

# New trends of thought” in the Cultural Revolution



Detailed study into the rise and development of the Chinese 'ultra-left' during the Cultural Revolution which found itself often in highly confrontational opposition with the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

*Taken from the Journal of Contemporary China, Vol. 8, No. 21 (July 1999)*

## **Abstract**

Most rebels of the Cultural Revolution were rebels, but not revolutionaries. Although they might have long been discontented with the establishment, few ever seriously thought about structural ways to overcome social maladies that had existed in the pre-CR China. They never questioned whether an old power structure with new power holders would be able to make any fundamental changes; and, they had no idea about what they would do with their power. Instead, they were interested in power as such. The events of 1967 and 1968 clearly demonstrated that the primary concern of most rebel organizations was merely to maximize their own share of power. There were, however, a handful of clairvoyants who were trying not only to reshuffle the bureaucracy but also to create a new society, a society modeled after the Paris Commune of 1871. What they represented then was called "new trends of thought" (xinshichao). By tracing the rise and evolution of xinshichao over the ten years between 1966 and 1976, this essay attempts to identify xinshichao theorists' main contributions and assess their impact on the course of the CR.

The Cultural Revolution (CR) was a "revolution from above," and the rebels did not rise of their own volition. Although they might have long been discontented with the establishment, few had ever seriously thought about what was wrong with the present socio-political system, let alone how to amend it. When reassessing the role in the CR of the rebels as a whole, a former rebel theorist points out that the rebels were basically a destructive force, which had enormous capacity to disturb and paralyze the existing system but had little sense about how to reform it. In seeking to liberate themselves from all forms of oppression and restrictions, the rebels tended to focus their attacks on their immediate superiors and other individuals who, they believed, were responsible for their past misfortunes. For most of the rebels, vindictiveness was a main, if not the only, force that kept them active in politics<sup>1</sup>. Once they, as victors, had vented their spite on those they hated, one of two outcomes was likely, either exiting from collective action altogether and becoming bystanders (xiaoyaopai) of the movement, or remaining active but only to pursue personal economic gains, which gave rise to "rampant economism."<sup>2</sup>

Even rebel leaders were just rebels, not revolutionaries. When Mao called on them to "seize power," they all responded enthusiastically. However, they wanted to be in power not because they needed power to realize some noble revolutionary goals, but because they were attracted by the prospect of becoming new power holders. They hardly ever thought about structural ways to overcome social maladies that had existed in the pre-CR China; they never questioned whether an old power structure with new power holders would be able to make any fundamental changes; and, they had no idea about what they would do with their power. Instead, they were interested in power for the sake of power. The events of 1967 and 1968 clearly demonstrated that the primary concern of every rebel organization was merely to maximize its own share of power<sup>3</sup>.

There were, however, a handful of clairvoyants who were trying not only to reshuffle the bureaucracy but also to create a new society, a society modeled after the Paris Commune of 1871. What they were advocating then was called the "new trends of thought" (xinshichao, hereafter NT). By tracing the rise and evolution of the NT over the decade between 1966 and 1976, this essay attempts to identify NT theorists' main contributions and assess their impact on the course of the CR.

### **The Embryonic Stage**

The NT began to emerge in the early months of the CR. But before the winter of 1967-68, no one had ever tried to synthesize various new trends of thoughts. Rather, new ideas just burgeoned here and there like wildflowers.

### **The Model of the Paris Commune of 1871**

On September 15, 1966, Lin Biao made a public speech in Beijing, stating:

*Bombard the headquarters means to bombard a handful of capitalist roaders. Our state is a socialist one under the proletarian dictatorship. The leadership in our country is in the hands of the proletariat. The purpose to struggle against capitalist roaders is to strengthen our proletarian dictatorship. Obviously, a handful of reactionary bourgeois, landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements and rightists hate the dictatorship so that they attempt to bombard our proletarian headquarters in every possible way. We will brook no such activities<sup>4</sup>.*

At that time, the local authorities were under severe attack by rebellious students. Lin's statement then became a weapon for local officials to resist challenges from below. In such provinces as Hubei and Hunan, those who criticized the public authorities now were accused of "bombarding the proletarian headquarters"<sup>5</sup>. However, two high school students in Beijing rose to challenge Lin Biao. Under the pseudonym of Yilin-Dixi, they published an open letter

to Lin Biao on November 15, 1966, which criticized Lin for having misrepresented Mao's idea of "bombarding the headquarters." Emphasizing that the significance of "bombarding the headquarters" did not lie in disclosing the crimes of individual bureaucrats, the two high school students pointed out:

The problems that have been revealed in the brief course of the CR demonstrate that the proletarian dictatorship needs to be ameliorated, the socialist system needs to be reformed, and the form of the Party and the government need to be amended. Founded seventeen years ago, the People's Republic based upon the principle of the people's democratic dictatorship has become obsolete. We must create a brand-new state machinery to replace the old one<sup>6</sup>.

The authors of the letter maintained that their position had a solid base in Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought. They reminded Lin that Mao had several times, lately, mentioned the model of the Paris Commune of 1871. Indeed, Mao had called the dazibao written by Nie Yuanzi and others of Beijing University a "declaration of a Chinese Paris Commune for the 1960s." And more importantly, Mao's metaphor was elaborated upon in the Sixteen Points--the Party's guiding document for the CR. The Sixteen Points fascinated many young minds, because its ninth point not only legitimated the mass organizations that had grown up spontaneously, but recommended "to institute a system of general elections, like that of the Paris Commune, for electing members to the Cultural Revolution groups and committees and delegates to the Cultural Revolutionary congresses."<sup>7</sup> If these members or delegates prove incompetent, the Sixteen Points suggested, they should be replaced through election or recalled by the masses through discussion<sup>8</sup>. The two authors of the Yilin-Dixi letter thought of applying the model of the Paris Commune to the whole structure of government. If that were to happen, the state would no longer be "the state in the original sense," and the old system would be replaced by a new system, a system in which there was no bureaucracy, inequality, and manipulation. The two authors firmly believed that Mao was guiding the CR toward that direction. For this reason, they declared "an Oriental Commune replacing [People's Republic of] China is already on the horizon."<sup>9</sup>

The Yilin-Dixi letter was the first cry of the NT. Although its authors were soon put into jail, as will be shown below, the letter had an enduring influence on the thinking of later NT theorists in the nation.

The interest in the model of the Paris Commune was rekindled during the January Storm of power seizure in 1967. On January 23, People's Daily recommended the first model of new power structure--- Shanghai Glass Machine Mill's Revolution and Production Committee, which was said to have been organized according to the principle of the Paris Commune<sup>10</sup>. On the same day when Chen Boda tentatively laid out his idea for the future power structure, he also called his model "commune." On the last day of January, an editorial of Red Flag, which was revised personally by Mao, confirmed that the commune was what Mao had in mind<sup>11</sup>. Chen Boda then told Zhang Chunqiao by phone that Mao was considering the candidates of the future Beijing Commune's leadership, which was the catalyst for the establishment of the Shanghai People's Commune on February 5<sup>12</sup>. The prospect of establishing a new form of state machinery thrilled many young rebel theorists at the time<sup>13</sup>.

Mao soon changed his mind, however. On February 12, he told Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan to change the name of the Shanghai People's Commune to Shanghai Revolutionary Committee<sup>14</sup>. And a week later, the center issued a circular which officially prohibited new power organs from using "commune" in their names. In the middle of March, Mao finally decided that the revolutionary committee based on the principle of "three-in-one combination" (the military representatives from the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the

revolutionary cadres, and the rebels) would be the standard form of the new power structure<sup>15</sup>.

### **The Redistribution of Property and Power**

In February 1967, Mao not only abandoned the Paris Commune as a model, but also condemned the slogan "thoroughly ameliorate the proletarian dictatorship." But, NT did not vanish. In a speech of April 3, Jiang Qing mentioned that Mao had thought of "redistributing property (of the means of production) and power" during the CR. The concept was quickly seized upon by a few NT theorists in Beijing. Around late April, they published an article titled "On New Trends of Thought," which was probably the first time that the term "new trends of thought" was coined during the CR.

