds/flow in the sky/the people's daughter Jiang Qing/ is coming back.” In addition to Jiang Qing, at

²⁸ Deng Xiaoping's hall locates at <http://jidian.china.com/usermemorial.jsp?urlcode=dengxiaoping>. At the moment of writing this story (on February 13, 2010), I find that even though Deng's hall is still there, the section of elegiac addresses in his hall is closed possibly due to too many protests and curse words. But in other people's halls such as Jiang Qing, the sections of elegiac addresses are wide open.

the virtual cemetery section of *zhonghuawang*, there are memorial halls for almost all the major Maoist leaders during the CR, such as Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan, Kang Sheng, Xie Fuzhi, Chen Yonggui, Qiao Guanhua, Hao Ran, etc. Every one of them has received strong support and a large number of flowers. It was indeed one of the many ways by which the Chinese people were recounting the history of the CR other than the official version. If Jiang Qing were alive and could see this, she might have even more confidence to say that it was really the masses of the people, not the elite, who made world history.

Farewell to Revolution vs. Continue the Revolution: The Commune as an Eternal Return

With the passing of Mao Zedong and the rightist coup in 1976, China started a large-scale campaign of de-revolutionization. At the early stage of this campaign, it took a “revolutionary” form by employing traditional revolutionary parlance, and the main target was limited to the by-gone CR based on Mao’s theory of the continuous revolution. In a meeting with the Chancellor of West Germany Helmut Kohl in 1984, Deng Xiaoping said: “We take the Reform as a kind of revolution, though it is not a revolution of the Cultural Revolution type.”²⁹ At this stage, even though the original content and essence of the word “revolution” was discarded, to talk about

²⁹ Deng Xiaoping, "Women ba gaige dangzuo yizhong geming" (We Should Regard the Reform as a Kind of Revolution, October 19, 1984). *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan* (Deng's Selected Works), vol.3, Beijing:Renmin chubanshe, 1993, pp.81-82.

“revolution” was still politically correct. Yet in some sense, Deng Xiaoping’s use of “revolution” to refer to the Reform was to the point, because indeed, post-Mao China underwent fundamental changes. For instance, several million of pro-CR revolutionaries were persecuted, jailed and even executed. Tens of thousands of women committed suicide every year for various reasons. After the CR for more than 30 years, the life-span of the Chinese people improved very little, and according to some studies, the life-span even reduced compared to that of Mao era. Everything could be sold: labor, land, water, mine, state sovereignty, women, children, blood, human organs, sex, emotion, and so forth. At the same time, all of these things were also “polluted”. This was a true Deng type “revolution”. But soon, even the very word “revolution” was not desirable for the Chinese authorities and the elite due to its “historical burden”. In 1991, in face of the major shift in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries, Chinese officials and intellectuals convened a meeting in which they drafted an influential document titled “China’s Pragmatic Response and Strategic Choice after the Radical Change of Soviet Union”. In the document submitted to the CCP, these elite people called the CCP to fulfill a major shift from “revolutionary party” (*geming dang*) to “ruling party” (*zhizheng dang*), replacing any remaining Marxism with a nationalist ideology.³⁰

In 1995, a self-claimed Marxist philosopher, Li Zehou, together with a well-known writer Liu Zaifu, published a book in Hong Kong titled *Farewell to Revolution: Looking Back upon China of the Twentieth Century*, bidding farewell to

³⁰ Chen Lei, Pan Yue’s Seven Keywords, see <http://env.people.com.cn/GB/1072/3637004.html> cited on February 10, 2010.

all the previous revolutions in the 20th century. In this book, they especially opposed the theory of class struggle, dialectical materialism, the so-called worship of ideology, and Mao's proposition of "it is right to rebel." What they advocated was class compromise, class cooperation, reformism etc. Li Zehou even condemned the Xinhai revolution, a Chinese bourgeois revolution in 1911.³¹ The book has swept across China. Yet it was by no means that Li Zehou and et al "invented" the theory of bidding farewell to revolution; it was at best a theoretical summary of the previous de-revolutionized trend of thought aimed at rendering revolutions illegitimate, especially the kind of revolution that had been led by Mao Zedong. Eventually, this thought became an official de-ideological ideology (*qu yishi xingtai de yishi xingtai*) and the CCP went from calling itself a "revolutionary party" to referring to itself as a "ruling party". In 2001, the Chinese president Jiang Zemin announced that the CCP had transformed itself from a party that led the people to strive for seizing state power, to a party that led the people to seize state power and ruled the country for a long time.³² Therefore, the CCP's historical task was no longer to lead the proletariat to make revolution toward socialism and communism, but to radically transform the Chinese society toward semi-primitive capitalism in the name of "developing the economy". The CCP not only tried to maintain the actually existing capitalist order in China, but also endeavored to help the capitalist world order survive in the current crisis of the worldwide financial breakdown. In order to justify the capitalist rule of China, the Chinese elite tried their best to rewrite history according to their worldview.

³¹ Li Zehou, Liu Zaifu, *Gaobie geming: huiwang ershishiji zhongguo (Farewell to Revolution: Looking Back upon China of the Twentieth Century)*. Hong Kong:Tiandi. 1995.

³² Jiang Zemin, *Selected of Jiang Zemin Works*, Vol.3, Renmin chubanshe, 2006, p.282.

In 2006, a set of new history textbooks for high school students stressed “civilizations” while greatly reducing discussion of the history of war, revolution and dynasty shifts. With the exception of two cases, almost all peasant revolts in Chinese history were obliterated. As for world history, the French Revolution and the Russian October Revolution were erased from the history textbooks.³³ In 2007, a famous pro-private capitalist liberal journal edited by some retired high Party and army cadres based in Beijing, *Yanhuang Chunqiu* (*China Chronicle*) reprinted a widely circulated article on the internet. This article, titled “The Pattern of Democratic Socialism and China’s Future”, written by Xie Tao, the former Deputy Principal of the People’s University in Beijing, strongly opposed the so-called “violent socialism” allegedly adopted by Lenin, Stalin and Mao. He claimed: “The relationship between socialism and capitalism is a relationship of continuation and development, and is not a relationship of overthrow and elimination.” “This already proves the shining rise to prominence of Western European democratic socialism and the eclipse of the violent socialism of the former Soviet Union.”³⁴ Xie Tao deemed that democratic socialism “turns the socialist movement into a peaceful, rational evolutionary process,” and that “Social Democrats have successfully created in the democratic framework of the developed capitalist countries a path for the peaceful transition to socialism”, therefore, “the working class has no need to rise in revolution, and can be ‘liberated’

³³ Panduola, *Lishi jiaokeshu jiu zheyang gaobie geming ma* (*Do the History Textbooks Bid Farewell to Revolution in Such a Way?*), from <http://www.globalview.cn/ReadNews.asp?NewsID=9678>, cited on February 13, 2010.

³⁴ Xie Tao, *Mingzhu shehui zhuyi moshi yu zhongguo de qiantu* (“The Pattern of Democratic Socialism and China’s Future”), in *Yan Huang Chun Qiu* (*China Chronicle*), February 2007. The original title of this article that has been widely circulated on the internet is “Only Democratic Socialism Can Save China”, which is a preface written for Xin Ziling, a retired high ranking PLA officer and professor’s book *Hong taiyang de yunluo: Qianqiu gongzui Mao Zedong* (*The Fall of the Red Sun: Mao Zedong’s Merits and Crimes*) published in Hong Kong in 2007. This book reevaluates the whole life of Mao as meriting only *dao san qi kai*, that is, seventy percent bad and merely thirty percent good.

along with the development of the advanced productive forces.”³⁵ Xie Tao’s viewpoints were swiftly promoted by Western English media agencies such as *Reuters*, *the Washington Post*, *Asia Weekly*, and the *Open Democracy website*, among others.³⁶ Even though the Chinese government did not promote Xie Tao’s article publicly in state-run mass media, Xie’s opposition to the “violent socialism” was no more than another footnote for the ruling state ideology – the Theory of Harmonious Society (*hexie shehui*).

The elite’s effort to propagate the idea of “bidding farewell to revolution” has indeed achieved tremendous success in many venues, but it has also encountered fierce resistance among the netizens. For instance, the “revisionist” Shanghai middle-school history textbooks have been widely criticized on the internet. When a neo-liberal historian Zhu Xueqing, who participated in the writing of the new Shanghai history textbooks, defended the textbook in a popular website *xinlang* (Sina.com) and claimed that previous Chinese history books had been feeding the children with barbarian “wolf milk”, he immediately came under overwhelming attacks and abuses from netizens, resulting in the withdrawal of his rebuttal from the website.³⁷ Similarly, Xie Tao and Xin Ziling’s opposition to the so-called “violent socialism” and advocacy of “democratic socialism” has been hit with a barrage of rebuttals. Several hundred articles, which refuted Xie and Xin and defended the

³⁵ The digest of Xie Tao’s viewpoints of this article can be found in Wu, Bing, *Democratic Socialism Is Capitalism: A criticism of Xie Tao’s “Only Democratic Socialism Can Save China”*, see <http://mike-servethepeople.blogspot.com/2007/05/democratic-socialism-is-capitalism-pt-1.html> cited on February 10, 2010.

