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## CHAPTER 2

### Public and Private Interests and the Participatory Ethic in China

Lowell Dittmer

The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the Chinese Communist concept of the proper political role of participation as it has been formulated in classical and contemporary ideological texts, particularly as this relates to the pursuit of political interests. The democratic concept of participation, based on such ideas as the contract theory of the state in political theory, a free market guided by a benevolent “invisible hand” in economic thought, and the adversary tradition in legal theory, has consistently assumed the existence of distinct and explicit private interests. These interests may appear to conflict with the perceived public interest, which has usually been formulated so abstractly as to obscure the issue. Nevertheless, their advocates should steadfastly pursue them, secure in the knowledge that such independence and enterprise will ultimately redound to the public weal. This idea seems never to have taken root in Chinese political thought, and conceivably never will. In China there is a corporate concept of interest. Group or individual interests may be acknowledged, but the public interest occupies a position of sacrosanct priority, and other interests may be tolerated only within the latitude of some plausible interpretation of the public interest.<sup>1</sup> This means that political participation as it is understood in the West, in which individual participants make autonomous political decisions based on their own interests, is rather difficult to accept or even to comprehend.

The tendency in Chinese political culture is for the public interest to subsume all private interests to the extent that the two may hardly be seen as separate or in conflict. This results in two characteristic patterns in Chinese political participation. The first is the tendency for those with power to use it to reconstrue the public

interest so that it conforms with their own interests, either to indulge in private luxuries, vain self-glorification, and so forth, or to pursue grand designs of no immediate benefit to the masses. Under these circumstances, the masses, who sense they are contributing more to the common project than they are benefitting from it, tend to ritualize their participation: that is, to render *pro forma* compliance while withholding authentic cooperation. The second, weaker, tendency is for the masses to usurp claims on the public interest when there is weakness or division at the center, whether to seek economic self-aggrandizement or to form factions in pursuit of local self-interests through demonstrations, criticism of troublesome officials, or strikes. Under these circumstances the leadership finds its claims on the public interest so attenuated that it must temporarily subordinate its ideological objectives to public demands or risk falling from power. Thus behind the linguistic veneer of common purpose there is a constant tug-of-war over legitimating symbols which may be used in subtly nuanced ways toward very different objectives.

### **The Ideological Context of Participation in Classical Maoism**

In affirming the overriding importance of service to the public interest in legitimizing popular participation, Mao stood squarely in the mainstream of classical Chinese political philosophy, but in a somewhat awkward relationship to Marxism. For the mature Marx denied the existence of a public interest, attributing interest rather to classes, which were based on the set of relationships surrounding the process of production. He considered the "public interest" an ideological delusion purveyed by the ruling classes in order to manipulate subordinate classes to act contrary to their own interests, specifically to work for a fraction of the true value of their labor while allowing the ruling classes to appropriate the rest. To sacrifice one's own interest in service of the public interest was to betray one's class interest, which had the sole legitimate claim on one's loyalties.

Given the "semicolonial, semifeudal" class structure of China and the diminutive size of its industrial proletariat, political expediency dictated an eventual departure from an exclusively class-based criterion for determining whose participation should be encouraged in the Chinese revolution. As early as the Second Comintern Congress in 1920 it was conceded that revolutions were less likely in industrial countries with large working classes than in less-developed countries without a large proletariat. In the latter, the participation and

cooperation of relatively progressive bourgeois reformers should be solicited in a united front strategy during the preliminary, "bourgeois democratic" phase of the revolution. The principal class enemy during China's first such united front (1923-27) was defined rather abstractly as "imperialism," and corresponded to China's "semi-colonial" status. The chief enemies were the warlords who stood in the way of national unity (and who were said to be aligned with various imperialist powers). Because very little united the participants in this united front beyond their common commitment to national unity, as soon as a semblance of unity was achieved the dominant partner in the coalition, the Guomindang (GMD), jettisoned the CCP. Consequently, in the period immediately following the disintegration of the first united front the returned student leadership turned again to a more narrowly class-based criterion for deciding who should be encouraged to participate. This "closed door" mentality, however, failed the test of political expediency by dogmatically excluding potential allies among other classes and by focusing party efforts on those urban areas where the GMD enjoyed overwhelming superiority via its military and police forces.<sup>2</sup>

During the late 1930s and early 1940s the ideological touchstone for legitimate participation seems to have shifted from class to nation. The Japanese invasion so clearly threatened the survival of the Chinese nation that service to national salvation transcended group or class interests. The CCP still insisted that it was a proletarian party leading the exploited classes, but the interests of the latter now merged with those of the nation at large. Thus the Central Committee in June 1938 declared that "the highest interests of the Chinese working class are identical with the highest interests of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people." If in some cases it seemed that the national interest conflicted with the interests of the working class, the Party demanded that the latter be sacrificed, claiming that the "long-term" interests of the workers coincided with those of the nation so that only "false" or "narrow" interests were being abandoned. Once the Party had identified its ultimate objectives with the national interest, it began to assume a paternalistic responsibility for national salvation and to assert leadership over anyone else who claimed to support this objective.<sup>3</sup>

It was also during this period, not by chance coinciding with the rise of Mao Zedong and the consolidation of his leadership, that the two patterns of participation that were henceforth to characterize Chinese Communist politics took coherent theoretical form. The first of these arose on the foundation of a multi-class united front. From

the Party's point of view, the key problem was how to exert party leadership over the other classes included in the united front, thereby enhancing the power of the CCP vis-à-vis the Japanese and the GMD, without allowing the non-proletarian classes to exercise reciprocal influence over the Party. To achieve this objective the Party proceeded to construct a series of front organizations in which representatives of other classes or parties were given nominal leadership roles, meanwhile retaining the substance of power within the party apparatus. For example, in 1940 the Party introduced the "three-thirds system," in which left, right, and middle groups were represented in equal ratios. Because the "left" under the CCP was the only part of the coalition with clearly specified objectives and strict organization, it was able to exercise guidance even though party dominance was played down.