The article argued that although China's socialist revolution had abolished the private ownership of the means of production, power and property were still concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals, namely, power holders. In theory, they should be the trustees rather than the owners of the property they controlled; but, in practice, some had turned themselves into de facto owners of the property entrusted to them by the people. Those power holders taking the capitalist road, in the judgment of the authors, constituted a "privileged class." The contradiction between this new class and the mass of laboring people was the main contradiction in Chinese society. The goal of the CR, according to the authors of the article, was to redistribute property and power and thus remove the foundations of the privileged class. Anyone who supported such a redistribution was a "revolutionary;" anyone who opposed it was a "conservative." The conflict between the "revolutionary rebels" on the one hand and the "conservatives" on the other was inevitable<sup>16</sup>.

It is not clear whether the authors of "On New Trends of Thought" were aware of Djilas' theory of "new class."<sup>17</sup> What is certain is that they did not know their theory resembled the new class theory developed by a "rightist" by the name of Zhou Dajue in 1957, the same year when Djilas published his *The New Class*<sup>18</sup>. Ten years before the publication of "On New Trends of Thought," Zhou had already argued that in China, the national ownership of the means of production existed only in name but not in reality. In reality, the means of production was controlled by a minority of individuals, who formed a class of "leaders" (*lindaozhe jieji*) separated from the mass of the people. He believed that the contradiction between this class of leaders and the mass of the people was a class struggle<sup>19</sup>. Ironically, while Zhou had been labeled a "rightist" in 1957, the authors of "On New Trends of Thought" who echoed his view were denounced as "ultra-leftists" in 1967.

### **Class Relations Changed**

In the chaotic spring of 1967, there was a strong demand for pushing the new class theory one step further, for many victims of past political campaigns wanted to exploit the opportunity to redress their grievances and to wreak revenge on those who were responsible for their suffering. To justify their demand for the "reversal of the past verdicts," some rebel theorists developed a so-called "theory of changed class relations." The theory was composed of three propositions in the form of a syllogism:

*The major proposition: Those who had been suppressed tended to be revolutionary.*

*The minor proposition: There were some social groups that had been suppressed in the 17 years prior to the CR.*

*The conclusion: The victims of the previous political movements should be relied upon as the motive force of the current CR movement.*

In other words, class relations in Chinese society had fundamentally changed. Workers, poor peasants, and communist cadres now had vested interests in the existing system. That

explained why they were so conservative. Only those who had suffered persecution in the past wished to rise against the establishment. Therefore, they became the backbone of the rebellious forces. It was implied in this theory that a bad family background should not be treated as a stigma any more. Conversely, a good family background was no longer a form of political capital, but a liability. According to this theory, power holders taking the capitalist road were the main and only target of the CR. Attacking anyone else, including a landlord, rich peasant, counterrevolutionary, bad element, rightist, or bourgeois intellectual, was wrong because it would "divert the general orientation of the movement." Although the theory of changed class relations was warmly embraced by many rebels,<sup>20</sup> for obvious reasons, few dared to articulate it in a systematic way<sup>21</sup>. One exception was Ge Bin, a theorist of Shanghai's "Cultural Revolution Contact Center of Middle Schools" (zhongxue yongdong chuanlianhui). To my knowledge, no treatment of the theory was more lucid than his famous essay "All for the Ninth Party Congress."<sup>22</sup>

### **The Seizure of Military Power**

After the Wuhan Incident of July 1967, a provocative slogan, "pull a handful of capitalist roaders from the army," gained wide currency in China<sup>23</sup>. The phrase was invented by rebel theorists<sup>24</sup>. As a matter of fact, Mao personally authorized its usage<sup>25</sup>. The center's organ, Red Flag, even published an editorial in late July, entitled "The Proletariat Must Take a Firm Hold of the Gun."<sup>26</sup> However, the slogan was soon grabbed by rebel theorists to put forth a theory of seizing military power. In those rebel theorists' view, the Wuhan Incident indicated that the main threat to the CR at the moment no longer came from "the handful in the Party" but from "the handful in the army." Thus, the central task of the day was to seize military power. Lu Li'an, a NT theorist we will encounter later, wrote in an article published on July 25:

*In a sense, the January Revolution of Shanghai was merely the prelude to the power seizure. Since all political power is based upon military power, it is not an exaggeration to say that the July Storm triggered by the Wuhan Incident signals the real beginning of the power seizure<sup>27</sup>.*

Another article asserted:

*The lesson of the Wuhan Incident is that a prerequisite for seizing power from the handful of capitalist roaders in the Party is to take over the military power usurped by the handful of bourgeois representatives in the army. Otherwise, the power seizure is nothing but empty talk<sup>28</sup>.*

But military power would not change hands without resistance. After all, it was Mao who had coined such famous phrases as "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," "the seizure of political power by army forces," and "settlement of the issue by war."<sup>29</sup> To prepare for an inevitable decisive military engagement with "the handful in the army," according to those rebel theorists, the rebels had to arm themselves and set up their own quasi-military groups. In August, rebel publications in the nation were full of statements like the following one:

*The confrontation in the future may become much more cruel and ferocious than ever before. Without arms, we can hardly win the decisive battle. If we were to be defeated, all the past efforts and achievements would end up in smoke. Nothing can be more terrible than that.*

*Therefore, we rebels must organize ourselves, arm ourselves, and be prepared to put up a desperate fight.<sup>30</sup>*

As a result of such a conviction, late July and early August of 1967 witnessed a gun-seizing movement. In many parts of the country, mass organizations raided army depots and barracks, and even attacked trains carrying war materiel to Vietnam<sup>31</sup>. For a while, the center

tried to stop such a spontaneous gun-seizing movement by promising to arm the "leftist organizations" in an orderly way<sup>32</sup>. But, rather than calming down the gun-seizing frenzy, this decision actually accelerated the armed race among warring factions<sup>33</sup>. By the middle of August, China was drowned in a sea of chaos, featuring pitched battles by heavily armed factions in nearly all of the provinces<sup>34</sup>. To prevent the situation from deteriorating into a real civil war, Mao demanded that all attacks against the army cease at once. Accordingly, the slogan "drag out the handful in the army" fell into oblivion. And such slogans as "the seizure of political power by armed forces" and "settlement of the issue by war" were denounced as reactionary. Moreover, the center ordered that all arms and equipment that had been seized be returned within a certain time limit<sup>35</sup>.

Why did Mao suddenly decide to deprive the rebels of the right to arm themselves? According to Lu Li'an's interpretation, just as Lenin had signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in 1918, Chairman Mao made the concession to some powerful moderate leaders at the center (implying Zhou Enlai) in order to gather revolutionary strength for launching a decisive battle against "the handful in the army" later. Therefore, the rebels should not return all the weapons to the army<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, in many cases, what the rebels returned were merely worn, big weapons which could not be easily hidden. New and small weapons like pistols and grenades were more often than not kept.

### **The Sheng-wu-lian**

After the embroiled summer of 1967, the country began to quiet down. In September, Mao stipulated that all China's 29 provinces should have their revolutionary committees established by the Spring Festival of 1968. Then all rebel organizations were drawn into dirty power politics, competing with each other to maximize their share of power. In the meantime, a large number of rebel activists began to distance themselves from politics. Having experienced the excitement of fighting the power holders and conservatives, they found infighting between the rebel organizations of little real interest. Hard-core faction leaders might come out of the infighting with powerful positions in revolutionary committees, but what would the rank-and-filers gain? Since there was little to be gained from further collective action, many chose to retire from active involvement.

