Revolution and Reaction in the Chinese Countryside: The Socialist Education Movement in Cultural Revolutionary Perspective

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AT the time the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) issued its now-famous Circular Notice of 16 May 1966, which roundly criticized Peking's Mayor P'eng Chen and thereby ushered in a dramatic new stage of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a large-scale and intensive Socialist Education Movement was still being implemented systematically in the Chinese countryside.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1966 these two mass movements co-existed in a loosely defined relationship of functional complementarity. The Socialist Education Movement continued to focus primarily upon the rectification of basic-level productive and administrative units in the rural communes, while the newly-intensified Cultural Revolution was directed mainly at eliminating "bourgeois influences" in higher level cultural and educational institutions and leading Party organs at the municipal level.

At the end of 1966, however, with the Socialist Education Movement completed in only a minority of China's villages, that movement was suddenly—and without explanation—terminated and universally supplanted by the Cultural Revolution.

The origins and early development of the Socialist Education Movement (also known as the *Ssu-Ch'ing*, or "Four Cleanups") have been fully documented and analysed elsewhere,[1] as has the question of the broad contextual relationship between the Socialist Education Movement and the Cultural Revolution.[2] No attempt has yet been made, however, to explore systematically the critical areas of contact, overlap

[1] See Richard Baum and Frederick C. Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962–1966* (Berkeley: University of California Center for Chinese Studies, 1968).

[2] See Baum and Teiwes, "Liu Shao-ch'i and the Cadre Question," *Asian Survey*, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (April 1968), pp. 323–345; also Charles Neuhauser, "The Chinese Communist Party in the 1960s: Prelude to the Cultural Revolution," *The China Quarterly*, No. 32 (October–December 1967), pp. 3–36; and "*Chung-kung te 'Ssu-ch'ing' yü 'Wen-hua ta ko-ming'*" (Communist China's "Four Cleanups" and "Cultural Revolution", in *Fei-ch'ing yen-chiu* (*Studies on Chinese Communism*) (Taipei), Vol. I, No. 1 (January 1967), pp. 23–31.

and—more important—conflict between the two movements; nor has there been any attempt to examine either the specific policy considerations which were operative in the CCP's December 1966 decision prematurely to terminate the Socialist Education Movement or the sequences of events which preceded—and proceeded from—that decision.

"Cleaning up" the Countryside: 1962–66

Launched initially in response to Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung's impassioned plea to the CCP Central Committee's Tenth Plenum in September 1962—"Never forget class struggle!"—the Socialist Education Movement was aimed specifically at correcting a number of unorthodox political, ideological and economic tendencies that had arisen in the rural communes in the aftermath of the disastrous Great Leap Forward.[3]

Among the many behavioural and attitudinal problems earmarked for "rectification" during the Socialist Education Movement were the following: (i) a general tendency on the part of rural cadres and peasants to pay insufficient attention to the potentially adverse political implications of the regime's newly-liberalized policies concerning the cultivation of private agricultural plots and the operation of rural free markets; (ii) the rampant growth of corrupt practices among basic-level rural cadres, including extortion of grain and money from local peasants, concealment of surplus grain from state purchasing agencies and misappropriation of collective funds, grain and properties for personal use (the so-called "four uncleans"); and (iii) the widespread demoralization of rural cadres and peasants which had arisen in the wake of severe economic dislocations and privations suffered during the "three hard years" of 1959–61.

The pre-Cultural Revolution development of the Socialist Education Movement can be divided into three broadly defined (though not wholly distinct) chronological stages. The first stage, which lasted roughly from the winter and spring of 1962–63 to the late summer of 1964, witnessed the gradual unfolding of the Four Cleanups on an experimental basis in a limited number of "trial points" (*shih tien*) and "key points" (*chung tien*) in the Chinese countryside.[4] In this

[3] The following discussion is based on Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing*.

[4] Although the Socialist Education Movement was also conducted in urban industrial, commercial and cultural enterprises after 1963, it was, at the outset, predominantly rural in orientation. Since reliable data concerning the urban components of the movement are generally not available, the following discussion will focus exclusively on the rural aspects of the movement. As applied in the rural communes in the period 1963–64, the term "Four Cleanups" referred to the tasks of checking up on the account books and work-point allocations of basic-level cadres and investigating the disposition of collectively-owned grain and properties.

preliminary period major emphasis was placed upon the educational and indoctrinational goals of the movement. In accordance with Mao's injunction to conduct the campaign "like a light breeze and gentle rain," socialist education work in this initial period was didactic in nature and positive in content. Rural cadres who were discovered to have committed various "four unclean" acts of corruption and/or mismanagement were given a chance to redeem themselves by confessing their mistakes to the masses, participating in physical productive labour and undergoing intensive ideological re-education. Peasants who had engaged in such illegal practices as grain speculation and black-marketeering, or who had exceeded legal limits in the reclamation and cultivation of private plots, were subjected to intensive propaganda and persuaded "voluntarily" to reform their "spontaneous capitalist tendencies." [5]

In the second stage, which began in September 1964, the tempo of the Socialist Education Movement was accelerated and greater emphasis placed upon the disciplinary and punitive functions of the Four Cleanups. Deviant behaviour was rectified mainly by restraint rather than by persuasion to conform. "Work teams" (*kung-tso tui*) were sent out by higher-level Party committees and urban educational institutions to investigate local political conditions and supervise the work of the Four Cleanups in the villages. Those basic-level rural cadres and so-called "five category elements" [6] who were found guilty of various illegal or unethical actions were now severely criticized, "struggled" against, fined or even sentenced to varying periods of "labour reform." The prevalence and severity of class antagonisms in the countryside received renewed stress as the major theme of the movement in this stage. Organizations of poor and lower-middle peasants were established under the watchful eye of Party committees in the communes and production brigades to "supervise" the economic and administrative work of local manage-

[5] The major CCP policy directives which governed the conduct of the movement in this initial stage were the "Draft Resolution of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Some Problems in Current Rural Work," dated 20 May 1963 (also known as the "First Ten Points"); and "Some Concrete Policy Formulations of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in the Rural Socialist Education Movement," dated September 1963 (also known as the "Later Ten Points"). The "First Ten Points" were reportedly drafted under the personal supervision of Mao Tse-tung, while the "Later Ten Points" were allegedly drawn up by the now-disgraced Teng Hsiao-p'ing. Both documents are translated and analysed in Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing*.

[6] The term "five category elements" refers to individuals whose family background is that of landlord, rich peasant, counter-revolutionary, "bad element" or unreformed rightist.

ment committees and individual cadres, and to report on the disruptive activities of local "class enemies."[7]

By the end of 1964 it had become apparent (at least to some) that the more intensive purges of the previous several months had achieved the opposite effect from that desired. Basic-level rural cadres had become visibly demoralized by the growing tendency toward excessive (and in many cases indiscriminate) "class struggle" in the villages. The Four Cleanup work teams had sown the seeds of mutual suspicion and animosity between local cadres and the peasantry; and the cadres consequently felt (not without justification) that they were unable to perform their official duties for fear of peasant interference and criticism.[8] Because of this, and because the demoralization of the rural cadres was apparently having an adverse effect upon productivity and labour discipline in the villages, the Socialist Education Movement underwent a further orientational change beginning in January 1965.[9]

In this third stage, primary emphasis was once again placed on the educational and indoctrinational aspects of socialist education work. In addition, new concessions were made by the regime to the material aspirations of the peasantry—aspirations which had been

[7] The major policy directives governing the conduct of the Socialist Education Movement in the latter half of 1964 were the "Organizational Rules of Poor and Lower-Middle Peasant Associations (Draft)," dated June 1964; and a revised draft of "Some Concrete Policy Formulations of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in the Rural Socialist Education Movement," dated 10 September 1964 (also known as the "Revised Later Ten Points"). The former document outlined the structure and functions of the newly-organized peasants' associations at the commune, production brigade and production team levels. The latter document, which was reportedly drafted by Liu Shao-ch'i, has come under heavy criticism during the Cultural Revolution for its allegedly erroneous orientation towards the question of rectifying basic-level rural cadres. For an analysis of these documents, and of the charges raised against Liu Shao-ch'i, see Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing*; also Baum and Teiwes, "Liu Shao-ch'i and the Cadre Question," *loc. cit.*

[8] Note, for example, the following complaints raised by rural cadres in December 1964: "If the masses criticize the cadres, the cadres will not be able to lead them at all. It's all right for higher levels to criticize cadres, but if the masses do it things will become chaotic. . . ." *Radio Tientsin* (Hopeh), 19 December 1964. "We are relying too much on the poor and lower-middle peasants. . . . What's the use of having cadres if the peasants are going to run things?" *Radio Nanchang* (Kiangsi), 18 December 1964.