³⁶ Serve the people, “Xie Tao ‘Adopted’ by Imperialists”, see <http://mike-servethepeople.blogspot.com/2007/06/xie-tao-adopted-by-imperialists.html>, cited on February 10, 2010.

³⁷ Anonymous, *Zhu Xueqing shi cuangai lishi jiaokeshu de zhuxiong* (Zhu Xueqing is the Arch-criminal of Tampering the History Textbooks), see <http://www.wg1976.net/read.php?tid=3868>, cited on February 1, 2010.

violent socialist revolution, appeared on the internet within a short period of time. The resistance to the bidding farewell to revolution did not only happen in cyber space, but has also come from the common workers, peasants, demobilized and transferred soldiers and many intellectuals who have no access to the internet. In sharp contrast to the authorities' and mainstream elites' wishes, the masses who are in the bottom of the social hierarchy, have earnestly called for revolution. Roughly starting in 2001, every year, common people from many places, both in cities and in villages, began to hold rallies to commemorate the birth and death of Mao Zedong on September 9 and December 26 respectively. In 2008, the Chinese regime legalized the traditional ancestor worship festival "Tomb-sweeping Day" (*qingming jie*) in the hope of propagating Confucian ideas. But to its surprise and beyond its expectation, many people made use of this festival to commemorate the revolutionary martyrs and Mao Zedong. This is really an example of the creative wisdom of the masses. Some of these rallies have been stormed by the police equipped with sleuthhounds and helicopters, and some Maoists have even been arrested and sentenced to set terms of imprisonment. Yet the scale of commemorations of Mao had been growing bigger and bigger in recent years. In 2006, regardless of the mass media's concentrated attack on the CR and Mao, many places throughout China held praiseful commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the CR.

In the post coup era of de-revolutionization since 1976, even though quite a few conferences on the Paris Commune have been held in China, there has been a lack of political gatherings in memory of it. In March 2008, for the first time after

1976, a political gathering in memory of the Paris Commune took place at the University of Aeronautics and Astronautics in Beijing. On their own initiative rather than that of the Party, forty Communist Party members attended a commemoration of the 137th anniversary of the Paris Commune. Except for ten college students, most participants were former Red Guards and retired high Party cadres. Their parents were usually old revolutionaries, and they themselves graduated from elite schools, such as the Yan'an Nursery School, the Yucai School, the August 1 School, and the No. 101 Middle School, which were schools mainly for children of Party's cadres even dated back to the Yan'an era. This meeting reaffirmed the most important principles of the Paris Commune: the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and use it for its own purposes. That is, the proletariat should use revolutionary means to seize state power, smash the military bureaucratic machine of the bourgeoisie, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat to replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. To ensure that administrators are not to transform into bureaucrats, all administrators should be elected by universal suffrage from the bottom up. They should be subjected to recall at any time and their salary should not exceed that of a working man. In this meeting, Professor Xu fei from the Communication University of China took Marx's *Civil War in France* in hand and said that it was necessary to combine Marxist theory with practice, and that it was important to understand Engels' "Introduction [to Karl Marx's the Civil War in France]". One of the key issues of the meeting was to defend the right to make violent revolution and oppose the Chinese "democratic socialists". Professor Zuo Dapei from

the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, clearly declared:

The meanings and influences of the Paris commune to the contemporary world, I would argue, are tremendous.... And it has practical meaning for current China. Originated from the European Democratic Socialist Parties, democratic socialism centers on the proposition of peaceful transition and parliamentarism. This is a lie that was exposed by the [lessons of] the Paris Commune. Under pressing conditions, rebellion is necessary. The difference in the Paris Commune from Western democracy is fundamental, as the former is the people's congress while the latter is the bourgeois congress. The Paris Commune is a democracy of the working class. I'd like to emphasize that the Commune was established through direct general election by the working people. Right now, while European social democratic parties have bragged that they represent the working class, in the Chinese democratic socialist circle, no one stands up to speak for the acting and laid-off workers and peasants.³⁸

Professor Wu Chongguang, who taught Marxism at the University of Aeronautics and Astronautics in Beijing, stated,

Today's meeting is very meaningful, as it can deepen our understanding of the idea of violent revolution in Marxist thought....Democratic socialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries put emphasis on developing into socialism by reformist and peaceful ways. In the new century, however, Xie Tao and others focus on changing the social ownership of the means of production and promoting private ownership.... The lessons of the Paris Commune warn us to be highly alert to democratic socialism.³⁹

Pointing at the huge gap of earnings between officials, bosses and common workers, the attendees of this meeting called for returning to the Paris Commune system of payment and Mao's mass line. A former counselor at the Chinese embassy

³⁸ Chen, Ansheng, Hongse ernü jinian bali gongshe 137 zhounian zuotan jiyao (A Summary of the Symposium in Commemoration of the 137 Anniversary of the Paris Commune by the Red Daughters and Sons), see <http://www.wengewang.com/read.php?tid=12518> cited on February 10, 2010.

³⁹ Ibid.

in the Soviet Union, Cheng Hai, who studied in the USSR for many years, asserted:

In keeping with the principles of the Paris Commune, the salaries of officials cannot be higher than those of experienced workers, that is, 6,000 francs. [But] according to the journal *zhonghua hun* (*Chinese Ethos*), however, CEOs of our top eight banks receive an annual salary of ¥ 9,000,000 per person....These phenomena utterly violate the principles of the Paris Commune, and they are completely divorced from the masses.... If we do not stick to the principles of the Paris Commune, no one would come to the rescue when the Party and the country fall.... Just as Su Tieshan says, if the Party does not talk about class, the Party loses the reason of existence. Now the attacks on Mao are as fierce as the Khrushchevian Soviet's attacks on Stalin...⁴⁰

The most important issue was raised at this meeting by the former chairman of the All the Chinese Workers' Union, Han Xiya. He said that the principles of the Paris Commune were of utmost importance. "I have been dealing with workers' affairs," he said, "I believe that it should be the workers who run the country. A single party cannot run a country very well; workers can manage a country as well." Then how to ensure the management of a country by workers? Zuo Dapei and Su Tieshan stressed at the meeting that all functionaries should be elected by virtue of universal suffrage.⁴¹ These points deserve to be reconsidered seriously. The key issues here are as follows: what is a feasible political system of workers' power organ in the future? Should it be run by the party, by workers themselves, or by the party and workers together? In other words, what is the relationship between the party and the workers? Will the general election after a socialist revolution suffice the consolidation of a socialist workers' power? As we know, at least in the 20th century, socialist revolutions usually

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

took place in the countries at the periphery of the world capitalist order. While in the post-revolution society, the workers always consisted of only a small portion of the population in those countries. The majority of the people were peasants, petty-bourgeoisie, and others, who were not imbued with proletarian thoughts. Take China as an example. In 1971, Chinese industrial workers accounted for no more than 30 million as compared to a total population of seven hundred million. Six sevenths of the Chinese population were peasants. In response to this situation, Premier Zhou Enlai took the view that on the one hand, China was a socialist country that was based on the worker-peasant alliance and the two systems of socialist ownership, viz. the ownership by the whole people and collective ownership. Seen from this perspective, China applied a dictatorship by the majority (worker-peasant alliance) over the minority. On the other hand, since the numbers of the authentic proletarian workers accounted for a small portion of the whole population, as well as within the worker-peasant alliance, there was not that much proletarian thinking. From this perspective, China was a dictatorship by the minority (industrial workers) over the majority (peasants and other non-proletarian population).⁴² Under such circumstances, how could the communist advocates of universal suffrage guarantee that general elections would not result in the restoration of the old capitalist order, that is, a non-socialist state?

I believe that general elections are important. But just as Marx was critical of the fact that the Parisian workers organized the general election too early, the

⁴² Zhou Enlai zongli jiejian Han Ding yijia shi de tanhua jilu (*Premier Zhou Enlai's Talk with the William Hinton's Family Members*), according to William Hinton and Yang Heping (Fred Engst)'s notes that day. See <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=15247> , cited on February 10, 2010.

questions of when and to what extent to institute the “general election”, and in what ways it can be guaranteed that the outcome of the “general election” will be good for the socialist and communist cause, are equally important issues and worthy of serious discussion. For example, after a successful socialist revolution led by a vanguard communist party, should the vanguard party completely transfer the state power to the congress of the workers, peasants and soldiers that are elected by universal suffrage? Or should the vanguard communist party at least partially retain some key power organs, such as a small-scale standing army, the educational and cultural entities, the treasury, and/or possibly others, and leave the rest of the power organs to the people’s congress based on universal suffrage? Should the post-revolution society institutionalize an Election Court in the hands of communists to veto any non-socialist outcome of the general elections? As we know, Lenin and his Bolshevik Party disenfranchised more than a few people after the October Revolution. Then, in the future revolution, what kinds of people should be deprived of voting right? And in what stage should every capable adult have his or her voting right? Is so-called democracy a goal, or a means to an end? Or both? Mao once stated that “Those who demand freedom and democracy in the abstract regard democracy as an end and not as a means. Democracy as such sometimes seems to be an end, but it is in fact only a means.”⁴³ The classical Marxist writers tended to believe that once one talks about “pure” democracy and freedom, the political meaning of these words will be lost and society will become a non-political society. I think that as people consider general

⁴³ Mao Zedong, On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People, *Peking Review*, No. 26, June 23, 1967.

elections in keeping with the principles of the Paris Commune as the key to future revolutionary society, the above issues should be discussed and further explored.

