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Reconsidered

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Source: *The China Quarterly*, No. 72 (Dec., 1977), pp. 675-712

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the School of Oriental and African Studies

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/652558>

Accessed: 09-06-2022 15:54 UTC

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# **“Line Struggle” in Theory and Practice: The Origins of the Cultural Revolution Reconsidered**

**Lowell Dittmer**

The extent to which the Cultural Revolution has transformed the world-view of the Chinese masses remains among the psycho-cultural imponderables, but clearly it has revolutionized the western view of Chinese politics. The dominant pre-1966 image of a consensual solidarity disturbed only rarely by purges, also handled in an orderly way by a consensus excluding only its victims, was challenged by a sudden multitude of polemical claims to the effect that a struggle for power and principle had been raging behind the scenes for decades. This struggle was characterized as a “struggle between two lines”: a “proletarian revolutionary line,” led by Mao Tse-tung, and a “bourgeois reactionary line,” led by Liu Shao-ch’i and Teng Hsiao-p’ing. This struggle allegedly represented a deep underlying ideological cleavage within the leadership that had repercussions on every aspect of Chinese life: foreign policy, strategies of economic development, techniques of leadership and administration, pay scales and living standards, delivery patterns for education, medicine, and other services; even scientific method. Allegations concerning this struggle were supported by a wealth of documentary evidence, culled from hitherto confidential Party and government files. Initially greeted with scepticism among western journalists and academic circles, some variant of the “two lines” paradigm has made increasing inroads into our attempts to understand the origins of the Cultural Revolution. The time has come to re-evaluate the conception of a two-line struggle in retrospect and to try to determine just what it means and how it functions.

The concept of a two-line struggle did not originate with the Cultural Revolution, but according to refugee informants it marked the first time that the term had been publicly used to characterize the Party leadership as a whole since the inner-Party disputes of the 1920s and 1930s. And since its reappearance, two-line struggle has formed the conceptual framework in which all subsequent leadership conflict has taken place. In view of the frequency and intensity

\* Earlier drafts of this article were presented to seminars at the 1976 AAS Convention in Toronto and at the Universities Service Centre in Hong Kong; I wish to thank Tang Tsou, Brantly Womack and Suzanne Pepper Kulkarni for helpful criticisms. I am indebted to the Joint Committee of the SSRC for their support during the article’s revision.

of that conflict it is possible to argue that two-line struggle has imposed its own deadly logic on Chinese public controversy, that a transformation of the language has resulted in a transformation of the political game. If this is so, the concept of two-line struggle is a significant political phenomenon and its logical and practical implications are worth exploring. Eventually such conceptual elucidations may enable us to construct theories of Chinese politics in terms understood by the Chinese themselves.

This paper consists of three sections. In the first, I shall attempt to reconstruct the theory of conflict that is implicit in the use of the term, both as it appears in the Chinese literature and as it has been modified to inform western scholarship on China. In the second, I shall review the material that has become available on two-line struggle within the Party during the years 1959–66, seeking to determine when and to whom it first became “real.” In the third section the public manifestation of the term during the same period is examined, in order to establish first whether this rhetoric signals disagreements within the leadership, and second whether it functions to mobilize mass grievances.

### *The Theory of Two-line Struggle*

In our search for the theoretical meaning of two-line struggle we turn primarily to the term’s *locus classicus* in the writings and talks of Mao Tse-tung, but also to the way it was used during the Cultural Revolution – an archetypal case of two-line struggle. In both contexts we find that just as in Wittgenstein’s definitional “family,” the term appears in numerous different contexts, imparting meanings that are related to each other in one way or another. It may be used to encourage people to work longer hours or to strike for higher wages; to support the authorities or to burn down the T’ien An Men police station. Running through these different usages, however, is a thread of common meaning that makes it possible for people to understand one another in various different contexts. Here we shall assemble all of these meanings into a logically consistent “ideal type” that may not fit every particular usage (i.e. it may not fit a political actor’s “persuasive definition” of a particular situation as a line struggle), but will circumscribe the range of “correct” (i.e. consensually valid) usages.

The term “line” was most frequently used during the Cultural Revolution in the context of a “struggle between the two classes, the two roads, and the two lines,”<sup>1</sup> but previously it had appeared more typically in the context of “general line,” “Party line” or “mass line,” without being juxtaposed with its antithesis. In all of these

1. Mao Tse-tung, “Speech to the Albanian military delegation” (1 May 1967), in *Mao Tse-tung ssu-hsiang wan-sui!* [*Wan-sui* (1969)] (n.pub. preface dated August 1969), p. 673.

contexts it refers to an internally coherent system of doctrines and programmatic guidelines designed to facilitate movement towards specific political objectives. Its function, therefore, is to focus attention on the *direction* of activities, preventing goal displacement from substantive objectives to the execution of procedures for their own sake. A line raises claims to exclusive and general legitimacy, thus providing an ideological basis for indoctrination, morale-building and discipline among the cadres who are to promulgate the policies and the masses who are to implement them.<sup>2</sup> In Mao’s words:

Whether or not a line is ideologically and politically correct decides everything. If the Party’s line is correct, then we will get everything; if there are no men, we will get men; if there are no guns, we will get guns; if we do not hold power, we will get power. If our line is incorrect, even if we have all of these, we can lose them. The line is the key link; once it is grasped, everything falls into place.<sup>3</sup>

The importance placed on “correctness” indicates that the line must accurately represent key determining aspects of socio-economic reality, and is thereby distinguished from “ideology,” which according to Mao’s most recent formulations may have an existence that remains independent from its material infrastructure for an indefinite period.<sup>4</sup> It is at a higher level of abstraction than “fashion” (*fang-chih*) or “work style” (*tso-feng*) and yet less abstract than “thought” (*ssu-hsiang*), corresponding perhaps most closely to what Schurman calls “practical ideology.”<sup>5</sup> Mediating between infrastructure and superstructure, a line functions to integrate those objective possibilities inherent in the economic base with the subjective ideas of the masses, as led by the Party leadership. Its specific policy content is most clearly articulated in the speeches of that leadership, but its formulation is nonetheless a *collective* endeavour involving (and thereby committing) all who participate in its realization. As is customary in the prefatory acknowledgments of scholarly monographs, credit accrues to everyone remotely associated with the project, blame only to those immediately responsible – to the author or, in this case, to the leaders – the “backstage backers” who “hoodwink” the masses. An “error in line” is a systematic, ideological error that becomes fully realized only at the highest leadership levels where

2. John Wilson Lewis, *Leadership in Communist China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 89.

3. Mao Tse-tung, “Summary of Chairman Mao’s talks to responsible local comrades during his tour of inspection (mid-August to 12 September 1971), transl. in *Chinese Law and Government*, Vol. V, Nos. 3–4 (Fall/Winter, 1972–73), p. 33.

4. Cf. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), Vol. IV, p. 336; also see Mao’s criticism of Stalin’s *Economic Problems of Socialism in the Soviet Union*, in *Mao Tse-tung ssu-hsiang wan-sui!* [*Wan sui* (1967)] (n.pub., preface dated 1967), p. 156.

5. Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 24–53.

the discretionary power exists to commit such a profound mistake. Thus, in contrast to other mass movements, in which the leaders manipulate prearranged symbols and the masses respond, line struggle is more hazardous for the leaders than for the masses.

A line's "correctness" may be determined only pragmatically. Mao has repeatedly emphasized: "Where do correct ideas come from? . . . They come from social practice, and from it alone."<sup>6</sup> But only a particular kind of practice is telling: struggle. "A correct political and military line is not developed naturally and peacefully, but through struggle." A line is a sort of battle plan, whose correctness is vindicated by victory; in the absence of struggle, no clear line can emerge. "Historical experience has proved that ideological struggle should be sound and that ideas should cross swords, you with a sword and I with a gun," as Mao put it. "If no swords are crossed, there will be a lack of definiteness and thoroughness."<sup>7</sup> Thus, Mao on another occasion complained that:

The defect of the struggles [against Ch'en Tu-hsiu-ism and Li Li-san-ism] was that they were not undertaken consciously as serious steps for correcting the petty bourgeois ideology which existed on a serious scale within the Party; consequently they neither clarified the ideological essence and roots of the errors thoroughly nor properly indicated the methods of correcting them, so it was easy for these errors to recur.<sup>8</sup>

The necessity for struggle and for clear-cut victory in the formulation of a correct line implies a necessity for opposition, for an opposing line. And just as intelligence about the enemy may be expected to make an important contribution to the formulation of a plan of battle, the nature of the opposing line has a significant determining effect on the correct line. As Mao commented in 1959:

The correct line is formulated with reference to the incorrect line, the two constitute a unity of opposites. The correct line is formed in the struggle with the incorrect line. To say that mistakes can be avoided, that there are only correct things and no mistakes, is an anti-Marxist proposition. . . . The correct and the incorrect are a unity of opposites, and the theory of determinism is correct.<sup>9</sup>

The relationship between the two lines, then, is one of *sympiotic opposition* between virtue and the evil it requires for self-definition – not unlike the relationship of a rebellious son to the father who

6. Mao Tse-tung, "Where do correct ideas come from?" (May 1963), *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), p. 502.

7. Mao, "Summing-up speech at the Sixth Expanded Plenum of the Seventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party" (September 1955), *Wan-sui* (1969), p. 12.

8. Mao, "Appendix: resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party" (20 April 1945), in *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 223–25.

9. Mao, "Talk at the Chengtu Conference" (20 March 1958), *Wan-sui* (1969), pp. 171–72.

sired him. As the chairman put it in an exchange with his uncomprehending (and quite unrebelling) niece shortly before the Cultural Revolution:

Chairman: Among the three thousand let us say there are seven or eight counter-revolutionaries.

Wang Hai-jung: Even one would be bad. How could we tolerate seven or eight?

Chairman: You shouldn't be all stirred up by a slogan.

Hai-jung: Why should there be seven or eight counter-revolutionaries?

Chairman: When there are many, you can set up opposition!<sup>10</sup>

The minions of the opposing line may represent another Party (thus the civil war with the Kuomintang was defined as a line struggle) or another country (Japan, during the Second World War, or the Soviet Union during the polemics of the 1960s).<sup>11</sup> But the normal locus of the opposing line is the “inner-Party.” According to Mao's latest count, there have been 10 great line struggles in the history of the Party: against Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, Li Li-san, Lo Chang-lung, Wang Ming, Chang Kuo-t'ao, Kao Kang, Jao Shu-shih, P'eng Te-huai, Liu Shao-ch'i, and Lin Piao.<sup>12</sup> The leaders of the opposing line may be expected to join forces in a conspiratorial organization; as Mao put it in reference to Lin Piao, “In my view, behind their surprise attack and their underground activity, lay purpose, organization, and a program.”<sup>13</sup> When Ch'en Tu-hsiu split from the Party he organized a “Leninist left-wing opposition”; Chang Kuo-t'ao allegedly organized what amounted to a rival Central Committee; P'eng Te-huai's group was associated with the “Military Recreation Club”; while Lin Piao's clandestine activities were still more extensive: “P'eng Te-huai organized a ‘Military Recreation Club’ and issued an ultimatum, while Lin's activities are even more secret and conspiratorial.” In other words, the opposition tends to form a “headquarters” [ling-tao ssu-ling-pu], and the struggle between two lines is also a “struggle between two headquarters.”<sup>14</sup> The opposition headquarters may include great numbers of people linked by either organizational or informal ties, and extend through time to include earlier opposition figures (for example, P'eng Te-huai was found to have supported Kao Kang and Jao Shu-shih, and Liu Shao-ch'i was linked with the Kuomintang).