This was at this time that the NT entered its mature stage. Disappointed because rebel leaders were avariciously scrambling for seats in the forthcoming revolutionary committees, NT theorists began to ask themselves: What were the root causes of the CR movement; what goals was the CR supposed to achieve; and what was the best way to realize these goals? They must have been embarrassed to find that after participating in the movement for more than a year, they could not readily answer these crucial questions. To seek the meaning of the CR, NT theorists set up independent study groups here and there in late 1967, as if by some prior agreement. As a result, the second part of 1967 witnessed the emergence of numerous NT groups in the country, including the "Communist Group" in Beijing, the "October Revolution Group" in Shandong,<sup>37</sup> the "Oriental Society" in Shanghai,<sup>38</sup> the "August 5 Commune" in Guangzhou,<sup>39</sup> and, most conspicuously, the Sheng-wu-lian in Changsha<sup>40</sup> and the Bei-jue-yang in Wuhan.

How the Sheng-wu-lian emerged from the Cultural Revolution is a fascinating story that need not be told in detail here<sup>41</sup>. Suffice to say, it was formed in Changsha, the capital of Hunan province, on October 11, 1967<sup>42</sup>. During its brief existence between October 1967 and January 1968, it produced a series of articles to advertise its political program. Three of them, namely, a program, a resolution, and an essay, soon reached the outside world. The most influential of the three was the essay, "Whither China," which was written on January 6, 1968 by Yang Xiguang, a high school student. Yang also authored "Report on an Investigation of the Educated Youth Movement in Hunan (November 16, 1967)" and "A Proposal Concerning

the Establishment of Maoist Group (October 1967)," which were less well-known in the West<sup>43</sup>.

In previous studies of "Whither China," the attention has been focused on three issues: its critique of the class of "red capitalists," its model for the future of China--the Paris Commune--and its advocacy for violent revolution. In fact, Yang's views on these individual issues were not really original. Rather, he only echoed the ideas of the other NT theorists discussed in the previous section. His real contribution was to synthesize the views of various NT theorists and to put forth a powerful criticism of the revolutionary committee, the model of power structure recommended by Mao.

In Yang's understanding, the basic contradictions that had given rise to the CR were opposed interests between a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the mass of the people<sup>44</sup>. The ultimate goal of the CR was to create a People's Commune of China after the model of the Paris Commune and to redistribute property and power. However, peaceful transition was impossible, because the "privileged class" would put up a last-ditch struggle to hinder the progress of history. In order to realize the People's Commune of China, it was necessary to wipe out this class. But, it was not sufficient to merely drag out some individual capitalist roaders and dismiss them. The CR had to be a revolution in the sense that one class overthrew another. More precisely, the old state machinery that had produced the class of "red capitalists" must be completely smashed.

Yang was very disappointed with what the CR had accomplished in its first one and half years. The best moment of the CR, in Yang's view, was the January Storm of 1967, during which ninety percent of the senior cadres were forced to stand aside. For a short while, property and power fell into the hands of the people, and the society was in a state of "mass dictatorship" similar to that of the Paris Commune. But, at the time, the seizure of power was widely understood as the dismissal of individual bureaucrats from their offices, and not as the overthrowing of the privileged class and the smashing of the old state machinery. As a result, although some former officials had been dismissed, the seizure of power resulted in only "superficial reform:" The old Party committees were replaced by the "revolutionary committees" or "revolutionary committee preparatory groups."

What was wrong with the revolutionary committee? The essence of the revolutionary committee was the principle of three-in-one combination. Implementing this principle, in Yang's view, would inevitably create a type of regime dominated by the army and bureaucrats. While the old power holders continued to play a leading role in the "new power structure," the red capitalist class was able to regain ascendancy. Property and power thus were again wrested away from revolutionary people and returned to the bureaucrats. "Everything remains the same after so much ado." For this reason, Yang called the revolutionary committee "a product of bourgeois reformism."

The question, then, was why Mao, who had once strongly advocated the commune, now opposed its establishment and proposed the model of revolutionary committee instead. Yang's explanation was that "if 'communes' are established while the masses have not yet fully understood that their interest lies in the realization of 'communes' in China, the 'communes' will be communes in name only. They will be at best sham 'communes,' essentially the same as the present revolutionary committees in which power is usurped by the [red] bourgeoisie." Did that mean that the goal of commune-building should be given up? No, Yang answered. If dictatorship by the revolutionary committee was to be taken as the final goal of the CR, China would inevitably go the way of the revisionist Soviet Union, and "the people will again be returned to the bloody fascist rule of capitalism." Therefore, "the revolutionary committee's road of bourgeois reformism is a dead-end." Should the

revolutionary committee be overthrown now and replaced by the commune? Yang's answer was again "no." He called such an idea "leftist doctrine of one revolution." Then, what should be the program of the Sheng-wulian? Yang himself seemed to be confused. On the one hand, he suggested: "should the Marxist-Leninists [namely, people like himself] have power, they should exercise it by banning the call to 'immediately overthrow the revolutionary committee and establish the commune.'" On the other hand, he declared "our objective of establishing the "People's Commune of China" can only be achieved by the forceful overthrow of the bourgeois dictatorship and the revisionist system of the revolutionary committee."

One thing was for sure, though. That is, "to make revolution, it is necessary to have a revolutionary party" (a quotation from Mao). As early as the initial stage of the CR, some young intellectuals in Beijing already proposed to "rebuild a Marxist-Leninist group."<sup>45</sup> In October 1967, Yang himself published "A Proposal Concerning the Establishing of Maoist Groups." Now, he again advocated the formation of Maoist groups, which he hoped would serve as the seeds of a future Maoist party in the country<sup>46</sup>.

Obviously, Yang's political program was diametrically opposed to the center's policy, at the time, of establishing and consolidating the revolutionary committee. Even before the formal establishment of the Shengwu- lian, Zhou Enlai and Jiang Qing had already noted "some ultra-leftists being at work" at the First Middle School of Changsha, where Yang was a student<sup>47</sup>. Two weeks after the establishment of the Sheng-wu-lian, Lin Biao warned that ultra-leftism was a major problem in Hunan<sup>48</sup>. And in late November and early December of 1967, a campaign was launched to fight against ultra-leftism in the province. Despite these pressures, however, Yang continued to publish his highly provocative essays and the Sheng-wu-lian remained active<sup>49</sup>. This explains why the Maoist center was so mad at the publication of "Whither China." Only a week after the essay was made public, the center staged an unbridled attack against Yang and the Sheng-wu-lian. The Sheng-wu-lian was denounced as a "counter-revolutionary big hotchpotch," and Yang's theory an "extremely reactionary trend of thought."<sup>50</sup> Ironically, it was because of the center's stern criticism that the Sheng-wu-lian, an otherwise obscure regional group, suddenly became well-known throughout the nation, and that Yang's theory received the attention of like-minded ultra-leftist groups elsewhere.

### **The Bei-jue-yang**

Soon after the Sheng-wu-lian was founded in Changsha, on November 7, 1967, a ultra-leftist group calling itself the "Plough Society" (beidouxing xuehui) was set up in Wuhan. The group changed its name twice in the following ten months of its existence. During the winter of 1967-68, it called itself the "Liaison Office of the Proletarian Revolutionaries Who are Determined to Carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution through to the End," which was usually abbreviated as "Juepai," the first and last characters of the phrase "the Proletarian Revolutionaries Who are Determined to Carry the CR through to the End" in Chinese<sup>51</sup>. From April to August, 1968, its members rallied under the banner of the Yangtze Tribune (Yangzijiang pinglun), a journal they had run intermittently since 1967. Later, the group was often called "Bei-jue-yang," a title formed out of the first characters of each of the three names.