Remarkably, many attendees at the meeting in commemoration of the 137th anniversary of the Paris Commune had a negative evaluation of the CR. This may possibly have been due to the family background of the high Party and army cadres. According to the news report of this meeting, none of them mentioned the Shanghai Commune and the RCs. Chen Ansheng, a researcher from the Party School of the CCP's Nuclear Industry, said that people should not negate the Chinese revolution just because of Mao Zedong's errors. Professor Wu Chongguang, a supporter of President Hu Jintao, warned that China should neither regress to the era of the CR that preceded the Reform, nor should the country regress to the old China before 1949. It was equally significant that the banner hung in the meeting room read: "Master and carry out the spirits of CCP's 17th Congress and commemorate the 137th anniversary of the Paris Commune." Nonetheless, many other people disagreed with the viewpoints about Mao and the CR at this commemoration. Some people even accused the attendees of this meeting of being a group of revisionist elements. In an article entitled "Red Blaze: In Commemoration of the 137th anniversary of the Birth of the Paris Commune", Qiushike, an influential internet writer, though not directly debating with the attendees of the meeting, posited that rather than being grave mistakes, many practices before and during the CR were based on Mao's theory of continuous revolution that inherited and developed the principles of the Paris Commune. According to Qiushike's studies, first of all, Mao saw that true socialism

must restrict bourgeois rights (*faquan*), which overran the Party, the government and the army before the CR. Therefore, Mao incessantly proposed to reduce the functionaries' salaries and abolish the military ranking system, and restrict the privileges of intellectuals. Mao even suggested that one should reduce the wage levels among the workers. Secondly, the masses should run the power organs directly, and have the right to supervise, elect and dismiss the power holders. The “two participations, one reformation, and triple combination”, “four big rights”, the rectification campaigns, the dictatorship of the masses, and the mass movements were concrete manifestations of this kind of thinking. Thirdly, realizing the superstructure's decisive counteractive effect on the infrastructure, Mao continuously carried out reforms of the state system. The cadres' participation in productive labor, the establishment of the militia, the cultural, artistic and educational revolution, and the CR, were manifestations of the deepening of the proletarian dictatorship. Fourthly, Mao deeply understood the counteractive effect of the social ideology. The final victory of communism would not simply depend on the change in the infrastructure and the superstructure. People's minds needed to be armed with a proletarian worldview and it was necessary to exercise proletarian dictatorship in the sphere of ideology. Therefore, Mao called for learning from Lei Feng, combating selfishness and repudiating revisionism. Without this, the socialist revolution will ultimately be defeated. Fifthly, Mao's thinking and the practice of smashing the old state machinery, compared to those of the Paris commune and October Revolution, were more thorough. Mao's thinking of exercising the all-round dictatorship of the proletariat in

the spheres of the superstructure and ideology was what the Paris Commune and October Revolution had neglected – which is why this was of such far-reaching and creative significance.⁴⁴ In this way, Mao's CR was a major contribution to the theory and practice of the world revolution.

Mao Zedong believed that even after ten thousand years, people would still make revolutions.⁴⁵ And Lenin used to say that to prepare for the future, one always began at the highest pitch previously reached.⁴⁶ In some sense, regardless of its historical limitations and shortcomings, the CR can be seen as the highest pitch of the last wave of the communist movement. Then, would people in the future still draw lessons from the CR, from the organizational creations of the Shanghai Commune and the RCs that were largely in keeping with the principles of the Paris Commune? Is there a possibility of reviving the Commune model in the Chinese and the world revolutions in the future? On the one hand, these are really questions without easy answers, as not even weathermen can tell the exact shape of the coming storm. On the other hand, there is simplicity to the questions, as the coming storm, as a familiar stranger, is likely to come in a similar way. As a Chinese verse in the famous drama *Che Guevara* directed by Zhang Guangtian goes,

Don't ask if the bonfire should be burned,

First ask if the coldness and darkness are still there;

⁴⁴ *Qiushike, Hongse huoyan, jinian bali gongshe dansheng yibai sanshiqi zhounian* ("The Red Blaze: In Commemoration of the 137th anniversary of the Birth of the Paris Commune") see <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=12441>, cited on February 11, 2010.

⁴⁵ Mao Zedong, Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, From *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977, Vol. 5, p344.

⁴⁶ Cited from James, C.L.R., *The Commune in 1971*, in John Hicks & Robert Tucker Eds., *Revolution and Reaction: The Paris Commune 1871*, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1973, p.57.

Don't ask if the bullets should be loaded,
First ask if the oppression and exploitation are still there;
Don't ask if the just cause has a future,
First ask if the human sufferings are still there for now.⁴⁷

As long as labor is not completely liberated from capital, as long as the big differences between the privileged and the underprivileged are not largely leveled, the Commune could be an enduring point of reference and an eternal return for the working people's emancipation. The Commune birthplaces, as Marx prognosticated, will be everywhere in this world.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Liu Zhifeng ed., *Qie Gewala: fanxiang yu zhengming (Che Guevara: Responses and Controversies)*, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001.p.24.

⁴⁸ *MECW*. Volume 22. p. 540.

Postscript

It was not easy for me to choose to write a dissertation about the CR. To do research on the CR is a risky endeavor. For someone like me who has not personally experienced the CR, it is indeed a daunting task to merely piece together basic historical facts, and the task is made more difficult due to the lockup and destruction of the CR materials by the post-Mao Chinese regime. More importantly, to study the CR in a light other than the official verdict and mainstream intellectual positions means a kind of self-isolation and self-exile from the Chinese intellectual elite. Before setting my mind to probe the shadowy history of the CR, to deeply learn about Mao and the masses in socialist China, I have already come a long way. Even though in my rural hometown in Hu'nan Province of China, almost all peasant families still hung Mao's portrait in the center of the domestic altar in their houses, I had no special feelings for Mao. For a long time, in the Chinese textbooks I studied, Mao was said to have achieved a great deal in creating the new China in 1949. However, he was portrayed as having made grave mistakes, and even described as a criminal for having launched the Great Leap Forward and the CR. During my undergraduate years in Beijing, many of my professors conveyed their hatred for Mao and the CR in the classes I attended. If it had not been for Mao, the last power and blood thirsty emperor, they claimed, China would have been far richer, stronger and more "modern" and we Chinese might have lived in a USA-style paradise by now. Their viewpoints, I have to

admit, profoundly influenced the way I looked at the world. Even though I had never totally negated Mao as many Chinese intellectuals did, I still remember when I applied for admission to American universities in 2000 to further my studies, I had a heated exchange with an American professor who later became a good friend of mine regarding Mao and the Cultural Revolution. I proclaimed to be the representative of the Chinese people and seriously “criticized” his sympathy for Mao and the CR and I argued that he, as a foreigner, had less knowledge of the Mao era than the Chinese people. I told him that the Chinese people suffered tremendously from Mao's inhumane social experiments, as my Chinese professors had repeatedly told me.

But during the past ten years due to several things my perspective has drastically changed. The most decisive factor was the chilling reality in China, especially in the rural areas, including my village. After I arrived in the USA, I continued to learn bad news from my family, my relatives and my neighbors in the village. I got so much bad news that sometimes I was afraid to make phone calls to China. Most of the bad news was related to the migrant workers from my village. For example, my second elder brother had contracted cervical vertebra disease because he was forced to overwork for bosses of private factories. I sent him money for medical treatment, and suggested that he give up the hard work since he was no longer able to do hard manual labor. But he refused. The reason was obvious. He could not pay the educational fees for his children if he stopped working in cities as a migrant worker. In today's China, due to the lack of medical service and parental care, many children, who are left in their rural homes, suffer from psychological disorders, because their

parents have to work as migrant workers in cities. My brother's smart and diligent daughter who once did very well academically in elementary school and used to be seen as the only hope for the family, unfortunately, now falls behind academically, suffering from an obsessive compulsive disorder. Meanwhile, my sister has suffered from serious mental trouble due to her working experience in cities. One disaster after another, in order to take care of her sick grandchild who was left behind by his parents, my aging mother broke her hand one night. Without my remittances, she would have no way to pay for the huge medical bill. In addition, my mother's younger sister died in her early-fifties from cancer. Short of money, she had never had any physical check-up before the terminal cancer. My mother's only brother, a skilled tailor in his early fifties, was diagnosed as having serious tuberculosis due to air pollution in the work environment and as a result of working 12-hour a day for his bosses. This kind of tragedy is by no means limited to my family. It is an epitome of our time.