10. Mao, “Dialogue between Mao Tse-tung and Wang Hai-jung,” transl. in *Issues and Studies*, Vol. IX, No. 8 (May 1973), pp. 93–98.

11. Mao, “On coalition government” (24 April 1945), in *Selected Works*, Vol. III, pp. 263, 267.

12. Cf. *supra*, note 3. Mao is using the term quite freely here, for most of these purges cannot meet all our criteria for line struggle.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Thus Mao, in 1971: “The struggle with P'eng Te-huai at the 1959 Lushan Conference was a struggle between two headquarters. The struggle with Liu Shao-ch'i is yet another struggle between two headquarters. The struggle at this Lushan Conference is yet another between two headquarters.” *Ibid.*

But the correctness of a line is not determined solely by its ability to prevail in battle nor its content determined solely by the nature of the opposing line. Both are codetermined by the umbilical relationship between line and *class*: line struggle within the Party is integrally connected with class struggle in society. The correct line is the “proletarian revolutionary line,” which means that it is linked to a mass constituency of workers and peasants and must represent their interests; the opposing line is a “bourgeois reactionary line,” meaning that it also has a mass constituency among the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary revisionist classes whose interests it represents. Inner-Party struggle between lines is a “reflection” of class struggle, and its significance stands in some approximate relationship to the intensity of class struggle – although the causal relationship seems to run the other way, with the leadership bearing responsibility for the actions of their respective constituencies. The victory of the proletarian revolutionary line is presaged by the more urgent and morally compelling nature of the motivations of the proletariat, who wish only to overthrow unjust authority while the bourgeoisie desire to perpetuate the basis of their own privilege.

The motives of the proletariat are compelling not only because of the patent injustice of the current system, but because the divergent objectives towards which the two classes are moving threaten to exacerbate that injustice. In other words, the struggle between lines is also a struggle between two “roads.” At stake are two different policy programmes whose purpose is to set guidelines for movement towards quite different types of regime: the proletariat aims to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat and move towards socialism, while the bourgeoisie wishes to subvert socialism and establish a bourgeois dictatorship. Not modern capitalism, to be sure, but rather prerevolutionary Chinese feudal capitalism – the bourgeois line is regressive, “reactionary.” In its function as a guideline for policy, line struggle elevates a single issue to a paradigmatic position and evaluates all other policy areas in the light of the correct resolution of that issue. Although the proletarian revolutionary line’s substantive policy content must shift somewhat over time in order to adapt to changing issues, imparting to it a “wave-like character,” its direction of movement and ultimate destination are unalterably progressive.

The theory of two-line struggle seems to be almost an operational model of Mao’s more abstract and theoretically elegant theory of contradictions: in both cases, the realm of possibilities is reduced to two final alternatives, one right and one wrong (i.e. the disagreement is one of “principle”), and an Armageddon-like struggle is waged until the correct line prevails. The theory of contradictions, however, seems to make more provision for flexibility in the resolution of the conflict: a distinction is made between “nonantagonistic” contradictions, which may be resolved through criticism and self-criticism, and “antagonistic” contradictions, which must be fought out in a

no-holds-barred, implacable (*ni-ssu-wo-huo*) struggle. A line struggle seems to involve an antagonistic contradiction.

In so far as line struggle is a multifaceted affair involving class conflict as well as leadership disagreement on a range of policy issues, it may take some time to determine that a line struggle is actually in progress. Heretofore this determination was made by the chairman, whose superior ideological penetration enabled him to discern that a contradiction defying amicable solution was at issue. Mao's decisions seem ultimately to have been based on human judgment. “There are two kinds of people who make mistakes in history,” he notes, ever the dualist. “One kind consists of those willing to correct their mistakes; the other consists of those unwilling to correct their mistakes.”<sup>15</sup> The form of treatment prescribed differs accordingly:

It is necessary to adopt dialectical techniques to treat our comrades. . . . First, we will conduct a struggle to criticize thoroughly and eradicate completely his mistaken ideology. Second, we will help him. First, we struggle; second, we help. There is no way to adopt a helpful attitude towards people like Tito and China's own Ch'en Tu-hsiu, however, for they are beyond help. . . . This is because, as far as we are concerned, they are not of a dual nature, but rather of a single nature.<sup>16</sup>

The distinction between these “two kinds of people” seems to rest on a judgment of whether a rectified opponent can be trusted sincerely to subordinate himself to the “truth” embodied in the correct line or will only outwardly comply while inwardly resisting. Mao would take considerable time to make this decision, during which he left the person in question a certain latitude for manoeuvre while observing him closely and monitoring the mass response. For example, although Mao criticized Liu Shao-ch'i at the very outset of the Cultural Revolution in his first big-character poster and demoted him at the August 1966 11th Plenum, the error of Liu and Teng was still generally considered “nonantagonistic” through the summer and autumn of 1966, and their mistakes were carefully distinguished from those of the “P'eng [Chen]-Lo [Jui-ch'ing]-Lu [Ting-yi]-Yang [Shang-k'un] Black Gang” by the fact that they were committed publicly and without apparent premeditation. This verdict, which debarred “struggle” tactics and permitted only “criticism,” was most forthrightly championed by Chou En-lai, but Chiang Ch'ing and Ch'en Po-ta in late August 1966 also instructed Red Guards to observe these limits, and Mao himself seemed to confirm the verdict at the October 1966 Central Work Conference

15. Mao, “Summing-up speech at the Sixth Expanded Plenum of the Seventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party” (September 1955), *Wan-sui* (1969), p. 13.

16. Mao, “Examples of dialectics” (1959?), in *Wan-sui* (1967), pp. 134–36.



by approving Liu's and Teng's self-criticisms.<sup>17</sup> The final decision was not reached until some time in late February or early March 1967, after Mao had reread Liu Shao-ch'i's major theoretical works and come to the conclusion that his mistake was one of principle. Likewise in the case of Lin Piao: Mao first became suspicious of his second heir apparent at the Second Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee at Lushan in August-September 1970, and subsequently took a series of steps to check his influence, but he pondered his ultimate disposition of the case until the following summer, when Lin pre-empted his decision. The chairman's uncertainty and growing suspicion during this period of consideration are apparent in a talk he gave shortly before the final falling out:

Some of them may be saved, others it may not be possible to save. This depends on their actions. They have two possible futures: they may repent or they may not. It is hard for someone who has taken the lead in committing major errors of principle, major errors of line or direction, to repent. In retrospect, did Ch'en Tu-hsiu reform? Did Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai, Li Li-san, Lo Chang-lung, Wang Ming, Chang Kuo-t'ao, Kao Kang, Jao Shu-shih, P'eng Te-huai, or Liu Shao-ch'i reform? They did not.<sup>18</sup>

In the case of Teng Hsiao-p'ing's most recent fall, although big-character posters began appearing early in February and Teng was apparently prevented from making further public appearances, not until the T'ien An Men incident of 5 April was the decision reached that the contradiction was one "between the enemy and ourselves."

After the judgment is rendered that a line struggle is in progress, that judgment is still technically subject to repeal on the basis of the target's self-criticisms, or the disposition of the constitutionally designated leadership organ (in Liu's case, the National People's Congress was empowered to remove him from his chairmanship of the People's Republic). But in fact, the judgment is promptly translated into a spiralling social movement whose thrust is inexorable. The error in line is found on the basis of various documentary materials to have completely pervaded the target's life, rendering redemption utterly out of the question. He "wormed his way" into the Party for opportunistic reasons in the first place, and has been committing similar errors throughout his career whenever the chance arose, making him in effect a "time bomb" who will wreak further havoc given the opportunity. In short, it is discovered that this enemy had always been and always would be an enemy; the image is evoked of a Party leadership permanently polarized between two antagonistic factions, with a few "waverers" in between who may

17. "Minutes of a forum with T'ung Hsiao-p'eng" [Deputy Director of the General Office of the Central Committee] (20 October 1966), in "Collections of speeches by central leaders," No. 4, jointly compiled by the Red Guard Commune, "Mao Tse-tung's Thought," and the Combat Group of the "Defence of the Supreme Directives," December 1966.

18. Cf. *supra*, note 3.

commit occasional indiscretions but will promptly rectify them. As one Red Guard article put it in a fairly typical opening paragraph:

There has been a sharp class struggle on the ideological and cultural fronts of our country ever since the founding of new China. A handful of representatives of the bourgeoisie within and without the Party have countered Chairman Mao's line on the proletarian cultural revolution with their own black anti-Party and anti-socialist line.<sup>19</sup>

Before looking at the adaptations made in the two-line struggle model by western social scientists, a brief concluding synopsis of the Chinese understanding of the concept is in order. A line struggle functions first of all as an authoritative decision-making technique, where it provides a means for resolving numerous complex issues quickly and simply by reducing the available alternatives to the basic question of which “road” is correct – capitalism or socialism – and forcing people to choose sides. Its locus is therefore “inner-Party,” specifically the Central organs where binding decisions are made. There its presence causes permanent factional polarization and struggle of varying intensity. Due to the integral link between line struggle and class struggle, upon reaching a given level of intensity these conflicts are transferred to the masses, allowing the masses to participate directly in politics and giving the leaders an opportunity to purge their opponents, renew their popular mandate and generate momentum for new policies.

The model contains numerous ambiguities, never having been accorded the same considered attention lavished on the theory of contradiction; line struggle is chiefly an action term, and different aspects of its meaning tend to be over-generalized at different phases in its operationalization. When western social scientists adopt this model, they usually make two important revisions in an attempt to resolve these ambiguities. First, they tend to assume that factional polarization among the leadership is not a permanent state of affairs but a temporary one based on a particular set of circumstances. These usually include the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the instauration of revisionist policies in order to cope with that failure and Mao's subsequent ideological objections, a premature succession struggle triggered by Mao's withdrawal from active leadership, and perhaps a few others. Secondly, the issue forming the basis of cleavage between the two lines is often reconstrued in terms of classic western sociological theory, wherein the Maoist choice between capitalism and socialism becomes reformulated as routinization vs.

19. “Raise high the great red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought and carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution through to the end – essential points for propaganda and education in connection with the Great Cultural Revolution,” *Liberation Army Daily*, 6 June 1966; cf. also “Outline of the struggle between the two lines from the event of the founding of the People's Republic of China through the 11th Plenum of the Eighth CCP Central Committee,” transl. in *Current Background (CB)*, No. 884 (18 July 1969), p. 19.

charisma, *Gesellschaft* vs. *Gemeinschaft*, institutionalization vs. participation, organic vs. mechanical solidarity, development vs. utopia, and so forth.<sup>20</sup> Like the polemicists of the Cultural Revolution, many western social scientists see in this model an opportunity to praise certain aspects of the Chinese political system that they admire while condemning others. While many agree with the evaluations implicit in the original model and ascribe to Mao great vision and considerable economic sophistication,<sup>21</sup> others subtly reverse these implications: the Maoists, possessed by a “Yenan complex,” are nostalgically pursuing a road into their heroic but irrelevant past, whereas the “pragmatists,” or “moderates” are realistically adjusting to future exigencies. Thus it seems that the two-line struggle model is not only linked to class struggle in Chinese society, but has even contributed to a certain polarization of the western community of China scholars.