[9] The major policy directive governing the conduct of the movement after January 1965 was "Some Problems Currently Arising in the Course of the Rural Socialist Education Movement," dated 14 January 1965 (also known as the "Twenty-three Articles"). During the Cultural Revolution this document has been hailed as the Maoist corrective to Liu Shao-chi's "poisonous" "Revised Later Ten Points" of September 1964 (see *Jen-min jih-pao*) (*JMJP*), 6 September and 23 November 1967. Specifically, the Maoists have claimed that the "Twenty-three Articles" served to "direct the spearhead" of the Socialist Education Movement away from the much-maligned basic-level cadres towards an (undisclosed) group of "people in positions of authority within the Party who take the capitalist road." For an analysis of the veracity of this assertion, see Baum and Teiwes, "Liu Shao-ch'i and the Cadre Question," *loc. cit.*

forceably suppressed in the early stages of the movement.[10] The Four Cleanups were now officially redefined in such a way as to shift the focus of the campaign away from the essentially purgative task of "cleaning up" (*ch'ing-li*) petty economic corruption in the villages towards a broader, more diffuse and positive stress on "basic construction" (*chi-pen chien-she*) of rural Party organs in the political, economic, ideological and organizational fields.[11]

The major developments in this new stage (which was commonly referred to as the "big Four Cleanups" in order to distinguish it from the previous stage, which retroactively became known as the "small Four Cleanups") were the inauguration of a major drive to "revolutionize" Party committees at the county (*hsien*) level and the concomitant initiation of an intensive nationwide mass movement to "study and apply the thought of Mao Tse-tung."

The major focus of socialist education work in this final pre-cultural revolutionary stage of the campaign was the widely-observed "contradiction" between political imperatives (*e.g.*, "rely on the poor and lower-middle peasants") and economic exigencies (*e.g.*, the necessity to provide material incentives to "activate" the more productive middle peasants). Both the Party-oriented "revolutionization" movement and the mass-oriented Mao-study movement were directed specifically at the resolution of the contradiction between politics and production.[12]

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1965–66 the national and provincial Party media consistently stressed the need for rural cadres

[10] Although the Socialist Education Movement was specifically aimed at overcoming "spontaneous capitalist tendencies" in the villages, at no time did the movement envisage a wholesale retreat from private plots, free markets and piece-rate wage incentives *per se*. The so-called "Sixty Articles" on commune management which had been drafted in March 1961 and revised in September 1962, and which laid down relatively liberal rules for the operation of private plots and free markets in the communes, were never repudiated during the movement; indeed, they were repeatedly defended against the derogations of Party radicals. See, for example, *JMJP*, 7 April 1966. What was at issue during the Socialist Education Movement were the *tolerable limits* of private farming and material incentives; and on this question official policy fluctuated considerably in the three stages of the movement outlined above. For an interesting theoretical analysis of the CCP's attempt to manipulate normative, coercive and remunerative rewards and deprivations in the course of rural mass movements, see G. William Skinner, "Compliance and Leadership in Rural Communist China: A Cyclical Theory," unpublished paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 8–11 September 1965.

[11] For an early statement of the new definition of the Four Cleanups, see Chou En-lai, "Report on the Work of the Government," delivered to the First Session of the Third National People's Congress on 21 and 22 December 1964, in *Peking Review*, No. 1 (1 January 1965), p. 13.

[12] See, *e.g.*, *Radio Changsha* (Hunan), 1 and 5 February 1966; *Radio Canton* (Kwangtung), 17 February 1966; *Radio Wuhan* (Hupeh), 2 March 1966; and *Yang-ch'eng Wan-pao* (Canton), 14 June 1966. For extensive documentation concerning the implementation of the Party committee "revolutionization" movement, see *Current Background* (*CB*) (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate General), No. 779 (1966).

and peasants to place "politics in command" of all economic and productive tasks. The following summary of the proceedings of a cadre conference held in Kiangsu province in the late winter of 1966 is typical of the numerous "morality plays" staged for the benefit of the rural cadres and peasant masses in this period; it is also highly instructive in revealing the nature of the perceived contradiction between politics and production on the eve of the Cultural Revolution:

> . . . many comrades stressed that "giving prominence to politics" must come first. However, others said: "Rather than waste time chatting about politics, we should take loads of manure to the fields . . . So long as we have grain, cash and work-points, everything is fine. So long as production work is done well, politics is good." During the discussion, many comrades cited evidence to show that those units which gave prominence to politics and put Mao Tse-tung's thinking in command were continuously increasing production. "Otherwise," they said, "even if some successes were scored in production, they would be only temporary and would not last." . . . The discussion lasted six days, at the end of which all the participants understood the importance of giving prominence to politics and to the thought of Mao Tse-tung. . . .[13]

The somewhat contrived and stereotyped didacticism of this passage tends to obscure the fact that the so-called "pure production viewpoint" constituted a serious challenge to orthodox Maoist policies in the countryside.[14] And the fact that this viewpoint was evidently still quite prominent among cadres at the commune, production brigade and production team levels, even after three years of the Socialist Education Movement, was undoubtedly a source of considerable anxiety to ideologues at the Party centre.

In reading through the official press and radio reports of the period from October 1965 to April 1966, one is inexorably drawn to the conclusion that the initiation of the parallel Party committee "revolutionization" and mass Mao-study movements reflected a grow-

[13] *Radio Nanking* (Kiangsu), 10 March 1966. During the Cultural Revolution a great deal of criticism has been directed at those so-called "bourgeois power-holders" who allegedly opposed giving prominence to politics and studying Mao's works during the Socialist Education Movement. For example, Li Ching-ch'üan, erstwhile First Secretary of the Southwest Regional Party Bureau, was quoted as having said: "What! Give prominence to politics? Better that we give prominence to fertilizer. Fertilizer can solve problems." *Radio Kweiyang* (Kweichow), 28 June 1967. While this is no doubt an exaggeration of the original, nevertheless there is some reason to credit the argument that opposition to Mao-study was indeed relatively widespread among high-level Party officials at the Central Committee, Regional Bureau and provincial levels. See Philip Bridgham, "Mao's 'Cultural Revolution': Origin and Development," *The China Quarterly*, No. 29 (January–March 1967), pp. 16–19.

[14] For an analysis of the main tenets of Maoist agrarian "orthodoxy," and of the nature of the so-called "struggle between two roads" in agricultural policy, see Parris H. Chang, "Struggle Between the Two Roads in China's Countryside," *Current Scene* (Hong Kong), Vol. VI, No. 3 (15 February 1968).

ing awareness on the part of the Maoist leadership that the Four Cleanups had not been an unqualified success.[15] The major premise of the Socialist Education Movement—*i.e.*, the Maoist claim that "class struggle is instantly effective" (*chieh-chi tou-cheng i-chua chiu ling*)—had apparently proved to be over-optimistic; and it thus remained for the Cultural Revolution to reignite the spluttering flame of revolutionary reform and rectification in the Chinese countryside.

Unmasking the "Capitalist Roaders"

When the Cultural Revolution began in earnest in May 1966, with the Central Committee's denunciation of P'eng Chen's so-called "February Outline Report," there was little indication that the new campaign was related to the Socialist Education Movement in any but a tangential sense. The so-called "three family village" phenomenon was, after all, essentially the product of urban academic and cultural circles.[16]

It soon became apparent, however, that the Cultural Revolution was aimed at exposing and repudiating "three family village"-type freaks and monsters in *all* sectors and at *all* levels of Chinese society. An open letter addressed to the peasants of Hupeh province by the Hupeh Provincial Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants' Association Committee in late June thus exhorted:

> Comrades! We must unmask all anti-Party, anti-socialist "three family village" freaks and monsters *in the whole country, the whole province and in our own localities and home units.* Whether they are in the towns or the villages, below us or above, we must strike them all down and uproot them. The poor and lower-middle peasants must carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution through to the end. . . .[17]

Initial rural reaction to this type of exhortation was relatively mild and cautious.[18] The Socialist Education Movement was, after all, still

[15] Note, for example, the allegation that "the class struggle between socialism and capitalism is being rekindled *even in those areas which have gone through systematic socialist education.* In these areas . . . class enemies have turned to 'softening up' tactics to corrupt our cadres. . . ." *Radio Lanchow* (Kansu), 21 December 1965; my italics. In a rather rare display of candour, a major regional newspaper in October 1966 published, as its lead article, a story which explicitly admitted that the Socialist Education Movement had been relatively ineffective in resolving certain "old, great and difficult problems" in the Chinese countryside. The basic reason for this failure was said to be the fact that "the broad masses of cadres and peasants were not armed with the thought of Mao Tse-tung." *Hung-wei pao* (Canton), 23 October 1966.