The concept of the united front went hand-in-hand with a propaganda emphasis on democracy designed to appeal to the intellectuals, a stratum whose support has traditionally been considered indispensable for the success of any Chinese government and who were most disenchanted with the conservative, repressive tactics of the GMD. In 1940 Mao placed the united front concept in the central position of the projected "New Democracy," abandoning the "dictatorship of workers and peasants" of the soviet period for a more inclusive formula in which political rights to participate would be given to anyone willing to cooperate with the CCP on certain broad national objectives. During the war the most important of these goals was obviously the expulsion of Japan; afterward it became the success of the revolution.<sup>4</sup>

The fate of the united front apparatus in the post-Liberation years was one of increasing formalization and ritualization. The mass organizations which had specialized in the mobilization of specific political strata (e.g., women and youth) were now explicitly subordinated to the Party in a neocorporatist arrangement. The Party established the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) as the core institution of its New Democracy, expanding its definition of the allies allotted representation there to include bourgeois democratic parties, democrats without party affiliations, national minorities, intellectuals, religious groups, and overseas Chinese. The Party also made the principle of alliance consultation the theoretical foundation of the CPPCC. Most representatives of non-proletarian classes, from the CPPCC at the national level down to the people's conferences at the local level, were selected on the basis of their ability to cooperate with broad party objectives. By

September 1952 “people’s governments” and “people’s representative conferences” had been established at all government levels in China. In 1953-54 the CCP conducted elections throughout China and established a uniform system of representation based on geographical units and administrative levels. This created a hierarchy of increasingly indirect democracy with the National People’s Congress (NPC) at its apex, and a people’s congress and an executive body called the people’s council at each level. The CPPCC was based on representation of groups rather than individuals, based on their contribution to the functioning of the whole. It was retained despite the establishment of the NPC in order to serve as a symbol of the united front and “play its part in mobilizing and rallying the whole people.”

The vicissitudes in the status and influence of the CPPCC in the post-Liberation era have reflected the Party’s assessment of the functional importance of the intellectual, bourgeois, and professional middle classes whom it represented. This is to say that its influence tended to decline from 1954 to 1976, corresponding to Mao’s steadily mounting radical (and anti-intellectual) proclivities, though this tendency did fluctuate from time to time. In 1956-57 the bourgeois democratic parties (BDPs) were invited to criticize the CCP in the context of a campaign to mobilize the support of managers, engineers, and other intellectuals for China’s modernization projects. After initial caution, the leadership of the BDPs joined enthusiastically in such criticism. As a result, when the Hundred Flowers Movement was curtailed and followed by an Anti-Rightist Movement the ranks of BDPs were decimated by purges. This resulted in a decline in the fortunes of the CPPCC from which it was not soon to recover, and even those BDP leaders who survived now made haste to join the CCP.

The intellectuals enjoyed a resurgence in the early 1960s when the Party sought their support in the effort to revive the economy after the Great Leap Forward. However, after 1957 they had to make their influence felt from their positions as coopted members of the party apparatus rather than from the more vulnerable united front organs. Those with constructive contributions to make usually participated in one of the state council ministries or commissions, or in any of the numerous “work conferences” or “expanded party meetings” that were convened during the post-Leap recovery period to solicit the advice of functional experts without high standing in the Party. Those with more damning criticisms (i.e., those directed against Mao, the Great Leap, or other unassailable fundamentals)

made them through Aesopian historical or literary satires, but still from their positions within the Party—usually the cultural, educational, or propaganda organs. These developments spelled the provisional failure of a system of functional representation designed to mollify non-party elites by granting them status without real political influence.

Whereas the pattern of participation based on the united front paradigm was always an ambivalent arrangement designed to invite cooperation and support while foreclosing influence, the pattern of participation known as the “mass line” was from its inception designed to include the party’s core constituency, and the CCP therefore went to some pains to facilitate feedback. The mass line, as expostulated in Mao’s classic 1943 essay “Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership,” proceeds “from the masses, to the masses,” and “linking the general with the specific.”<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the indirect democracy characteristic of the united front organs, under the mass line elites were expected to keep in constant contact with the people, said to be the motive power in history and the source of great creative energy. After observing the “scattered and unsystematic views” of the masses, the cadres were to summarize them in reports to their superiors. The highest committee responsible for the area covered by the reports should receive the reports, together with comments from lower echelons, and issue authoritative directives and instructions on how to deal with the problem. These directives would then be sent back through the apparatus to be popularized among the masses “until the masses embrace the ideas as their own, stand up for them, and translate them into action by way of testing their correctness.” Should some of the masses fail to achieve this enlightenment they must be educated through persuasion and discussion until they correct their errors; should errors occur among the leadership they may also be pointed out through mass criticism and corrected. The circular flow pattern emphasizes direct, open channels of communication from the highest to the lowest levels of information and opinion and implies some degree of reciprocity. Though the masses are thus assured some input into the policy process, they remain essentially passive: the cadres come to survey their opinions and summarize the issues in upward-bound reports and the party leadership preserves a monopoly of decision-making power. And, the party leadership may disagree with the masses’ subjective perceptions of their own interests. If the “partial and temporary” interests of the masses should come into conflict with their “total, long-range interests,” then the latter must take

priority.<sup>6</sup> By dint of the interest-aggregating process of the mass line the Party alone is capable of arriving at a correct synthesis of scattered and unsystematic opinions and defining the public interest.

The hallmark of the mass line concept, according to John Lewis, is its flexibility within the limits of firm operational principles; that is, it provides an aura of consistency and stability during periods of rapid policy shifts. In contrast to the tendency of the returned students and other pre-Mao leaders to rely on the traditional principle of leadership prestige to issue doctrinaire commands, the mass line focuses leadership attention on cultivating the receptivity of its constituency.<sup>7</sup> Uniquely favorable circumstances allowed the Party to come closer to realizing the theoretical ideal of the mass line during the Yen-an period than at any subsequent time. There was an identity of interest between the Party and its host population in expelling the Japanese, and the Party was obliged to solicit cooperation from the population and less able to coerce or remunerate it than it would be after it had captured the state.<sup>8</sup> The mass line does not entail reciprocal influence between elites and masses, but it does require that circular flow be maintained.

There are two major types of deviations from the mass line which can be extrapolated from the public polemics that have in recent decades made such a significant contribution to the definition of ideological orthodoxy. The first is "revisionism," which consists of an asymmetry of influence and communication to the advantage of elites. The second is "radicalism," which tends to permit too much latitude to the "revolutionary masses" in the exchange. Although in the following accounts I emphasize the differences between them, the reader should be aware that both deviations are rooted in and justified by elements of Mao's classic formulation, differing from it more in interpretation than in principle.