The evidence in support of these western versions of the two-line struggle model derives largely from the same sources as the model itself. The Cultural Revolution resulted in a sudden inundation of revealing and seemingly authentic information about the inner workings of the Chinese political system, which appeared in response to radical polemicists’ need for supporting documentation to build their case against the capitalist-roaders. Naturally, this information was selected *parti pris*, and even when researchers try to corroborate it with contemporaneous materials there is a danger that its polemical thrust will bias the investigation. The fact that the researchers who use these data are usually searching for an explanation for the unprece-

20. The most faithful adoption of the Chinese model is found in Rainer Hoffman, *Entmaoisierung in China: Zur Vorgeschichte der Kulturrevolution* (Munich: Weltforum Verlag, 1974), and Rüdiger Machetzki, “Chronologie des innerparteilichen Linienkampfes in der Kommunistischen Partei Chinas, 1949–1965,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts fuer Asienkunde*, No. 57 (Hamburg, 1973). Much more subtle is Pierre Illiez, *Chine Rouge, Page Blanche* (Paris: Julliard, 1973). Attempts to develop a synthesis with western social science are found in Martin King Whyte, “Bureaucracy and modernization in China: the Maoist critique,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (April 1973), pp. 149–63; Richard Lowenthal, “Development vs. utopia in communist policy,” in Chalmers Johnson (ed.), *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 33–117; Harry Harding, “Maoist theories of policy-making and organization,” in Thomas Robinson (ed.), *The Cultural Revolution in China* (Berkeley Calif.: University of California Press, 1971); and Harding, “The organizational issue in Chinese politics, 1957–1972” (Stanford, Calif.: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1973).

21. E.g. cf. Jack Gray, “The two roads: alternative strategies of social change and economic growth in China,” in Stuart R. Schram (ed.), *Authority, Participation and Cultural Change in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 109–59; Stephen Andors, “Revolution and modernization: man and machine in industrializing societies, the Chinese case,” in Edward Friedman and Mark Seldon (eds.), *America’s Asia* (New York: Vintage, 1971), pp. 393–444; and John G. Gurley, “Capitalist and Maoist economic development,” in *ibid.* pp. 324–56.

dent ed polarization that in fact occurred during the Cultural Revolution also inclines them to be particularly sensitive to previously unnoticed early signs of cleavage and then to impute a causal relationship between these “symptoms” and the later “pathology.” Under these circumstances the two-line struggle model can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In the next two subsections, which analyse different aspects of the practice of two-line struggle, I shall attempt to avoid such pitfalls by breaking the model into a number of empirically testable hypotheses:

1. The first set of hypotheses concerns *power*, designated by the “headquarters” element of line struggle: the Chinese leadership is in a state of permanent factional polarization, and incessant struggle of varying intensity goes on between the two factions. The leadership and most of the membership of these two factions are fixed on a long-term basis (e.g. the factional alliances that emerged during the Cultural Revolution had been thus affiliated at least since the Great Leap Forward). This implies that the relationship among top-level leaders is fairly collegial, for without the give-and-take and mutual respect that collegiality implies no coherent opposition may be expected to emerge, let alone to form a durable “headquarters.”

2. The second set of propositions concerns *participation* (“two classes”): mass participation is induced by unresolved line struggle, wherein the leaders of the two lines, frustrated in their attempt to resolve their dispute within the Party, proceed to mobilize their respective class constituencies and to precipitate class struggle. Class struggle in a socialist system concerns not the ownership of the means of production but the pattern of distribution of wealth, status and power.

3. The third set of propositions concerns *policy* (“two roads”): despite their similar backgrounds and experiences, the two lines are divided by broad differences of *Weltanschauung*. Whereas members of the proletarian revolutionary line remain determined to press relentlessly for the realization of socialism, members of the opposing line have lost this determination and are apt to seize the opportunity presented by temporary reverses to introduce revisions which, if permitted to continue, would lead to a reversal of socialist advances and usher in a revival of capitalism.

### *The Private Life of the Two Lines*

Thanks largely to the information explosion ignited in the Cultural Revolution, we are now privy to more information concerning the internal workings of the Chinese political system during the years 1957–66 than for any other equivalent time period. In this section we shall confine ourselves to an examination of esoteric communications; this includes limited circulation documents not intended for

public consumption, as well as the sophisticated interpretations of public information that rely on the trained perception of non-obvious clues (e.g. “protocol evidence”)<sup>22</sup>. We shall examine in succession those three policy episodes most frequently alleged to have anticipated the cleavages of the Cultural Revolution, attempting in each case to find answers to the questions posed above: the Lushan incident of August 1959, the period of retrenchment and policy experimentation following the Great Leap Forward, and the disagreements involved in implementing the Socialist Education Movement.

1. *Lushan*. The Lushan incident has no direct bearing upon the factional divisions of the Cultural Revolution, for the line of cleavage among the leadership shifted somewhat between the two purges – both Liu and Teng supported the Great Leap Forward, whereas Chou En-lai withheld his full support. It is nevertheless significant as a precedent to inner-Party line struggle, and the available material is more complete than that for any other series of high-level conferences. This material is particularly revealing on questions of power relations and policy disputes among the leadership; mass participation is never really engaged.<sup>23</sup>

Mao tried hard to convey the impression that an atmosphere of full and free debate prevailed in these forums: “You have said what you have wanted to say. The minutes attest to that. If you do not agree with my views, you can refute them. I don’t think it is right to say that one cannot refute the views of the Chairman.”<sup>24</sup> Yet an examination of the speeches and exchanges at the Lushan meetings suggests that Mao’s forbearance had definite limits. Despite the chairman’s later characterization of P’eng’s letter of criticism as “an open declaration of war: his intention was to seize power, but he did not succeed,” a more impartial reading of that letter reveals considerable tact and deference. No one at Lushan openly challenged the principles on which the commune system rested; the question was rather one of timing, the haste with which it was implemented and the failure to test it in selected spots before implementation on a nationwide scale. The comparison of P’eng’s respect-

22. Protocol evidence consists of the order of appearance on ceremonial occasions, which is assumed to coincide with the order of precedence within the leadership. Cf. Roderick MacFarquhar, “On photographs,” *The China Quarterly* (CQ), No. 46 (April/June 1971), pp. 289–308, for an excellent example of this type of analysis. Successful predictions made on this basis include the fall of Beria (because of his failure to attend a performance of *The Decembrists* at the Bolshoi theatre) and MacFarquhar’s own prediction of the resurrection of Teng Hsiao-p’ing.

23. Many of the following points I owe to a personal communication from Tang Tsou.

24. Mao, “Speech at the Lushan Conference” (23 July 1959); the most complete translation is in *Chinese Law and Government*, Vol. I, No. 4 (winter 1968–69), pp. 27–44.

ful letter, with its pleading tone, with Mao’s frontal attack on P’eng, suggests that those in a subordinate position generally assume a respectful attitude and understate their case, whereas those in a superior position can and do take advantage of their positions to use forceful language and display their authority or even temper. In his letter P’eng began by telling Mao, “Whether this letter is of value for reference or not is for you to decide, if what I say is wrong please correct me.” Then he affirmed the achievements made in the Great Leap, before pointing to the errors committed by the Party.<sup>25</sup> Even regarding the back-yard steel furnaces, which everyone, including Mao, agreed were a disaster, P’eng merely said, “there had been some losses and some gains,” making his point subtly by reversing the usual order. And when he went out of his way to declare that these shortcomings and errors were unavoidable and that there were always shortcomings among great achievements, he attributed responsibility for these mistakes not to Mao, where it surely belonged, but to the misinterpretation by officials and cadres of Mao’s programmes. He asked for a systematic summing up of achievements and lessons gained in the several months since mid-1958, but added that “on the whole, there should be no investigation of personal responsibility.” Finally, he said that the situation was now under control, and “we are embarking step by step on the right path.” At the end of the letter he quoted Mao’s assessment of the situation: “The achievements are tremendous, the problems are numerous, experience is rich, the future is bright,” thus trying to legitimate his own subtle criticisms.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, Mao’s criticism of P’eng was direct and blunt. P’eng’s letter, he said,

... constituted an anti-Party line of rightist opportunism. It is by no means an accidental and individual error. It is planned, organized, prepared, and purposeful. He attempted to seize control of the Party and they wanted to form their own opportunist Party. P’eng Te-huai’s letter is a program that opposes our general line although it superficially supports the people’s commune. P’eng Te-huai is a cautious fellow; while we talk in terms of gains and losses he puts losses before gains. His letter was designed to recruit followers to stage a rebellion. He was vicious and a hypocrite.<sup>27</sup>

True, Mao did forbear for 20 days at Lushan, but his purpose seemed more tactical than tolerant, designed to lure his opponent into a more blunt and culpable expression of his views. In this as in many

25. P’eng Te huai’s “Letter of opinion” (14 July 1959), in *Exchange of Revolutionary Experience* (Red Guard tabloid), 24 August 1967, transl. in *The Case of Peng Teh-huai, 1959–1968* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968), pp. 7–15.

26. *Ibid.* In emphasizing the lop-sidedness of the encounter, I basically agree with J. D. Simmonds’ interpretation, in his “P’eng Te-huai: a chronological reexamination,” *CQ*, No. 37 (January/March 1969), pp. 120–39.

27. Mao, “Criticism of P’eng Te-huai’s ‘letter of opinion’ of July 14, 1959” (July 1959), transl. in *Chinese Law and Government*, Vol. I, No. 4, pp. 25–26.

other respects Mao's political tactics were identical with his military tactics:

When I was young and in the prime of my life I would also be irritated whenever I heard some bad remarks. My attitude was, "If they provoke me, I shall also provoke them. Whoever provokes me first, I shall provoke him later." *I have not abandoned this principle even now, though I have learned to listen.* Let us stiffen our stance to withstand criticism, and listen to them for a couple of weeks, then counterattack (emphasis added).<sup>28</sup>

We seem justified in concluding that freedom to dissent among top-level leaders is limited by the chairman's forbearance. And once discussion surpasses his forbearance and Mao counterattacks, all open opposition crumbles. At least this was the case at Lushan. According to material prepared by the Red Guards, Teng Hsiao-p'ing slipped away under the pretext of having ailing legs; Liu remained silent for a long time, then pretended to criticize P'eng by speaking vaguely of the relationship between the leaders and the masses. Even outside the meeting the dissenters no longer dared to discuss their common concerns. As P'eng noted:

After Comrade Mao spoke on July 23rd, we [P'eng and Chang Wen-t'ien, who had discussed their mutual views previously] met again and both of us felt rather tense. He said we could not engage in further discussion. But I said it was just as well for us to discuss things a little and to clear up some vague ideas. But in the end we did not discuss other problems.<sup>29</sup>

Why was the opposition so utterly intimidated? In the first place, Mao's ideological authority entitles him to attach labels to his opponents, ranging from anti-Party faction, right opportunism, making a serious mistake, to having some problems in work. The possibility of receiving such a label tends to discourage Mao's colleagues from saying anything distasteful to Mao and to encourage them to guess the psychology of their leader and try to anticipate his desires. Hence when Mao tried to encourage his colleagues to express their views, he warned them: "one should not be afraid of imprisonment, should not even be afraid of execution or of dismissal from the Party." Indeed, all of these prospects were conceivable once a label was affixed, and would-be sympathizers hastened to dissociate themselves from the target by attacking him, lest they themselves become implicated. Chang Wen-t'ien, as noted above, went to great lengths to avoid the impression that he and P'eng were engaged in any form of organized opposition to Mao, but the accusation was still made.