Compared to many other rural families' destinies, my family's misfortunes are actually less tragic. As a matter of fact, there have been numerous cases in my village and neighboring villages where young peasants who went to cities as migrant workers were shipped back in cinerary urns that contained their ashes.

As a matter of fact, the average life span of Chinese peasants has greatly decreased under the post-Mao regime. In today's China, the Chinese peasants' average life span, is possibly around 60, 12 years shorter than that of the urban population.¹

¹ This data is from Zhao Zhongwei's disclosure at an international conference "Beijing Forum" in 2005 to celebrate the coming of Beijing Olympics. See <http://bjyouth.y.net.com/view.jsp?oid=6824932&pageno=1>, Zhao Zhongwei's research on this issue was reported in *Xinjingbao (New Beijing Daily)* on November 17, 2005. Also see Zhou Zhengcheng, Nongming weihe bi shimin shouming duan 12 nian (Why Peasants' life is 12 Years' Shorter than that of Citizens?), in *Xiaokang shenghuo (Well-Off Life)*, 2005, No.12.

Nevertheless, roughly at the closing of the Maoist era, the average life-span of the Chinese population was age 69.² After about 30 years, the Chinese government claimed that the average life-span was approximately 69 years, or even 72 years. But according to a former Deputy Health Minister, Yin Dakui's disclosure, the average life span in China was only 68, and the average life span of the Chinese intellectuals was even less, at 58 years. Roughly from 2000 to 2005, 135 experts and professors in the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Beijing University died at an average age of 53.5 years.³ Compared to the great improvements from 35 years in 1949 to 69 years in 1980 in the average life-span of the Chinese population because of the socialist achievements during the Mao era (and the Maoist legacy from the closing of the CR years to the early days of the Reform and Open-up era), the post Mao regime really has nothing good to report in terms of the life span in China. However, the sufferings of the Chinese people, especially so-called “disadvantaged social groups” (*ruoshi qunti*, such as peasants and workers), from the perspectives of the mainstream elites, are nothing other than the “necessary” cost of the seemingly permanent “Reform and Opening up” policy.

So I asked myself: why is that? Were the things the same before and after the

² Yu Guanghan, the director of National Committee of Chinese Aging Issue stated that the average life span of Chinese population in 1980 is age 69. See Ji Xichen, *Dajia lai guanxin laonianren wenti: fang zhongguo laoling wenti quanguo weiyuanhui* (Let us Concern the Aging Issue: An interview with the National Committee of Chinese Aging Issue), in *Renmin ribao (People's Daily)*, July 29, 1983. According to another source, the maximal life-span of Chinese population was age 69 in 1982. See Yuan Shouzhuan ed., *Shehui jingji tongjixue gaiyao (An Outline of the Social Economic Statistics)*, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1987, p.278. But according to numerous studies on the internet, as early as in 1976, the average life span of Chinese population was age 69; and in order to depreciate the Maoist achievement on the life span issue and glorify the Reform and Open-up, the current regimes purposely falsify the statistics. See Cao Weiping, *Jiechuan Deng Xiaoping zai renkou shouming shang de huangyan* (Debunk Deng Xiaoping's Lie on the Issue of the Average Life-span), from <http://www.wengewang.org/read.php?tid=12532>, cited in February 14, 2010.

³ See <http://bjyouth.yinet.com/view.jsp?oid=6824932&pageno=1>, Yin Dakui's disclosure on this issue at an international conference “Beijing Forum” in 2005 was reported in *Xinjingbao (New Beijing Daily)* on November 17, 2005.

so-called the Reform era? How did China arrive at its current state? Whither China? These questions can not be easily answered from reading books published recently—especially books published in China—which are full of distortions when discussing the history and reality of the PRC. Fortunately, the internet provides a great number of narratives and arguments about the Mao and Reform era which run counter to the mainstream narratives in books, films, TVs, radios, and other media. From the internet, I have learned and deepened my understanding of the current situation in China. The online sources revealed a lot of information that the mainstream media did not or refused to reveal. From the internet, I learned that in the post-Mao era, the bureaucracy expanded with overwhelming speed and scale. Today, the ratio of officials and ordinary people in China is 1 to 18.⁴ There is no cure, I believe, for the Chinese bureaucracy in an established system. The Reform era began in the economic sphere, i.e. from introducing the capitalist relations of production, which has effectively suffocated Chinese socialism and communism which was characterized by egalitarianism and extensive social welfares. And the Chinese capitalist bureaucrats will by no means give up the economic, cultural, educational and political privileges they have acquired during the past 30 years. Nowadays, in China, due to capitalist and bureaucratic interventions, there are more than sixty million peasants who have lost their lands, and over sixty million jobless workers and several dozen millions of

⁴ Ma Haoliang, Guanmin bili gaoda 1 bi 18, zhuanjia huyu yankong guanyuan pengzhang (The Ratio of Officials And Ordinary People Reaches 1 to 18; Experts Call on Strictly Checking the Expansion of Officials), see <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40764/64077/64080/4404600.html> cited on March 23, 2009. In the 1950s during the time of Mao, the ratio of officials and ordinary people in China was 1: 600. See Lan Ye ed., Zhongguo zhengfu da caiyuan (The Big Streamlining Program of the Chinese Administration), Chongqing: Chongqing daxue chubanshe, 1993,p.27.

prostitutes.⁵ And the numbers of all the marginalized people are increasing every year. Poor people cannot afford the high tuition fees, housing, and healthcare. Many of them even do not have enough healthy food. It seems that China is sitting on the edge of a volcano which is about to erupt. Against this backdrop, despite the fact that the Chinese government after the CR tried its best to suppress, obliterate, and distort the memory of the CR, the growing social contradictions and brutal reality since the Reform have made me and many other Chinese students turn to the repressed histories of the CR.

Even though there are still countless postings on the internet about the CR and Mao that repeat the official propaganda of post-Mao regime, there are also many postings clarifying the distortions of history, recalling the “good old days” of Mao’s time, and praising the socialist achievements under Mao. At first, given that I had seen so few positive evaluations of the Mao era in books, newspapers, TV screens, and so forth, I was very puzzled as to why there were so many Chinese people on the e-media supporting Mao and the CR. But the more I learned about Mao’s time, the more interested I became in the CR studies. Eventually, I became addicted to debating with other netizens in the virtual space. On numerous sleepless nights, I have learned tremendously from the community of netizens (*wangmin*). In the Chinese internet forums, chatrooms and blogspheres, battles of political positions are taking place

⁵ For the numbers of landless peasants in China, see *Chen Yanhui, Dalu liuqianwan nongaming shidi xianlu tu (The Roadmap of Losing Lands for the Sixty Million Peasants in Mainland China)* at <http://www.wyzxsx.com/Article/Class17/200504/1873.html> . Wang Shaoguang et al estimated that between 1996 and 2000 there were 48,070,000 laid-off workers in China. See Wang Shaoguang, Hu An’gong and Ding Yuanzhu, *Jingji fanrong beihou de shehui bu wending (The Social Instability Behind the Economic Boom)*, in *Zhanlue yu guanli (Strategy and Management)*, 2002. No.3. And there are at least sixty million jobless workers till 2007. See Wei Jianfeng, *Sanshinian jiben wancheng gongyou qiye de siyohua guocheng (The Finishing of the Privatization Process of the Enterprise of Public Ownership Within 30 Years)* at <http://blog.163.com/weijianfeng666@126/blog/static/21475688200811585734896/> . All cited on Dec 21, 2009.

every minute. Except for the draconian censorship imposed by the Chinese government's numerous faceless internet police, this is almost like the re-staging of the Maoist *sida* ("Four Big Rights") of the CR, that is, to speak out freely, to air views freely, to hold great debates, and to write big-character posters in virtual space. In some sense, it is not me who chose to take up the CR studies; it is the dire social and economic reality in China today that has compelled me to pursue this project.

Appendix A: Brief Biographies of the Major Characters Related to the Shanghai Commune

An Wenjiang (1944-) was a student leader of the “Third Headquarters of Shanghai Red Guards”. On January 11, he led nearly 1,000 members of his faction to rush into Shanghai’s Public Security Department and seize power. At the end of January 1967, driven by the thought of “overthrowing everything”, he actively participated in the bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao. In 1968, he became a worker in Jiangxi Province. After the Cultural Revolution, he was a college professor in Foshan, Guangdong Province. He is now an anti-Cultural Revolution writer.