### **The Revisionist Version of Mass Participation**

According to Maoist criticism during the Cultural Revolution, the basic flaw of the revisionist construal of the mass line was that it gave too much play to the pursuit of self-interest. To the revisionists, just as the untrammelled pursuit of interests under capitalism endowed that system with an internal dynamic that would burst its integuments and usher in socialism, so under socialism the continued pursuits of interests would propel that system toward the realization of communism. Revolution would emancipate the economic system



from an economically irrational set of production relationships, and with the introduction of socialism the interests of the proletariat would truly coincide with the public interest. Indeed, inasmuch as class was defined in terms of economic criteria, once the means of production had been socialized there would be no reason why everyone in society should not become members of the proletariat, making class struggle inapplicable. To those identified with the "proletarian revolutionary line," on the other hand, self-interest was inherently venal, a bourgeois mode of thinking that should, with the advent of socialism, make way for general dedication to the public interest and to universalizable values. The slogan "Fight self, champion the public" (*posi ligong*) is typical of this view.

The revisionist concept of the economic origins and political cultivation of interests gave rise to a pattern in which participation was essentially confined to the leadership. The masses would by no means be excluded from politics, but would participate in a form of mass line in which their performances would echo themes first articulated by the party leadership. Political participation could be likened to a long procession, led by the party vanguard and the progressive classes and docilely followed by the relatively backward classes. The logic of this sequence was dictated by the assumption that the party leadership was the most altruistic in the pursuit of the public interest, an assumption which was in turn predicated on the existence of a natural hierarchy of values.

This idea is perhaps most elaborately formulated in the works of Liu Shaoqi. According to Liu, the aspiration for higher values was normally reached only after the base physical appetites had been sated. The satisfaction of material interest was but the basic foundation in a long process of "raising the level," whereby people would be brought to an understanding of the interdependence of their interests with those of others in the same circumstances. Although the political organization was the highest form of organization because it dealt with the public interest, the economic organization was thus the most important because everyone had economic interests. Therefore, "all the economic demands of the masses must be integrated with political or cultural demands. When the masses begin to take action on one simple demand, they can understand better a series of problems and further push their actions to a still higher stage." Thus by "raising the economic demands to political demands, raising partial and temporary demands to whole and permanent demands, and raising local demands to state and national demands," the masses would be elevated to a higher concept of their interests.<sup>9</sup> Self-interest

would never be renounced or transcended in any quasi-religious sense, but it would gradually become more inclusive and enlightened.

This concept of the transformation of self-interest into public interest through "cultivation" was premised on the assumption that under socialism the interests of the individual and those of the collective were always in principle compatible—that is, they merged. Merging took place by tacit reciprocal agreement: the individual performed certain services for the collective and the collective in turn provided for the individual's welfare.<sup>10</sup> Consistent with Liu's belief in a hierarchy of values, this transaction involved the exchange of such tangible assets as labor and commodities on a *quid pro quo* basis among the uncultivated masses, but among the cultivated party cadres it involved the exchange of increasingly symbolic or deferred values. The good party member, having attained the insight that the inexorable course of historical development assures that his or her interests will ultimately merge with those of the working class and the party, would be willing to perform services disregarding immediate subjective interests.

Liu's general concept of the role of interests in the socialist transition was allegedly manifested in the early 1950s in the theory of productive forces. According to this theory, the pace of the revolutionary transformation of the relations of production was limited by the capability of the forces of production to provide the wherewithal for that transformation. This would mean, for example, that the collectivization of agriculture should wait until China had sufficient industrial capacity for the mechanization of agriculture. Based on this theory, Liu is said to have opposed the accelerated collectivization of agriculture in the early 1950s and he admitted having approved the 1955 decision dissolving 20,000 (200,000, according to an erroneous rumor) cooperatives for which the material preconditions were considered immature.<sup>11</sup> Though the evidence relevant to decision making during collectivization is still incomplete, the theory of productive forces is entirely consistent with Liu's views on the appropriate role of interest in motivating participation. Because the satisfaction of material interests has basic priority, the expansion of productive forces must keep pace with the transformation of the relations of production. As productivity expands, the greater efficiency (and profitability) of the larger units will become evident and people will eagerly pool their resources to join them. Thus individual self-interest and the interests of the collectivity will merge.

During the Cultural Revolution the Maoists criticized this theory from two different but closely related perspectives. First, they

argued that the hierarchy of values bore a negative relationship to the social stratification pyramid rather than the positive one asserted by the revisionists. The picture of a materialistic mass and an ideologically motivated party leadership may have been roughly accurate during the thirty-eight years that the Party was an itinerant pariah group; those who persevered and rose to responsible positions under such trying circumstances could hardly have been motivated by material advantage. But it began to acquire a hollow ring once the Party occupied the state apparatus and became the main distributive network for the nation's resources. At this point the hierarchy of offices fell into correspondence with the allocation of material rewards to implement policy. Individual and public interest merged so perfectly that the motives of the most well-rewarded officials were ambiguous. Through organization, altruism became compatible with the pursuit of self-interest, permitting revolutionary heroism to atrophy from functional redundancy. Because in this system of bonuses and graduated incentives those who worked hardest and most effectively were most bountifully rewarded, it was plausible to argue that they were in fact motivated by these rewards and not by the ideology of moral elevation that legitimated the structure of incentives.

The whole notion of a public interest had become a self-serving ideology for the elites, the Maoists suggested, whereas the actual relationship between moral and social stratification was quite the reverse. It was not the "cultivated" party leaders, but the workers and peasants and soldiers at the basic levels who were most likely to approximate communist ideals. They were more intelligent, because their work brought them into closer touch with empirical reality; more selfless, because their acquisitive and possessive instincts had not yet developed; more revolutionary, because they had less to lose and more to gain from radical change. It was the elites who were most in danger of falling into revisionist ways, with their responsibility for the disposition of social resources tending to give them delusions of high status and inspiring them to act like bosses rather than public servants. Thus it was the elites who should "go down" (*xia fang*) and learn from the masses rather than vice versa. This tended to discredit the upward-striving achievement ethic that motivated officials and spurred them to seek absolution in self-criticism and other forms of self-abasement.

The second Maoist criticism follows from the first. This is to dispute the compatibility of public and private interests, the doctrine of merging. The Maoists believed that altruism required self-sacrifice and so it followed that the graduated system of incentives arranged

by the Party to coincide with moral efficiency could not possibly motivate genuine altruism. Those who managed to acquire prestige and high position were suspected of having been motivated by these mercenary values, and because they were so motivated they were categorized as "bourgeois," "revisionist," or "party persons in authority taking the capitalist road." The tendency to assume a compatibility of self-interest with the public interest was discredited by a number of arguments.