[16] See Stephen Uhalley, Jr., "The Cultural Revolution and the Aattack on the 'Three Family Village'," *The China Quarterly*, No. 27 (July-September 1966), pp. 149–161.

[17] *Radio Wuhan* (Hupeh), 29 June 1966 (my italics).

[18] The following discussion is based in part on information supplied to the author by refugees from 14 widely separated rural communes in Kwangtung province.

the most important piece of unfinished business in the majority of China's villages; and in these areas the Four Cleanup work teams continued to carry out the movement much as before, with primary emphasis on Mao-study activities.[19]

By the end of June, however, news of Chairman Mao's personal approval of the use of wall posters by the masses to expose and criticize " bourgeois powerholders " has spread to the villages.[20] Emboldened by the Party centre's injunction to launch a " full airing of views and great debates " among the worker-peasant masses,[21] the peasants in some (mainly suburban) areas soon turned to an energetic, if at times excessive and unprincipled, verbal assault upon local " freaks and monsters "—including, for the first time in many instances, leading Party cadres at the commune and production brigade levels.[22]

Many rural cadres who had previously escaped criticism and/or organizational discipline during the anti-corruption phase of the " small Four Cleanups " now came under heavy attack, while other officials who had not fared so well in the earlier period took advantage of the new situation of " big blooming and contending " to post scathing written critiques against real or imagined enemies in order to gain revenge or justify their own requests for rehabilitation.[23]

To some degree, the initial impact of the Cultural Revolution in the countryside thus served to precipitate a cathartic outpouring of

Wherever possible, interview data has been checked and correlated against official documentary sources and/or unofficial Red Guard materials.

19 In some rural areas, the launching of the Cultural Revolution apparently served to " freeze " regular administrative channels in both the Party and the government in the spring of 1966, with the result that political movements in these areas ground to a temporary halt. See Ray Wylie, " Red Guards Rebound," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. LVII, No. 10 (7 September 1967), pp. 462–466.

20 The first wall poster reportedly appeared on the campus of Peking University on 25 May. On 2 June, the *People's Daily* editorially approved the use of this technique; and on 20 June, Mao's personal approval was reported, also in the *People's Daily*.

21 *Hung-ch'i* (*Red Flag*) (Peking), No. 9 (July 1966), editorial, " Trust the Masses, Rely on the Masses."

22 It should be emphasized that throughout the period of the Cultural Revolution, only a relatively small percentage of China's rural villages were directly affected by revolutionary violence of any kind. In general, the more remote the village the smaller the impact of the Cultural Revolution. For this reason, the major lines of argumentation and analysis which appear below should not be regarded as being uniformly applicable to the political situation in all—or even most—of China's rural areas. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine on the basis of the limited amount of data presently available just how widespread and prevalent were the various phenomena described throughout this paper. With this caveat in mind, it may nevertheless be asserted that such phenomena were, *prima facie*, widespread and prevalent enough to affect significantly both the central formulation and local implementation of Party policies in the period under consideration.

23 A trend towards reinstating cadres who had been demoted or dismissed during the " small Four Cleanups " was apparently under way in some rural areas as early as April 1966. See *Sing Tao Daily* (Hong Kong), 20 May 1966. This trend was undoubtedly accelerated by the Party centre's call for launching " great debates " in the early summer of 1966.

pent-up personal resentments and antipathies, wherein private motives were rationalized and expressed in terms of officially-sanctioned political and ideological principles. Despite the fact that this initial, short-lived outbreak of "revolutionary" activity was confined to a small number of primarily suburban rural districts, and despite the fact that it was manifested mainly in written polemics rather than physical violence, it nevertheless established a pattern of intramural conflict that was to be repeated, *mutatis mutandis,* many times and in a variety of ways in the course of subsequent events.

The brief flurry of mass revolutionary activity in China's rural areas in the early summer of 1966 necessitated an attempt to define more clearly the relationship between the ongoing Socialist Education Movement and the newly-developing Cultural Revolution. Previously, the nature of this relationship had been only briefly hinted at, and in such a way as to gloss over potential points of overlap and/or conflict between the two movements.[24] Now, however, with rural Party organs and Four Cleanup work teams alike apparently immobilized by the somewhat contradictory imperatives of the two movements (*e.g.*, Mao-study versus revolutionary "big contending"), further clarification was required.

Such clarification was initially provided in the celebrated "Sixteen Points" adopted by the Central Committee's Eleventh Plenum on 8 August 1966.[25] In that document, the relationship between the two movements was defined in terms of their complementary foci. Whereas the Socialist Education Movement was described as "currently being conducted in rural villages and urban enterprises" (*i.e.*, in basic level production units), the Cultural Revolution was said to take as its key-point the "cultural and educational units and leading Party and governmental organs in the large and medium sized cities."[26]

That the two movements, though differing in focus, were clearly intended to complement each other was indicated in the assertion, also contained in the "Sixteen Points," that "the Great Cultural Revolution enriches and elevates the Socialist Education Movement . . . [and] adds momentum to the movement in cleaning up politics, ideology, organization and economics."[27]

[24] A *Hung-ch'i* editorial of early June had indicated only that the Socialist Education Movement and the Cultural Revolution were to be treated as two distinct, though complementary, movements, with the central objective of each being "to ensure that Mao Tse-tung's thought is placed in the forefront." *Hung-ch'i*, No. 8 (8 June 1966), p. 2. On the other hand, a provincial radio broadcast of 23 May had explicitly stated that the Cultural Revolution was an "important, integral part of the Socialist Education Movement." *Radio Sian* (Shensi), 23 May 1966.

[25] *Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966).

[26] *Ibid.* Article XIII.

[27] *Ibid.*

Despite the ostensible identity of purpose (*viz.*, "to rectify a small handful of capitalist roaders . . .") of the two movements at this stage, however, and despite their professed complementarity of focus, the Socialist Education Movement and the Cultural Revolution were nevertheless explicitly intended to be kept separate and distinct. Thus, the Sixteen Points concluded its brief discussion of the Socialist Education Movement by stating that the Cultural Revolution would *not* be launched in those villages and urban enterprises "where original arrangements for the [socialist education] movement are appropriate, and where the movement is going well."[28] As for those "certain localities" which did not fall into this category, "the Sixteen Points" merely indicated (somewhat obscurely) that the Cultural Revolution could be used as a "focal point" to "add momentum" to the Socialist Education Movement.

Following the mid-August 1966 formal debut and subsequent official Maoist blessing of the Red Guards as an instrument for carrying out the Cultural Revolution, the centre of revolutionary activity in the cities and surrounding countryside became the destruction of the "four olds" (old thoughts, old culture, old customs and old habits). With all schools throughout the country closed for an extended vacation, the youthful Red Guards, acting with the express consent of the Party centre, began to leave Peking and other major urban recruiting centres to "link up" (*ch'uan-lien*) and "exchange experiences" (*chiao-liu ching-yen*) with their counterparts from other areas.[29]

In the weeks following the mobilization and nationwide dispersal of Mao's "revolutionary little generals," indigenous groups of Red Guards were formed in the countryside. Like their urban counterparts, they took as their primary objective the destruction of the "four olds." Unlike their peripatetic (and therfore relatively detached) urban compatriots, however, they frequently used the official injunction—"do not be afraid of creating chaos"[30]—as a pretext for forceably resolving long-standing economic grievances and internecine political disputes in their home villages. And, in some cases, multiple Red Guard units were created within a single village or production brigade, organized along local factional lines.[31]

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] See, for example, *People's Daily*, 1 September 1966.

[30] *Radio Changsha* (Hunan), August 23, 1966.

[31] The following partisan account of the emergence of two competing Red Guard factions within a single production brigade in suburban Peking is highly instructive in revealing the socio-economic bases of intramural conflict: "In August, when Chairman Mao openly signified his support for Red Guards . . . several poor and lower-middle peasant youths took the lead in organizing the 'Poor and Lower-Middle Peasant Red Guards.' They vigorously destroyed the 'four olds' . . . and struggled against the bourgeois powerholders. . . . Frightened, [brigade Party branch secretary] Li Ch'un-ch'ang and his gang immediately called a meeting of the Party

The newly-emergent rural Red Guards came into conflict not only with competing factions within their own villages but also, on several occasions, with resident Four Cleanup work teams and/or itinerant urban students and Red Guards who had come to the countryside to "link up" with their peasant brothers. The result, in many cases, was a new high tide of "revolutionary repudiation" wherein various and diverse interest groups engaged in self-interested, often particularistic "big blooming and contending" in the villages.[32]

Who Guards the Guards?