Cao Diqu (1909-1976) was the Shanghai mayor and a secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee at the beginning of the CR. He was brought down by the rebels during the Shanghai January Revolution in early 1967. In 1973, he went to a May 7 Cadre School in Fengxian County, Shanghai. In March 1976, he died of an illness in the Shanghai Huashan hospital at the age of 67. Cao was rehabilitated in 1978 by the Hua Guofeng-Deng Xiaoping regime after the Cultural Revolution.

Chen Pixian (1916-1995) joined the CCP in 1931. Between 1940 and 1945, he was a high army cadre in the communist-controlled anti-Japanese New Fourth Route Army. After the founding of the PRC, he was a secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee from 1956 to 1960. Upon the launch of the CR, he was the first secretary of the

Shanghai Party Committee. During the Shanghai January Revolution in 1967, he was brought down by the rebels for “taking the capitalist road and suppressing the mass movements”. In 1975, he was appointed deputy director of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee. After the CR, he became a secretary of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee in 1982, and was the secretary of the CPC Central Political and Legislative Affairs Committee from 1982 to 1985. He died in 1995 at the age of 80.

Geng Jinzhang (1925-) was a soldier in Jiang Jieshi’s Nationalist army. After being captured by the PLA in the Ji’nan Battle in 1948, Geng joined the PLA. In 1957, he became a worker in the Shanghai Zhongni Paper Mill. During the Anting Incident in December 1966, Geng and 473 rebel workers refused Zhang Chunqiao’s mediation and insisted on going to Beijing to present their case. Zhang Chunqiao and the Shanghai mayor Cao Diqu had to go to Suzhou, where Geng Jinzhang and his men stayed overnight on their way to Beijing to sign their five demands. After that, Geng formed the “Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned from the North” based on his Suzhou Brigade. As a subsidiary branch of the WGH, the Second Corps developed within several months into a gigantic rebel workers’ formation with more than 500,000 members. At the Kangping Street Battle and Kunshan Battle, the Second Corps was an important rebel force in defeating the Scarlet Guards, a huge conservative workers’ faction. Eventually, under Geng’s leadership, the Second Corps became a worker faction opposed to the WGH, its parent organization. Geng actively

led the anti-WGH and anti-Shanghai Commune activities around the formation of the Shanghai Commune. He even attempted to form a “New Shanghai People’s Commune” based on the “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels’ Committee of Broad Unity.” After the establishment of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, Geng was held in protective custody against his will by Wang Hongwen, the commander of the WGH. When Zhang Chunqiao learned of Geng’s detention two months later, he ordered the immediate release of Geng. Geng was then assigned to the industrial division of the WGH. Later he acted as a deputy-director of the basic construction division of the Bureau of Light Industry.

Hu Shoujun (1944-) was a leader of a small ultra-leftist Red Guard formation “Monkey King” in Fudan University during the Cultural Revolution. He was famous for his bombardment of Zhang Chunqiao during the January Revolution. Now he is an anti-socialist professor of philosophy in Fudan University and a consultant of the Shanghai government.

Jiang Qing (1913-1991) was a leftist actress in Shanghai from 1934-1937. She went to Yan’an in 1937 and married Mao Zedong the next year. In 1965, Jiang Qing arranged for the writing and publication of Yao Wenyan's “Notes on the New Historical Drama Hai Rui Dismissed from Office” in Shanghai, which was considered the opening salvo of the Cultural Revolution. In October 1966, Jiang Qing was appointed deputy-director of the Central Cultural Revolution Group. She was one of

the major Maoist leaders who supported the Shanghai rebels. Before and during the Cultural Revolution, she helped to revolutionize the Chinese arts, including the famous model operas. In October 1976, she was apprehended in a rightist coup and later accused of being the head of the “Gang of Four”. In January 1981 she was sentenced by the Deng Xiaoping regime to death, given a reprieve and permanent deprivation of political rights. At her trial, Jiang Qing denied all accusations and shouted that “it is not criminal to make revolutions and it is right to rebel!” On May 14, 1991, the government announced that Jiang Qing had committed suicide. Many people were suspicious of this because of various contradictions in the official statements. After the coup, Jiang Qing has been demonized by the mass media as a “white-boned demon”. But now, on the internet, she is respected by many Chinese people as the greatest heroine of the proletariat and the mother of the PRC (*guomu*). Her online memorial hall is located at

<http://jidian.china.com/usermemorial.jsp?urlcode=jq>. (Accessed on March 8, 2010)

Ma Zhenlong (1940-) was a rebel worker leader at the Shanghai Porcelain Enamel Machinery Repair Shop. He was a committee member of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, a standing committee member of the Shanghai General Trade Union, and a deputy secretary of the Revolutionary Committee of the Shanghai Bureau of Light Industry. Shortly after the 1976 coup, he urged the Shanghai rebels to stage an armed uprising. In 1982, he was sentenced to 16 years’ imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for three years. When the judge delivered the verdict to him in a prison

house, Ma threw the verdict out of the iron-barred window without reading a single word.

Ma Tianshui (1912-1988) joined the CCP in 1931. He had been one of the secretaries of the Shanghai Party Committee before the Cultural Revolution. After the January Revolution in 1967, Ma was a representative high Party cadre who supported the rebels. In February 1967, he was appointed deputy director of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, in charge of Shanghai's industrial production and economic work. He became an alternate member of the 9th Central Committee (1969), a secretary of the Shanghai CCP Committee (1971-1976), and a member of the 10th Central Committee (1973). After the 1976 coup, even though Ma Tianshui had contributed a lot to the economic development of Shanghai and cooperated with the Hua Guofeng and Ye Jianying regime, he was dismissed from the position of Shanghai party secretary and held the next year. Due to harsh interrogation, Ma Tianshui became mentally deranged in 1978. In 1988, Ma Tianshui, a senior and outstanding communist with nearly 50-year-length Party membership, died alone in a madhouse.

Pan Guoping (1934-) was a rebel worker leader at the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory. As the earliest commander of the WGH, he actively took part in the power seizure in the January Revolution and the establishment of the Shanghai Commune. Pan was arrested by the coup regime in 1977. In 1979, according to Deng Xiaoping's

personal instruction, he was sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for three years. He was released upon completion of his term of imprisonment in 1985. After that, Pan was arrested again at Zhuhai on charges of forging a passport and other crimes and sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment. In 1996, Pan migrated to the USA. He is business man and anti-communist activist now.

Wang Hongwen (1935-1992) was a major rebel worker leader of the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters (WGH) during the CR. After the January Revolution in 1967, he was one of the major leaders of the Shanghai Commune, and then one of the vice directors of the Shanghai RC. He became a member of the 9th Central Committee (1969), a secretary of the Shanghai CCP Committee (1971-1976), and a member of the 10th Central Committee (1973). In 1973, Wang was made deputy chairman of the CCP. In October 1976, Wang was apprehended in a rightist coup and later accused of being a member of the "Gang of Four". In January 1981, he was sentenced by the Deng Xiaoping regime to life imprisonment and permanent deprivation of political rights. On August 3, 1992, Wang died of a liver ailment in jail at the age of 57.

Xu Jingxian (1933-2007) was a secretary of the Writers' Group of the Shanghai Municipal Committee in 1965. As an intellectual rebel leader during the CR, Xu was one of the drafters of the Shanghai Commune Manifesto and was elected into the leadership of the Shanghai Commune and the ensuing Shanghai Revolutionary

Committee. He became a member of the 9th Central Committee (1969), the Standing Committee and deputy secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee (1971-1976), and the 10th Central Committee (1973). He was arrested in the 1976 coup and sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for four years. He died in Shanghai in 2007.

Ye Jianying (1897-1986) was a senior leader in the CCP and the PLA. In 1927, he participated in the Nanchang Uprising, which was seen as the founding event of the PLA. The same year, he participated in the Guangzhou Uprising, which resulted in the establishment of the short-lived "Canton [Guangdong] Commune". In 1955, Ye was made a marshal. During the Cultural Revolution, Ye was active in various military functions. As an opponent of the large-scale mass movement, Marshal Ye firmly supported conservative generals in the army in their suppression of the rebels during the February Countercurrent. Ye was also a bitter opponent of the Shanghai Commune. On October 6, 1976, less than one month after Mao's death, Marshal Ye, together with Huo Guofeng and other generals and Party elders, staged a coup d'état that arrested the so-called "Gang-of-four", hence paving the way for the restoration of capitalism in China.

Yao Wenyuan (1931-2005) was a Maoist literary critic and a close friend of Zhang Chunqiao. In 1965, with the authorization of Jiang Qing and helped by the historian Zhu Yongjia, he composed *Notes on the New Historical Drama Hai Rui Dismissed*

from Office, which was seen as the opening salvo of the Cultural Revolution. In October 1966, Yao joined the Central Cultural Revolution Group. In February 1967, Yao was elected as a second secretary of the Shanghai Commune. Then he was promoted to membership in both the Politburo and Central Committee of the 9th Central Committee (1969). In October 1976, Yao was apprehended in a rightist coup and later accused of being a member of the “Gang of Four”. In January 1981, he was sentenced by the Deng Xiaoping regime to twenty years’ imprisonment. Yao died on Dec. 23, 2005 at the age of 74.

