

Mao's Cultural Revolution in 1967: The Struggle to Seize Power

By PHILIP BRIDGHAM

Introduction

The aim of every revolutionary struggle in the world is the seizure and consolidation of political power. **Mao Tse-tung.**¹

In January 1967, Communist China's "great proletarian cultural revolution" entered a new stage—a stage of violent overthrow of all those in positions of authority in the Party and government who refused to accept Mao Tse-tung's new "revolutionary" order. Erupting in Shanghai under the name of the "January Revolution," this frenzied drive to "seize power" initiated a period of nation-wide violence and disorder.

Although implicit in what had gone before,² the strident call to seize power transformed the Cultural Revolution from an effort to reform the existing structure of power into an all-out assault against the power structure itself. As originally envisaged by Mao Tse-tung, this revolutionary act of "seizure of power from below" was to have resulted in the creation of a new revolutionary power structure dominated by his "revolutionary Leftist" supporters and modelled after the Paris Commune.³ As the ultimate expression of Mao's mass-line approach to politics, this undertaking to rely on the "revolutionary masses" to create a viable substitute for a bureaucratic party and government apparatus was probably doomed from the outset.)

Factionalism, more than any other single factor, undermined Mao's grand design to mobilise the forces of the revolutionary Left to seize power from his enemies in 1967. Explaining late in the year why this movement had failed, Premier Chou En-lai pointed to alternating "seizures" and "counter-seizures" of power by contending factions as

¹ Quoted by Lin Piao in "Speech at Peking Rally Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the October Revolution," New China News Agency (NCNA), 6 November 1967.

² For a survey of developments in the Cultural Revolution through 1966, see Philip Bridgham, "Mao's 'Cultural Revolution': Origin and Development," *The China Quarterly*, No. 29 (January–March 1967).

³ See the editorial "On the Proletarian Revolutionaries' Struggle to Seize Power," *Hung Ch'i (Red Flag)*, No. 3, 3 February 1967, in *Peking Review*, 3 February 1967, p. 13.

having produced a situation in which "seizure of power became surrender of power and power could not be retained."⁴ Because of factionalism in the ranks of the revolutionary Left, it had been necessary to relinquish the power seized to military control committees set up in nearly all provinces and major cities by the People's Liberation Army.

Although not mentioned by Chou, (another important product of Mao's call to seize power from below was to inculcate contempt among Red Guards and revolutionary rebels for authority of any kind, including the authority of new "revolutionary" institutions and even that of the party Centre.) The net effect of the struggle to seize power in 1967 was to diminish, rather than increase, Mao's power to control developments in Communist China.

THE "JANUARY REVOLUTION"

The central task of the great proletarian cultural revolution, in the last analysis, is the struggle by which the proletariat seizes power from the handful of people within the party taking the capitalist road.—Commentator article in *Red Flag*, "Proletarian Revolutionaries, Unite," 16 January 1967.

Although the 8 August 1966 Central Committee decision on the Cultural Revolution had predicted "relatively great resistance" once the Red Guards were turned loose on society, (the extent and effectiveness of this opposition was clearly beyond expectation) The nature of this "opposition,"⁵ was analysed and explained by Ch'en Po-ta (head of the Cultural Revolution Group of the Central Committee) at an important party work conference held in Peking in October. The principal opposition, according to Ch'en, had come from provincial party secretaries who, "afraid of losing their positions and prestige . . . instigated workers and peasants to fight against the students."⁶

(The provincial party and government apparatus had been able to repulse the first attack by Red Guards in August and September by mobilising workers and peasants in their defence. To prevent this from happening again, it was necessary for the Maoists to infiltrate and take over these opposition strongholds) This campaign began immedi-

⁴ "Premier Chou En-lai Gives Important Instructions," in *Kung-nung-ping Chan-pao* (Worker-Peasant-Soldier Combat News), Survey of China Mainland Press (SCMP) (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate General), No. 4078, p. 4.