In response to the increasing frequency and potential destructiveness of such situations of intramural conflict, the Central Committee issued a set of instructions on 14 September, "Concerning the Great Cultural Revolution in Rural Districts Below the County Level."[33] The major thrust of this directive was to prohibit urban students and Red Guards from "engaging in debates" and "exchanging revolutionary experiences" in rural units below the county level and to confine their activities in the countryside to "assisting with the autumn harvest in an organized manner."[34] In an obvious rebuke both to the fractious Red Guards and to those Four Cleanup work teams which had abandoned the Mao-study movement in order to "make [or, in the case of some work teams, suppress] revolution," the directive also indicated that the Cultural Revolution would be conducted in communes and production teams "according to original arrangements for the Four Cleanups," with major reliance now placed on the "revolutionary masses and cadres *of the units concerned.*"[35]

The 14 September directive further stated that during the busy autumn harvest season, "forces should be concentrated on harvesting, sowing and procurement, and the Four Cleanups may even be tem-

branch and decided to organize the 'Red Guards of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung' . . . Everyone except the 'five category elements' was eligible for admission into this organization. Overnight it enrolled more than 90 members, many of whom were children of cadres and 'relatives of the emperor.' There were several leading cadres in the organization. . . . They were in reality the royalist guards of Li Ch'un-ch'ang and his gang. . . ." *Nung-min yün-tung* (Peking), No. 3 (22 February 1967), in *Survey of the China Mainland Press* (*SCMP*), No. 3910 (1967), pp. 9–10.

32 For an eyewitness account of an urban versus rural Red Guard confrontation in suburban Shanghai, and of the paralysing effect this had on production work within a local commune, see Wylie, "Red Guards Rebound," *loc. cit.* A rather detailed description of conflict between the "revolutionary peasants and cadres" of a Kweiyang production brigade and a work team dispatched by a higher-level Party committee is given in *New China News Agency* (*NCNA*) (Peking), 25 February 1968, in *SCMP* No. 4128 (1968), pp. 21–24.

33 Translated in *CB*, No. 852 (1968), p. 17.

34 *Ibid.* For a somewhat earlier statement of this new policy, see *People's Daily*, 7 September 1966.

35 *CB*, No. 852, *loc. cit.* (my italics).

porarily stopped." [36] Cadres who had received their official appointments from higher-level Party committees and state organs (*i.e.*, the "principal cadres" at the commune and brigade levels) were not to be removed from office by the masses—an obvious reference to the overzealous "revolutionary repudiation" of previous months. Finally, it was held that in those Party organs and management committees at the commune and brigade levels which had become "paralysed" (by revolutionary excesses and/or cadre demoralization), immediate steps should be taken to "readjust the cadres" and "restore and strengthen the leading force." [37]

In the context of the events of the preceding summer, the implications of the 14 September directive were abundantly clear. Social order and labour discipline were to be preserved in the villages during the critical farm production season, even if this meant the (temporary) rehabilitation of some cadres who had previously been criticized, struggled against, transferred or even dismissed during the Four Cleanups and the initial "great debate" stage of the Cultural Revolution. Political agitation either from within or without was to be kept to a minimum in the countryside, and all available manpower resources were to be directed towards production.

Shortly after the promulgation of the Central Committee's 14 September directive, a *Hung-ch'i* (*Red Flag*) editorial gave a more detailed rationalization for the new prohibition against "outside interference" in rural politics:

> Workers and poor and lower-middle peasants are the main force of the revolution. They are fully capable of handling the revolutionary movement in their own organizations. Moreover, conditions in these units differ, and they have very great tasks in production. Interference from outsiders who do not understand the situation can easily affect the normal progress of production. . . .[38]

Significantly, however, the *Hung-ch'i* editorial also modified the conditional restraints which had been placed upon Red Guards in the 14 September directive by now stating that urban students and Red Guards were prohibited from "making revolution" only in those rural production units where the original Four Cleanup arrangements were "*considered appropriate by the masses.*" [39] In making this caveat, the Party centre apparently realized that the earlier injunction to temporarily halt the Four Cleanups and "restore and strengthen the leading force"

[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Hung-ch'i*, No. 12 (17 September 1966), pp. 13–14.
[39] *Ibid.* (my italics). The Sixteen Point Decision of the Eleventh Plenum had contained a similar reservation, but had made no mention of the role of local peasants in determining the appropriateness of existing Four Cleanups arrangements.

in the villages might be construed as a signal for a general counter-attack by previously discredited cadres and "five category elements." To prevent such a situation from arising, the power to summon "outside interference," if necessary, was granted to the peasants—with the tacit understanding that such summonses would first be subject to ratification by local Party committees.

In a final rebuke to urban students and Red Guards who had displayed tendencies towards overzealous and undisciplined revolutionary agitation in the villages, the above-mentioned *Hung-ch'i* editorial warned the city youths to "learn from the poor and lower-middle peasants [by] taking part in productive labour in the countryside." [40]

With the coming of the autumn harvest season, the slogan "grasp revolution, promote production" (*chua ko-ming, ts'u sheng-ch'an*) was raised to a position of prominence in the Party media.[41] What this meant, in effect, was that revolutionary debate was now to be subordinated to the seasonal demands of agricultural production.[42]

This was, to be sure, a temporary phenomenon; but it was nonetheless indicative of one of the principal dilemmas that has consistently plagued the Maoist leadership since the initiation of the Socialist Education Movement in 1962–63: how to "make revolution" without at the same time disrupting the continuity of authoritative leadership that is so crucial to the smooth functioning of normal production processes in a "command economy." [43]

With revolutionary "great debates" temporarily shelved in the autumn of 1966, indigenous propaganda groups, made up of local cadres, Youth League members, peasant activists and militiamen, were established in many rural areas to carry out ideological mobilization work in production brigades and teams in connexion with the autumn harvest. The main functions of these groups were to propagate the thought of Mao Tse-tung and popularize the current policies of the

[40] It is interesting to note that when the Red Guards were officially rebuked and demobilized in the late summer of 1968, virtually the same deprecatory language was used. See, *e.g.*, *People's Daily*, 12 September 1968.

[41] *People's Daily*, 7 September 1966; also, *Hung-ch'i*, No. 12 (17 September 1966), pp. 13–14.

[42] The duality of the slogan "grasp revolution, promote production" is indicated by the fact that the same slogan was used at the time of the "January Revolution" some four months later, to underwrite officially "power seizures" in the countryside. The tendency to place less emphasis on political and organizational rectification during the busiest agricultural seasons has been a prominent, recurrent feature of the CCP agrarian policy, particularly during periodic rural mass movements, when excessive political agitation might interfere with productive activities.

[43] It is interesting to note that periodic upsurges of Mao-study in the rural areas in recent years have generally occurred during the busiest agricultural seasons, *i.e.*, March–May and September–November. It may thus be argued that ideological study represents a basically conservative approach to the contradiction between production and politics, while political–organizational rectification (which generally receives stress in slack seasons) is a more radical approach.

Central Committee.[44] In some cases, local propaganda work was conducted by two parallel (but distinct) functional groups, for "grasping revolution" and "promoting production," respectively. All such activities were expressly organized under the "unified leadership" of local Party branches.[45]

It is significant that throughout the autumn of 1966 little or no mention of the role of Four Cleanup work teams was made in the official media. On the other hand, however, numerous references were made to the need for strengthening local autonomy over revolutionary and productive tasks, and for ensuring the unified leadership of Party organs in the countryside.[46] Since this was, by all indications, a period of relative political conservatism and consolidation in the villages, it can only be inferred that the work teams—which along with the Red Guards had been a major source of upheaval in the earlier period—were now being looked on with some misgivings by the Maoist leadership in Peking.[47]

As if to confirm this hypothesis, a Central Committee directive of 15 December stated that no new work teams would be sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. Even more significantly, the new directive called for an immediate and unconditional end to the autonomy of the Socialist Education Movement, with the added stipulation that a general re-examination of the results of the Four Cleanups would be conducted in the near future as part of the Cultural Revolution.[48] Henceforth, the Socialist Education Movement was to be supplanted in *all* areas and in all respects by the Cultural Revolution.

The January Revolution

With the achievement of what was officially described as an "unprecedented bumper harvest" in the late autumn of 1966,[49] the stage was

[44] See, *e.g.*, *Radio Chengchow* (Honan), 24 November 1966. In conjunction with the increased stress on ideological indoctrination in this period, a *JMJP* editorial of 10 November ordered peasants to remain at their production posts during the day, while confining their revolutionary activities to "spare time" after meals and in the evenings.

[45] See *Hung-ch'i*, No. 13 (1 October 1966), pp. 13–15.