Zhang Chunqiao (1917-2005) was a leftist writer in Shanghai between 1935 and 1937. He joined the CCP in 1938 in Yan'an. After the founding of the PRC, he started his career in literary and propaganda work. He served as the chief editor of the *Liberation Daily (Jiefang ribao)* (1955), the director of the Propaganda Department of the Shanghai Party branch (1963-1965), and a secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee (1965). In October 1966, Zhang became deputy head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group. He was one of the major initiators and leaders of the Shanghai Commune and the director of the Shanghai RC. Zhang was elected into the Politburo of the 9th Central Committee (1969) and was promoted to be a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the 10th Central Committee (1973). In 1975, he was appointed deputy-premier. In October 1976, Zhang was apprehended in a rightist coup and later accused of being a member of the “Gang of Four”. During his subsequent trial, Zhang refused to cooperate by not raising a single word. He was

sentenced by the Deng Xiaoping regime to death with a reprieve and permanent deprivation of political rights in January 1981. In 1983 his death sentence was commuted to life in prison. In the Chinese mass media Zhang was rumored to have died in 1991. In May 2005, the Chinese government officially announced that he had died of cancer on April 21.

Zhu Yongjia (1931-) joined the CCP in 1948 and before the Cultural Revolution he was a historian on the history of the Ming dynasty at Fudan University. In 1964, he organized a regular political discussion group “*Luosiding*” (Screws) in his department. In 1965, he helped Yao Wenyuan write the famous book *Notes on the New Historical Drama Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, which was seen as the opening salvo of the Cultural Revolution. At the end of 1966 and the beginning of 1967, he became an important intellectual rebel leader and took part in the leadership of the influential “Frontline Headquarters of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production in Shanghai”. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the Shanghai Party Committee and in charge of the Shanghai Revolutionary Mass Criticism Writing Group. Shortly after the rightist coup in 1976, he urged the Shanghai rebels to learn from the spirit of the Paris Commune and stage an armed uprising. In 1982 he was sentenced to 14 years’ imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for three years. In recent years he has been very active in writing blogs. His blog space is located at <http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/1558425561/>. (Accessed on March 8, 2010)

Appendix B: Major Shanghai Mass Organizations Discussed

The Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters (*gongzongsi*)

The First Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North (*Shanghai gongren beishang fanhu diyi bingtuan*)

The Second Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North (*Shanghai gongren beishang fanhu di'er bingtuan*)

The Third Corps of Shanghai Workers Returned From the North (*Shanghai gongren beishang fanhu disan bingtuan*)

The Revolutionary Rebel Steel Corps of Shanghai Workers, later renamed as Workers Third Headquarters (*Shanghai gongren geming zaofan gangtie bingtuan*, later renamed as *gongsansi*)

The Revolutionary Rebel Field Corps of Shanghai Workers (*Shanghai gongren geming yezhan bingtuan*)

The Red Guards' Revolutionary Committee of the Colleges and Universities of Shanghai, Red Revolutionaries in short (*Hongweibing Shanghai shi dazhuan yuanxiao geming weiyuanhui*, *honggehui* in short)

The Red Guard Army Command of the Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel United Committee (*Shanghai geming zaofan lianhe weiyuanhui hongweijun zhihuibu*, *hongweijun* in short)

The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (*Shanghai shiwei jiguan geming zaofan lianluobu*, *jilianzhan* in short)

The "Bombard the Headquarters" United Corps of Shanghai (*Shanghai shi paoda silingbu lianhe bingtuan*, *paosi* in short)

The "Rebel to the End" General Liaison Headquarters of Shanghai Communications University (*Shanghai jiaotong daxue fandaodi bingtuan*, *jiaoda fandaodi* in short)

The Mao Zedong's Thought Red Guards' "East Is Red" General Headquarters of Tongji University (*Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing Tongji daxue dongfanghong zongbu, Tongji dongfanghong* in short)

Workers' Eighth Headquarters (*Gongbasi*)

The Shanghai Liaison Center of the Jinggang Mountains Headquarters of Qinghua University

Third Headquarters of Shanghai Red Guards (*Hongweibing Shanghai disan silingbu, shangsansi* in short)

Revolutionary Rebels' Committee of Shanghai Public Security Bureau (*Shanghaishi gong'anju geming zhanfan weiyuan hui, gonggehui* in short),

"Creating New World" (*Kai xin yu*)

"Monkey King" (*Sun Wukong*)

Appendix C: Chronology: From May 16, 1966 to February 24, 1967

May 16, 1966 The “Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”, often referred to as the “May 16 Circular”, was issued. But it was actually published one year after, on May 17, 1967 in *People’s Daily*. This document has usually been seen as what signaled the launch of the CR.

May 25 Seven young instructors and staff persons of the Philosophy Department of Beijing University put up the first big-character poster during the CR, which was hailed by Mao Zedong as “the declaration of the Chinese Paris commune of the sixties of the twentieth century. Its significance surpasses the Paris Commune.”

May 28 The CCRG was formed. Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao acted as deputy directors, and Yao Wenyuan was a member.

June 1 Mao personally ordered that the first big-character poster be broadcast nationwide.

Early June Power holders struggled against some mini-cadres in charge of public security in street and lane committees and some common policemen at local police stations.

June 12 Seven workers at the Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill, led by Wang Hongwen, put up a big-character poster titled “*See Through the Make-ups of the Party Branch to Get the Truth Out*” in the factory, accusing the factory power holders of taking the capitalist road.

June 19 Zhang Heming, the vice-secretary of the party branch at the Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill, broke into and rummaged through the Security Section where Wang Hongwen and his two comrades were composing big-character posters. This was later called “the June 19th incident”.

June 20 The power holders and the loyalist workers at the Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill besieged Wang Hongwen, branding him and the cosigners of the big-character poster as “the Petofi club” and counterrevolutionaries who intended to initiate an “armed uprising” similar to that of Hungary in 1956. The SPC sent a work team led by Yu Wei to the No. 17 Textile Mill.

The *People's Daily* editorial “*Revolutionary big-character posters are demon-detectors to unveil all ghosts and monsters*” was released.

July 7-19 Led by Wang Hongwen, the rebel workers at the Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill wrote 7,525 big-character posters bombarding the factory's party committee.

August 1-12 The 11th plenary session of the 8th Central Committee of the CPC was held in Beijing.

August 9 The *Sixteen-point Program* was published by the *People's Daily*.

August 18 Mao received Red Guards for the first time in Beijing. Zhang Chunqiao was at rostrum at this rally.

August 25 The Shanghai Public Security Bureau uncovered the hidden Nationalist spy Ying Gongjiu, who was a former professor of Fudan University and the underground Shanghai mayor assigned by the Taiwan authority.

August 27 Beijing Red Guards in Shanghai demanded that the SPC give them

printing and communications equipment. The SPC refused.

August 28 Beijing Red Guards demonstrated in front of Shanghai's city hall.

September 2 Some Red Guards were beaten by conservative workers.

September 3 When Beijing Red Guards staged a sit-in in front of Shanghai's city hall demanding negotiations with top cadres, the Shanghai government summoned many workers, including 700 workers from Shanghai No. 17 Textile Mill, to come and provide security. Physical conflicts ensued between Red Guards and Shanghai workers, resulting in some bloodshed.

September 4 Beijing Red Guards stormed the SPC offices. Representatives of the rebel workers and students held a joint rally at Eastern China Textile Technology Institute, expressing their solidarity with each other. Some rebel workers went to the Shanghai city hall, displaying their help to Red Guards.

October 11 Wang Hongwen and his comrades formed a fighting team titled "Faithfully Carrying Out the Proletarian Cultural Revolution to the Bitter End". This was an early attempt in Shanghai to have organizations of the workers that had been formed on their own initiatives.

October 18 Wang Hongwen and some of his workmates joined the Red Guards to be received by Mao at Tian'anmen Square.

November 5 Rebel workers from various factories held a meeting at the Shanghai Liaison Centre of the Third Capital's Red Guard Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters for "exchanging revolutionary experiences of the Shanghai rebel workers". At this meeting, Red Guard students and rebel workers swore to fight

together.

November 6 Rebel representatives from 17 Shanghai factories met and agreed to forge a large city-wide rebel workers' organization.

November 8 The ceremony preparatory committee for the proposed WGH sent representatives to the Shanghai Municipal Committee several times, asking Mayor Cao Diqu to talk at the inauguration rally the next day. Mayor Cao refused.

November 9 The Shanghai WGH came into existence. More than 30 thousand workers from over 470 factories all over the city attended the inauguration rally in Shanghai Culture Plaza.