⁵ The term "opposition" is an unfortunate one, since it suggests conscious resistance to Mao's directives concerning the Cultural Revolution. Much of the "opposition," however, has come from those who consider themselves loyal supporters of Mao but who either have misunderstood the vague and contradictory guidelines laid down to govern the Cultural Revolution or have acted in self-defence.

⁶ "A Summary of the Last Two Months of Progress in the Cultural Revolution," in *Tung-jeng Chan-pao* (East Wind Combat News), 11 December 1966, Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) (Washington, D.C.), No. 40, 488, p. 13.

ately after the October work conference, with the formation of new "revolutionary rebel" organisations in industrial and mining establishments, party and government organs, and, to a lesser extent, among the peasantry.⁷ The expansion of the Cultural Revolution into the government and the economy engendered increasing resistance which, in turn, led to a final test of strength when Mao exhorted his supporters to "seize power" in all those party, government and economic organisations which continued to resist.

(If the expansion of the Cultural Revolution in November and December to cover industry and the countryside was intended primarily to re-establish Mao's control over the provinces, there was a parallel escalation and extension of the revolution at the centre encompassing the party, government and military control apparatus in Peking.) In a major speech to a Red Guard rally on 18 December, Chiang Ch'ing (deputy head of the Cultural Revolution Group and, of greater importance, Mao Tse-tung's wife) charged that the municipal public security bureau had been largely responsible for recent bloody clashes in Peking. Describing the bureau, along with the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Supreme People's Court, as bourgeois in nature, she then called upon the Red Guards in her audience to "rise up in rebellion" and "take over" these government organs. The movement to seize power from below by calling upon the revolutionary Left to take over government and party organs had begun.

On 26 December, addressing the newly organised "All-China Red Workers General Rebellion Corps," Madame Mao (together with Ch'en Po-ta) endorsed the recent "seizure" of the Ministry of Labour by this revolutionary rebel organisation, as well as its intention to take over the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.⁸ With this call to the revolutionary Left to seize control of China's labour organisations, the stage was set for the outbreak in Shanghai of what has come to be known as the January Revolution: the Maoist drive to seize power in the party and government apparatus on a nation-wide scale.

(The January Revolution in Shanghai resulted in a Pyrrhic victory. Instead of winning over Shanghai's million-odd workers, it antagonised a large proportion of them, precipitating a large-scale strike which for a time crippled the economy of Shanghai. This in turn resulted in the complete paralysis and breakdown of local government and necessitated a premature, disorderly seizure of power in Shanghai for which Mao's revolutionary rebels were ill-prepared.)

⁷ See the editorial "Welcome the High Tide of the Cultural Revolution in Industrial and Mining Enterprises" in *Jen-min Jih-pao* (*People's Daily*), 26 December 1966.

⁸ Accounts of these speeches by Mme. Mao, taken from Red Guard wall posters, appeared in the Japanese press. See, for example, *Yomiuri*, 4 January 1967.

It is important to understand the nature of the opposition generated in Shanghai at this time, for it was to be duplicated in nearly all major cities and provinces, becoming so widespread and tenacious that the "seize power" movement in China soon ground to a halt. Although depicted in every case as the product of "base and sinister tricks" played by the "handful" of Mao's enemies, the actions of the "opposition" at this time were in most cases taken by organisations and groups who considered themselves to be loyal supporters of Mao and the Cultural Revolution. This was true even of the general strike carried out in late December by Shanghai's railroad, harbour and public utility workers, a strike motivated primarily by political grievances directed not at Mao but at the violence and radicalism of young revolutionary rebel workers in that city.⁹