Feng Tian'ai and Lu Li'an, two students of the Central China Institute of Technology, were the leading spirits of the group<sup>52</sup>. They had been active in local politics since the outset of the CR, but held the leaders of major rebel factions in contempt. In their judgment, those rebel leaders cared about nothing but seats in revolutionary committees. Watching rebel leaders shamelessly scrambling for power on the sidelines, they felt it was time to probe why the CR was necessary, what its goals were, and how the CR should be carried out. The "Inaugural Declaration" of the "Plough Society" stated:

*Political climbers are fighting each other to secure their seats [in revolutionary committees]; mediocre persons are searching for secret recipes of longevity<sup>53</sup>. But there are also a large number of revolutionary whippersnappers who have made unremitting efforts to prepare 'weapons' and 'ammunition' for battles in the future. Those who desire nothing but to be part of the officialdom...will eventually be abandoned by the people. The hope of our country is placed in those who are willing to seek truth and study hard to understand the current movement. They will play the leading role in politics in the future.<sup>54</sup>*

Obviously they believed themselves to fall into the latter category.

Although Yang Xiguang once talked about the necessity of a peasant movement,<sup>55</sup> no NT theorist paid more attention to the peasant movement than Lu Li'an did. For Lu, the main purpose of establishing the "Plough Society" was to prepare its members for "a new upsurge of the peasant movement" in the slack winter season of 1967-68<sup>56</sup>. Why was the peasants' involvement so important? In the "Manifesto of the Juepai," which was published on December 10, 1967, Lu wrote:

*All major wars in China have been peasant wars, and all massive movements have been peasant movements. Without the participation of 500 million peasants, the complete victory of the CR would be impossible. A rule in the history of modern China has been for a revolution to develop from a student movement into a workers' movement and eventually into a peasant revolution...A great peasant movement is in the making; the Juepai must go through the baptism of the peasant movement.<sup>57</sup>*

As it happened, in mid-December, a peasant rebel group, the First Headquarters of Bahe District of Xishui County, came to Wuhan to seek support from the rebels of the city. After talking with Wang Renzhou, the head of the First Headquarters, Lu, found that his ideas agreed with Wang's. Wang asserted that the peasantry was the most advanced class in contemporary China. His argument was very simple: since the group that was suppressed and exploited most severely tended to be the most revolutionary, and the economic status of the Chinese peasants was the lowest among all social groups in Chinese society, the peasants must have been imbued with the strongest revolutionary spirit<sup>58</sup>.

At Wang's invitation, Lu went to Bahe to see the "New Countryside" that the First Headquarters was trying to build. This was an experiment modeled after "military communism." The level of production team was abolished, and the means of production came under the control of the authorities at the brigade level. It was planned that the means of production, in due course, would be centralized at the level of commune. The farm cattle were managed centrally; all the livestock previously owned by individual peasant families were surrendered to the brigades; and all craftsmen who had done their business separately were ordered to work together. The mess halls that had been abandoned after the fanatic "communization" of 1958 were restored. All peasants had to eat three meals together. Moreover, all private houses were torn down, and the peasants were forced to move into simply-built living quarters. These measures, of course, met with strong resistance from a majority of the local residents. To impose the "new rules," the First Headquarters, under the leadership of Wang Renzhou, set up its militia, which was empowered to "punish mercilessly anyone who dare to sabotage the New Countryside."<sup>59</sup>

Wang's "New Countryside" not only faced internal resistance but also was surrounded by hostile neighbors. In Lu's eyes, however, the unpopular experiment foreshadowed the future of the peasants' community life in the entire province and country. Modeling himself on young Mao Zedong, he published a "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Xishui County" on the last day of 1967<sup>60</sup>. In the report, he prophesied that an upsurge in the peasant movement would soon overtake the country, and asserted that whether one supported

the movement or not would be the sole criterion for distinguishing the "true proletarian revolutionaries who are determined to carry out the CR through to the end" from "the petty bourgeois revolutionaries."[61](#)

Contrary to Lu's expectations, however, the joint 1968 New Year's editorial of People's Daily, Red Flag, and PLA Daily did not say a single word at all about the peasant movement, indicating that the center had no intention to revolutionize the countryside. Worse still, none of the major rebel organizations in Wuhan showed interest in the Bahe experiment of social reform, nor had they any sympathy for the First Headquarters' failed struggle with its rivals. Instead, they all made statements denouncing the peasant group and finally drove it out of the city. But Lu continued to advocate a peasant revolution.

In mid-January 1968, thanks to the center's criticism of the Sheng-wu-lian, Yang Xiguang's "Whither China" began to circulate in Wuhan[62](#). Meanwhile, the theses of other NT varieties, such as Shanghai's "Oriental Society," also became available to the Bei-jue-yang group[63](#). Lu Li'an was fascinated by the ideas of "the smashing of the old state machine" and the "building up of the people's communes."[64](#) Like Yang Xiguang, Lu also viewed the revolutionary committee as a transitional rather than the ultimate form of the new power structure after the CR. The ultimate form would be the commune. Lu strongly believed that history had entrusted the Juepai with the mission of leading the struggle to overthrow the "bourgeois dictatorship and the revisionist system of the revolutionary committee." To accomplish this task, Lu maintained, the Juepai must throw themselves into the peasant movement and lead the movement, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had done after its defeat in the urban areas in 1927. Only when the peasants were aroused to action and the peasant movement was merged with the workers and students' movements could Juepai accomplish its historical mission of bringing the commune into being.

Of course, the peasant movement alone would not be sufficient for bringing the "People's Commune of China" into being. In addition to mobilizing the peasants, Lu believed that the army and the Party must undergo thorough reform before the commune was to be made a reality. The army was crucial because, as Mao once pointed out, whoever controlled the army would be able to control political power. To get rid of the existing armed forces, Lu suggested that China's PLA must be eradicated and replaced by a people's militia. He justified his suggestion by citing Marx's praise of the Paris Commune's decision to "abolish the standing army."[65](#)

Moreover, Lu conjectured that if the Ninth National Congress of the CCP could not be convened in 1968 as Mao had scheduled, advanced elements of the rebels throughout the nation might have to gather together to discuss important issues in national politics just as Mao Zedong, Li Dazhao, and other communists had done in 1921. In other words, he anticipated that a new political party would be established to replace the decayed CCP. The Juepai of Wuhan, in his eyes, was the proper leader for such a new party. In his diary of February 22, 1968, Lu wrote:

*Just like the moment of June 1, 1966, a new historical juncture is coming. Will someone in Beijing be able to draw up a program for ushering in the new era of the proletarian revolution? I don't think so. Such a program will emerge only somewhere in the Hubei and Hunan areas. The failure of (the Sheng-wu-lian of) Hunan has provided (the Juepai of) Hubei with some lessons. Therefore, we may say with confidence that the manifesto of the future People's Commune of China will issue forth from Hubei. We, the proletarian revolutionaries who are determined to carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution through to the end, will be entrusted to draft the manifesto.[66](#)*

To help create the new party, Lu even drew up a travel plan to visit like-minded people in other parts of the country in May and June<sup>67</sup>. Unfortunately, before he was able to leave Wuhan, a rebel faction of the city kidnapped him and soon turned him over to the local authorities<sup>68</sup>. Stepping forward, Feng Tian'ai assumed the position of chief editor of Yangtze Tribune. Thereafter, until mid-July, the Yangtze Tribune published four more issues. Among the articles appearing in these issues, two had widespread and profound influence.

One entitled "How to Understand Proletarian Political Revolution" was written by Feng. Based upon the assertion that a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie had been formed in China, the article first argued that the CR was not a purely cultural revolution but rather a political revolution in which the working class would overthrow the new exploiting class. Then it pointed out that any political revolution should have three characteristics. First, to make a revolution, it was necessary to have a revolutionary party. The existing CCP, it said, must undergo revolutionary changes, and "the proletarian revolutionaries who are determined to carry the CR through to the end" (Juepai) should become the nucleus of a reorganized CCP. Second, a political revolution would necessarily and inevitably take the form of civil war. No rebel should be under the illusion that the proletarian revolutionaries would win the CR without a baptism by fire. Third, a social revolution was bound to follow the political revolution. The social revolution would, Feng argued, result in the realization of a new form of sociopolitical relations, the peoples' commune<sup>69</sup>.