In a revival of Marx's critique of the notion of a public interest, it was argued that in a class society there was only class interest and no public interest and that throughout the phases of socialism and even full communism, classes and class struggle would persist. In addition, the motives of the leadership as a group became suspect because their supposedly altruistic careers had also brought them power and prestige. This point was dramatized by vignettes of the luxuries and vanities with which high officials allegedly indulged themselves, such as good food, mahjong parties, filter cigarettes, pearl necklaces, and chauffeured limousines. Finally, the integrity of the institutions in Chinese society that had been responsible for reconciling public and private interests—viz, the Communist Party, the mass organizations—was seriously compromised by allegations that they were staffed by "capitalist roaders" and afflicted by "bureaucratism." For example, during the Cultural Revolution such tenets of democratic centralism as majority rule within committees, the segregation of party and public affairs, and unquestioning obedience to superior authorities were discredited in the name of substantive justice as defined by Mao's thought. The incompatibility of private interests and the public interests as defined by these corrupted institutions was effectively illustrated by indignant accounts of the manipulative and coercive techniques employed by the work teams dispatched by the Central Committee under Liu Shaoqi in June to July 1966. In the name of promoting the Cultural Revolution, these work teams imposed such stringent demands for conformity on the masses that their own leadership could never be questioned, although that was the whole object of the Cultural Revolution.

### **The Radical Version of Mass Participation**

Whereas the revisionist deviation from the mass line was essentially practical, the radical deviation was primarily theoretical. The revisionists made only slight modifications of doctrine while in practice interpreting that doctrine to the advantage of compliant officials

and economically productive citizens. This was quite effective in furthering their own motivating assumptions and developmental objectives. The radicals, on the other hand, made a substantial contribution to the development of theory. However, they failed conspicuously in the application of theory to practice, with the destructive aspect of their program succeeding to a considerable degree while the constructive aspect failed. Part of the reason for this is that even after they acquired high party positions the leading radicals continued to comport themselves as if they were an opposition group outside the established leadership, devoting most of their attention to "continuing the revolution." By repeating and continuously refining their powerful criticisms of erstwhile patterns of participation and interest articulation without presenting viable alternatives they also disrupted the effort to reconstruct the organizational structures within which the mass line had previously been conducted. Mass participation therefore took place in somewhat chaotic fashion outside these structures. Their oppositionist revolutionary stance and consistent opposition to any form of organizational suppression left them with no instrument to impose unity but ideological criticism of deviation, which gave rise to an incessant stream of polemics. But factional groups were skilled in construing polemics for their own interests and the radicals failed to restore unity. The leadership finally had to fall back on the public security apparatus. In the following sections I will examine the radicals' practical failures and then turn to their critical contributions.

During the Cultural Revolution the radicals introduced original patterns of participation. These included such populist innovations as the unsigned big-character poster, the independently published tabloid newspaper, the freedom to travel and exchange experiences (*quanlian*), which arose in the midst of the almost complete breakdown of provincial and local civilian political authority. Prior to the Cultural Revolution the articulation and aggregation of interests had been monopolized by the Communist Party apparatus and its ancillary mass organizations. Interests were articulated by the masses in mass campaigns or the mass line and aggregated into univocal statements through the arrangement of meetings convened in well-established sequence.<sup>12</sup> The radicals attacked this system on the grounds that it allowed the revisionist organization-men who controlled the apparatus to define the public interest based on their own interests and then to use the organizational and propaganda resources of the Party to manipulate everyone else to support this interpretation. While Mao supported their criticisms, the radicals

were able to bring this system to a standstill. Thereafter, the party organization was eclipsed by quasipluralistic voluntary associations, or factions, more or less spontaneously assembled on the basis of long-standing ideological and social cleavages.

These associations, cited by some radical publications as a model for the ultimate reorganization of the state itself, lacked internal structure and rested on the assumption that concurrence on a set of abstract universals entailed concurrence on various concrete particulars. But just as ideological agreement constituted the basis for inclusion in these associations, disagreement became sufficient grounds for exclusion or schism, as few procedural mechanisms were acceptable means of reconciling internal contradictions. "Struggle" was the constitutive principle and *raison d'être* of these associations, and it proved difficult for them to cooperate in more peaceful and constructive endeavors. Thus the factions were forcibly disbanded in 1968 and were repeatedly condemned whenever they reconstituted themselves. The central leaders who survived the Cultural Revolution seemed to have reached a consensus that henceforth participation should proceed through more formal institutional channels.<sup>13</sup>

The central leaders who had incited the Cultural Revolution then attempted to cage the more spontaneous pattern of mass participation that emerged in its course within some institutional setting that would permit economic growth and other essential social processes to resume normally. First they sought to construct new and more revolutionary organizations under their own aegis. Second, they sought to infuse existing institutions with a more revolutionary spirit.

In their attempt to foster the construction of new and more revolutionary organizations, the radicals were prolific indeed. Beginning with their rise to influence in 1973 following the death of Lin Biao, the civilian radicals introduced a series of models in rapid succession: the Fanghualian Model Army Unit in Zhejiang, the Xiaojinjiang Brigade's Political Night School, the Chaoyang Model Agricultural College, the July Twenty-first Worker Colleges and May Seventh Peasant Colleges, the armed workers' militia, etc. Although these organizations have not yet received full attention from western scholars, they seem to have been launched with minimal preparation and little follow-through, and none of them achieved the status accorded Dazhai brigade or the Daqing oilfields. The organizations usually offered few intrinsic rewards—they did not seem to improve productive efficiency or augment unit income, and in fact usually imposed sacrifices on their participants. They could rely only briefly on the extrinsic reward of publicity, after which their news value

would decline and radical attentions would shift. If a radical-sponsored organizational venture did prosper, on the other hand, it faced problems of a different nature. In that case, the party establishment would seek either to coopt it or to impede its further development. There is evidence that the radicals sought to construct a base for themselves in the trade union movement, armed workers' militias, and mass organizations, for example, but there was no precedent for organization building outside the auspices of the CCP. When these organizations were linked to the Party (after the latter's reconstruction from the top down in 1971) the radicals found they lacked the inner-party support at the provincial and local levels to maintain their influence among responsible cadres at those levels. Shanghai was the only exception, and even there their control ultimately proved much more limited than had been expected.<sup>14</sup>

The attempt to infuse existing institutional structures with a more revolutionary spirit began with the introduction of many ideas designed to enhance mass participation. Some of these were "open-door rectification" of the Party, which involved the non-party masses in the purge and reconstruction of the Party; the regular rotation of leaders between front-line labor and desk jobs; replacement of the branch principle with the committee principle for unified leadership at regional and local levels, implying more influence by "reds" and less by functional specialists; a general simplification and decentralization of the bureaucracy; and so forth.<sup>15</sup> Although here again additional research would be required to reach a definitive verdict, it would seem that many, perhaps most of these changes proved shallow and ephemeral, few of them surviving the first, conservative phase of the movement to criticize Lin Biao (1972-73). One reason for their lack of viability was that by obscuring the boundaries between party and masses, organizational control over both was attenuated. The public security and police system had already been damaged by the Cultural Revolution, and the legitimacy of various intra-party disciplinary techniques remained controversial. Inasmuch as the salient problem in the immediate aftermath of the Cultural Revolution appeared to be the restoration of economic production, these democratizing tendencies could be curtailed on the grounds that they contributed to disputes among factions.<sup>16</sup>

A second reason for the short life-span of the Cultural Revolution innovations—one that the radicals at the center probably found easier to countenance than the allegation that they were incompatible with economic growth—had to do with the accelerated rehabilitation of purged civilian cadres that began after the purge of Lin Biao.