Mao's ability to prevail over all challengers seems from the Lushan encounter to have depended only partly on the deferential atmosphere and hierarchical structure of authority that obtained at the

28. Cf. *supra*, note 24.

29. "P'eng Te-huai's speech at the Eighth Plenum of the Eighth CCP Central Committee," transl. in *CB*, No. 851 (26 April 1968), p. 28.

highest levels; Mao's own consummate mastery of the skills of political infighting also played an important role. He seems to have paid little attention to the concrete problems of policy implementation but to have given first priority to his monopoly of the symbols of legitimacy. Whenever he chose to assert his will forcibly and presented his colleagues with a choice between submission and his own resignation (as he did on more than one occasion), there was no question what the choice would be. Thus he could prevail whenever he chose to, playing on the general belief in his indispensability. Other top leaders might conceivably try to bypass him but they also had to try to humour him and would yield to him whenever he made up his mind. If the chairman felt pressed to the wall on some issue for which his own responsibility was unavoidable, he could make a self-criticism that would absorb the brunt of the attacks by admitting clearly indefensible errors without making any concessions on general principles. For example at Lushan he admitted:

Before August last year I devoted my main energy to revolution. Being basically not versed in construction, I knew nothing about industrial planning. However, in 1958 and 1959, the main responsibility has fallen on me, and you should take me to task. In the past, responsibility could be laid to others, Chou En-lai and XXX. But now, you should blame me.<sup>30</sup>

In accepting responsibility for the most glaring excesses he could then demand self-criticism from others on matters of principle. His self-criticism also gave a pretext to the waverers and the middle-of-the-roaders to rally to his defence, thus signalling the end of his retreat and the beginning of his counter-offensive – or in any case, the end of the debate. Mao was the only judge of the adequacy of his own self-criticisms, which were typically quite lenient on himself and liberal in distributing criticisms to others. At Lushan he criticized those cadres who would not listen to criticism, the communications media that reported mistakes and thereby undermined the regime, the investigation group of the academy of sciences, the state planning committee, and many more: “As for responsibility, XXX and XXX have some responsibility, and XXX of the Ministry of Agriculture has some responsibility.” Even K'ō Ch'ing-shih, first secretary and mayor of Shanghai, one of Mao's most faithful supporters, the first person to support Mao in the campaign to build backyard furnaces, was held partially responsible for the failure of that campaign.<sup>31</sup>

If P'eng's case is typical of the way opposition is perceived and dealt with at the Centre, surely anyone intending to form an opposing “line” would have a formidable gauntlet to run! And yet subsequent events seemed to convince the chairman that he may have responded too leniently. The retrenchment forced by

30. *Cf. supra*, note 24, pp. 42–43.

31. *Ibid.*



the Leap's failure created an atmosphere conducive to a re-evaluation of P'eng's criticisms. While P'eng Te-huai himself fell, his line seemed vindicated by events, making the marshal something of an unsung martyr (a "Hai Jui") in some quarters, and encouraging P'eng to write an (unsuccessful) 80,000-character appeal for a "reversal of verdicts" in 1962. Future purges, Mao seems to have concluded, must comprise an intensive mass education campaign to impress the masses with the import of the purge.

2. *Retrenchment.* Most western protagonists of a modified two-line struggle model consider the 1959–62 retrenchment period crucial to their argument, for this is the time when the "revisionist" programme came into full flower: many of the mass innovations introduced during the Leap, such as work-study schools, small rural factories built by "self-reliance," rural medical facilities, etc., were "chopped down"; private plots were restored, material incentives were distributed to workers in an effort to foster an ethic of competitive materialism, and a "small blooming" (*hsiao ming-fang*) in the cultural sphere resulted in the appearance of some stinging satires of the chairman. The two lines argument assumes that Mao had withdrawn from effective leadership of the Party during this period and that those entrusted with the reins of power committed errors of "revisionism" in his absence.

This argument seems vulnerable at the following points. First, reports that Mao's power was in eclipse during this period seem to have been greatly exaggerated. Secondly, there is no firm evidence that disagreements had assumed the form of distinct factions with identifiable memberships (i.e. "two headquarters") during this period, and there is considerable evidence of continuing elite cohesion. Finally, the sharp policy cleavages etched in Red Guard polemics (i.e. "two roads") seem to diminish if the same policies are examined in the context of the contemporaneous policy environment without reference to the Cultural Revolution. We find considerable policy *flexibility*, but believe this can be accounted for by assuming a rational response to changing economic exigencies.

The supposition that Mao lost influence in the policy process during the post-Leap interregnum seems to have originated in the chairman's own oft-quoted complaints that no one came to consult him any more, that they considered his ideas old-fashioned, placed him on the shelf like a "Buddha," or (to switch metaphors) treated him like a dead father at his own funeral. The extreme form of this argument, that Mao had been forced to retire from his post as chief of state owing to the failure of the Great Leap, has by now been widely discounted. Mao had been asking his colleagues to relieve him of this largely honorific post since 1957, well before the launching of the Leap, and he did not care to reclaim it after Liu's dismissal in 1968, although Lin Piao reportedly tried to per-

suade him to do so in 1970. He was tired of the endless ceremonial chores the position entailed, he complained, and wanted to write poetry and devote himself to more general theoretical concerns, and to give his successors designate an opportunity to establish their prestige before he died.

Even if Mao's retirement was voluntary it is still conceivable that he came to regret his loss of influence as it became apparent that his successors, less ambivalent than he about the leadership transition for which they were both preparing, “usurped” power and set sail on a diverging course, rebuffing his attempts to regain the helm. Yet even this attenuated form of the argument requires qualification. Notwithstanding his complaints about inadequate consultation, Mao was apparently not being systematically deprived of information, for we know him to be well-informed on matters of diplomacy and foreign policy, and such information is among the most sensitive in any government. The chairman had never been one to pay much heed to jurisdictional boundaries, but his “retirement” seemed to detach him from any fixed locus in the institutional structure and allow him to range at will in the corridors of power – yet this seems to have been his chosen operating style. His influence was dominant in the Sino-Soviet dispute that claimed central public attention during this period, lending the Chinese contribution to these polemics their trenchant, authoritative tone. He also made his presence felt on the domestic scene: at the 10th Plenum in September 1962, which the chairman personally organized and directed, Mao put the authority of the Central Committee behind a programme of waging class struggle and consolidating the collective economy; in May 1963, he issued a policy paper on the need to correct certain deficiencies in rural work; in 1964, he focused on weaknesses in the educational system; in June 1965, he delivered strong criticism of the management of public health. Although it is clear that Mao was often dissatisfied with the response to his proposals, there is no solid evidence that the bureaucracy was consciously frustrating their implementation; in a matter of days after Mao had issued one of his broad programmatic statements, newspaper editorials, Party pronouncements, and the speeches of high officials echoed his thoughts; work conferences were held, and the ponderous bureaucratic machine was set in motion.<sup>32</sup> Whether measured against Mao's original instructions or against the standards of previous such cases, the results seem reasonably creditable.<sup>33</sup> Even in launching the Cultural

32. Michel C. Oksenberg, *China: The Convulsive Society* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, December 1970), Headline Series, No. 203, p. 37.

33. A new emphasis on rural health appeared. More emphasis was given to the integration of labour with education and to creating educational opportunities for workers and peasants: for example, in 1964–65 the admission of children with bad class backgrounds on the basis of good test scores was sharply curtailed, and in 1964–65 class origin became a more decisive criterion for admissions. There was also a politicization of literature and culture in 1964–65.

Revolution, where Mao did encounter organized and sustained resistance from P'eng Chen and his cronies on the Peking Party Committee, Mao retained the initiative and defined the issues throughout the movement, a situation one would not expect if a serious attempt to displace him had been involved. Thus he appointed P'eng and the Group of Five to the Wu Han case and then purged most of them when they refused to come to grips with the problem he had assigned them; he called for a Cultural Revolution in the spring of 1966 and then purged Liu and Teng when he disagreed with their method of carrying it out.<sup>34</sup>

It does appear to be true, whether because of illness or momentary preoccupation with other concerns, that Mao absented himself from a number of important meetings during the retrenchment period, and that Liu Shao-ch'i, as leader of the "first front" responsible for policy implementation, convened and presided over these meetings while Teng Hsiao-p'ing, as general secretary, took charge of day-to-day affairs. It has been conjectured that whoever convenes these conferences possesses the power to select the participants and decide the agenda and thereby dominate the meetings.<sup>35</sup> If this is correct, Mao's withdrawal would have provided Liu and Teng with an organizational vehicle that they could effectively dominate to initiate a policy line different from, and perhaps contrary to, that of the chairman. Interview informants, however, suggest that control of a conference agenda is not exclusively vested in the convener but is decided on the basis of consultation among the leadership, making it likely that Mao retained some input into these decisions even when he chose to play no active role in the conference. And although it seems plausible *prima facie* that Mao should hold the convener responsible for any proposals or decisions that a conference approved, why should he adopt such a general rule of inference if more direct evidence was at hand? – with the information at his disposal, Mao was able to allocate blame more precisely. For example, in 1955 Liu Shao-ch'i chaired a meeting of the Central Committee at which Teng Tzu-hui proposed a cutback in the number of APCs by 200,000, which Liu, as acting chairman, tacitly approved; this then became official policy until Mao reversed it in the second half of the year. There is however no indication in any of his secret talks that Mao held Liu responsible for this, whereas he did make several sharply critical references to Teng Tzu-hui, whose career thereafter encountered difficulties.<sup>36</sup> Again,

34. Frederick C. Teiwes, "The evolution of leadership purges in Communist China," *CQ*, No. 41 (January/March, 1970), pp. 122–36.

35. See Michel Oksenberg's introductory essay in Kenneth Lieberthal, *Research Guide to Central Party and Government Meetings in China, 1949–1975* (White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976).

36. Mao, "Talk on philosophical questions" (18 August 1964), in *Wan-sui* (1969), p. 551.

at a meeting of the Party Centre under Liu’s jurisdiction in the spring of 1962, Teng Tzu-hui described the merits of the so-called responsibility field system, in which production quotas would be assigned to individual households; his view was not refuted and thereby gained legitimacy. In the area of foreign policy, an official proposed a policy of “three reconciliations and one reduction”; and in the area of domestic policy, another official proposed “three freedoms and one contract,” all of which were later denounced as revisionist. But although Liu presided over these meetings, Mao did not seem to hold him responsible, but rather those who made the proposals. This is indicated in a briefing he held in March 1964:

Teng Tzu-hui wanted to “contract to the households.” In the past Wang Chia-hsiang had always been ill. For that half a year he was healthy and wanted to have “three reconciliations and one reduction,” with such activism! What we must now do is “three struggles and one increase.” The United Front Department . . . wanted to carry out “three reconciliations and one reduction” internationally and “three freedoms and one contract” domestically.<sup>37</sup>

It has been correctly noted that Chou En-lai, in his address to the National People’s Congress in December 1964, condemned the domestic policies of “three freedoms and one contract,” liberalization, reversal of verdicts, and capitulation in united front work; and in foreign policy attacked “three reconciliations and one reduction.” The contemporaneous significance of Chou’s condemnation was not in the fact that it attacked policies later attributed to “top capitalist-roaders,” but that it marked the clearest overt move away from such policies by the regime, underlining the leadership’s concern over a general state of “stagnation, pessimism, inertia and complacency.” In the same report, Chou explicitly commended the instructions of “Chairman Liu Shao-ch’i” on the reform of the full-time education system and the establishment of the part-time system.<sup>38</sup> In fact, what is noteworthy is that no one is on record as having criticized Liu and Teng for the errors of the retrenchment period until after Liu’s October 1966 self-criticism, in which Liu himself (“very bravely,” according to his wife) assumed responsibility for allowing such proposals to surface.<sup>39</sup>

The absence of identifiable factions during the retrenchment period

37. Mao, “Remarks at a briefing” (March 1964), in *Wan-sui* (1969), p. 479.

38. Chou En-lai, “Summary of report on the work of the government,” *New China News Analysis (NCNA)*, 30 December 1964, transl. in *Survey of the Mainland Press (SCMP)*, No. 3370 (5 January 1965), pp. 1–18.