Other strikes in Shanghai and elsewhere at this time were motivated by economic grievances. But instead of being provoked by "reactionary elements" (as alleged in the important 12 January *Red Flag* editorial, "Oppose Economism and Smash the Latest Counterattack by the Bourgeois Reactionary Line"), these strikes were the direct result of exhortations by Madame Mao (together with Ch'en Po-ta and other members of the Cultural Revolution Group) to large numbers of contract workers, temporary workers and apprentice workers to rise up against the "political oppression and economic exploitation" to which they had been subjected by Liu Shao-ch'i and Teng Hsiao-p'ing and all others responsible for foisting these revisionist, capitalist systems on China's working class. As Madame Mao put it in the 26 December speech noted above, these "contract and temporary workers have suffered the most . . . and therefore their spirit of revolt is the greatest." But when they rose in revolt, demanding an end to the low-wage policy which was a common feature of all these systems, they were then told that they had been hoodwinked into following the "evil road of economism" and were "pursuing only personal and short-term interests."

Another form of economism (defined as "the conspiracy of issuing the 'sugar-coated bullets' of economic benefits . . . to corrupt the masses' revolutionary will") at this time in Shanghai and elsewhere was the payment of year-end bonuses and of travel allowances to enable large numbers of revolutionary workers to go to Peking to engage in the "large-scale exchange of revolutionary experience," as the student Red Guards had done before them. The responsibility for this unexpected development must also be borne in large part by the Maoists themselves. On the one hand, party and government cadres in the

⁹ For an account by one of the organisers of this strike, see the article by Li Shih-yin in *Kuang-ming Daily*, 25 January 1967.

industrial (also agricultural) sector were accused of "exploiting" and suppressing the workers. On the other hand, the workers were invited to rise up in rebellion against these revisionist, capitalist systems of exploitation and, if need be, to carry their grievances to higher authorities. Having effectively undermined the authority of the local cadres (who quickly succumbed to worker demands for travel funds and economic benefits), the Maoists then accused them (in the words of Chou En-lai) of engaging in a "big plot to pass the burden of all kinds of contradictions [*i.e.*, problems] up to us."¹⁰

The Maoists were confronted with a number of serious problems as they took stock of the Cultural Revolution in mid-January 1967. First, more than a million workers had descended on Peking to protest against their "exploitation" by local party and government cadres. Next, there were reports of widespread disorder and bloody clashes in a number of cities and provinces where revolutionary rebels were rising up to seize power in response to Mao's call to emulate the example of Shanghai. Also, the preliminary results of the "new stage" of extending the Cultural Revolution into factories and mines were at hand, results which showed that both revolution and production in the industrial sector had been adversely affected by sending in revolutionary students without adequate preparation.

Finally, reports on the progress of the seize power movement in Shanghai revealed growing chaos following the breakdown of party and government controls in that city. What had been hailed just a few days previously as a "brilliant example" was now repudiated as a model for general emulation. Addressing a workers' rally on 15 January, both Chou En-lai and Ch'en Po-ta stressed that "seizure and control of everything . . . as has been done in Shanghai" was "not good" and was not to be repeated in Peking. Indeed what had happened in Shanghai was now depicted as but another example of plotting by the enemy, who wanted "to wreck the social order and the process of production and thereby make us a laughing stock" by "withdrawing behind the scenes while allowing you to place all organizations under your seizure and control." Rather than the formula of "seizure and control," Chou and Ch'en advocated the "supervision formula" as "much better and more practical"—that is, keeping party and government cadres on the job under supervision by the revolutionary rebels.¹¹

Another of the difficulties involved in taking over power in Shanghai (as noted by Chou in an 18 January speech) was the inability of

¹⁰ For a good analysis of this phenomenon of "economism," see Evelyn Anderson, "Shanghai: The Masses Unleashed," *Problems of Communism*, January–February 1968.

¹¹ *Sankei*, 17 January 1967.

MAO'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN 1967

"revolutionary workers, peasants and intellectuals" to achieve unity. Indeed, the failure of the revolutionary Left to achieve "great unity" was denounced in a series of statements at this time, not only by Chou and Ch'en Po-ta but also by Madame Mao and even by Mao himself, statements decrying the phenomena of "anarchism," "departmentalism," "sectarianism," "splitting," "small-group mentality" and "ultra-democracy" which characterised the behaviour of revolutionary rebels generally throughout the country.¹² (Having succeeded in the destructive task of overthrowing the party and government control apparatus, the revolutionary rebels had failed in the constructive task of establishing a "new revolutionary order.")