The other article, titled "An Analysis of Various Political Groups in the CR," was written by a history student at Wuhan University, Yang Xiulin. According to this article, there were basically six groups of political actors in the Cultural Revolution: the ultra-rightist forces, the conservatives, the rebels, the middle-of-the-roads, the forces that were left in form but right in essence, and Juepai. Here what needs to be noted is the distinction between the ordinary rebel and Juepai.

Ordinary rebels were not only blind to the necessity for completely smashing the old state machinery and overhauling the existing social system, they also barely recognized the simple fact that their enemies had formed a class. Believing that the purpose of the CR was merely to purge individual capitalist-roaders, they had no objection to the revolutionary committee. On the contrary, they tended to fight each other to grab as much power for themselves as possible within the committee. The Juepai elements were different. They perfectly understood that the basic social contradictions that had given rise to the Cultural Revolution were between the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the mass of the people. The intensification of these contradictions necessitated thorough changes in the society. This, in turn, required overthrowing the rule of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie, smashing the old state machinery, redistributing property and power, and establishing a new society--the People's Commune of China<sup>70</sup>. The implications of that distinction were clear. As the "advanced element" of the rebels, the Juepai should play a vanguard role in future struggles, even though as an emerging political force they were still weak and somewhat immature.

In July, 1968, however, Beijing suddenly began to adopt a high-handed policy toward the rebels. Under the enormous pressure, most rebel organizations found it necessary to lie low until the center's criticism blew over. But Feng and his comrades around the Yangtze Tribune had no intention to give in. On August 4, they put up a large-sized poster in the busiest section of downtown Wuhan, which carried nothing but three slogans:

*Revolutionary people yearn to take the destiny of the proletarian dictatorship, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and the socialist economy into their own hands.*

*Long live the proletarian democracy. Let the masses educate and liberate themselves.*

*The roaring Yangtze River calls on the Xiangjiang River (of Hunan), the Songhua River (of Heilongjiang), the Zhujiang River (of Guangdong), the Wujiang River (of Sichuan), and, the Huangpujiang River (of Shanghai) to converge into a mighty moat of Tiananmen rostrum of Beijing.*[71](#)

This was obviously an attempt to protest the oppressive policies adopted by the central and local authorities. The third slogan, in particular, demonstrated that those young men were determined to unite with "ultra-leftist forces" in other provinces to launch a nationwide counterattack against the present "adverse current." They believed that, just like the two previous "adverse currents" of Spring and Fall 1967, the current one would also be short-lived. What they did not realize was that Mao had decided in late July to deradicalize the movement for the sake of preserving public order[72](#). On August 22, Zeng Siyu, the chairman of the Hubei Provincial Revolutionary Committee, declared that the Yangtze Tribune was an "extremely reactionary publication" and that Lu Li'an and Feng Tian'ai were "active counter-revolutionaries." Three days later, Feng was arrested[73](#). And the Yangtze Tribune was forced to close.

The rebels became the victims of ruthless repression in the following months. But the NT held up in Wuhan. In the spring of 1969, when Wuhan witnessed a brief revival of radicalism,[74](#) the remnants of the routed Bei-jue-yang rallied and became active again. Having suffered in the hands of revolutionary committees, these NT theorists now awoke to two facts: one, it might not be feasible to establish the commune for a long time to come; the other, short of the commune, it was important to develop some institutional devices to check the power of revolutionary committees. How to reconcile the two facts? Under the pseudonym of Cao Sixin (in Chinese sounding like the term "new trend of thought"), a high school student named Xiao Tieren put forward a transition theory[75](#). To be sure, Xiao asserted, the state would eventually wither away and a commune would take its place. But the time was not ripe yet. Rather, China was still in the period of transition from socialism to communism, which might take a long time. The CR, Xiao believed, was merely the first of a series of earth-shaking changes that the period would witness. Since it was impossible to replace the state with a commune in the transition period, the existence of the revolutionary committee and the army, the two pillars of the post-CR state machine, was justifiable, even though the state, in Engels' words, was at best "a necessary evil."

The power of the revolutionary committee, however, needed to be checked. Who was to play that role? The answer was the workers' congress. Composed of representatives from rebel organizations, the workers' congress had been largely a ceremonial institution. To put teeth in the existing workers' congress, it was suggested, this institution had to be placed on an equal footing with the revolutionary committee. Moreover, it should be granted the right to supervise the revolutionary committee. In other words, the workers' congress would become the power source and the revolutionary committee its executive body[76](#).

This was indeed a bold proposition. Centralized and united leadership (yiyuanhua lindao) had long been regarded as the cornerstone of communist political systems. And at the recent Ninth Party Congress, Mao had once again endorsed the principle. But now the Bei-jue-yang was challenging this fundamental principle and proposing an alternative principle--checks and balances. If the proposed principle were to be put into practice, the entire Chinese political system would be shaken to its foundations and even Mao's absolute authority might be questioned.

The rebel workers in Wuhan were generally not sophisticated enough to draw such implications, but still they were attracted by the idea. If the workers' congresses were allowed to supervise the revolutionary committee, they would certainly be able to seize back lost

power. More importantly, they would not have to worry any more about losing ground in revolutionary committees. That was why, in the spring of 1969, "the workers' congress must exercise leadership" became a watchword of the Wuhan rebels. For the first time, the "new trend of thought" of the Bei-jue-yang seemed to have been embraced by the mainstream rebels<sup>77</sup>. But it was too late.

The doom of the Bei-jue-yang was sealed on September 27, 1969, when the Maoist center issued "Instruction Concerning the Bei-jue-yang of Wuhan," which labeled the NT group "a hotchpotch manipulated by a handful of renegades, spies, and counter-revolutionaries from behind the scenes."<sup>78</sup> In fact, a week before the publication of the instruction, twelve active members of the Bei-jue-yang and their allegedly "backstage bosses" had already been arrested<sup>79</sup>. The September 27 Instruction thus sounded the death knell of the NT forces in Wuhan.

### **Conclusion**

The NT theories attracted a great deal of attention throughout the first three years of the CR, but none of the NT groups mentioned in this essay was sizable. The Bei-jue-yang, for instance, had no more than two dozen committed members<sup>80</sup>. The NT groups in other provinces were equally small. Yang Xiguang always signed his writings as "a fighter of 'Seize Military Power' at First Middle School of Changsha." Similarly, "the Storm at Guangdong Sea," an organ of Guangzhou's "August 5 Commune," was also operated by a single person<sup>81</sup>. The lack of popular support was another common characteristic of these NT groups. The conservatives would not support them, because they were too radical. Their views were not embraced by the mainstream rebel forces, because they were judged as "bookish," "naive," and "divorced from the real struggle of the day." Most of the rebels, as the NT advocates criticized, simply took the CR as a God-sent opportunity to vent personal spite and to acquire personal gains. They were men who acted without vision. They could, and did, destroy the old power structure, but had no idea what the new power structure should look like. They scrambled for power. But what they really cared about was not the quality of power, but the "quantity" of power.

The NT advocates, on the other hand, sought to make fundamental changes in the existing social and political order. It was not accidental that most of those people shared three features: they were young, from "bad" family backgrounds, and not in a position to acquire power. Because they had little experience in life, they were likely to embrace egalitarian utopianism; because they were discontented with the pre-CR social order, they became rebels; and because they were personally detached from the power struggle, they were able to think about the problem of social change in a more profound way. There was one more similarity. All the NT theorists were all exceptionally bright and gifted with critical minds<sup>82</sup>.