November 10 As the SPC rejected the WGH's demands for recognition, the rebel workers occupied several Beijing-bound trains hoping to present their case and make an appeal directly to the Maoist leadership in Beijing. But the trains were halted on the Shanghai authorities' order. The petitioning workers headed to Beijing were dispersed by the Shanghai authorities into three different places: Shanghai, Anting and Nanjing. Chen Boda sent an urgent telegram to Shanghai urging the rebel workers to return to their jobs. Upon receiving this telegram, the Shanghai Party sent a delegation consisting of Han Zheyi (a secretary of CCP Eastern China Bureau), Li Gancheng (a vice-mayor), and Yang Kai (a vice minister of the Propaganda Department of CCP Eastern China Bureau) to Anting. Negotiations between the party delegation and rebels lasted several hours till midnight, but were fruitless.

November 11 After a discussion among major leaders, such as Zhou Enlai, Chen Boda, and Tao Zhu, Zhang Chunqiao was sent to Shanghai by military plane to handle

the Anting Incident.

November 12 Zhang Chunqiao arrived at Anting. After a nine-hour meeting with the rebel workers, Zhang verbally recognized the WGH as a “revolutionary organization” and expressed his personal support.

November 13 Zhang Chunqiao held a mass meeting in the Culture Plaza of Shanghai with the rebels who had returned from Anting and formally signed their five demands. 474 rebel workers led by Geng Jinzhang left for Beijing from Anting to protest Chen Boda’s telegram.

November 14 Zhang Chunqiao and Mayor Cao Diqu arrived in Suzhou. They met with the workers’ representatives led by Geng Jinzhang and signed another set of five-point demands.

November 19 When meeting with more than 500 loyalist workers, Cao Diqu attacked the WGH.

November 24 (23?) The SPC convened an enlarged meeting to discuss the ongoing situation. At this meeting, Zhang Chunqiao came under heavy attack from other SPC high ranking cadres because of the way he had handled the rebel workers.

November 24 Mayor Cao Diqu received more than one hundred worker representatives from 38 factories of Shanghai who were preparing to form a loyalist “Scarlet Guards” to protect the establishment. During the meeting, Mayor Cao suggested setting up a preparatory committee and promised that the Shanghai Party would send key figures to attend its inauguration. The proposed “Scarlet Guards” was entrusted to the Shanghai General Workers’ Union.

November 25 Mayor Cao talked with loyalist representatives and claimed that it was just a strategic and temporary measure for the Shanghai Party to recognize the WGH and that the way that Zhang Chunqiao dealt with the Anting Incident was wrong. In addition, Cao urged the representatives to seize Zhang Chunqiao back to Shanghai from Beijing.

November 29 The SPC set up a special group headed by vice mayor Song Richang to handle workers who complained about the labor system and wage payments.

November 30 Red Guards in Shanghai, led by the largest rebel student organization, the Red Revolutionaries, occupied the building of the *Liberation Daily*, a Shanghai Party organ.

December 3 The WGH people in the *Liberation Daily* building convened all occupiers for a meeting. All attendants agreed with the WGH's suggestion of forming a "Front Line Headquarters".

December 5 After nine days of the outburst of the *Liberation Daily* Incident, the Shanghai authorities signed "three decisions" proposed by the Red Revolutionaries and "four demands" of the WGH.

December 6 The Scarlet Guards was officially established.

December 14 The WGH and other 18 other organizations convened a "joint meeting", at which they demanded that the Shanghai Municipal Committee and its cadres at all levels must support the rebels; no public self-criticism by the Shanghai Municipal Committee and its cadres at all levels could be made without permission from the rebels; methods and timing for public self-criticism of all cadres needed to

be decided by the rebels.

December 18 The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee convened a rally to “hold high the red flag of Mao Zedong thought and attack the bourgeois reactionary line of the old Municipal Committee”.

December 24 Mayor Cao signed an eight demands’ petition requested by the Scarlet Guards at their meeting of “Criticizing the Bourgeois Reactionary Line of the Shanghai Municipal Committee,” and proclaimed that the Scarlet Guards was a revolutionary mass organization. Moreover, he announced that whatever commitments the SPC had made to the WGH were null and void.

December 25 The WGH and its allies held a huge rally to “Criticize the Bourgeois Reactionary Line of the Shanghai Municipal Committee Headed by Cao Diqui”. Mayor Cao had to apologize for meeting the demands of the Scarlet Guards and proclaimed that it time to exert “proletarian dictatorship” over the Scarlet Guards.

December 27 A wall poster calling for the seizure of power was put up in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory, stating that it was necessary to replace the power holders with a “Workers’ Committee of Production Management” (later renamed as the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production).

At the capital mass rally entitled “thoroughly criticizing the Liu-Deng bourgeois reactionary line,” Nie Yuanzi, one of the authors of “the first Marxist-Leninist wall poster” and a leader of the Commune of New Beijing University, suggested forming a Beijing Commune based on the great alliance of

various Beijing Red Guards factions.

December 28 The Kangping Road Incident took place. In order to settle scores with Mayor Cao, several tens of thousands of Scarlet Guards flooded into Kangping Street, where the SPC was located. They demanded that the SPC should re-validate the “8 demands” that Mayor Cao had betrayed. The Scarlet Guards’ demonstration was attacked by the WGH contingent. The first issue of the WGH newspaper “Worker’s Rebel News” was published.

December 30-31 The defeated Scarlet Guards staged a mass exodus from Shanghai which involved 60,000 to 100,000 workers’. The departing Scarlet Guards were intercepted at Kunshan by the WGH contingent.

December 30 The Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production was officially established through a “Paris Commune style general election” in the Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory.

January 1, 1967 Moderated by Mayor Cao Diqu, with the attendance of some major senior cadres of the SPC such as Wang Yipping, Song Richang, Song Jiwen, Zhang Chengzong, and Wang Ke, a special yet secret meeting was held and a 5-point guidance to promote workers’ wages and welfare was passed in accordance with Chen Pixian’s instructions of “relaxing on economic issues”. This meeting exerted decisive influence upon Shanghai’s economy.

The *People’s Daily* and the *Red Flag* jointly released an editorial entitled *Carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Through to the End*.

January 3 The WGH convened the responsible heads from a variety of rebel

organizations for a meeting entitled “Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production, Defending the Socialist Shanghai”. Late at night, some workers and Red Guards, led by Shu Zechi and Wang Liping from the Central Conservatory of Music, drafted “Message to All Shanghai People”, urging the masses to promote production while grasping revolution, and fiercely attacking the slow-downs and walk-offs by the Scarlet Guards. The *Wenhui Daily* was seized by the rebel group “The Spark That Sets The Prairie Fire”.

January 4 The CCRG sent Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan back to Shanghai. Zhang and Yao met with the *Wenhui Daily* rebels. Again, the first secretary of the SPC Chen Pixian advised to ease up on giving materials offered to the mass organizations.

January 5 1967, the *Wenhui Daily* put out the “*Message to All Shanghai People*”, which signaled a crucial move for the power seizures on a larger scale in Shanghai and the entire country. 11 rebel organizations led by the WGH signed the Message. Zhang and Yao convened a meeting of rebel leaders from the railway, the port, and all bureaus to discuss how to check the spread of economic disorder.

January 6 The *Liberation Daily* was seized by the rebels on the staff and the new *Liberation Daily* published the “*Message to All Shanghai People*”. More than 100,000 rebels attended a huge rally in People’s Plaza titled “Raising High the Great Banner of Mao Zedong Thought, Thoroughly Downing with the SPC Headed by Chen and Cao”, which was televised by a closed circuit television network to the whole city and broadcasted via 14 relay stations to ten neighboring counties.

January 7 Rebels from the WGH and other rebel organizations visited the Shanghai

branch of Chinese People's Bank, demanding that there be no distribution of money to any units without the Center's instructions.

January 9 The "*Message to All Shanghai People*" was reprinted in the *People's Daily* and broadcasted to the whole country.

Led by the WGH, 32 rebel organizations issued a new appeal titled "*Urgent Notice*" to the Shanghai people, strongly condemning the SPC and urging workers to return to their posts. Assisted by other rebel groups such as the East Is Red Regiment of Tongji University, the Railway United Headquarters of the WGH seized the power of general control rooms of the Shanghai Railway Bureau as well as the Shanghai Station.

Mao talked with the CCRG members, praising the mass takeover of the *Wenhui Daily* and the *Liberation Daily* by leftists.

January 10 The Heilongjiang rebels, by forming a triple alliance with leading members of the PLA and the Provincial Party Committee such as Wang Jiadao and Pan Fusheng, seized power from the old authorities.

January 11 A congratulatory telegram "Message of Greetings to Revolutionary Rebel Organizations in Shanghai", signed jointly by the Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Committee and the CCRG, was sent from Beijing praising Shanghai rebels' guiding principles and their efforts to oppose economism. Based on the Shanghai rebels' experiences of defying economism, Beijing officially issued a *Circular of the CPC Central Committee Concerning the Opposition to Economism*.

Nearly 1,000 members of the "Third Headquarters of Shanghai Red Guards"

led by An Wenjiang, together with the “Revolutionary Rebels’ Committee of Shanghai Public Security Bureau”, rushed into the city’s Public Security Department and captured power.