EFFORTS TO RESTORE ORDER (EARLY 1967)

Originally the Army was not to intervene in the Cultural Revolution . . . but now that the class struggle has sharpened, the Army must support the "Leftists." . . . Most old cadres still do not understand the Cultural Revolution.—Mao Tse-tung, speech at Military Affairs Committee Plenum, 20 or 21 January 1967.¹³

The havoc created by Mao's revolutionary rebels in their frenzied drive to seize power during the January Revolution required immediate and drastic counter-measures. The first of these was the decision of 23 January ordering the People's Liberation Army to intervene in the Cultural Revolution, (directed to support the outnumbered and disorganised forces of the revolutionary Left. The second was a shift in policy towards party cadres, emphasising more humane treatment and rehabilitation to make use of their administrative skills) The third was an effort to overcome the pronounced tendency towards "anarchism" which had characterised the behaviour of the revolutionary Left during the January Revolution, an effort to reorganise, retrench and rectify the ranks of the revolutionary rebels.

Finally, the decision was taken by Mao personally to jettison the Shanghai example in favour of a new model for emulation in the seize power movement throughout China; that provided by the formation of a "three-way alliance to seize power" in the province of Heilungkiang.¹⁴ Whereas the revolutionary rebels had played the dominant role in Shanghai, they were now to share their power (in fact, the greater part of their power) with two new allies, the People's Liberation Army and "revolutionary party cadres.")

(The new, dominant role of the military in the government) and

¹² See, for example, the speech by Ch'en Po-ta in *Huo-Ch'e-T'ou* (*Locomotive*), February 1967, *SCMP*, No. 3898, pp. 5-6.

¹³ *Asahi*, 4 February 1967.

¹⁴ *Asahi*, 18 February 1967.

administration of China was revealed in discussions of the course of the seize power movement in February. Although at first the fiction was maintained that revolutionary rebels were leading the way in forming the new three-way alliance to seize power (e.g., in Heilungkiang province), this pretence was dropped in a 23 February *Red Flag* article describing the seizure of power in Shansi province.¹⁵ Here it was made clear that the PLA had taken the initiative throughout, dictating its will and imposing the cadres it had selected upon the representatives of the revolutionary Left. In those provinces (the great majority) where for various reasons the seize power movement had bogged down, the PLA was directed to establish military control commissions charged with maintaining law and order. (As the only remaining nation-wide organisation still intact, the PLA perforce had to step in to replace the now largely defunct party and government control apparatus.)

For the same reason, the PLA was soon deeply involved in administering China's economy. On 22 February, the army was directed to restore order in the countryside by supervising the organisation of peasants and rural cadres to carry out spring planting. A month later the Central Committee directed workers and cadres in factories and mines to "cooperate effectively with the comrades from the PLA" who were being sent to "support their work in industrial production." The further disclosure in March that PLA personnel had been sent in large numbers to conduct military and ideological training in universities and schools showed the extent of influence and control exercised by the military in China in the early months of 1967.¹⁶

The problem of finding "new leaders" or "revolutionary leading cadres" (the second component of the three-way alliance) was an acute one, described in early February by Wang Li, a leading member of the Cultural Revolution Group, as "the biggest problem now." In successive *Red Flag* editorials of 3 and 23 February drafted under the personal supervision of Mao himself, the problem of treating cadres correctly received priority attention. As emphasised in these editorials and accompanying commentary, the revolutionary rebels in Shanghai and elsewhere had gone too far, "opposing, excluding and overthrowing all cadres indiscriminately." In the graphic description by Wang Li, "all that remained after the seizure of power were some vacant offices and stamps."¹⁷ (The most serious problem facing the Maoists in the wake of the January Revolution was that it had succeeded too well, destroying the party and government control apparatus without providing an effective substitute.) The end result, as régime spokesmen emphasised, was

¹⁵ Chang Jih-ch'ing, "Steadfastly Support the Proletarian Revolutionaries' Struggle to Seize Power," *Red Flag*, No. 4, 1967, in *Selections from China Mainland Magazines* (SCMM), No. 567.