Despite the criticism and self-criticism that they had endured at the hands of the Red Guards and later in the May Seventh Cadre Schools, resulting in their purported transformation to a revolutionary viewpoint, these veteran officials tended to revert to the pre-Cultural Revolution policies with which they were most familiar. According to Jiang Qing, "More than 75 percent of the old cadres inevitably turn from members of the democratic faction into members of the capitalist-roaders' faction."<sup>17</sup> The vacancies left by the purge of the followers of Lin Biao precipitated a competition between rehabilitated cadres and representatives of the "revolutionary masses" that exacerbated the ideological and policy differences between them. The radicals were at a disadvantage in this competition because as early as February 1967, when the revolutionary committee replaced the Paris Commune concept, it was generally acknowledged that their lack of bureaucratic experience disqualified them from executive leadership positions. The most they could hope for thereafter was a quasi-apprenticeship under the "three-in-one" formula, which tacitly allotted them a third of all plenary seats. The radicals did, indeed, achieve visible gains under this arrangement. For example, the percentage of mass representatives increased from 26 percent in the Ninth Central Committee to 34 percent in the Tenth, and young Shanghai radical Wang Hongwen, a petty factory cadre before 1966, became a vice chairman of the Party.

Yet these gains were more apparent than real. With the reconstruction of the Party at the provincial and local levels the radicals found themselves unable to take advantage of Lin's purge to make significant inroads: none of the mass representatives at the Tenth Congress were first or second party secretaries of their provincial party committees and twenty-eight of the forty-eight did not have positions on the standing committees of their provincial party committees. The general tendency at all levels was to confine radicals to symbolic and easily expendable positions on the plena while reserving most executive positions and key committee assignments for veteran party officials. The plena had only nominal power in the policy process and their chief function was to form a pool for the recruitment of members of the executive and functional committees, but the radicals were rarely able to rise from the plena to influential positions at the Central Committee level or below it. For example, in preparation for the Fourth National People's Congress (NPC) in 1975, the radicals managed to place ninety of their members on the Presidium (whose only apparent function is to



elect the NPC Standing Committee), yet only thirty-one of these were elected to the NPC Standing Committee and only one of the twelve vice premiers on the State Council (Zhang Chunqiao) was a radical, while three others could be considered radical sympathizers. In general, the radical struggle for power and position succeeded only in those areas under Mao's immediate jurisdiction (particularly the Central Committee Politburo), and only as long as he was still alive. This put the radicals in the position of an imposing head and torso without arms or legs.

To summarize, the radicals' failure to institutionalize the more spontaneous patterns of participation that emerged during the Cultural Revolution resulted from the weakness and vulnerability of their own constituency, the unrelenting and increasingly skilled opposition of the veteran bureaucrats who emerged to regain control, and their inability to acknowledge and remedy the problems of the new patterns of participation they had introduced. Of course, the chief weakness of the radicals at every level was their lack of administrative experience. Most of them had become involved in politics through the Cultural Revolution, an experience that did not dispose them to be patient with old rules of the bureaucratic game that would consign them to a long apprenticeship before acquiring real influence. This revolutionary impatience in turn inclined them to be disruptive, for example, to split from the committee and denounce their colleagues publicly if outvoted, or to retain their links to factional constituencies and use them to lobby for specific policies. This exacerbated the mistrust between veteran cadres and radical sympathizers and hastened the weakening of the latter. The veteran cadres, since the fall of Liu and Deng under the leadership of Zhou Enlai, avoided direct confrontations with the radicals and managed to blunt the most potentially dangerous themes in their polemical offensive by reinterpretation and to ignore the rest.

The greatest problem of the new participation pattern was of course its disruptive, anarchic quality. Although the radicals agreed to the suppression of factionalism whenever it became a serious threat to production, they were unable to discover a forum or medium whereby their constituency might acceptably articulate its support for radical policies. They remained suspicious of the tendency of institutionalization to impose procedural constraints on participation and exclude the young and inexperienced. Their lack of a base of bureaucratically eligible supporters and general ineptitude in intra-organizational infighting severely limited any attempt to cultivate a constituency by offering patronage or other official

rewards. Their constructive programs also came to naught (as noted above), and so the only way they could mobilize their supporters was by leading them in criticism *against* certain policies and personnel, with the implied promise of seizing power if a sufficient number of cadres could again be toppled. Under these circumstances mobilization tended to be very brief and destructive, resulting in an on-going two-line struggle that oscillated from left to right with increasing frequency.

### **The Radical Contribution to Theory**

The radicals formulated no positive theory of participation and their ideas can only be inferred from their criticisms of others. These ideas fall into three categories: the relationship between public- and self-interest, appropriate criteria for participation in politics, and methods of participation.

### **The Relationship between Public- and Self-Interest**

The radicals assumed that public- and self-interest were inexorably in conflict, so that to serve the public meant to sacrifice oneself, to serve oneself to betray the public. Their purpose was to foreclose the comfortable assumption that selfishness was objectively compatible with the public interest and force people to make a clear-cut choice. Although this was intended to preclude the expression of self-interest altogether, the open-textured quality of most ideological formulations of the public interest permitted private interests to be expressed in altruistic rhetoric, which in turn discredited such rhetoric and fostered a certain amount of apathy and even cynicism about the public interest. All the same, by severely damaging the sanctimonious reputation of the Party the radicals at least temporarily succeeded in liberating the public interest from the CCP's exclusive definition. The non-party masses learned to manipulate altruistic rhetoric for their own purposes, resulting in a more frequent incidence of original big character posters (such as the famous Li Yizhe poster in Guangzhou), in strikes, slowdowns, factional strife, and other autonomous political activities.