Nevertheless, the NT theories were still rather premature. They rarely read anything but editorials in official newspapers and works of Marx, Lenin, and Mao<sup>83</sup>. They were trained, and sometimes felt uncomfortably constrained, to speak in the language of "Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought." The Paris Commune became their model simply because it was the only model they knew that was close to their ideal. Moreover, because they lacked basic knowledge about history, philosophy, and economics, their understanding of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought was at best superficial. Instead of calling a spade a spade, they were good at the trick of garbling statements from those "great teachers of the proletariat" to support their own ultra-leftist theses. What they overlooked were the contexts in which such statements had been made. To be sure, their most important intellectual source was Mao's writings. But when Mao's remarks were used out of context, Mao himself might find them objectionable. For instance, although Mao strongly advocated "continuous revolution," he did not like the idea of unceasing revolutionary thrusts. Instead,

he hoped to see the revolution advancing wave upon wave, with each revolutionary thrust followed by a brief period of breath catching and reconstruction. Mao was always ready to retreat when it was necessary and then transform himself back into a revolutionary again when he considered the time to be ripe. But the NT theorists seem to have stood for a permanent revolution, a revolution without pause. That was why they were often puzzled by Mao's "concessions." That was also why the Maoist center treated those Mao's true believers as its worst enemies. The main problem with NT theorists was that they had often applied Mao's "correct" ideas at the "wrong" time.

Moreover, the means the NT theorists resorted to were not compatible with their goal. They paid too much attention to "smashing the old state machinery," but yet said almost nothing about how to build up a new form of government that would structurally eliminate the possibility of bureaucracy and inequality. They never asked themselves how the Paris Commune had actually functioned and whether such a societal form would work in the contemporary China. No one ever bothered to elaborate exactly what the future People's Commune of China would look like. It never occurred to these NT theorists that the model of the Paris Commune might not be as desirable as they thought, for Marx himself had "moved from a qualified acceptance to a fairly thoroughgoing dissatisfaction with the actions of the Communards."<sup>84</sup> When they called the revolutionary committee "a transitional form of power" and upheld the commune as the ultimate goal of the CR, they were certainly not aware that the Commune, in Marx's view, was but "a transitory organ of revolutionary action."<sup>85</sup> In the final analysis, what the NT theorists called a "fundamental structural change" was nothing more than a wholesale replacement of the existing bureaucrats with the proletarian cadres who had risen in the course of the rebels' struggle against the establishment. They warned the rebels that no problems would be solved by simply dismissing a few officials. They should have questioned themselves whether China would necessarily become a better society with a sweeping reshuffle.

Most curiously, most radical NT theorists rarely used the term "democracy," if at all. In Yang Xiguang's understanding, for example, the Paris Commune was a model of "mass dictatorship" rather than a model of extensive democracy<sup>86</sup>. In all the discussions of the commune model, one key ingredient of the Paris Commune was almost never mentioned after 1966: that is, general elections. Why? Because, believing that the future commune should represent only the interests of the rebels, these NT theorists saw no reason to grant "capitalist roaders" and "conservatives" the right to elect its leadership. In essence, what the NT theorists were really promoting was a factional dictatorship. Twenty years later, Yang Xiguang (now going by the new name of Yang Xiaokai) admitted: "What we were advocating those days, to put it bluntly, was merely a 'dynastic change.' If we had succeeded, it would absolutely have been a big disaster for China."<sup>87</sup> Such repentance was shared by many former NT protagonists<sup>88</sup>.

While the radical NT began to fade, a liberal NT finally emerged in the second half of 1968. In Guangxi, where factional fighting between rebel and conservative organizations was extremely fierce and brutal, a sober-minded middle school principal by the name of Liu Zhenwu wrote, in July, two long essays appealing for unity between the two factions. He pointed out that all factions were being used as "political tools" by the Maoist center. Hating each other, wrangling with each other, fighting against each other, and even killing each other would not lead them anywhere. It was in their common interest to live in unity and to substitute animosity with mutual regard and friction with harmony. Unfortunately, except for sending a copy of the two essays to an army unit, Liu did not circulate them. As a result, his view was buried in his "criminal files" which were not made public until the mid-1980s<sup>89</sup>.

Around the same time, in Zhejiang province, there was also a group of people who advocated unity. But their theory was much more interesting. According to them, "the distinction between the rebels, the conservatives, and the capitalist-roaders does not make any sense. Everybody is a citizen. And as a citizen, everybody has the equal right to vote and to stand for election." They maintained: "Without a general election, there would be no democracy. The public authorities would not be trusted by the people unless their leadership is elected by the people." Furthermore, elections were considered a solution to factionalism. Had the revolutionary committees been established through elections, it was argued, opposing factions would no longer have to intrigue against each other or resort to violence. For this reason, the group put forward a slogan: "No more distinction between the 'rebels' and the 'conservatives,' let's all look forward to a democracy."<sup>90</sup> This idea found support among some workers in several large factories of Hangzhou, the capital of the province. Elections were reportedly held in response to the spread of the idea in some small towns of the province as well<sup>91</sup>. However, just like its radical counterpart, the liberal NT was also severely suppressed in late 1968. It was condemned as "blind faith in elections," "formalism," and even "reactionary trend of thought."<sup>92</sup>

The radical NT theorists did not awake from their illusion of factional dictatorship until they themselves had undergone a painful process of enlightenment. The "Li Yizhe big character poster," published in November 1974, marked the completion of the long process. Titled "On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System," the poster was discussed by three former rebel theorists, Li Zhengtian, Chen Yiyang and Wang Xizhe, but Li did the actual writing (hence the name Li Yizhe). Once strongly influenced by the Sheng-wu-lian and Bei-jue-yang,<sup>93</sup> they now came to realize the perniciousness of factional dictatorship<sup>94</sup>:

*Even if the faction which dominates the dictatorship is "correct," it still would not be able to unite the broad masses of people. If the faction happens to be erroneous, it would be the beginning of social-fascism.*

The only solution to factionalism was to grant the two sides of the factional conflict the same democratic rights. To do so, the poster proposed, China should enact a new constitution that protected all the democratic rights deserved by the mass of the people. Of course, a constitution by itself could not guarantee the rights of the people. The authors of the poster therefore encouraged the people to fight for their rights. By "fight," however, the group did not mean violent revolution. Rather, it meant legal struggle. Obviously, the romantic revolutionary fervor of the old-style radical NT had finally been overcome.

From Yilin-Dixi to Li Yizhe, the NT theorists, both radical and liberal varieties, represented the most critical minds in the contemporary Chinese society. They were not willing to resign themselves to being "passive tools of the center." Rather, they were trying independently to probe into the meaning of the CR. Although their theories were still premature and generally not accepted by the public, their existence in itself was a challenge to the authority of the Maoist center. They foreshadowed the coming of a new era.

- <sup>1</sup>. Interviewees 60. Interviews were conducted in 1986. Altogether, 85 persons were interviewed. For the profiles of the interviewees, see Wang Shaoguang, *Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 282-287. After the rebel forces defeated the conservative forces in Wuhan in late July 1967, for example, public accusation meetings were held in every unit, and hundreds and thousands of people paraded through the streets day in and day out. Many party cadres and former conservatives were tortured, their homes seized, and their family members abused. According to incomplete statistics, more than 600 people were beaten to death and over 66,000 others injured or crippled as the result of

torture after the Wuhan Incident. See Chen Zaidao, "720 shijian shimo," *Gemingshi ziliao*, Vol. 12, (Beijing: Historical Material Publishing House, 1981), p. 42.