¹⁶ *Asahi*, 18 March 1967.

"anarchy," a situation aggravated by rivalry and clashes between revolutionary mass organisations acting (as the 23 February *Red Flag* editorial put it) like "a host of dragons without a leader."¹⁷

To deal with this alarming situation, the régime instituted what was subsequently referred to as Mao's "mild cadre policy." Reaffirming the original line taken in the Central Committee decision of 8 August on the Cultural Revolution, this policy called first of all for correct treatment and support of "revolutionary leading cadres," defined as "those leading cadres who follow the proletarian revolutionary line represented by Chairman Mao." The exemplar of this category in the provinces was P'an Fu-sheng, the former party first secretary in Heilungkiang province who had stepped forward to join the revolutionary Left during the Cultural Revolution and had been rewarded by a position of leadership in the new revolutionary committee established there. Described as "more mature politically . . . , more experienced in struggle . . . , and having greater organizational skill" than the "young revolutionary fighters," these revolutionary cadres were "to act as the core of leadership" both in the seizure of power and in the exercise of this power by the new revolutionary committees.¹⁸

Indeed, the time had come for the young militants of the revolutionary Left (the third component of the "three-way alliance") to be blamed for the chaos of the January Revolution which they had been incited to carry out. They were attacked and criticised from all directions, not just by the relative moderates (like Chou En-lai) but also by the zealots in the Cultural Revolution Group and even by Mao himself. Among the criticisms levelled by Mao at his "little revolutionary generals" (as reported in a wall poster at this time) were (1) that they were being corrupted by "money" and "cars"; (2) that they "called for criticism after criticism and took part in too many rallies"; and (3) that they had been guilty of "sectarianism" and "splittism" and must endeavour to achieve unity even with those who held "contrary opinions."

In addition to these verbal attacks, a number of measures were instituted at this time in a concerted effort to retrench, reorganise and rectify the unruly ranks of the revolutionary Left. First of all, a 3 February Central Committee directive ordered Red Guards on "revolutionary liaison" throughout the country to return to their schools,¹⁹ a directive expanded on 21 February to encompass all "revolutionary organizations" engaged in liaison. Although justified on grounds of health and economy, the primary reason for these directives was to curtail political

¹⁷ SCMM No. 566, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Mainichi*, 8 February 1967.

and economic instability by reorganising the seize power movement on the basis of individual localities and units. Next, reorganisation of the Red Guards was effected in Peking by merging the three formerly independent Red Guard headquarters into a single Red Guard Congress. Speeches at the rally proclaiming this Congress, moreover, suggested an intent to establish similar congresses in all major cities and provinces, with the ultimate goal of forming a national organisation.²⁰

Finally, it was announced that Red Guards on returning to their schools would have to undergo rectification—"a painful process of protracted ideological struggle"—in order to overcome their "tendencies of departmentalism, small group mentality, ultra-democracy, individualism and anarchism. . . ." ²¹ With the disclosure that the PLA would supervise this rectification campaign in schools and universities, it was clear that the revolutionary Left was being disciplined for the excesses it had committed during the January Revolution.

(As a result of the urgent need to restore order and maintain production, the seize power movement at the end of February was in a state of suspended animation.) Only Shanghai and the four provinces of Heilungkiang, Kweichow, Shansi and Shantung had succeeded in setting up revolutionary committees approved by the central leadership as fulfilling the requirements of a genuine tripartite alliance of revolutionaries, party cadres and the army. In a major summing-up of the progress of the Cultural Revolution, a 9 March editorial in *Red Flag* entitled "On the Revolutionary Three-in-One Combination" revealed what these requirements were.²² Citing a directive by Chairman Mao that these "provisional organs of power" would have to be "revolutionary and representative and have proletarian authority," the editorial discussed candidly the problems which had obstructed, and would continue to obstruct, the effort by Mao's proletarian revolutionaries to seize power in China.