The Party strongly discouraged such activities, both because they were disruptive and because they were autonomous, attempting to reassert the merging of public and private interests under the

auspices of the Party. Once again it was claimed that correct procedures enabled the Party to define this fusion. The radicals periodically protested this subordination of ideology to organization, for example in the 1973 campaign to "go against the tide." But because they could find no acceptable alternative, they concurred in suppression of the movement whenever the disruption it precipitated threatened production.

### Participation in Politics

The radicals repudiated dependence on bureaucratic rules and procedures to determine who could participate. They supported inclusion on the basis of a correct ideological stand. This begged the question of how to determine who was correct. Obviously class was a decisive factor, but how should class membership be determined in a society in which the means of production had been socialized? Prior to the Cultural Revolution this question was answered by ignoring the individual class composition (*geren chengfen*), or current occupation, of the individual in question and relying on family origin (*jiating chushen*), the occupation of the person's parents' three years before Liberation. This proved to be an increasingly inaccurate indication of current socioeconomic status, including among the proletariat the children of both poor peasants and high-ranking cadres, for example.

During the Cultural Revolution the radicals were inclined to substitute ideology for family background as a criterion for class membership, but this gave rise to much ideological posturing and overblown rhetoric, not to mention factional schisms and fights. In their search for an objective economic basis for the determination of classes in a socialist society, radical theorists fastened on two criteria: ownership and distribution.

With regard to ownership, the radicals emphasized that socialization of the means of production was not simply a matter of state appropriation, but a long process requiring ongoing struggle. There is a contradiction between collective ownership (by members of the unit only) and ownership by the whole people (as represented by the state), according to Mao, and this manifested itself in China in the form of the "three great differences": between city and countryside, manual and mental work, and workers and peasants. To permit collective ownership to consolidate too long without pressure for further transformation to "whole-people" ownership would be to threaten further progress toward communism and raise the spectre

of Soviet-style revisionism.<sup>18</sup> In the People's Republic of China (PRC), while whole-people ownership held sway in industry and commerce, collective ownership still predominated in agriculture because the production team had been the unit of accounting since the early 1960s.<sup>19</sup> This implied that workers (in state enterprises) were more progressive and advanced than peasants and their participation was therefore valued. The distinction further implied that participation aimed at movement toward a higher level of ownership was preferable to participation within the parameters of existing property arrangements, presaging a future drive to raise the unit of accounting from the team to the brigade or the commune.

By extending the definition of ownership to include the form of distribution the radicals were able to extend their critique to challenge the basic principle of distribution in the People's Republic: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work." This exemplified the principle of exchange of equivalents, or "exchange between a given amount of labor in one form and a similar amount of labor in another form," and as such was part of the "commodity system," a relic of capitalist productive relations. Differences in market conditions, conditions for production, and levels of technology, mean that equal rights in the exchange of equivalents in socialist society (in the form of competition between collectively-owned enterprises or production units, or individuals in the rural free markets) is still unequal in reality. As Marx put it in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, "Equal right here is still in principle—a bourgeois right."<sup>20</sup> In terms of participation, the implications were to narrow the range of politically acceptable behavior to preclude the further commercialization of social relationships which, if permitted to continue, would have a spillover effect on the distribution of political power:

If we do not follow this course, but call instead for the consolidation, extension, and strengthening of bourgeois right and that part of inequality it entails, the inevitable result will be polarization, i.e., a small number of people will in the course of distribution acquire increasing amounts of commodities and money through certain legal channels and numerous illegal ones. Capitalist ideas of amassing fortunes and craving personal fame and gain, stimulated by such "material incentives," will spread unchecked; such phenomena as turning public property into

private property, speculation, graft, and corruption, theft and bribery will rise; the capitalist principle of the exchange of commodities will make its way into political life and even into party life, undermine the socialist planned economy and give rise to such acts of capitalist exploitation as the conversion of commodities and money into labor and labor power into a commodity; there will be a change in the nature of ownership in certain departments and units which follow the revisionist line; and instances of oppression and exploitation of the working people will once again occur.<sup>21</sup>

In short, while the definition of *political* participation was expanded, the criteria for *acceptable* participation were contracted. "The socialist economy must function in accord with the correct ideological line," as defined by the CCP leadership: "The historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat at home and abroad tells us that whether the socialist system advances or moves backward is closely linked with whether or not we correctly adjust the relationship, whether Marxism or revisionism is practiced, and which line is implemented."<sup>22</sup> As in Calvinist Geneva, participation would be rigorously screened to sanction only those whose values coincided with those of the leadership. The correctness or incorrectness of the ideological line and the control of the leadership by one class or another determine which class actually owns a factory.<sup>23</sup> In the context of the prevailing political situation, this criterion for participation may be seen not only as a response to those "revisionists" within the leadership who wished to restore material incentives, but as a counter to mass factions who were taking advantage of the breakdown of discipline in the Cultural Revolution to agitate on behalf of their own interests.

### Method of Participation

The radicals tended to distrust formal institutional arrangements, whether those of democratic centralism within the Party or the forms of electoral democracy that survived the era of the united front. Thus at various times they sanctioned violation of such canons of democratic centralism as majority rule, obedience to the higher level, and obedience to the Central Committee, arguing that

ideological correctness superseded procedural criteria, and ideological correctness had to be determined by the masses. Electoral democracy was a sham in a class society, and the radicals dispensed with elections in favor of an informal procedure they called "democratic consultation." The principal reason for the radical rejection of formal institutions seems to have been the tendency of the latter to degenerate into "bureaucratism," i.e., empty formalism.

Having therefore abandoned due process, the radicals placed their faith in a radicalized concept of the mass line as the sole realistic way for the masses to influence their leaders. According to this concept, the leaders must remain in constant (or at least frequent) physical contact with masses and be intent upon serving their interests; only through such intimacy and concern on the part of the leadership can authentic mass involvement in political decisions be ensured. If a given leader should fail in this obligation, that leader is apt to develop his/her own distinct and even alien interests. Thus in 1965 Mao said: "The bureaucrat class on the one hand and the working class with the poor and lower-middle peasants on the other are two classes sharply antagonistic to each other."<sup>24</sup> He reiterated this point of view about a decade later.<sup>25</sup> A leader who undergoes such a process of embourgeoisement is no longer a Marxist-Leninist and has forfeit the legitimate support of his constituency. "When we judge whether a person is a true or false Marxist, we need only find out how he stands in relation to the broad masses of workers and peasants, and then we shall know him for what he is," Mao decreed. "This is the only criterion, there is no other."<sup>26</sup> During the Cultural Revolution Mao introduced the notion that the masses might spontaneously criticize and demonstrate publicly against leaders who were travelling the "capitalist road." Such tactics had a devastating psychological effect upon their targets, sometimes resulting in physical injury or even suicide.