[46] *Ibid.*; also *Hung-ch'i*, No. 8 (8 June 1966), p. 2. Interviews conducted with numerous refugees have confirmed the fact that the rural Party apparatus *per se* (as opposed to individual Party members) did not come under concerted attack until the winter of 1966–67.

[47] It was subsequently alleged that Four Cleanup work teams had conspired with higher level Party committees in the summer and autumn of 1966 to overthrow "several tens of thousands" of "good and relatively good" basic level cadres in Hunan province alone. See *Ts'ui-hui tzu-fan-hsien* (*Destroy the Bourgeois Reactionary Line*) (Canton), No. 1, February 1968, in *SCMP*, No. 4151 (1968), pp. 8–9.

[48] "Draft Directive of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Rural Districts" (15 December 1966), in *CB*, No. 852 (1968), pp. 31–32.

[49] *NCNA*, 1 January 1967.

set for renewed emphasis on revolutionary "blooming and contending" in the countryside. The 15 December directive thus stated that the key-point of the Cultural Revolution in the rural areas in the next stage was to "rectify a small handful of people in positions of authority within the Party who take the capitalist road, and the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and unreformed rightists." [50]

This slogan, which had been so prominent in the period prior to and immediately following the Eleventh Plenum, had received little stress in the countryside in the intervening months for reasons which appear related to the high priority attached to productive tasks during the autumn harvest. Once the harvest was over, however, the work of exposing "bourgeois powerholders" in the villages picked up where it had left off, with the important difference, however, that this time the movement was to be organized and led primarily by indigenous revolutionary forces.

In addition to reiterating the perennial demand that "styles of bureaucracy and commandism among cadres must be rectified and the system of cadre participation in labour implemented," the 15 December directive for the first time explicitly stated the organizational and political programme of the Cultural Revolution in the countryside:

> The organs of authority leading the Cultural Revolution in the rural areas are the Cultural Revolution committees of poor and lower-middle peasants, which are to be democratically elected by poor and lower-middle peasant congresses. If these organs are unequal to their duties, they may be replaced at any time by holding new elections.
>
> Streamline or re-elect production leadership groups through mass discussions. These groups are responsible for production, distribution, procurement and supply work.
>
> Build and develop [local] Red Guards, with young poor and lower-middle peasants as the backbone force . . .
>
> As a rule, the children of leading cadres of various levels in the rural areas may not take up leadership duties in the Red Guards . . .
>
> Guard against factional strife stirred up by evil people.
>
> The "four bigs" [big blooming, big contending, big debates and big character posters] must also be introduced into the Cultural Revolution in the countryside. Revolutionary ties may be forged between brigades and between communes during the leisure hours of production . . .
>
> It is not permitted to attack or retaliate upon the revolutionary masses who express views opposed to the leading bodies and who put up wall posters. Nor is it permitted to deduct their workpoints . . .

[50] *CB*, No. 852, *loc. cit.*

> Landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and rightists are absolutely not permitted to rebel against the poor and lower-middle peasants . . .
>
> During the Great Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao's works must be studied and applied in a flexible manner, with class struggle as the main theme and emphasis placed on "application". . . .[51]

The truly striking feature of this revolutionary blueprint is the total absence of any reference to the leadership of local Party organizations in the countryside. Prior to the 15 December directive the "unified leadership" of Party committees and branches at the commune and brigade levels had been officially regarded as the best guarantee for preserving the continuity of economic and political processes. Now, however, Party leadership was to be bypassed, with all power in effect reverting to the poor and lower-middle peasants' representative committees at the commune and brigade levels. The "production leadership groups" mentioned in the second paragraph above ostensibly referred to the local "promote production" organs which had been established at the production team level during the previous autumn harvest period.[52]

The significance of the injunction against children of leading cadres serving in responsible positions in rural Red Guard organizations lay in the fact that one of the major characteristics of intramural Red Guard conflict in the previous period had been the polarization of local political forces into pro-establishment and anti-establishment factions.[53] Since the anti-establishment position was now being given preferred status in the Cultural Revolution, the most ardent defenders of the status quo—*i.e.*, rural Party cadres at the commune and brigade levels and their offspring—were now temporarily excluded from occupying positions of influence. Coupled with the explicit warning against "factional strife stirred up by evil people," and with the prohibition on retaliation by leading cadres against those people who criticized them, the ban on political agitation by children of leading cadres was thus designed to minimize the possibility of a Thermidorian reaction to the Cultural Revolution.

In those villages which had already conducted—or were in the process or conducting—the Socialist Education Movement when the 15 December directive officially terminated that campaign, the political situation was undoubtedly tense and confused. In these areas Four Cleanup work teams, acting under the supervision of higher-level Party committees, had carried out investigations leading directly to the

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] See *Radio Chengchow* (Honan), 24 November 1966; also *Hung-ch'i*, No. 13 (1 October 1966), pp. 13–15.

[53] See above, p. 101, n. 31.

purging of substantial numbers of basic level cadres and the labelling of numerous suspected "five category elements." Since the December directive in effect froze the work teams while explicitly promising that the results of their investigations would be re-examined, there was thus some question as to whether the victims of the Four Cleanups were now to be rehabilitated and permitted to join the ranks of the Revolutionary Rebels. Lacking firm official guidelines on this question, many of the freshly purged cadres and newly labelled "five category elements" apparently took advantage of the Central Committee's conspicuous silence on the subject of the propriety of the Socialist Education Movement to denounce the Four Cleanup work teams as "counter-revolutionary" and to demand a wholesale "reversal of verdicts" in the countryside.[54]

Ostensibly freed from the watchful eye of the work teams and from the political domination of local Party organs, and spurred on by the official call to "seize power" issued shortly after the New Year, various dissident elements in the countryside launched an unprecedentedly violent attack against rural "powerholders" of all kinds in January and February of 1967.[55]

With the example of the "Shanghai storm" available as an officially sanctioned prototype of revolutionary power seizure, these dissident elements, acting out of a variety of motives, the common denominator of which was opposition to the status quo, soon raised the battle cry "suspect all, overthrow all."[56] It was also at this point that the first large-scale manifestations of "counter-revolutionary economism" became evident in the Chinese countryside, as various local leadership clusters competed among themselves to gain the allegiance of the peasants and discredit their opponents by offering bribes in the form of various illegal material benefits and excessive grants of absenteeism from production posts.[57]

[54] *SCMP*, No. 4151, *loc. cit.*; also *SCMP*, No. 3910, *op. cit.* p. 14.

[55] Note, for example, the following: "In December the directive of the Party centre concerning the Cultural Revolution in rural districts . . . greatly boosted the morale of the revolutionary rebels. . . . On the night the directive was proclaimed, the 'Poor and Lower-Middle Peasant Red Guards' waged a struggle against [brigade Party branch secretary] Li Ch'un-ch'ang. . . . Eventually, Li Ch'un-ch'ang was overthrown. The revolutionary rebels first seized the power of the No. 2 production team, and very soon after that they struggled against and overthrew Li Che, a powerholder who followed the capitalist road. They are now ready to seize power in the No. 1 production team and in the production brigade, but the powerholders have launched a new counter-attack. The poor and lower-middle peasants and revolutionary rebels . . . will surely win a great victory in the struggle to seize power. . . ." *SCMP*, No. 3910, *op. cit.* pp. 10–11. For a similar account of revolutionary activities in a suburban Canton commune, see *Hung-se pao-tung* (*Red Riot*) (Canton), Nos. 12–13 (8 July 1967), in *SCMP*, No. 4030 (1967), pp. 14–21.

[56] See, *e.g.*, *Hung-ch'i*, No. 4 (1 March 1967), pp. 49–50, and *passim*.

[57] *People's Daily*, 27 January and 1 February 1967. As early as 11 January the Central Committee had acknowledged that ". . . a small handful of powerholders in the

In addition to demanding reversal of previous verdicts and the overthrow of local Party cadres, the insurgents in some areas also sought to recall the Four Cleanup work teams to their rural "squatting points"—this time to be targets of criticism and struggle rather than initiators.[58]

Although the various phenomena described above were confined largely to suburban communes in the immediate vicinity of a few large municipalities where anarchist tendencies on the part of Red Guards and Revolutionary Rebels were most pronounced, the situation in the countryside was apparently serious enough by the end of January to warrant the issuance of a new Central Committee directive.[59]

Promulgated on 25 January, this new directive constituted the first formal Maoist defence of the (now defunct) Socialist Education Movement against the deprecations of the retribution-minded victims of that movement. In stating categorically that "great achievements have been made in the Four Cleanups," and in implicitly retracting the earlier promise that the results of the Four Cleanups would be generally reexamined during the Cultural Revolution, the directive was clearly aimed at limiting the scope of rural insurgency.[60]

Although it was officially admitted that "some comrades" in the Four Cleanup work teams had committed mistakes in their work, it was nevertheless held that such mistakes were the fault, not of the work teams themselves, but rather of the "person who originally put forward the erroneous line that was left in form but right in essence"—*i.e.*, Liu Shao-ch'i.[61] Because of this, it was deemed "inappropriate" for rural peasants and cadres to retain or recall work teams for struggle, and it was held that individual complaints against work team members were to be registered by writing to higher-level Party authorities rather than by taking direct action.