The dominant theme of the editorial was that all three components of the alliance (the leaders of revolutionary mass organisations, representatives of the PLA, and revolutionary leading cadres) were essential, as expressed in the injunction not "to overlook or underestimate the role of any one of them." Of particular concern was the practice of excluding or "regarding as secondary" the role of "leaders of the revolutionary mass organisations," who, although guilty of "shortcomings and errors," still constituted "the base of the revolutionary three-in-one provisional organ of power." Reiterating the policy on party cadres laid down the preceding month, the editorial stressed the

²⁰ NCNA, 2 March 1967.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² SCMM No. 568, pp. 1-4.

importance of the role of the revolutionary cadres (that of providing "the nucleus and backbone" of the new revolutionary committees) while holding forth the prospect of redemption and "proper jobs" for the broad mass of cadres who had made "mistakes." What was new in the discussion of cadre policy, however, was a call for vigilance against "class enemies" who were "distorting" the principles governing the formation of three-in-one organs of power to impose on the masses cadres who "persisted in their mistakes" and thus "carry out counter-revolutionary restoration."

The editorial's discussion of the PLA revealed that it too was experiencing difficulties in playing its "extremely important role" in the struggle to seize power. Admitting the existence of "dissension between the revolutionary masses and the PLA," the editorial attempted once again to blame this on the "intrigues" of class enemies. More to the point, it revealed that the PLA was having a hard time carrying out the ambiguous directive by Chairman Mao "to actively support the revolutionary Leftists," conceding that "some comrades in the local army units may commit temporary mistakes in giving their support because of the intricate and complex conditions of the class struggle."

THE RESURGENCE OF THE LEFT (SPRING 1967)

A big question now confronting the people of the whole country is whether to carry the great proletarian cultural revolution through to the end, or to abandon it halfway. *Red Flag* editorial, "On the Revolutionary Three-in-One Combination," 9 March 1967.

In the same editorial's allusion to mounting opposition lies the explanation, it is believed, for the next phase of the Cultural Revolution which extended through March and much of April. The principal characteristic of the new phase was the resurgence of the revolutionary Left, incited once again to criticise and attack the opposition and thus maintain revolutionary momentum. In Mao's view, the pendulum had swung too far in the direction of order and stability imposed by the PLA and party cadres from above, and it was necessary once again to stress the role of the revolutionary masses.

The first target of attack by militant Red Guards and revolutionary rebels, unleashed again in early March, was what was termed the "countercurrent of counter-revolutionary restoration" in central government organs. This referred to the practice of "false power seizure" whereby senior party cadres or revived party committees had exploited, so it was charged, Mao's "mild cadre policy" to reinstate all or most of the old officials and systems of control, at the same time ignoring

and suppressing the opinions of the revolutionary Left.²³ The ring-leader of the new "counter-revolutionary current" was Vice Premier T'an Chen-lin, charged with perpetrating sham seizures in agricultural departments, but heavy criticism was also levelled at three more vice premiers—Ch'en Yi, Li Fu-ch'un and Li Hsien-nien, specialists in foreign affairs, economics and finance respectively. Although defending the last three of his vice premiers against these charges, Chou En-lai, in addressing a March rally of revolutionary rebels in industry and transportation, also attacked this "tendency of rehabilitating all cadres, disregarding their previous offences," characterising it as an "extremely grave" mistake and as the "main danger" at that time. Chou also revealed in this speech (as reported in wall posters) that this phenomenon of "false power seizures" had appeared not only in central offices but in the provinces as well.²⁴