- [2.](#) Wang Shaoguang, *Failure of Charisma*, pp. 166-170.
- [3.](#) Interviewees 51, 60, 69.
- [4.](#) *People's Daily*, September 16, 1966.
- [5.](#) For the situation in Hunan, see *Zaofan youli* (Hunan), December 13, 1966; and *Beiyong dongfanghong* (Beijing), March 24, 1967.
- [6.](#) Yu Xiguang, ed., *Weibei weigan wangyouguo: wenhua dageming shangshuji*, (Changsha: Hunan People's Press, 1989), pp. 75-82.
- [7.](#) Quoted from Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left: At Home and Abroad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 101.
- [8.](#) See John Bryan Starr, "Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eyes," *China Quarterly*, No. 49 (January-March, 1972), pp. 106-125.
- [9.](#) Yu Xiguang, ed., *Weibei weigan wangyouguo*.
- [10.](#) *People's Daily*, January 23, 1967.
- [11.](#) *Zhongyang fuzhe tongzhi jianghua chaolu* (hereafter JHCL) (Wuhan, 1966), Vol. 3, p. 206; Zhao Cong: *Wenge yundong licheng shulue* (hereafter WGSL) (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1971), Vol. 2, p. 643; and *People's Daily*, January 31, 1967.
- [12.](#) Jin Chunming, "Shanghai yiyue duoquan he eryue kangzheng" in the Party History Department of Zhejiang Provincial Party School, *Wenhua dagemin shiqi ziliao xuanji* (hereafter WGZL) (Hangzhou: 1984), pp. 73-98.
- [13.](#) Mi Heduo, *Hongweibing zheyidian [The Red Guard Generation]* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1993), pp. 236-38.
- [14.](#) *Mao Zedong sixiang shengli wansui* (hereinafter Wansui) (Wuhan, 1969), p. 667.
- [15.](#) *People's Daily*, March 10, 1967.
- [16.](#) "Lun xinshichao" [On New Trends of Thought] was published by the organ of the Sheng-wu-lian, *Xiangjiang pinglun* in late 1967. Yang Xiguang obviously got some of his inspiration from this article.
- [17.](#) Djilas' book was translated into Chinese and published in China before the CR. But the book was available only to high-level officials.
- [18.](#) Zhou was a young assistant professor at Beijing Aeronautical Engineering Institute at the time.
- [19.](#) *Zhongguo gongren*, no.17 (1957), p. 4.
- [20.](#) In Wuhan, the triumph over the conservatives in July 1967 emboldened many rebels to try to cast off the bad labels imposed on them in the past. Some former capitalists, landlords, rich peasants, and bad elements complained that "Liu Shaoqi's reactionary revisionist line" had mistakenly made them bear those humiliating labels. And some rightists asserted that the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 had been initiated by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping so that the label of rightist should be abolished altogether. They appealed for redress of "wrongs" and demanded reversion of their properties confiscated during the Smashing Four Olds Campaign of 1966.

Many went even further, seizing the opportunity to victimize those who had victimized them before. Wuhan hongdaihui (Wuhan), May 18, 1968; and Changjiang ribao, December 22, 1967, March 21, 27, April 13, 1968.

- [21.](#) Xinhua Gong (Wuhan) June 8, 1968; interviewees 13, 14, 48, 49, 59, 60, 69.
- [22.](#) Ge Bin, "Yiqie weiliao jiuda" [All for the Ninth Party Congress], Hongwei zhanbao (Shanghai), No. 3, 1968. For other examples, see Dongfanghong (Beijing), March 22, 1967; Jinjunbao (Beijing), March 5, 1967; Jingtangshan (Beijing), February 8, 1967.
- [23.](#) See People's Daily and PLA Daily, July 24 to 31, 1967.
- [24.](#) This slogan was not new at all. As early as on January 10, 1967, Guan Feng and Wang Li put forward in a report the slogan "thoroughly expose a handful of capitalist roaders in the army" for the first time. When being asked to give comments, Lin Biao readily endorsed the slogan. See Jin Chunming, "Shanghai Yiyue duoquan he eryue Kangzheng." In the following days, the slogan twice appeared in PLA Daily. See WGS, Vol. 2, p. 460. At that moment, the PLA had not yet intervened in local affairs, so that the slogan did not draw much attention. At the Central Military Commission's enlarged conference held in late March and early April, Lin Biao used a different but more vivid phrase to refer to the capitalist roaders in the army: "Liu Shaoqis and Deng Xiaopings with guns." He asserted that Lius and Dengs with guns were far more dangerous than those without guns. See Lin Biao wenxuan (Wuhan, 1967), pp. 291, 295. Lin's speech, however, was not made public. And the center's efforts to create an atmosphere of "supporting the army and cherishing the people" from the middle of April on threw the phrase into the shade. After the Wuhan Incident, the phrase reappeared first in an article authored by a writing group led by Lin Likuo, Lin Biao's son, which was published on PLA Daily of July 22. See PLA Daily, July 22, 1967.
- [25.](#) Kang Sheng told Wang Li that Mao personally authorized the usage. See Chen Zaidao, "720 shijian shimo."
- [26.](#) Red Flag, no. 12 (1967).
- [27.](#) Yangzijiang pinglun (Wuhan), September 7, 1967.
- [28.](#) Xinhuda (Wuhan), August 11, 1967.
- [29.](#) Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua (Wuhan), October 1967, pp. 6-22; Hongwu (Wuhan), September 18, 1967.
- [30.](#) Wuhan gangersi (Wuhan), August 13, 1967.
- [31.](#) Hai Feng, An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1971), pp. 176, 213; and Hongwu (Wuhan), September 18, 1967.
- [32.](#) On August 8, when meeting the heads of the Wuhan rebel organizations, the central leaders first made known its position on this issue. See Wuhan shijian (Wuhan), August 1967. The next day, when interviewing Zeng Siyu, the new Commander of the Wuhan Military Region, Lin Biao instructed Zeng to "distribute guns to the leftist masses," and claimed that it was Mao's idea. See Lin Biao wenxuan, p. 296. Interestingly, when Lin's speech was officially transmitted throughout the country in the middle of October, this paragraph was deleted. See Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming wenjian huibian (hereinafter WJHB) (Wuhan: Hubei Provincial

Revolutionary Committee, 1968), Vol. 1, pp. 22-24. On August 10, the center issued its decision on the problems in Hunan and Jiangxi provinces, which stated: "The revolutionary organizations will be armed only under and by the leadership of the preparatory group of the provincial revolutionary committee. Their main tasks are to assist the PLA in safeguarding state property and maintaining order. Under no circumstance should they be allowed to seize the army's weapons spontaneously." See WJHB, Vol. 2, pp. 426, 432-433. Four days later, Zhou Enlai made a similar statement to a group of the Guangdong rebels. See Hai Feng, *An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area*, pp. 237-238.

- [33](#). Interviewees, 46, 48, 51, 54, 69, 74. Many organizations established their own "armed detachments." For instance, in Guangzhou, Dalian, and Shenyang, the rebels set up their own "garrison headquarters" to stand up to the army's garrison forces as an equal, if not as a substitute. See Hai Feng, *An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area*, p. 224.
- [34](#). WGSJ, Vol. 3, pp. 214-218, 411; Hai Feng, *An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area*, pp. 149-183.
- [35](#). WJHB, Vol. 3, pp. 498-503.
- [36](#). Jiangcheng qianshao (Wuhan), June 26, 1968.
- [37](#). Zhengming (Hong Kong), no. 9 (1986).
- [38](#). Xinhua (Wuhan), June 15, 1968; and interviewee 78.
- [39](#). Hai Feng, *An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area*, pp. 329-32.
- [40](#). The Sheng-wu-lian was the abbreviation of the Chinese name of the "Provincial Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee."
- [41](#). See WGSJ, Vol. 3, pp. 328-57; and Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left*.
- [42](#). WHSL, Vol. 3, pp. 328-57; and Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left*.
- [43](#). Yang Xiguang was a student of the First Middle School of Changsha whose father had been dismissed from the post of secretary-general of the Hunan Provincial Government in 1959. See Qi Hao, ed., *Guanyu shehuizhuyi di minzhu yu fazhi* (Hong Kong: Bibliotheque Asiatique, 1976), pp. 153-54.
- [44](#). The quotations in the following paragraphs are cited from Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left*, pp. 74-100.
- [45](#). An essay titled "Rebuild Marxist-Leninist Groups" was circulated in Beijing in late 1966. See Yang Xiguang, "Guanyu jianli Mao Zedong zhuyi xiaozhu de jianyi [A Proposal Concerning the Establishing of Maoist Group], October, 1967.
- [46](#). Quoted from Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left*, p. 85.
- [47](#). See Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua (Wuhan), October 1967, p. 15.
- [48](#). See Lin Biao wenxuan, p. 301.
- [49](#). See Xinhua tongxun (Wuhan), December 10, 1967.
- [50](#). From January 19 to February 1, 1968, on at least five occasions, such central leaders as Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, Chen Boda, Jiang Qing, and Yao Wenyuan, denounced the Sheng-wu-lian. Soon after, Yang Xiguang was arrested. See WGSJ, Vol. 3, p. 353; Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left*, pp. 107-16; Center for Chinese Research Materials, ed., *Hongweibing ziliao* (Washington, D.C., 1975), Vol. 19, p. 6385; and Zhouzongli zhongyao jianghua (Wuhan), February 1968, p. 9.