39. “Three trials of pickpocket Wang Kuang-mei,” transl. in *CB*, No. 848 (27 February 1968), p. 20. MacFarquhar demonstrates that with regard to his errors at the Eighth Party Congress, at least, Liu overstates his own fault. Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. I, *Contradictions Among the People, 1956–1957* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 164.

is compatible with a model of leadership decision-making that is more disjointed and incrementalist than Chinese ideologues like to imagine. Except perhaps when Mao chose to throw his prestige behind some proposal that endangered significant organizational interests, the Chinese policy process appears to be highly consensual. We know, for example, that no decree, no report, no important public statement is ever issued in China on the word of a single person; Chou's NPC report, for example, went through 20 drafts before publication, after receiving approval from the Central Committee, the State Council, and many other organs. Even the Great Leap Forward, which bore the unmistakable personal imprint of the chairman, was conceived and implemented consensually, and created dissensus only after its failure had become apparent – one reason for Mao's outrage at P'eng Te-huai. In view of their lower public profiles and more consensual, less personally forceful leadership styles, and in view of the less objective nature of their "errors," it is quite conceivable that Liu and Teng were not the obvious candidates to be held responsible for post-Leap revisionist policies until the October 1966 "reckoning of accounts."

Actually, the policies in themselves do not seem to have been the object of Mao's ire so much as the demoralized quality of mass response. The tendency to experiment with revisionist economic and cultural policies had already been arrested in September 1962. The policies already in effect were not thereby abrogated, but Mao did not seem particularly anxious to abrogate them. For example, the 60-Article programme on the communes, the general thrust of which was to induce the peasantry to produce more by means of material incentives and other ideologically heterodox means (private plots, free markets) with little interference from the Party, was adopted by the Central Committee in May 1961, after being discussed at a high-level Canton conference two months earlier. But although Mao criticized Teng Hsiao-p'ing for adopting certain policies without consulting him, and although the most controversial off-shoot of the 60 Articles (the "three freedoms and one contract") was later denounced, not one of the 60 Articles was repudiated before, during or after the Cultural Revolution. In fact, the 60 Articles were implicitly endorsed in the 10th Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee, consistently advocated in contemporaneous Work Bulletins, and explicitly affirmed in the First 10 Points of the Socialist Education Movement (allegedly written by the chairman himself).<sup>40</sup>

Personal responsibility for the decisions of the retrenchment period was ascribed in the context of a general politicization of human

40. Pierre Illiez, *Chine Rouge*, p. 63. Work Bulletins for this period are translated in J. Chester Cheng, *The Politics of the Chinese Red Army: A Translation of the Bulletin of Activities of the PLA* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1966).

motives, which served the purpose of maximizing the realm of human potential by making all action seem the outcome of deliberate choice. The purpose was to encourage the masses to believe in the efficacy of their own efforts and to strive harder to achieve socialism, but this logically implied that misfortune was also the result of subjective intentions and precipitated a search for scapegoats. Maoist politicization should not be replaced by an equally one-sided economic determinism, but we must nonetheless bear in mind that the failure of the Great Leap Forward placed severe economic constraints on the policy options then open to the leadership. That failure was similar in its effects to a major depression in capitalist economies, giving rise to over-production, under-consumption, a drying up of savings, unemployment, a decline of business morale, and disruption of the market.<sup>41</sup> Chinese Communist budgetary policy is not Keynesian but very fiscally conservative: confronted with a deficit of two billion *yüan* in early 1962, restricted from borrowing money abroad by principles of self-reliance, inhibited from raising money domestically by fears of inflation, the leadership probably saw no alternative to a policy of fiscal retrenchment and economic rationalization. This entailed “chopping down” all recent capital outlays (e.g. local factories and schools) that could not be justified in terms of cost-benefit analysis, emphasizing costs and profits over output targets as criteria for enterprise success, reforming the banking system and price policy, and allocating greater responsibility to the “professional intellectuals” most capable of implementing such reforms: factory managers, technical accountants, engineers and educators. Mao was not immune to practical considerations, and in view of the gravity of the situation it seems unlikely that anyone sensitive to the plight of the masses could have opposed a programme that promised to overcome the general insufficiency of food, fuel and clothing.<sup>42</sup> That the economic imperatives of such crises can override ideological considerations was illustrated during the world-wide recession of the early 1970s, which witnessed American liberal Democrats, the British Labour Party, and German Social Democrats moving towards programmes of fiscal conservatism and monetary restraint, while even French and Italian Communist Parties promised some moderation. The nationwide construction of locally financed small-scale industries in the two years following the Cultural Revolution was likewise followed in 1971–72 by a retrenchment of uneconomic ventures, a

41. Franz Schurmann, “China’s ‘new economic policy’ – transition or beginning?” *CQ*, No. 17 (January/March 1964), pp. 65–92.

42. Mao is on record as approving material incentives and pay according to work. *Cf.* Mao, “Speech at an enlarged session of the Military Affairs Committee and the External Affairs Conference” (11 September 1959), in *Wan-sui* (1969), pp. 312–15.

renewed emphasis on cost accounting and efficient managerial procedures, on the priority of the central plan, and so forth.<sup>43</sup>

3. *The Socialist Education Movement.* The Socialist Education Movement, a drawn-out and evidently frustrating campaign complicated by several changes of policy, has been simplified by the Red Guard polemicists into four basic periods. The first and the last were allegedly dominated by the policies of Mao Tse-tung, with his First 10 Points and his 23 Articles; the second and third were under the aegis of Teng Hsiao-p'ing and Liu Shao-ch'i, who supervised the drafting of the Second 10 Points and the Revised Second 10 Points respectively. The two-line struggle argument perceives two lines of cleavage, one defined by the differences contained in these sets of documents, the second by the differences between policy formulation and policy implementation.

As for the first and most heavily emphasized line of cleavage, there is first of all some doubt to what extent authorship can so definitively be assigned to individual leaders. Secondly, there are strong elements of continuity in all four documents, while the differences between them by no means fall into consistent patterns, throwing doubt on the idea that they were conscious contributions to some esoteric controversy. There is in my view more validity to the allegations of a second line of cleavage, between policy formulation and implementation, but here it seems unclear to what extent Mao had focused his general discontent with the bureaucracy on specific individuals and equally unclear whether he had any notion of what to do about it.

Rather than adopt the Red Guard image of Mao's control of the Socialist Education Movement being insidiously usurped by Teng Hsiao-p'ing *et al.*, it seems more plausible to suppose that Mao retained control throughout the campaign, that he was genuinely puzzled by his inability to evoke the desired mass response, and that he turned first to one man, then to another, in the hope of achieving his purpose; when the situation failed to improve, he resumed personal control of the campaign. Although there were clearly differences between the documents (the details of which need not concern us here), these did not seem to refer to any conscious power struggle among leaders but rather to the evolution of policy caused by changing circumstances and subscribed to by most of the leaders. There is substantial evidence that Mao explicitly approved the dissemination of the Second 10 Points, the first draft of which was apparently drafted under the supervision of Teng Hsiao-p'ing on the basis of investigations by P'eng Chen. In March 1964 the chairman personally directed that the First and Second 10 Points were thence-

43. See my "Revolution and reconstruction in contemporary Chinese bureaucracy," *Journal of Comparative Administration*, Vol. V, No. 4 (February 1974), pp. 443-87.

forth to be required reading for all cadres and peasants throughout the countryside: “Recently we held a discussion to ratify documents from members of the Central Committee. . . . These documents are being read to the masses. . . . I have recommended that whoever is not old and infirm, whoever is not illiterate, and whoever has prestige among the masses should take part in this reading.”<sup>44</sup> And in April 1964 Mao commended a plan by Public Security minister, Hsieh Fu-chih, to popularize the First and Second 10 Points among all labour reform prisoners in China.<sup>45</sup> It is true that the Second 10 Points were quite lenient in dealing with spontaneous capitalist tendencies in the countryside, but in this respect they were a logical outgrowth of the First 10 Points, which concentrated on the rectification of rural cadres.

Liu Shao-ch’i supervised the drafting of the Revised Second 10 Points at Mao’s behest because of the chairman’s dissatisfaction with the response to the First and Second 10 Points, and it therefore might have been anticipated that the Revised Second 10 would deal more strictly with the evils the campaign was designed to eradicate. And indeed, the latter half of 1964 witnessed the initiation of what Baum considers “in all probability the most intensive purge of rural Party members and cadres in the history of the Chinese People’s Republic.”<sup>46</sup> During the Cultural Revolution Liu’s critics claimed that he was “hitting at the many in order to protect a handful,” using “human sea tactics” by inundating local Party committees with huge work teams, and using excessively coercive struggle methods to compel self-criticisms. Whether these complaints reflected Mao’s dissatisfaction with Liu’s performance or simply the grievances of the many victims of the Party’s crackdown in the countryside it is difficult to say. The criticisms are inconsistent with the criticisms of Teng’s Second 10 Points – the Second 10 were too lenient, the Revised Second 10 too strict; it is still not inconceivable that both criticisms were valid, but, if so, one loses the sense of two coherent lines, “opposite, mutually exclusive, and struggling.”<sup>47</sup>

Certainly Liu never came under personal attack prior to the Cultural Revolution for his role in drafting and implementing the Revised Second 10 – he continued to exercise considerable power within the Central Committee well after January 1965, and was publicly identified in October 1965 as Mao’s “closest comrade in arms.”<sup>48</sup> If Mao became “disappointed” in Liu at the time of the

44. Mao, “Remarks at a briefing” (March 1964), in *Wan-sui* (1969), p. 473.

45. “Directive on labour reform” (28 April 1964), as cited in Richard Baum, *Prelude to Revolution: Mao, the Party, and the Peasant Question, 1962–1966* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

46. Baum, *Prelude*, p. 103.

47. Mao, “Speech to the Third Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee” (7 October 1957), in *Wan-sui* (1969), pp. 122–26.