Finally, the 25 January directive declared a near-total injunction against the reversal of Four Cleanup verdicts in the countryside with the statement that

> Party are inciting a few people, who are ignorant of the true facts, to indulge freely in economism and wage struggle against the socialist state. . . . They incite some of the masses to demand promotion and wage increases and to freely demand money and material supplies from the state. They incite the masses, who went to settle down in the rural villages a few years ago . . . to return to the cities to put forward unreasonable economic demands. . . ." "Notification by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Opposition to Economism" (11 January 1967), in *CB*, No. 852, pp. 40–41.

[58] "At present, some rural villages, enterprises and commercial units want to call back members of the Four Cleanup work teams for struggle. . . ." Central Committee Notice of 25 January 1967; see below, n. 59.

[59] "Notification on Safeguarding the Achievements of the Four Cleanups Movement" (25 January 1967), in *CB*, No. 852, p. 52.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] *Ibid.* This was the first official reference to Liu Shao-ch'i's "erroneous cadre policy" in the Socialist Education Movement. See above, p. 95, n. 7.

> It is necessary to safeguard the achievements of the Four Cleanups. Those Party cadres taking the capitalist road who have been dismissed from office, and the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and rightists who have been labelled, are absolutely not permitted to reverse the verdicts passed on them, nor are they allowed to make trouble.[62]

A *Hung-ch'i* commentary, published in early March 1967, shed further light on the purpose of this injunction by acknowledging that it was precisely those rural cadres and "five category elements" who had been struggled against during the Four Cleanups that were now in the vanguard of the movement to reverse verdicts and overthrow all those in authority.[63] In calling for the total repudiation of this "adverse current," the *Hung-ch'i* commentary repeated earlier claims, made initially at the time of the Eleventh Plenum, that the Socialist Education Movement had been conceived by Chairman Mao himself and thus constituted a "great revolution" in which the enthusiasm of the masses had been greatly elevated and the enemies of socialism dealt a "severe blow."[64] Various allegations raised by dissident elements to the effect that the Four Cleanups had "made a mess of things" were dismissed as "utterly vicious attacks by the class enemy"; and the Four Cleanup work teams were generally exonerated of responsibility for making mistakes on the grounds that

> . . . an overwhelming majority of them acted according to Chairman Mao's instructions. They ate, lived, laboured and struggled together with the poor and lower-middle peasants, developed a profound proletarian friendship with them and contributed their part to the Four Cleanups movement.[65]

The problem with both the January Central Committee directive and the March *Hung-ch'i* commentary was that neither document provided concrete, unequivocal guidelines for differentiating between those cadres and "five category elements" who had been *rightfully* struggled against as capitalist roaders during the Four Cleanups, on the one hand, and those who had been *wrongly* criticized and labelled during the movement, on the other. Furthermore, in upholding the general propriety of the results of the Four Cleanups, two significant caveats had been implicitly raised. First, since the January directive had expressly enjoined only those "Party cadres taking the capitalist road" not to reverse verdicts, the question of how to handle *non*-Party cadres who had been criticized and/or dismissed during the Four Cleanups was presumably still left open; and second, the official

[62] *Ibid.*
[63] *Hung-ch'i*, No. 4 (1 March 1967), pp. 49–50.
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] *Ibid.*

admission that certain mistakes had been committed by the work teams left open the possibility that errors of *omission*, as well as commission had occurred, and that some cadres who had managed to "traverse the pass" (*kuo-kuan*) during the Four Cleanups might now find themselves classified as "capitalist roaders" during the Cultural Revolution.[66]

It soon became apparent that the political situation in the countryside was far too complex and multi-faceted to be handled in terms of the rather crude, simplistic and ambiguous guidelines proposed in January and February. In addition to the areas of official equivocation mentioned above, at least three other factors served to complicate the issue. In the first place, the Four Cleanups had never been systematically carried to conclusion in many—indeed most—of China's rural villages.[67] Hence, no reliable precedents were available to the "revolutionary masses" and "revolutionary cadres" in these areas to help them distinguish in principle between proletarian and bourgeois power-holders. In such a situation, the call to "safeguard the achievements of the Four Cleanups" could have little or no influence.

Secondly, the initiation of an all-out campaign of vilification against Liu Shao-ch'i in the early spring of 1967 brought with it the official allegation that substantial numbers of "good" and "comparatively good" rural cadres (Party and non-Party alike) had been overthrown by Liu-inspired work teams in the middle stages of the Four Cleanups—a revelation which at least partially controverted earlier claims concerning the overwhelming success of the Socialist Education Movement.[68] Nor were the grievances of those cadres who (rightly or wrongly) felt themselves to have suffered injustice at the hands of the Four Cleanup work teams salved by the Central Committee's January ruling, that they could take their complaints in writing to higher level Party organs; for one of the major consequences of the January Revolution had been the

[66] Throughout the month of February the Party consistently hedged on this question by stating that in those areas where the Four Cleanups had been conducted, "most" of the surviving basic level cadres were "good" or "comparatively good." See, *e.g.*, *Nan-fang jih-pao* (*Southern Daily*) (Canton), 24 February 1967, in *SCMP*, No. 3904 (1967), pp. 12–13.

[67] The "Twenty-three Articles" of January 1965 had stated that the Socialist Education Movement would be completed in one-third of China's villages by the end of 1967, and that the movement would be terminated nationally by 1970 or 1971. See Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing*, Appendix F, Article XI. Although there are indications that the movement was accelerated somewhat in the winter of 1965–66 (with the advent of the Mao-study movement), official media reports in the summer and autumn of 1966 confirmed the fact that the Four Cleanups had been completed in only about one-third of the rural villages by the time the Cultural Revolution was inaugurated. See, *e.g.*, *Radio Changsha* (Hunan), 29 July 1966.

[68] In some areas it was alleged that as many as 70–85 per cent. of the basic level rural cadres had been wrongly purged during the Four Cleanups. See, *e.g.*, *NCNA*, 18 April 1967, in *SCMP*, No. 3924 (1967), pp. 11–12; also *Peking Review*, No. 38 (15 September 1967), p. 26; and *China Pictorial*, No. 1 (January 1968), pp. 27–28.

near-total paralysis of Party committees at the county, special district and provincial levels.[69]

Even more significant, however, was the fact that the major points of conflict in the villages were in many cases only loosely (if at all) related to questions of broad political or ideological principle. Although local power struggles were routinely rationalized (by all parties concerned) in terms of proletarians versus capitalist roaders, the extreme variability of local political conditions in rural China, and the partial obscurity and inconsistency of factional differences, rendered reality considerably too complex and problematical to be interpreted in straightforward black and white terms, or in terms of undifferentiated ideological exhortations.[70] Because of this, and because in the midst of revolutionary upheaval self-preservation and self-aggrandizement are more powerful inducements to action than abstract considerations of principle, the question of the over-all propriety (or impropriety) of the Socialist Education Movement was largely irrelevant to the factional conflict in the villages.[71]

For all of the above reasons, the Party centre's call to "safeguard the achievements of the Four Cleanups" was largely ineffectual as a criterion for discriminating between appropriate power seizures and inappropriate ones. It was in this situation of uncertainty that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was called on actively to assume the role of arbiter by "supporting the left" in the more serious cases of factional conflict in the countryside.[72]

Since the Four Cleanup work teams were often the immediate focus of factional controversy in the rural areas (and this was particularly true in those areas which had conducted the Socialist Education Movement in the latter half of 1966, and where work teams were therefore still in residence at the time of the January Revolution), one of the

[69] See Charles Neuhauser, "The Impact of the Cultural Revolution on the Chinese Communist Party Machine," *Asian Survey*, Vol. VIII, No. 6 (June 1968), pp. 465–488.

[70] For a cogent illustration of the type of normative confusion engendered by the attempt to evaluate local power struggles solely in terms of proletarians versus capitalist roaders, see Richard Baum, "A Parting of Paupers," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. LIX, No. 1 (4 January 1968), pp. 17–19.

[71] There is a certain similarity in this respect between the January Revolution of 1967 and the Russian *Yezhovshchina* of 1936–38. In both cases official encouragement to denounce "enemies of the state" tended to strengthen the hand of opportunist and/or career-minded elements who sought to make personal capital out of the purge by denouncing their superiors; and in both cases the chain of irresponsible denunciations tended to "overshadow and depress all the constructive enterprises of the state." See Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 439–442.