January 11 to 14 49 city, district and county level units of Shanghai were taken over by the rebels.

January 12 In celebrating the congratulatory telegram “*Message of Greetings to Revolutionary Rebel Organizations in Shanghai*” from the Center, the Shanghai rebels held a rally to pledge resolve and mass efforts in “smashing the new counteroffensive of the bourgeois reactionary line.” At this rally, a proposal to form an city-wide revolutionary rebels’ liaison post was passed.

January 14 The *People’s Daily* put out an article hailing the formation of the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production in Shanghai Glass Machinery Factory. In the middle of January, truckloads of rebels, from a contingent of small rebel organizations and led by an obscure Worker Rebel Eighth Headquarters tried to seize power from the SPC.

January 15 Members from the Shanghai Red Guard Third Headquarters, together with the Second Corps led by Geng Jinzhang, rushed into the SPC, Shanghai People’s Committee, and the East China Bureau of the CCP, trying to seize power from the SPC.

January 16 Led by the WGH, a “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Workers’ Liaison Department”, which consisted of 15 rebel workers’ organizations, was set up.

January 18 A small faction *Fanfupi* in Fudan University posted a wall poster “there

must be a second chaos in Fudan”, which claimed to “carry forward the proletarian spirit of doubting everything.”

January 19-20 Premier Zhou chaired a meeting of the Military Commission of the Central Committee at Jingxi Hotel, Beijing. At this meeting, Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, and Ye Qun (Lin Biao’s wife) insisted on launching *Sida* (“Four Big Rights”) in the army. Their proposal was opposed by Marshal Ye Jianying.

January 21 Rebels in Anhui province asked the local troops to send out 300 to 500 soldiers to guard their rally. In response to this request Mao ordered the Army to support the “Leftists”.

January 23 Rebel representatives held a preparatory meeting to establish the Shanghai People’s Commune on January 25.

The *People’s Daily* reprinted two more articles that glorified the Committee of Grasping Revolution and Promoting Production, hailing the Committee as the rudiments of a brand new communist organizational form and a “great creation”.

Hu Shoujun et al put up many anti-Zhang Chunqiao wall posters at Waitan.

January 24 The Red Revolutionaries swept all official seals from 23 major units including the SPC, the Shanghai People’s Committee, the East China Bureau of CCP, and the Party Committees and People’s Committees of ten lower districts. Some leaders of the Red Revolutionaries, such as Lao Yuanyi and Zhao Jihui, began to get actively involved in the bombardment of Zhang. Geng Jinzhang rejected the *Wenhui Daily’s* request to write articles praising the proposed Shanghai People’s Commune. Moreover, he crashed the preparatory meeting for the Shanghai Commune. The

meeting had to be adjourned.

January 28 The Red Revolutionaries of Fudan stormed the offices of “The Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Centre of Organizations of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee” (*jilianzhan*) and kidnapped Xu Jingxian et al.

January 29 An urgent telegram dated on this day was issued from Beijing, condemning the anti-Zhang Chunqiao activities in Shanghai.

January 30 Geng’s Second Corps, together with the International Red Guards, and Fight to the End, stormed the general headquarters of the WGH. That night, they also raided three grass-root district headquarters of the WGH—Nanshi, Changning, Yangpu branches.

January 31 The *People’s Daily* published the *Red Flag* editorial “*On the Proletarian Revolutionaries’ Struggle to Seize Power*”, hailing Shanghai as a model for initiating seizures of power.

The Red Rebel Revolutionary Committee in Heilongjiang Province was formed.

February 2 One branch of the Red Revolutionaries in the Shanghai Normal Institute held an anti-Zhang Chunqiao rally. Some major rebel organizations, without informing Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyan, formed the Committee of the Shanghai People’s Commune and decided to hold an inauguration rally the next day.

The *People’s Daily* published an editorial titled “New Morning Lights of the Northeast [of China]” to hail the establishment of the Red Rebel Revolutionary Committee in Heilongjiang Province, which was the first of such organs sanctioned

by the central authorities.

February 4 Geng Jinzhang announced that the Second Corps had withdrawn from the “Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels’ Committee of Broad Unity”, claiming to support the Shanghai Commune.

February 5 More than one million people gathered at Shanghai’s People’s Square to celebrate the founding of the Shanghai People’s Commune.

Han Tong, a young Red Guard of Inner Mongolia Normal Institute was shot to death at the gate of Inner Mongolia Military District in Huhehaote.

February 5-7 Clashes between the pro- and anti-Commune forces took place here and there. The anti-WGH-led Commune forces launched a new campaign to attack and struggle against the lowest rank of cadres in the whole city, who were in charge of street and lane committees.

February 8 A rebel faction within the Shanghai Commune titled “The Revolutionary Rebel Committee of Shanghai Foreign Economic Relations Bureau” issued a circular order titled “*Smashing The Old System of Hierarchy and Professional Titles*” via cable directly to “Premier Zhou Enlai, the State Council, the CCRG, Comrade Chen Boda, Comrade Jiang Qing and the New China News Agency”. They demanded the abolition of the use of the title “*zhang*” (meaning directors), all hierarchical levels, and all the titles of administrative officials at various bureaus (*ju*), departments (*bu*), divisions (*chu*) and offices (*ke*).

Feb. 9 23 rebel organizations led by the WGH issued *the Notice Concerning Firmly Following the Big Orientation of Struggle in the CR at the Street and Lane*

Level. Geng Jinzhang convened a meeting of “Committee of Broad Unity” consisting of all his 14 anti-Shanghai Commune factions to discuss the current situation in Shanghai.

February 10 The *People’s Daily* published an editorial titled "A Good Example in the Struggle by Proletarian Revolutionaries to Seize Power" that hailed the new power organ of Heilongjiang. It summed up some “fairly comprehensive and successful” experiences in the struggle of Heilongjiang.

To oppose the forces opposing the Shanghai Commune, the *Wenhui Daily* released a strong editorial titled “To Struggle with Cadres in Charge of Street and Lane Committees is Wrong in the General Orientation”.

February 10-11 Geng Jinzhang-led forces continuously held massive protests against the Shanghai Commune.

Feb. 11 Premier Zhou Enlai convened a Politburo meeting at the Huai Ren Hall. Three vice premiers Tan Zhenlin, Li Fuchun, Li Xiannian, and four marshals Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian, and Nie Rongzhen fervently denounced the ongoing CR at this meeting.

February 12-18 Mao summoned Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan three times and talked about the Shanghai CR. During these talks, Mao suggested not using the title of the Shanghai Commune.

February 15 The anti-Shanghai Commune factions launched attacks on the district branches of the WGH.

February 17 The *People’s Daily* released a New China News Agency’s report on

Shanghai's CR titled *The All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels Calls All Revolutionary Rebel Fighters and Revolutionary Masses on Seriously Studying and Applying Mao Zedong Works in a Creative Way, and Catering to the New Circumstances of the Struggle of Power Seizure*, covering the "All-city Provisional Supreme Power Organ of Shanghai Revolutionary Rebels".

February 22 The anti-Commune factions held a mass demonstration in People's Plaza.

Feb. 23 General Zhao Yongfu's army fired at rebels in Qinghai province. More than 300 rebels were killed, and many more were wounded by gun fire and all the rest were captured as prisoners.

February 24 A huge oath-taking rally with more than ten thousand people, titled "Raise the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong Thought and Take Further Steps to Seize Power in the Three-in-One Combination", was held at the Cultural Plaza of Shanghai. At this rally, the Shanghai Commune was renamed to the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee.

Appendix D: Cultural Revolution Newspapers and Periodicals Cited

Beijing zhoubao (Peking Review), Beijing

Collected Leaflets (chuandan huibian), Shanghai

Dongfanghong (East Is Red), Shanghai

Dongfang hong (East Is Red), Wuhan, Hubei

Dongfang hong zhanbao (East Is Red Battle News), Yangzhou, Jiangsu

Frontline News (huoxian bao), Shanghai

Gongren zaofan bao (Workers' Rebel News), Shanghai

Hongqi (Red Flag), Beijing

Hongwei zhanbao (Red Guard Battle News), Shanghai

Jiefangjun Bao (PLA Daily), Beijing

Jiefang ribao (Liberation Daily), Shanghai

Jinggangshan (Jinggang Mountains), Beijing (Beijing Normal University)

Jinggangshan (Jinggang Mountains), Beijing (Qinghua University)

Pi tao zhanbao (Battle News of Criticizing Tao Zhu), Beijing

Renmin ribao (People's Daily), Beijing

Shanghai hongweibing (Shanghai Red Guards), Shanghai

Shanghai Wanbao (Shanghai Evening News), Shanghai

Tingjin kuaibao (Advance Express News), Shanghai

*Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming tongxun (The Newsletter of the Great Proletarian CR),
Beijing*

Yiyue fengbao (January Storm), Shanghai

Zhibu shenghuo (Life in Party Branches), Shanghai

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Biography

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