48. *Jen-min jih-pao*, 1 October 1965. On 27 May 1965 the main newspapers of Peking reported on a front page that during the previous summer Mao and



drafting of his 23 Articles in January 1965, as Chou En-lai later alleged, he seems to have kept his disappointment to himself. It was alleged in retrospect that Mao's 23 Articles were drawn up in explicit repudiation of Liu's Revised Second 10, and it is true that the 23 Articles repudiated certain provisions in the earlier draft. But Mao did not condemn it *tout ensemble*; on the contrary, he implicitly approved of all preceding documents in his statement that "thanks to the execution of a series of instructions by the Central Committee of the entire Party . . . a very good situation has been created."<sup>49</sup> There is no evidence that the January conference, which adopted the 23 Articles, repudiated Liu's "line," and in fact it seems that here again, the 23 Articles were the result of a consensual decision-making endeavour in which Liu participated. On 18 December 1964 Liu, as chief of state, convened the Supreme State Conference, and then again on 30 December he reconvened the same organ. Why was it necessary to have two meetings of this august body, which usually meets infrequently, only 12 days apart? The only event that appears to have come between the two meetings is the Politburo meeting of 26 December, which probably drew up a first draft of the 23 Articles. The New China News Agency noted that Liu spoke during the second session of the Supreme State Conference "on the current international and domestic situation and on important questions of work."<sup>50</sup> Less than 48 hours later, *People's Daily* published its New Year editorial for 1965, discussing for the most part the Socialist Education Movement. Although the international situation was also discussed in brief, for the most part three important questions were stressed: the principal contradiction in the struggle between socialism and capitalism, the correct method of carrying out the struggle, and the correct personal attitude. It is plausible to infer, following J. D. Simmonds, that the division of subject matter in the editorial was precisely that of Liu's speech. More importantly, a comparison of the open editorial with the text of the 23 Articles reveals a close parallel in themes (with the exception of the discussion of international affairs).<sup>51</sup>

We conclude that differences among the documents were not the result of a struggle based on two internally consistent and mutually

Liu had been seen swimming together in the artificial lake on the outskirts of the city (a reservoir near the Ming tombs). "On the diving board, they chatted with a group of young people, exhorting them to swim and struggle against the elements so as to become vigorous revolutionaries." "Mass swimming," *Peking Review*, No. 23 (24 June 1965).

49. Article One, in "23 Articles" (14 January 1965), transl. in Richard Baum and Frederick C. Teiwes, *Ssu-ch'ing: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 120-21.

50. NCNA, 31 December 1964, in *SCMP*, No. 3371 (6 January 1965), p. 1.

51. Cf. the closely reasoned monograph by J. D. Simmonds, *China: The Evolution of a Revolution* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1968), Working Paper No. 9.

exclusive lines, but of mutually agreed upon tactical adjustments to frustrations and changing circumstances. Even if we assume for the sake of argument that the First 10, Second 10, the Revised Second 10, and the 23 Articles may be identified with Mao, Teng, Liu, and Mao respectively, and that the 23 Articles repudiated important points in “Liu’s” Revised Second 10, it would seem that the 23 Articles were relatively successful in reversing the adverse trends set in motion by the Revised Second 10 and that the Cultural Revolution was therefore not necessary for this purpose. Implementation of the 23 Articles resulted in a sudden abatement of the struggle, and the Maoist leadership indicated that the movement was now regarded as successfully concluded. Mao himself first declared on 26 June 1965 that “The ‘Four Cleans’ movement was wound up in the year [1964] and has been fundamentally completed; medical and health work in the villages has not yet been completed.”<sup>52</sup> On 25 January 1967 a Central Committee directive stated that although a few comrades had made mistakes, “great achievements have been made in the Four Cleans,” and an injunction was issued against the reversal of work-team imposed verdicts in the countryside.<sup>53</sup> A *Red Flag* commentary published in early March 1967 claimed that the Socialist Education Movement had been conceived by Mao himself and thus constituted a great revolution; allegations to the contrary were “utterly vicious attacks by the class enemy.”<sup>54</sup>

Because the four documents contained so many elements of continuity, because they seem to have been consensually formulated, because the differences between them are so detailed, seemingly tactical in nature and mutually inconsistent, it seems to be implausible to infer the existence of any “struggle in thought, which consists of divergencies and mutual opposition in ideological principles.”<sup>55</sup> More consistent with the available evidence is the hypothesis that any line of cleavage must have been a functional one based on a growing rift between policy formulation and policy implementation, i.e. between the “first front” and the “second front” in the Politburo.<sup>56</sup> This cleavage anticipated (though it did not “cause”) the principal line of cleavage in the Cultural Revolution, which was to pit those who espoused a conception of broadly based and spontaneous mass

52. Mao, “Directive on public health” (26 June 1965), in *Wan-sui* (1969), p. 629.

53. “Notification on safeguarding the achievements of the four cleans movement” (25 January 1967), transl. in *CB*, No. 852, p. 52; as cited in Baum, *Prelude*.

54. *Hung-ch’i*, No. 4 (1 March 1967), pp. 49–50; as cited in Baum, *Prelude*. Not until 1 January 1967 was the Socialist Education Movement included in the polemics, too late for it to figure in a convincing causal explanation of the Cultural Revolution.

55. Mao, quoted in Boyd Compton (ed.), *Mao’s China: Party Reform Documents, 1942–1944* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1952), p. 190.

56. I concur with MacFarquhar in dating the introduction of the two fronts at April 1959. Cf. *Origins*, pp. 152–59.

mobilization against those who retained their faith in the principles of Leninist party organization. Yet there is no evidence that Mao had more than the vaguest notion whom such a cleavage might affect until the events of June–July 1966 actually precipitated it. It is true that Mao made a number of references to revisionism, bourgeois influences in the Party, a choice for the nation between the capitalist road and the socialist road, but these had been his theoretical leitmotifs since the purge of P'eng Te-huai in 1959 and he reiterated his concern with these theoretical issues periodically throughout this period. True, his 23 Articles of January 1965 contained the apparently pointed warning:

The key point of this movement is to rectify those people in positions of authority within the Party who take the capitalist road, and progressively to consolidate the socialist battlefront in the urban and rural areas. Of those Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road, some are out in the open and some are at the higher levels. . . . Among those at the higher levels, there are some people in the commune districts, hsien, special districts, and even in the work of provincial and Central Committee Departments, who oppose socialism.<sup>57</sup>

It is clear that Mao's line of thinking had led him to suspect the leaders, not the masses, which alone would have been enough to indict Liu's and Teng's implementation of the Cultural Revolution during the first "50 days" (June–July 1966). But it is going too far to assume that the statement was implicitly aimed at Liu and Teng. If this were the case, then was it also the case in September 1964, when Liu's Revised 10 Points spoke of misdeeds being ultimately attributable to high-level cadres, or in December 1964, when Chou En-lai spoke of the protectors and agents of the wrong-doers in higher leading organizations (at the same time commending one of Liu's policies)?

Just as I have argued that policies cannot be directly attributed to individual members of the leadership, I would also argue that the keypoint experiments that were later identified as competing models representing a covert line struggle were not so identified at the time they were in progress. Liu's wife, Wang Kuang-mei, claimed during a Red Guard interrogation that Mao gave his personal approval to her "squatting on a point" investigation in T'aoyüan, and that he praised her later for "eating together, living together, and working together with the masses . . . during the Four Cleans."<sup>58</sup> This story

57. "Twenty-Three Articles," in Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-ch'ing*, p. 121.

58. "Three trials," *supra*, note 40. In 1962 Mao approved the procedure of "squatting on a point" (*tun-tien*): "We must go to the countryside to squat on a selected spot. We must go and squat in the production brigades and production teams, and go to the factories and shops." "Talk at an enlarged central work conference" (30 January 1962), in *Wan-sui* (1969), pp. 413–14. However, in the same speech Mao warns against the use of secret investigative techniques.

was confirmed by Baum's refugee informants.<sup>59</sup> Just as Wang's "T'aoyüan Experience" became a notorious *cause célèbre* during the Cultural Revolution, Ch'en Yung-kuei's Tachai Brigade became a model for the triumph of Maoist dedication and courage in the face of austere natural conditions and technocratic interference. It is not implausible that there was friction between Ch'en and the local work team sent to audit his accounts, stocks, disposition of public property, and allocation of work points; nor is it implausible that some discrepancies and exaggerations were discovered in the brigade's records, and that Ch'en's personal lobbying efforts in Peking were necessary to disembarrass him of work team accusations.<sup>60</sup> However, not until the Cultural Revolution could this incident be construed as a battle in any two-line struggle. When an observant French journalist reminded Ch'en that his rise to national stature had occurred at the Third National People's Congress, which also unanimously re-elected Liu chairman of the PRC; and that Ch'en was shown in a film of the occasion as voting for Liu, who in turn warmly congratulated Ch'en during a break in the session with the compliment, "In agriculture, we must learn from Tachai," Ch'en retorted that: "At that time nobody imagined that he was a 'Chinese Khrushchev' and was 'taking the capitalist road.' That fellow knew how to hide his game."<sup>61</sup> Along with his other no doubt remarkable achievements, Ch'en Yung-kuei has mastered the rules of public self-dramatization in Chinese politics, and has been able to translate his pioneer participation in the two-line "struggle" into national prominence and seats on the State Council and Politburo. In December 1976 he joined the campaign against Chiang Ch'ing and the Shanghai radicals, claiming they had also attempted to besmirch Tachai's revolutionary escutcheon.

What may we conclude from this brief and rather superficial review? The central cleavage of the Cultural Revolution was most clearly anticipated (but not "caused") by the rift among the leadership between policy formulation and policy implementation, which began as a functional division but eventually included some policy friction as well. In their polemical altercation with the Soviet Union Mao and his collaborators on the "first front" became particularly sensitive to elite exploitation of the authority relation between leaders and masses, focusing on this as the "principal aspect" of what they now saw as the world's "principal contradiction": the contradiction between revisionist and revolutionary socialism. Mao's secret talks indicate that this never became the basis of theoretical discussion between members of the first and second fronts; the issue seemed

59. *Prelude*, p. 190, note 10.

60. Cf. Martin King Whyte, "The Tachai brigade and incentives for the peasant," *Current Scene*, Vol. VII, No. 16 (15 August 1969).

61. Quoted in K. S. Karol, *The Second Chinese Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973), p. 168.

only to arise as an area of friction when strain in mass-elite relations surfaced in the course of policy implementation. The question of poor and lower-middle peasants' associations vs. Party work teams became such an area of friction, as did the issue of anonymous "squatting on a point" vs. public "investigation and study."

This functional rift and policy friction between the first and second fronts was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the line struggle that emerged in the Cultural Revolution. It was necessary for two reasons: first, a degree of autonomy was allotted to the second line in the implementation of policy that allowed these leaders to formulate policy as well in a crisis situation when the leadership was forced to respond quickly and time did not permit consultation with an absent first front. Under these circumstances an independent "line" might emerge. Secondly, the rift created the *public impression* that the leaders on the second front were estranged from Mao, whether this was in fact the case or not. Such impressions were crucial when the Red Guards were permitted to pick their own targets among the Central leadership, because leaders then became vulnerable to attack in direct proportion to their perceived social distance from the chairman – Chou En-lai's continued proximity to Mao was one of the factors that saved him from an ideologically justifiable Red Guard assault. It was not sufficient, however, again for two reasons. First, the division of functions between the two fronts implicitly placed the technocratic second front in a subordinate position, and there is no evidence that this arrangement was ever challenged. Thus whenever Mao made specific complaints or proposals, those on the second front took steps to accommodate him (for example, by approving and implementing Mao's 23 Articles). This meant that the functional rift and policy friction between the two fronts was not likely ever to become a *power* cleavage. Secondly, it was insufficient because in the absence of *mass mobilization* no line struggle could have conceivably developed. The rift might have continued, it might have been abridged through some form of internal reorganization, or it might have continued to widen until it led to a purge; none of these outcomes necessarily implied a two-line struggle. Inasmuch as mass participation is a defining characteristic of line struggle, the following section will examine the public manifestation of line struggle during roughly the same period and its relationship to mass mobilization.