According to refugee informants I interviewed in Hong Kong, the Cultural Revolution was in fact quite successful in inducing leaders to cultivate a closer relationship with their constituents, hoping thereby to conform with this radicalized notion of the mass line and forestall future criticism from an activated mass. Most informants felt that this gave them somewhat more control over local policy implementation and improved their chances of attaining political demands or redressing grievances. But intensified elite-mass fraternization also brought problems in its train, which involved both the demands of the masses and the motives of the leaders.

The first problem lay in the possibility that the masses might take advantage of the more conciliatory posture of the leadership to escalate their demands or to thwart policies to which they objected, thereby promoting their own interests at the expense of the public interest (as the Party saw it). The use of this more fraternal relationship to attain demands was apparent in the proliferation of the "back door" phenomenon, the use of privileged official access to scarce goods or services to allocate these in exchange for reciprocal favors rather than according to universalistic criteria of need. Previously this form of corruption had been limited to party cadres and their families. Aggressive escalation of demands was also apparent in the proliferation of industrial strikes and slowdowns in 1975-76 and the Tian'anmen incident of April 1976, an almost unprecedented case of major mass protest without demonstrated elite collusion. Originally touched off by a refusal to allow a memorial to Zhou Enlai, this incident symbolized mass resentment of radical censoriousness.

The second danger inhered in the possibility that elites might cater to the subjective interests of the masses as a way of cultivating personal constituencies beyond the ambit of the formal mechanisms of control. This tendency appeared in its most virulent form at the highest levels of elite politics and in the Lin Biao case in particular. While the reasons for the rift between Mao and his erstwhile heir apparent still remain obscure, most analysts agree that it was precipitated less by ideological or policy differences than by Lin's attempt to exploit his patronage and other official powers in order to consolidate his own political base.

Thus, after the Lin Biao episode the radicals found themselves in the paradoxical position of criticizing the intensified elite-mass fraternization they had only recently hailed as a panacea for optimally effective mass participation. To be sure, they did not attack fraternization *per se*, but only fraternization that was badly motivated. The radical argument, as it appeared in its most theoretically sophisticated form in Zhang Chunqiao's 1975 article on "bourgeois right," held that classes were defined not merely on the basis of economic attributes but in terms of particular "relations among men." Those relations that resembled the instrumental relationship between men and commodities in a capitalist system were *ipso facto* bourgeois.<sup>27</sup> Thus Lin Biao was accused of "handing out official posts and making promises, inviting guests and giving them presents, wining and dining, and traffic in flattery and favors."<sup>28</sup> His private notebooks were found to contain telltale mention of "inducement—official post, emolument, favor," stripping

bare the manipulative intention behind Lin's service to his constituents. This was "bourgeois," according to Yao Wenyuan, because it transformed the relations among people into "relations of buying and selling commodities."<sup>29</sup>

The problem with this criticism, justified though it might be in Lin's case, is a problem endemic to all such attempts to draw a clear line of distinction between public and private interests: there are numerous situations in political life in which the motives of the actor remain ambiguous. The services that a "revisionist" official might render his constituents—the adjustment of policy to suit local circumstances, the provision of protection, funding, patronage, etc.—are not essentially different from those that his more "revolutionary" colleague might provide; the main difference is in the motive behind the action. The difference between an official who acts for the public welfare and one who hopes for reciprocal benefits is difficult to maintain when some form of reciprocity is likely in either case, and attempts to draw such a distinction begin to seem hair-splitting and inquisitorial.<sup>30</sup> This imparted a note of caution to what cadres might safely consider "serving the people," which was reinforced by the official media in their exegetical commentaries during this period. These emphasized that serving the people meant serving the "overwhelming majority" of the people,<sup>31</sup> which might well involve temporary deferment of the interests of their immediate constituents.<sup>32</sup> Those who seemed to "show concern for the masses" and "work for the well-being of the public" might well be actually "divorcing themselves from the broad masses" if they defied party directives. Implicitly, the independent ideological judgment of the local masses and cadres about what was in the interests of the masses had been invalidated, and in its stead the infallibility of party procedure had been resurrected.

In sum, the weakness of the radical critique of Liuist practice was that it took two contradictory positions. First, it challenged those aspects of the mass line which led to a public policy that ignored vital mass interests. Then it criticized the pursuit of self-interest altogether. The result was to place the radicals at odds not only with mainstream Marxism, but with mass aspirations. This fatally alienated them both from the bureaucrats and from the masses.



### The Emerging Synthesis

The primary goal of the successor government since it came to power in 1976 has been to restore pre-Cultural Revolution practices and theories of mass participation, although this restoration has necessarily been incomplete. The result of the redefinition of public interest during the first, mobilizational, phase of the Cultural Revolution was a quasi-pluralism of group interests masquerading as the public interest. The Deng government seems to have been quite successful in discrediting the autonomous organization and factionalism of the radicals even before the fall of the Gang of Four, at least partly because even the radicals at the center found it impossible to use the potpourri of competing interest groups for their own programs. This is not to say that the problem was solved immediately; indeed, during and even after the succession crisis there were widespread reports of strikes and factional violence that still followed organization patterns originally set by the radicals during the Cultural Revolution. But these were no longer ideological problems, for the legitimacy of the radicals had already been destroyed; it was sufficient to link them with the Gang of Four to bring the latter into disrepute. And during the initial phase of the post-succession consolidation the new regime took draconian punitive measures against persisting outbreaks of factional conflict, including a wave of executions. Clearly a subjective conviction of ideological correctness is no longer sufficient to legitimate dissenting or disruptive forms of participation.

During the second phase of the radicals' ascendancy, they attempted to institutionalize the Cultural Revolution innovations in participatory behavior, thereby allowing them to survive in somewhat more innocuous form. Rather than "housebreaking" the radical movement and preparing the young rebels to succeed to leadership of a permanent revolution, however, this seems to have introduced factionalism and ideological polarization to the councils of party and state. Largely because of the radicals' lack of administrative experience, the veteran officials were for the most part successful in confining them to showcase positions without significant leverage.