[72] "Decision of the Central Committee, the State Council, the Central Military Commission and the Cultural Revolution Group under the Central Committee on Resolute Support for the Revolutionary Masses of the Left" (23 January 1967), in *CB*, No. 852, pp. 49–50. For a case study of PLA intervention in a rural factional dispute, see Baum, "A Parting of Paupers," *loc. cit.*

primary tasks of the PLA rural arbitration teams was to attempt to neutralize the work team issue as a source of local conflict. Armed with a broad Central Military Commission mandate to take all necessary steps to suppress physical violence,[73] PLA representatives in the countryside directed those Four Cleanup work teams which had been "retained" in the villages for purposes of struggle to disband and leave the countryside. This action was formally endorsed in a Central Committee resolution of 17 February, which specifically required all work teams dispatched in the period since the initiation of the Cultural Revolution in May 1966 to return to their home units.[74]

With the issue of the work teams thus at least partially defused, the next major task confronting both the Maoist leadership in Peking and the PLA leadership in the countryside was the articulation of a more realistic and practical set of standards for evaluating the conflicting claims of rival factions in the villages. It was decided that henceforth the question of who was and who was not a "capitalist roader" would be approached in empirical fashion, by investigating fully the class backgrounds, political histories and bases of local popular support of various rival claimants, rather than by relying on the single, frequently misleading criterion of an individual's previous success (or failure) in having survived (or not survived) the Four Cleanups.[75]

One problem that proved particularly intractable in the spring of 1967 was the restoration of cadre morale and initiative in basic level rural production units. In the January–February high tide of "revolutionary" power seizures, large numbers of rural cadres had been (often indiscriminately) criticized and struggled against as "bourgeois powerholders." As a result, the production brigade and team level cadres in many areas had apparently responded by lying down on the job and refusing to carry out their duties.[76]

Coming as it did on the eve of the spring planting season, the phenomenon of widespread cadre demoralization was undoubtedly a source of considerable anxiety to the Maoist leadership. In order to quell the fears of basic level cadres, and to overcome their unwillingness to assume active leadership in the production process, the Central

[73] "Order of the Military Commission of the Central Committee" (28 January 1967), in *CB*, No. 852, pp. 54–55.

[74] "Notice of the CCP Central Committee on the Question of Dealing with Work Teams in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (17 February 1967), in *CB*, No. 852, p. 80.

[75] See, for example, *NCNA*, 25 February 1968, in *SCMP*, No. 4128 (1968), pp. 21–24; also *Radio Tientsin* (Hopeh), 12 December 1967.

[76] Such attitudes as "it is unlucky to be a cadre"; "being a cadre offends people . . . when a campaign comes you get rectified again"; and "when we [cadres] are criticized we have no prestige" were reported to be widespread among basic level cadres in many provinces. See, for example, *Radio Wuhan* (Hupeh), 27 February 1967; also *Radio Nanchang* (Kiangsi), 20 and 28 February 1967.

Committee, on 20 February, published an "Open Letter" to the nation's poor and lower-middle peasants, calling on them actively to support and cherish all rural cadres who were "willing to make amends" for past mistakes or shortcomings.[77] Even those cadres who had been removed from office during the Four Cleanups were now to be allowed to rehabilitate themselves by "displaying new merit" in spring farming.[78] Clearly, the main emphasis in the villages was once again on the unification and consolidation of cadre ranks.

In order to provide concrete guidelines for restricting the scope of legitimate power seizures in the countryside, and in order to provide the rural cadres with a needed sense of security against indiscriminate attacks at the hands of the "revolutionary masses," a new definition of the term "people in positions of authority" (*tang-ch'üan p'ai*) was officially formulated in late February. Previously, this term had been widely (though not uniformly) interpreted to apply to Party and administrative cadres at all levels and in any organization. Now, however, it was necessary to restore the shaken confidence and morale of basic level rural cadres. Accordingly, it was ruled that

> Since production team cadres are not divorced from production, they are only charged with the duties of making production arrangements, organizing labour forces and carrying out such concrete tasks as are planned by communes and production brigades. In this sense, they are by no means "people in positions of authority." Neither are the ordinary cadres of the production brigades. Therefore, with the exception of a very few "five category elements" who have wormed their way into production brigades and teams to become cadres or ordinary cadres . . . the rest of them should not be subjected to struggle, let alone treated as the target of struggle. . . .[79]

Despite such assurances, however, and despite the visible presence of PLA "support the left" arbitration teams in the countryside and the Party centre's renewed stress on support for and rehabilitation of previously discredited or demoralized cadres, the rising tide of revolutionary violence in the villages was not easily brought under control.[80]

[77] "Letter from the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants and Cadres at All Levels in Rural People's Communes All Over the Country" (20 February 1967), in *Peking Review*, No. 9 (24 February 1967), p. 6.

[78] *Ibid.* Throughout this period rural cadres were uniformly exhorted to "stand fast at their posts" and join with the "leading cadres," militia members and "revolutionary peasants" in the creation of new "three-way alliances" (*san chieh-ho*) in the rural districts. See *NCNA*, 22 February 1967.

[79] *Nan-fang jih-pao*, 24 February 1967, in *SCMP*, No. 3904 (1967), pp. 12–13.

[80] Provincial radio broadcasts throughout March and April continued to cite numerous instances of anti-cadre struggles and leadership "paralysis" in the countryside. Such reports were almost always accompanied by fresh pleas to unify and consolidate the cadre ranks, and by assurances to the basic level cadres that they were not the legitimate targets of revolutionary repudiation. Such assurances were apparently honoured more in the breach than in the observance, however.

Part of the explanation for this undoubtedly lay in the near total paralysis of leading Party organs at the county level, paralysis which had the effect of rendering the Central Committee's new, conciliatory cadre policy enforceable only at the discretion of resident PLA unit commanders. In many cases, however, these local military representatives were simply unwilling to go out on a limb, either by actively taking sides in internecine village power struggles or by forcibly suppressing such struggles; instead, the PLA frequently opted for a relatively "safe," morally neutral posture of waiting to support whichever faction happened to emerge victorious.[81]

By early March, with seasonal production pressures weighing increasingly hard on the countryside, the central leadership was forced to take resolute action to preserve social order and labour discipline in the villages. A Central Committee directive of 7 March thus stated categorically and unconditionally that there were to be "no further power seizures in production brigades and teams during the spring farming season."[82] At the same time, it was stated that in those production brigades and teams "where leadership has already been paralysed" (by factional strife or cadre demoralization) "activist elements" among the poor and lower-middle peasants, militia members and "revolutionary cadres" were empowered to organize a "provisional leading group" to grasp spring farm work.[83]

With Four Cleanup work teams virtually banished from the countryside, with the vast majority of basic level cadres exempted by definition from the status of "powerholders," with new power seizures at least temporarily prohibited and with the PLA now assuming *de facto* leadership over spring farming,[84] a certain amount of social order and discipline was restored in the villages by the end of May 1967.[85] Nevertheless, the underlying roots of factionalism ultimately proved infinitely more difficult to suppress than the outward manifestations; and swelling numbers of illegal immigrants to Hong Kong from the rural areas of south China in the autumn and winter of 1967–68 provided

[81] For an interesting variation on this formula, see Baum, "A Parting of Paupers," *loc. cit.*

[82] "CCP Central Committee Notice on No Seizure of Power in Production Brigades and Teams During the Spring Farming Season" (7 March 1967), in *CB*, No. 852, p. 94; see also *JMJP*, 13 March 1967.

[83] *Ibid.* For a somewhat earlier statement of this policy, see *Radio Nanchang* (Kiangsi), 28 February 1967.

[84] "In special districts and counties, no matter whether power has been seized or not, the leading cadres of PLA units must set up production leadership organs consisting mainly of the army and with the participation of local cadres and poor and lower-middle peasants, to be responsible for leading spring farming. . . ." Summary of Kweichow Military District Three-Level Cadre Meeting, *Radio Kweiyang*, 28 February 1967.