### *Two Lines in Public*

Mao has been recognized as the leading theorist of Chinese Communism, at least since 1935, when Liu Shao-ch'i so fulsomely praised the "thought of Mao Tse-tung" in his Report to the Seventh Party Congress, but his retirement from active participation in the policy process freed him to spend much more of his time in the study of

Marxist theory. Inasmuch as “every important policy initiative in the past 20 years has been prompted by Mao,”<sup>62</sup> and inasmuch as we have tried to show that Mao retained this initiative through the early 1960s, the fact that the chairman now became engrossed in theoretical ruminations could be expected to affect policy formulation quite profoundly. His policy proposals began to take a more radical and absolute form, betraying their abstract origins; his comments were increasingly critical and his positive suggestions quite vague, and he often raised problems without suggesting any remedy at all, saying only that action should be taken and the matter studied.<sup>63</sup> Mao’s theoretical interests also led him to recruit his own specialized staff, consisting not only of two alternate members of the Politburo (viz. K’ang Sheng and Ch’en Po-ta), but of some informal assistants from outside the Central leadership altogether. Thus, for the first time in Chinese Communist politics there arose that which chroniclers of European court politics have called the “favourite”: the imperial adviser whose place in court depends solely on the favour of the crown. The exclusively personal basis of the favourite’s authority inclines him to be more royal than the king himself, whereas his insecurity of tenure motivates him to attempt more innovative, high-risk ventures on behalf of his patron than the career bureaucrat. Chiang Ch’ing and her young protégés in Peking and Shanghai fit this type well, and their bold, iconoclastic approach to the revolutionization of China’s cultural superstructure placed them on a collision course with the bureaucrats formally assigned this responsibility. When the opportunity arose, they were prepared to launch a campaign with a far more radically anti-bureaucratic cast than ever before. But, to repeat: this did not involve the factionalization of a Central leadership organ, but rather the injection of a fresh new element into Central politics, thus in effect changing the rules of the game by introducing players who did not know the rules or were prepared to disregard them.

In order to establish the relationship between cleavage among the Central leadership and the activation of mass grievance against a segment of that leadership, we must try to determine what bearing the *rhetoric* of two-line struggle (presumptively an indicator of leadership cleavage) has upon mass mobilization. To do so I have undertaken an analysis of the contents of *Hung-ch’i* magazine from 1 January 1961 to 1 January 1967, under the assumption that Ch’en Po-ta’s editorship (since May 1958) and the journal’s theoretical pre-eminence would make it a sensitive indicator of Maoist perceptions of the two lines’ appearance. During this period the pages of the

62. Michel C. Oksenberg, “Policy making under Mao, 1948–68: an overview,” in John M. H. Lindbeck (ed.), *China: Management of a Revolutionary Society* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1971), p. 88.

63. *Ibid.*

journal were enlivened by sustained polemical controversy, beginning in the spring of 1961 with an attack on Yugoslav revisionism<sup>64</sup> and continuing through no less than 76 articles, rising to a climax in December 1966, when a fully elaborated theory of line struggle was first applied to the central-level domestic political scene.<sup>65</sup> Although the animus of these polemics was invariably some form of *embourgeoisement*, it cannot necessarily be inferred that the polemics represented a leadership cleavage, inasmuch as the target specified in the attacks seems to have been a real one and not simply a stand-in for a revisionist faction in the Central leadership (a “mulberry” in the Chinese saying, “to point at the mulberry while cursing the locust”). The primary target during these years was the U.S.S.R., with whom policy differences and eventual territorial disputes were acute enough to unify the entire central leadership; in fact, some of those later excoriated as revisionists (e.g. P’eng Chen, Teng Hsiao-p’ing) were among the principals on the Chinese side of the controversy.

After the American assistant secretary of state, Roger Hilsman, made a speech in December 1963 predicting that evolutionary changes in China’s “more sophisticated second echelon of leadership” would “eventually profoundly erode the present simple view with which the leadership regards the world,”<sup>66</sup> the attack on revisionism was brought home to China and directed against a series of cultural notables, in an effort to warn the younger generation against the dangers of “peaceful evolution.”<sup>67</sup> Whether Mao’s desire to eliminate bourgeois vestiges from the cultural sphere and to prepare some sort of test for China’s “revolutionary successors” was given the same high priority by his bureaucratic colleagues seems doubtful, but given the division of labour in the Politburo this need not have occasioned a split, and indeed these articles did not refer to one. The first reference to a “counter-revolutionary, revisionist line” that was “opposed to the Party, to socialism, and to Mao Tse-tung’s thought” did not appear until 1 July 1966, and the reference was explicitly directed to “some of the principal leading members of

64. Liao Yuan, “Yugoslav agriculture on the road to capitalism,” *Hung-ch’i*, No. 8 (16 April 1961), pp. 35–37.

65. Wang Li, Chia I-hsueh, and Li Hsin, “Dictatorship of the proletariat and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” *Hung-ch’i*, No. 15 (13 December 1966), pp. 17–24.

66. U.S. Department of State Press Release, No. 618 (12 December 1963), as cited in John Wilson Lewis, “Revolutionary struggle and the second generation in Communist China,” *CQ*, No. 21 (January/March, 1965), pp. 126–47.

67. Cf. Ku Ta-ch’un, “Intensify socialist education for the working masses,” *Hung-ch’i*, No. 1 (4 January, 1964); and Editor, “The cultivation of successors is a long-term project in revolutionary work,” *ibid.* No. 14 (31 July 1964), pp. 34–39. That Mao was very personally preoccupied with this issue is revealed in his “Conversations with Mao Yüan-hsin” (5 July 1964), in *Wan-sui* (1969), pp. 467–68.

the former Peking Municipal Party Committee.”<sup>68</sup> In the “16 Points” adopted by the 11th Plenum this reference to the opposing line became anonymous (Article 5: “The main target of the present movement is those within the Party who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road”), thus encouraging the search for further targets among the leadership. The theoretically rationale for two-line struggle was fully articulated in December 1966, and in May 1967 it was announced that “the contradiction between the proletariat and the handful of Party people in authority taking the capitalist road . . . is an antagonistic one, a contradiction between the enemy and ourselves.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, as far as the Party’s vanguard journal was concerned, hence as far as the politically conscious public should have been able to infer, there was no line struggle within the leadership until the summer of 1966, after the first Red Guards had already risen.

This sequence suggests that mobilization was not precipitated by the rhetoric of line struggle emanating from the Centre, but that mobilization occurred for other reasons and the rhetoric was then invoked to give the movement a coherent direction. An examination of the confused events of the summer of 1966 suggests that mobilization occurred as a result of the coincidence of a sense of *legitimate grievance* against authority with unprecedented *licence* to express that grievance.

Grievance must be expected in a still indigent nation that systematically discriminates against certain social categories, but the Party has normally been skilled at orchestrating the displacement of grievance against opposition symbols and thereby inducing the majority to embrace Party objectives. But for a variety of reasons the Central Committee’s management of the burgeoning movement during the “50 days” of June and July 1966 soon placed the Party in an untenable position. According to refugee informants, the lines of cleavage were never as clear in the urban areas as in the countryside, because no land reform campaign had been conducted in the cities and the official classification of class origins was hence less clearly established. The legitimacy of officially designated class origins was further attenuated by the facts that (1) there was no longer any economic basis for the bourgeois classes (which meant that students could be penalized because of their parents’ or even their grandparents’ backgrounds, which seemed to them unfair), and (2) much of the Cultural Revolution rhetoric seemed animated not against traditional class enemies but against what Djilas called the “new

68. Editor, “Thoroughly criticize and repudiate the revisionist line of some of the principal leading members of the former Peking Municipal Party Committee,” *Hung-ch’i*, No. 9 (1 July 1966).

69. Commentator, “Grasp the general contradiction, hold to the general orientation of struggle,” *Hung-ch’i*, No. 7 (20 May 1967), pp. 12–14.



class”: Party cadres who had become estranged from the masses and undergone bureaucratic *embourgeoisement*.<sup>70</sup> Under these circumstances the Party could find no legitimate basis for labelling scapegoats, frustrating its standard procedure of establishing clear lines of cleavage between the people and the enemy and then mobilizing the people against the enemy; those so labelled protested with righteous outrage, and the Maoists in the Central Cultural Revolution Group supported their protests on the basis of the new, behavioural definition of class. In the absence of legitimate rules of classification, the actions of the work teams seemed arbitrary and authoritarian. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the work teams would ultimately have been able to prevail had not Mao interceded to call for their withdrawal, thus introducing the second key element: licence.

The unprecedented licence granted to protesters was Mao’s gift to the movement, and the Red Guards were duly grateful, carrying the cult of Mao to new heights. Shortly after his return to Peking in late June 1966, he withdrew all work teams and encouraged Red Guards to form their own protest organizations, giving them unparalleled freedom to organize, advertise, recruit and travel. This decision represented a clean break with communist organizational tradition and caught Liu and Teng completely by surprise, giving rise to the supposition that its sole purpose was to throw them on the defensive; but in retrospect the decision seems to be consistent with Mao’s new line of thinking emerging in the 1960s. Mao’s defence of the new behavioural definition of class allowed hitherto excluded students (most of them members of the “middle” classes, but also including a few of “five black” origins) to participate in the movement, and they were inclined to turn the “spearhead” of criticism against the Party establishment that had previously discriminated against them. The licence granted to all participants gave rise to a sort of free market of factions, competing with slightly different polemical ideologies to recruit followers and attract elite support and gain power and renown. Such an experiment with untrammelled liberalism was the “cultural” aspect of the Cultural Revolution, and for its participants it was a memorable experience.

The consequence of this coincidence of grievance and licence resulted in an extensive and relatively spontaneous mass mobilization throughout China, beginning in the urban areas and fanning out to the countryside. A campaign initially focused on rectification of the cultural superstructure had succeeded in tapping popular grievances of unsuspected depth, evoking differing responses from functionally divided leadership groups over how the expression of these grievances should be organized; these leadership differences

70. Cf. Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1976), Contemporary China Papers, No. 9.

were then communicated to the masses (by Mao and the radicals) before they could be resolved among the leaders. Thus, the mobilization of mass grievance (class struggle) came to coincide with a cleavage between radical favourites and career bureaucrats (power struggle, struggle between headquarters) over a decision Mao chose to exemplify as the general policy issue of mass-elite relations (struggle between two roads). This tumultuous culmination, welcomed by some, deplored by others, was unforeseen in its full consequences by anyone. In short, it was a *crisis* – an induced crisis, to be sure, but still a crisis – with all its attendant peril and uncertainty.

*The two-line struggle rhetoric then arose as an attempt to make this crisis meaningful in terms of prevailing belief systems.* I believe that the reason the largely fortuitous (or at least indeterminate) nature of the events leading up to this crisis has been so often misunderstood by western analysts is that the Chinese understanding of crisis is so different from our own. Westerners tend to view crises as exceptional and irrational situations that trigger different types of coping responses, and there is generally a bias against conspiratorial interpretations (except among extreme political groups, such as the Minutemen or the Weathermen). But the Chinese interpretation of crisis, which seems to have been derived partly from Marxist doctrine and partly from cultural preconceptions of politics, is explicitly conspiratorial.