Much more dangerous to the new regime were the theories devised by the radicals to legitimate spontaneous mass activism. These critical theories exerted considerable power and cogency, as evidenced by the care taken to refute them. The radical premise that the relationship between public and private interest is contradictory has given way under the successor regime to an emphasis on the

merging of collective, group, and individual interests as intermediated by correct party procedure; any apparent incompatibility of interests is only temporary.<sup>33</sup> Whereas radical theory encouraged self-sacrificing nonconformity for altruistic ends, this new interpretation identifies altruism with organizational conformity and the satisfaction of legitimate self-interest (e.g., earning salary bonuses by working harder). The emerging pattern of participation should be a less disruptive one, more compatible with the functional needs of economic modernization as well as with the material interests of the vast majority of the citizenry. At the same time it may have costs, tending for example to discourage negative feedback or innovative behavior.

On the question of who should be permitted to participate, the radical critique of “bourgeois right” implied that classes should be redefined on the basis of substantive rather than procedural criteria. For the polity, correct socialist orientation was defined at any time by the ideologically correct line. For the individual, correct socialist orientation was defined by the preeminence of pure motives. These were assumed to coincide. Any behavior, any motive not consistent with socialist ends should be criticized until it is dispelled. The commodity system and the distribution of unequal pay according to labor performed were still indispensable at the present stage of socialist development, but they should be criticized and eventually superseded. “We must not say, ‘Long live distribution according to work.’ The fact that we recognize it and allow it to exist at the present stage does not mean that we should extend or develop it.”<sup>34</sup>

Once they gain currency, key polemical catchwords tend to survive in the passive vocabulary of their users long after their repression from public discourse. This is particularly so when the post-Mao regime elects to soldier on under the ideological masthead of “Mao Zedong Thought.” No matter how it may try to reconstrue and domesticate that thought, its radical implications are apt to linger like a ghost. The existential questions so confidently (and disastrously) answered by the radicals—What should we do? What is the purpose of life? Where are we going?—have generally been begged, or answered superficially (“seeking truth from facts”). “Modernization,” to the Maoists a dubious means, has become the all-justifying end. Aside from *tu quoque* arguments,<sup>35</sup> only the juridical distinction between capitalist and socialist ownership spares the reformers from the haunting reproach, “capitalist roader.”<sup>36</sup> By so unreservedly embracing the gospel of development, the Deng Xiaoping leadership risks becoming hostage to an economic machine

which it cannot fully control. Its growing awareness of the danger has become clear since the Sixth Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee (June 1981), when the Party suspended further criticism of Mao's Thought and launched a campaign for "socialist spiritual civilization," which is defined somewhat independently of the economic base.

Whatever the posthumous career of radical sentiment, it is worth bearing in mind that radical politics was practically bankrupt. On the key issue of mass participation, for example, the radical position went through an initial extreme phase and a subsequent moderate one. During the first phase leadership claims to represent the public interest were validated on the basis of their intimacy with the masses and their satisfaction of constituent interests. During the second, the radicals backed away from this criterion and criticized certain forms of elite-mass fraternization, now using substantive correctness as the sole legitimate determinant of the public interest. In its attempts to criticize the radical version of the mass line the successor regime has focused on the first, radical phase, when leadership claims to represent the public interest were evaluated on the basis of their intimacy with the masses. This seems to have exerted broad popular appeal despite its later abandonment by all contingents of the leadership (including the radicals). The critique takes the form of an *ad hominem* attack: the radicals divorced themselves from the masses and "used a portion of the power they usurped to 'happily' loot the national coffer and live extravagantly—in a manner even more ruthless than landlords and capitalists."<sup>37</sup> This line of criticism harbors a certain degree of ambivalence, masking an unresolved problem. In the first two years of the succession the new regime permitted a form of mass participation ironically redolent of the Cultural Revolution, permitting those who had been repressed during the various phases of the Cultural Revolution to press their criticism of the Gang of Four toward the logical outcome of a critique of Maoism and all those who had benefitted from it (ultimately including Hua Guofeng himself). But after the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping in the winter of 1978-79 the attitude toward mass participation became more reserved. The mass activists were suppressed, first with quasi-judicial measures and then with the full force of the law. Even the famous "big-character poster" was eliminated for its association with the irresponsible and chaotic polemics of the Cultural Revolution.

Although the Deng Xiaoping regime seems to have turned the clock back to 1962 (or even 1956), like all restorations this may be

viewed as a synthesis of selected aspects of the idealized bygone era with inadvertent or unavoidable components of the immediately repressed past. The radical phase, after all, lasted ten years and cannot simply be effaced from participants' memories. The highly prejudicial Maoist conceptualization of bureaucracy lingers on in the resentment of the masses as well as the literati, as does the marked xenophobic and populist strain in the recent campaigns against bourgeois liberalization or spiritual pollution. The democracy movement manifested again a conviction that there is a contradiction between public- and self-interest which justifies dramatic self-sacrificial gestures on behalf of the former. In spite of all attempts to enhance respect for authority, the pervasive attitude seems to be far more irreverent than before 1966. The current era seems to represent an uneasy synthesis of disparate participatory traditions.

### **Conclusion**

The bourgeois democratic concept of participation, in which individual participants make autonomous political decisions based on their own interests, is rather difficult to assimilate to Chinese political culture. The Chinese revolution has if anything reinforced the indigenous corporate concept of interest. This is not to say that private interests do not exist in Chinese politics, and in fact there is a great deal of evidence in the critical literature of their ubiquity and ineluctability. But they may only be expressed in euphemistic, public-spirited form.

Under these circumstances political participation takes a somewhat different form than it does in the West. Rather than the explicit confrontation of sharply diverging interests and ideologies, we find each side trying to lay claim to the same legitimating symbols, while at the same time using the same demonology to denounce their opponents. Wang Ming's denunciation of Mao Zedong employed many of the same themes that Mao used against Liu Shaoqi; the official denunciations of Liu, Lin Biao, and the Gang of Four have also been thematically similar. This means that political conflict in China does not result in a clear-cut delineation of alternatives unless one side can monopolize communications, in which case the opposition is grotesquely caricatured. Instead it is expressed in esoteric allusions and tirades against anonymous opponents. This gives rise to an Aesopian language of "holding high the Red Flag to oppose the Red Flag" that is difficult for outsiders to comprehend. It fosters an

iterative rather than an adversarial form of participation in which self-interest may be pursued only through subtle modification of consensually acceptable themes; the adversarial form of participation is used only against absent or powerless targets. Although this form of participation pays a price in terms of public clarity about political issues, it does ensure that all policy proposals make some attempt to accommodate the public interest. And the "mass line" paradigm stipulates that such proposals be circulated among a broad range of elites and masses before being generally implemented.