[85] According to the reports of numerous peasant refugees, the summer of 1967 was, with a few notable exceptions, a relatively "orderly" period in the countryside.

ample testimony of the continuing undercurrent of political turmoil in the countryside.[86]

Maoist praise for the over-all results of the Socialist Education Movement continued to be articulated publicly until the late autumn of 1967.[87] At that point, however, it was officially (though not publicly) admitted for the first time that during the final stages of the movement—*i.e.*, in the nine-month period from the formal initiation of the Cultural Revolution in May 1966 to the final recall of all work teams in February 1967—large numbers of revolutionary cadres and peasants had been erroneously labelled as counter-revolutionary elements by the Four Cleanup work teams.[88] Consequently, in the late summer and autumn of 1967, a series of executive orders was issued in the name of the Central Committee which had the effect of nullifying virtually all verdicts imposed by rural work teams in the period after the initiation of the Cultural Revolution[89]; and in a rather blatant distortion of the historical record, it was now held that the Socialist Education Movement was officially terminated on 16 May 1966 (the date of the Central Committee circular condemning P'eng Chen), rather than the following 15 December (the date of the formal merging of the two movements).[90] Thus, the book was officially closed on one of the most complex—and as yet only imperfectly understood—episodes in the entire history of the Chinese People's Republic.

[86] From an average (estimated) monthly influx of 300–400 refugees in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, the number swelled to a monthly average of 1,100–1,200 in the winter of 1967–68.

[87] The last significant public reference to the "great achievements" of the Socialist Education Movement came on 23 November 1967, in a joint editorial published by *Jen-min jih-pao*, *Hung-ch'i* and *Chieh-fang-chün pao*. Interestingly enough, this editorial, which also contained the first (and only) official attack against Teng Hsiao-p'ing for his role in drafting the "Later Ten Points" of September 1963, marked the demise of *Hung-ch'i's* editorial staff. The journal was not published again until 1 July 1968, following the announced purge of Chi Pen-yü, Wang Li and Kuan Feng, members of the top editorial staff, as "ultra-leftists."

[88] See, for example, *SCMP*, No. 4151, *loc. cit.*; also *NCNA*, 28 February 1968; and *Peking Review*, No. 27 (5 July 1968), p. 15. A provincial radio broadcast of early April 1969 claimed that in the "early stages" of the Cultural Revolution, 98 out of the 182 brigade- and team-level cadres in a certain Kweichow commune were submitted to "cruel struggles," while even those not so persecuted were forced to "stand aside without exception" in what was described as a "reign of white terror." *Radio Kweiyang* (Kweichow), 1 April 1969.

[89] See the collection of documents concerning the question of "reversal of verdicts" and "rehabilitation of cadres" in *Survey of China Mainland Magazines* (*SCMM*), No. 617 (1968), pp. 8–50. Note particularly the following report of a conversation held between members of the Joint Cultural Revolution Reception Centre of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee and representatives of a Kwangtung mass organization on 15 November 1967: "*Question*: Is it right or wrong for us to brand as "counter-revolutionaries" or "bad elements" those who have survived the Four Cleanups campaign . . .? *Answer*: It is wrong. . . ." (*Ibid.* p. 19).

[90] *Ibid.* pp. 46–50; also *SCMP*, No. 4151, *loc. cit.*

Summary and Conclusions

In retrospect, it appears that the oft-reiterated Maoist assertion that the Cultural Revolution was a direct outgrowth and generic extension of the Socialist Education Movement, while containing substantial elements of truth, is misleading—and therefore subject to modification—in at least five aspects.

In the first place, it is apparent that if (as the Maoists have claimed) the "Twenty-three Articles" of January 1965 served as an open declaration of war against high level "capitalist roaders" within the Party, then the outcome of that war—at least in its pre-Cultural Revolution phase—must have been the source of considerable personal disappointment to Mao. Not only did the Party apparatus, particularly at the middle and upper levels, emerge relatively unscathed from the Socialist Education Movement, but Mao's own position of hegemony within the Party increasingly came under the threat of direct challenge in the latter stages of the movement.[91]

Secondly, and closely related to this, is the fact that the extraordinary Party committee "revolutionization" campaign of October 1965–March 1966, together with the concomitant nationwide movement to study Chairman Mao's works, were intended primarily as emergency emendations to, rather than linear extensions of, the Socialist Education Movement.[92] The failure of these emergency measures to stem the tide of rising opposition to Mao's radical thesis of "class struggle," moreover, undoubtedly constituted a prime factor in Mao's subsequent decision to expand and intensify the Cultural Revolution.[93]

Thirdly, the precipitate termination of the Socialist Education Movement in the early winter of 1966–67, when viewed in the light of the subsequent revelation that large numbers of revolutionary cadres and peasants had been erroneously labelled as "counter-revolutionary ele-

[91] The near-total absence of significant personnel changes in Party committees at the provincial, regional and central levels in 1965 tends to negate the Maoist argument that the "Twenty-three Articles" constituted a "decisive turning point" in the struggle between two roads—at least in the phenomenological sense. Mao's position of hegemony within the Party was apparently called into question for the first time at a Central Committee working conference in September 1965. See Bridgham, *loc. cit.* (note 13).

[92] See above, p. 97, n. 13, and p. 98, n. 15; also Neuhauser, "The Impact of the Cultural Revolution," *loc. cit.*

[93] Note particularly the Party's February 1966 complaint that many leading cadres were "outwardly compliant but inwardly disobedient" with respect to Mao's dictum that politics must take command over production. See *Radio Changsha* (Hunan), 1 February 1966. Note also the July 1966 allegation that "the main reason why the anti-Party, anti-socialist, revisionist elements were able to conceal themselves for a considerable period of time was that they waved 'red flags' to oppose the red flag, carried the signboard of Mao Tse-tung's thought to oppose Mao Tse-tung's thought . . . and carried the communist banner to engage in anti-communist intrigues. . . ." *Hung-ch'i*, No. 9 (July 1966).

ments" by Four Cleanup work teams in the latter half of 1966, leads to the conclusion that, at least in Mao's eyes, the Socialist Education Movement began to lose its correct orientation in the period following the initiation of the Cultural Revolution in the spring of 1966.[94] This conclusion is reinforced, moreover, by two additional considerations: first, the Maoists' *post facto* (and otherwise inexplicable) decision to regard 16 May 1966 as the terminal date of the Socialist Education Movement; and second, the corollary decision which served to limit the regime's official defence of the "great achievements" of the Socialist Education Movement to those "correct" verdicts passed by Four Cleanup work teams *prior to* 16 May, while at the same time explicitly sanctioning the reversal of all "erroneous" verdicts imposed after that date.[95]

Fourthly, available evidence tends to indicate that by the spring of 1967 few of the major programmatic goals and operational instrumentalities of the Socialist Education Movement remained in effect. Provincial, special district, county and municipal-level Party committees, which had assumed major responsibility for directing and co-ordinating the over-all implementation of the movement, were now either overthrown or completely paralysed. Basic level rural cadres, who had once been the major target of the Four Cleanups, were now officially exempted from being struggled against by the "revolutionary masses." Party-led work teams, which had been the major instrument for carrying out the Four Cleanups in the villages, were now dissolved and replaced by PLA work teams.

Finally, and closely related to the above, it may be argued that a major contradiction between the Socialist Education Movement and the Cultural Revolution lay in the widely differing organizational bases, operational methods and target groups of the two movements. As a Party-organized and directed "revolution from above," the on-going Socialist Education Movement proved to be fundamentally incompatible

[94] It is suggested that since the Socialist Education Movement was directly implemented by work teams dispatched by regular Party organs at the provincial, special district, county and municipal levels, the work teams themselves were "conservatively" oriented with respect to the question of attacking and repudiating "power-holders" in the period after 16 May. This hypothesis is consistent with the known facts concerning the activities of urban work teams in June and July 1966. See Baum and Teiwes, "Liu Shao-ch'i and the Cadre Question," *loc. cit.*

[95] In the light of the above developments, it is likely that in the period after 16 May, the Four Cleanup work teams, acting under the protective mantle of higher-level Party organs, tacitly conspired in the initiation of a counter-offensive against those dissatisfied elements in the countryside who were demanding the overthrow of the rural *status quo*—as represented by local Party committees and by the work teams themselves. The Maoist charge of "attacking the many to protect the few" undoubtedly refers to this type of pre-emptive, self-protective action. See, for example, "A Party Branch Secretary Grows Up in the Course of Class Struggle," *Peking Review*, No. 27 (5 July 1968), pp. 14–16.

with the new, mass-oriented Cultural Revolution, which was by nature a "revolution from below" directed primarily against powerholders within the Party apparatus itself.

Rural Party organizations (and the work teams under their jurisdiction) understandably proved incapable of serving as willing instruments of their own destruction; nor were they content to sit passively by in the face of a rising tide of mass criticism and repudiation. For this reason, a rapid polarization of rural political forces around pro- and anti-establishment positions occurred in some (primarily suburban) rural areas in the autumn and winter of 1966-1967. And since the Socialist Education Movement had in effect served to define the pre-cultural revolutionary *status quo* in these areas, the results of that Movement quite naturally became a central focus of controversy in the initial stages of the Cultural Revolution.