According to Marxist historical determinism, each new stage in history is inaugurated by the crisis that dealt the death blow to the preceding stage. The crisis is therefore not seen as an unmitigated catastrophe but as an opportunity for progress – an interpretation that coincides with the Chinese concept of crisis as *wei-chi*, a combination of danger (*wei-hsien*) and opportunity (*chi-hui*). Nor is crisis irrational, but rather the inevitable outcome of long-term socio-economic processes. Therefore those who understand the underlying pattern of these processes can anticipate and plan for crises, and realize their progressive potentialities.<sup>71</sup> The attempt to rationalize the Cultural Revolution as the logical outcome of a long-term inner-Party struggle between two lines was consistent with these beliefs, as was the attempt to construe the temporary breakdown of law and order as an opportunity to mobilize a broad mass constituency on behalf of radical policy advances. The two-lines rhetoric facilitated this attempt by designating all desirable policies as the “proletarian revolutionary line” while denouncing the opposing line for supporting contrary policies, whether this was in fact true or not. Reality became

71. Cf. John A. Kringen and Steve Chan, “Chinese crisis perception and behaviour: a summary of findings,” paper delivered at the Joint Committee on Contemporary China, Workshop on Chinese Foreign Policy, Ann Arbor, 12–14 August 1976. Kringen’s and Chan’s analysis of refugee interviews in comparison with a control population of Hong Kong Chinese indicates that these views of crises have been well internalized by the mainland Chinese population.

polarized between two comprehensive alternatives, with the contrast being polemically dramatized in vivid Manichaeic imagery (light/dark, pure/defiled, public/secret, active/passive), and the masses were urged to choose between these alternatives. The illusion of choice was meant to generate renewed commitment. The actual consequences of the Cultural Revolution were not unmixed, but they must have been disappointing to those who chose to cast their lot with the revolutionary masses.

Chinese cultural preconceptions of politics became manifest in the Red Guard movement because of the unprecedented degree of non-Party involvement. These preconceptions were most evident in polemical reconstructions of factional networks among the leadership. Leadership factions were assumed to be tightly knit informal organizations based primarily on long-standing patron-client ties. Every organization has informal groups, including the Chinese Party and state bureaucracies,<sup>72</sup> but there was only an approximate correspondence between the factional networks perceived and assailed by the Red Guards and the loose and shifting bureaucratic alignments that actually operated, as our earlier review of the Socialist Education Movement indicates. Red Guard accusations were selectively and mechanically applied to all purge victims on the basis of long dormant or assumed connections. But if factions are operational loyalty groups, one of the most well articulated functional structures was in Chou En-lai's State Council, and Liu Shao-ch'i had hardly any faction at all – only Teng Hsiao-p'ing and Ch'en Yi are known to have publicly defended him. The Red Guard notion that factional networks are based on primordial ties seems to conform more closely to Red Guard factional recruitment at the mass level, or to the organization of elite factions in pre-Liberation China.<sup>73</sup> Adult political leaders also tended to classify their opponents into factions, but although they had access to better information about actual elite alignments, the available evidence suggests that they were not above making decisions based on immediate impressions and emotional impulses and then rationalizing afterwards.

### *Conclusion*

The theory of two-line struggle holds that there is a permanent latent division within the Central leadership between those travelling the capitalist road and those travelling the socialist road, a division that both reflects and stimulates class struggle in society at large.

72. Cf. Tang Tsou, "Prolegomenon to the study of informal groups in CCP Politics," *CQ*, No. 65 (January 1976), pp. 98–113.

73. Cf. Andrew J. Nathan, *Peking Politics, 1918–1923: Factionalism and the Failure of Constitutionalism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 27–59; also Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

During periods of adversity, when discouraging setbacks frustrate the achievement of socialist objectives and allow the morale of the proletariat to flag, the bourgeois reactionary line may prevail, taking advantage of its ascendancy to implement policies beneficial to the bourgeois and neo-bourgeois classes; during periods more favourable to the achievement of socialist goals, the proletarian revolutionary line seizes the initiative and implements policies beneficial to its lower-class constituency. When the ceaseless struggle between lines becomes too intense to resolve within its inner-Party forum, it may be brought to public attention, inviting the masses to participate in its resolution. Yet no final resolution is possible: as long as human selfishness and social stratification persist the bourgeois line will survive and perhaps again prevail.

The classic two-line struggle occurs when an open policy disagreement and leadership split coincides with the relatively untrammelled mobilization of mass grievance. The mass line rhetoric rationalizes this chaotic situation in terms of prevailing belief systems, generalizing the explanation backward in time to give the crisis an historically inevitable character, and providing a symbolic vehicle by means of which the forces unleashed in the *mêlée* can be steered towards the achievement of revolutionary goals. Our investigation of the pre-Cultural Revolution period has, however, demonstrated that this coincidence of power cleavage, policy disagreement, and mass grievance is an exception to the rule of consensual incremental policy making. The available evidence suggests that the structure of authority at the highest levels is too hierarchical, the sanctions available to the leader too formidable, to permit any coherent opposition group to form, let alone to persist for long periods and wage effective resistance. This does not foreclose the incidence of functional rift or policy conflict. But as in cabinet crises in parliamentary systems, leadership reshuffles and dismissals are probably occasioned by relatively specific and immediate political issues, not by long-standing divergences of *Weltanschauungen*. Organizational controls over the expression of public opinion are normally too restrictive to allow class struggle to take the form it took during the Cultural Revolution.

Two-line struggle should thus be considered a particularly audacious method of crisis management rather than a permanent conflict structure. During the Cultural Revolution, the rhetoric of line struggle succeeded in polarizing the proliferating factions into two factional coalitions in each arena, usually so evenly matched that the struggle could not be resolved without outside arbitration. The opposing line was not, however, consciously moved by any lingering allegiance to capitalism, nor were any links to a bourgeois “headquarters” ever brought to light; the opposition seems rather to have been spontaneously engendered at those phases in the escalation of the movement when powerful vested interests were threatened, and to

have been motivated by a relative attachment to the status quo. Inasmuch as this attachment tended to coincide with higher status, power and security, something resembling a “class struggle” did in fact take place, along new, more political lines of cleavage. But attachment to the status quo also seemed to coincide with tested loyalty to the system, and the most ardent revolutionaries were under normal circumstances considered troublemakers of dubious class origin who used a rhetorical commitment to “rebellion” to justify a complete *bouleversement* of existing arrangements, including proletarian gains as well as institutionally vested interests. The radicals in the leadership found themselves committed to a position that sacrificed stability and production for ideological purity and a form of mass participation that had become intolerably disruptive, and they were finally forced to disavow their constituency and let it be systematically demobilized. Now ensconced in the seat of power, still enjoying Mao’s favour, with control over at least part of the nation’s propaganda and cultural apparatus, but stripped of a mass constituency or a firm institutional base, the radicals became increasingly isolated amid a reviving bureaucracy.

If line struggle does not apply to Chinese politics before 1966, perhaps the cleavages of the Cultural Revolution were so searing that a more plausible case can be made for the relevance of the two-line paradigm since that date. This struggle tended to pit those who had been hurt by the Cultural Revolution and were determined to prevent its recurrence against those who had benefited from it, remained faithful to its values and sought to revive them. Since the Cultural Revolution there have been two explicit line struggles, resulting in the purges of Lin Piao and Ch’en Po-ta in 1971 and in the arrest of Wang Hung-wen, Chang Ch’un-ch’iao, Chiang Ch’ing, and Yao Wen-yüan in the summer of 1976. There also seems to have been one implicit line struggle, waged under cover of the *p’i-Lin*, *p’i-K’ung* campaign in 1973–75, and pitting the forces of Chou En-lai and Teng Hsiao-p’ing against the forces of Wang Hung-wen, Chang Ch’un-ch’iao, Chiang Ch’ing, Yao Wen-yüan, and possibly Mao Tse-tung. None of these involve the full complement of policy disagreement, power cleavage and mass protest observed during the Cultural Revolution, but they all resemble the classic pattern more closely than before 1966. Yet the self-fulfilling aspects of post-Cultural Revolution line struggle tended paradoxically to inhibit full self-fulfilment, for all could see those aspects and take appropriate countermeasures. Campaigns which may have been originally motivated by pedagogical objectives were immediately reconstrued in terms in their power implications for various leadership groups and quickly became paralyzed as other groups mobilized to protect themselves. Perhaps the greatest contrast with the situation prior to the Cultural Revolution was that functional

segmentation among the leadership was more in evidence, inviting the speculation that it reflected disagreements over power and policy.

The Lin Piao dispute certainly involved a power cleavage, and a few power-related policy differences,<sup>74</sup> but the subsequent attempt to mobilize the masses was co-opted by the bureaucratic right, who took advantage of Lin's public identification with the left to denounce “ultra-leftist” policies while promoting their own policies and personnel. Thus Mao never gave public leadership to the anti-Lin Piao drive, and its promoters refrained from an open attack on their radical adversaries. The subtle contest between Chou En-lai and the radicals involved functional rift, policy friction and power cleavage between those chiefly concerned with economic production and those chiefly concerned with mass participation and continued cultural revolution, but the radicals were unable to mobilize sufficient mass support to prevail – partly because of Chou's own skill at mobilizing support, partly perhaps because the radical constituency had been rusticated and the provincial leadership was well entrenched and capable of denying the licence necessary for radical organization. At the time of writing the campaign against the “gang of four” had been only tepidly identified as a line struggle. Both power cleavage and a systematic range of policy disagreements seem to have been present, but basic policy issues have not yet been mooted in public polemics, perhaps because Mao's close identification with radical policies might call into question the logic of the line of succession. It seems evident that the leadership could mobilize a convincing mass constituency, but the classes whose interests coincide most closely with those of the victorious leadership include the military and bureaucratic right, who oppose a revival of open class struggle on grounds of both interest and temperament.

In sum, the theory of line struggle represents an attempt to absorb some of the advantages of political opposition and meaningful mass participation within a still basically authoritarian order. To the leaders, it provides a set of roles and an audience transcending the bureaucratic arena, lending them a means of making a clean break

74. The author of the most penetrating analysis of the Lin Piao affair concludes that “the orchestration of accusations against Lin in line and policy, many of which are poorly substantiated and incomprehensible, seems to be aimed mainly at raising the level of criticisms from the rather uninspiring level of power struggle to the more acceptable plane of ideological and policy disputes, thus justifying Mao's purge of Lin with the noble cause of struggle for continuing the revolution.” Michael Y. M. Kau, “Introduction,” in *The Lin Piao Affair: Power Politics and the Military Coup* (White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1975), p. xlv, et passim. It is interesting to note that in Mao's in camera explanation of the reasons for the purge, he alludes exclusively to power-political considerations, just as he did in the case of Liu and Teng. To infer policy differences, one must look at the political context and the public polemics. This is not to say that policy plays no role in the chairman's decision to purge, but that policy must first be “translated” into power-political terms.

with the past, renouncing old commitments, generating a new constituency and forging ahead with new policies. To the masses it supplies the insights that their leadership is probably divided, that the policies being promoted at any given time are not necessarily all "correct," and that rebellion is sometimes justified; all other things being equal, these insights should lead to a more discriminating public whose compliance would be contingent rather than automatic. Moreover, the leadership's need for some expression of mass approval for key decisions seems to ensure that at least a regulated form of line struggle will be periodically revived, and if the efficacy of organizational constraints on mass participation continues to deteriorate the classic pattern may even resurface. This development is not without its encouraging aspects. Whatever its undeniably grave costs, a line struggle does function to expand the arena of meaningful participation and the range of grievances allowed public expression. It also opens a non-bureaucratic avenue for elite recruitment, allowing something like the western politician to emerge (but not necessarily to survive) on the basis of his skill at using symbols to mobilize a mass constituency.