- [51.](#) This phrase was extracted from one of Mao's "latest instructions" released in People's Daily on November 3, 1967: "For the carrying out of proletarian educational revolution, it is necessary to rely on the broad masses of revolutionary students, revolutionary teachers and revolutionary workers in schools, especially on the activists among them, namely, the proletarian revolutionaries who are determined to carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution through to the end." See People's Daily, November 3, 1967.
- [52.](#) It might not be accidental that the two men had many things in common. Both were in their early twenties. Their fathers were senior office workers before 1949 with "impure" records, and their mothers were school teachers. They were both members of the track and field team of the Institute. During the Campaign of Smashing the Four-Olds of 1966, their homes were searched, and they were denied membership to the Red Guards. In late 1966, they joined the same "long march team," traveling together to Jiangxi to "exchange revolutionary experiences" See Xinhua (Wuhan), August 27, 1968; and interviewee 78.
- [53.](#) At the time, it was bandied about in Wuhan that regularly injecting cock blood into the veins would prolong one's life. For a moment, it became a hot topic in town.
- [54.](#) Yangzijiāng pinglun (Wuhan), No. 12, July 16, 1968.
- [55.](#) Mehnert, Peking and the New Left, p.91.
- [56.](#) Yangzijiāng pinglun (Wuhan), No. 12, July 16, 1968.
- [57.](#) The manifesto was dated December 10, 1967.
- [58.](#) Wang was not a peasant. Rather, he had once been a student at Beijing Foreign Language Institute. Because he often criticized the Party's domestic and foreign policies and behaved eccentrically, he was expelled from school and sent back to his hometown in the early 1960s.
- [59.](#) One of Wang's famous remarks was "without the support of guns, who would come to our mess halls?" Interviewee 49.
- [60.](#) Mao wrote the "Investigation Report of the Peasant Movement in Hunan Province" in 1927.
- [61.](#) Yangzijiāng pinglun (Wuhan), No. 12, July 16, 1968.
- [62.](#) Interviewees 60, 78.
- [63.](#) Feng Tian'ai visited Shanghai from mid-November of 1967 to mid-January of 1968, during which time he accidentally got a copy of the "Manifesto of the Oriental Society." What fascinated him were its two propositions: first, the Paris Commune must be the model of the post-CR power structure; and second, the CR was designed by Chairman Mao to teach the Chinese people how to create and maintain an extensive democracy. He tried to make contact with the society but failed.
- [64.](#) They were very indignant at the Center's criticism of Sheng-wu-lian and thought the criticism fallacious. See Xinhua (Wuhan), August 25, September 9, 1968; and interviewee 78.
- [65.](#) Dapipan (Wuhan), No. 1, August 23, 1968.
- [66.](#) Xinhua (Wuhan), June 15, 1968.
- [67.](#) Xinhua (Wuhan), September 9, 1968.
- [68.](#) Lu was imprisoned until December 1979. Interviewee 78.

- [69.](#) Yangzijiāng pínglun (Wuhan), June 12, 1968.
- [70.](#) Yangzijiāng pínglun (Wuhan), June 20, 1968. Yang was once disciplined for "cursing the socialist system" in the early 1960s. Interviewees 60, 78.
- [71.](#) Xinhuda (Wuhan), August 25, 1968; Xinhua Gong (Wuhan), August 27, 1968; and interviewee 78.
- [72.](#) On July 28, Mao summoned five student leaders in Beijing to an interview, during which he warned that if rebel organizations continued to fight against each other, they would have to be surrounded and wiped out by force. See Wansui, pp. 687-716.
- [73.](#) Feng stayed in prison until December 20, 1979. Xinhuda (Wuhan), August 25, 1968; and interviewee 78.
- [74.](#) See Wang Shaoguang, Failure of Charisma, pp. 210-219.
- [75.](#) Xiao Tieren had been in close association with the Bei-jue-yang in 1967 and 1968. Interviewees 49, 60, 61.
- [76.](#) Xiao's thesis was based on his reading of Lenin's The State and Revolution and Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program.
- [77.](#) Interviewees 60, 61; and Dapipan (Wuhan), August 23, 1969.
- [78.](#) My personal hand-written copy.
- [79.](#) Most of them were kept in jail until August 1976. But Lu Li'an and Feng Tian'ai were not freed until December 1979. Among the 12 persons, one committed suicide after being released; three of them became mentally ill. Interviewees 60, 78.
- [80.](#) Although several thousands of individuals registered as members of the Juepai, they never formed a tangible group. Lu himself admitted that Juepai was but "an empty shell." See Xinhuda (Wuhan), September 9, 1968.
- [81.](#) Hai Feng, An Account of the Cultural Revolution in the Canton Area, p. 331.
- [82.](#) Without exception, all the active members of the Bei-jue-yang had "bad" family backgrounds. For this reason, most had been denied the opportunity to enter college before the CR. But they all had critical minds. Now three of them are mental patients; one an established professor of philosophy; and one still trying to build up his own theory of the universe.
- [83.](#) For instance, before the winter of 1967-68, Lu Li'an and Feng Tian'ai were so busy that they hardly had any time to read anything but the editorials of People's Daily, Red Flag, Wenhui Daily, PLA Daily, and the like. Only when forced back to the classroom in the first quarter of 1968, did they find time to read, for the first time, The Civil War in France, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, and The State and Revolution, which helped to improve their later writings. Interviewee 78.
- [84.](#) Quoted from Starr, "Revolution in Retrospect," p. 125.
- [85.](#) Quoted from Starr, "Revolution in Retrospect," p. 125.
- [86.](#) Mehnert, Peking and the New Left, p. 85.
- [87.](#) Zhengming (Hong Kong), No. 9 (1986).
- [88.](#) Interviewees 49, 51, 60, 61, 69, 78.
- [89.](#) Liu Zhenwu died in prison on September 20, 1968, 40 days after his arrest. Three days after his death, he was sentenced to death as an "active counter-revolutionary." See Yu Xiguang, ed., Weibei weigan wangyonguo, pp. 132-166. Also see the

Editorial Group, ed., *Guangxi wenge dashi nianbiao* [The Chronicle of the CR in Guangxi] (Nanning: Guangxi People's Press, 1990).

- [90](#). Zhejiang Radio, July 15, 1968.
- [91](#). Zhejiang Daily, December 13, 14, 1968.
- [92](#). Red Flag, No. 4 (1968); and Zhejiang Daily, December 13, 1968.
- [93](#). Li Zhengtian was born and spent his early years in Wuhan. Later he moved to Guangzhou to attend Guangdong Institute of the Fine Arts. Because he still had relatives and friends in Wuhan, he frequently went back and forth between Guangzhou and Wuhan, which enabled him to get acquainted with people in the Bei-jueyang. He enthusiastically took part in many of the Bei-jue-yang's activities in 1968. See Zichuan, *Li Yizhe yu wo* (Hong Kong: The Plough, 1979); and interviewees 60, 61, 78.
- [94](#). Citations below are all from Zichuan, *Li Yizhe yu wo*, pp. 70-97.