The fact that these "false power seizures" had been widespread, occurring in the great majority of China's provinces, constituted a serious indictment of the army's performance since ordered to intervene in late January to support the Left. As revealed in a 27 March Central Committee decision on the problem of Anhwei province, a 1 April Central Committee directive extending the application of this decision to other provinces generally, and a 6 April Military Affairs Committee directive sharply circumscribing the authority of local military commanders, the PLA had performed badly its assigned task of supporting proletarian revolutionary Leftists in forming great alliances to seize power.²⁵

What had happened, as these documents made clear, was that the revolutionary Left, instead of forming a "great alliance," had split into two factions. When the first of these had seized power and been recognised and supported by the local military command, the other faction had then attempted a counter-seizure, attacking not only the newly established régime but the PLA as well. Reacting to this attack, the local military commander had opened fire in self-defence and suppressed the attacking faction as a "counter-revolutionary organization." To prevent this from happening again, the 6 April Military Affairs Committee directive (of crucial importance in understanding the subsequent course of the Cultural Revolution throughout 1967) stripped the army of all real authority in dealing with the revolutionary Left, forbidding it to open fire on mass organisations, to label these organisations counter-revolutionary, to make mass arrests, or in general to "take

²³ *Mainichi*, 17 March 1967.

²⁴ *Ceteka* (Prague), 28 April 1967.

²⁵ *Yomiuri*, 6 April, 9 April 1967.

any important action " towards these organisations without first receiving instructions from Peking.

At the same time that its power was being sharply curtailed, the PLA was ordered to establish military control committees and thereby assume responsibility for exercising "the provincial leadership power" until such time as new revolutionary committees approved by the Centre (i.e., genuine power seizures) could be created. Regional and provincial military commands were also directed at this time to "rectify immediately" all of their previous errors in dealing with the Left, releasing all those previously arrested, rehabilitating all those previously labelled counter-revolutionary and, in general, seeking the forgiveness of the revolutionary masses for their wrong conduct. The net effect of this series of decisions in late March and early April was to place an almost intolerable burden on the PLA, subjecting it to severe pressure and strain at the very moment it was being ordered to take over the responsibility for governing the country and administering the economy.

A key ingredient in this new revolutionary upsurge, as in earlier ones, was to escalate the attack against Liu Shao-ch'i, to launch (according to an important 8 April *People's Daily* editorial) "a powerful general offensive against the number one party person in authority taking the capitalist road." New features of this intensified campaign in early April were (1) public humiliation at a struggle rally where, nevertheless, Liu continued to deny his guilt as a criminal or counter-revolutionary; (2) wall-poster demands (allegedly citing K'ang Sheng and Ch'i Pen-yu) that Liu be put to death for his "betrayal and collusion with a foreign power"; and (3) a barrage of criticism of Liu's leading theoretical work "How To Be a Good Communist," condemned by Mao, Lin Piao, Chou En-lai and other top leaders at this time as "anti-Marxist."²⁶

The basic purpose of this general offensive against Liu Shao-ch'i was an attempt once again to form a great alliance of the revolutionary Left (which had split into rival factions in the disorderly struggle to seize power in January) and, following this, an attempt once again to form genuine three-way alliances (which had been dominated by the army and old-line cadres at the expense of the revolutionary Left in February and March). The first objective of "great unity" was to be achieved by inciting the revolutionary masses to undertake "great criticism and great struggle" not only against Liu but also against the "handful" of Mao's enemies in "each area, department and unit" throughout the country, depicted as the supporters of Liu who had to be overthrown in order to bring him down.²⁷ The second objective was

²⁶ *Yomiuri*, 15 April 1967.

²⁷ See the speech by Vice Premier Hsieh Fu-chih in *SCMP* No. 3925, pp. 8-9.

to be achieved by leashing the army and exerting new pressure on party cadres to step forward in support of the campaign, both by offering a way out for repentant cadres (by joining in the attack against Liu Shao-ch'i and his alleged supporters) and by threatening dire consequences should they refuse. Political and ideological struggle against a common target would serve, it was thought, to unify and strengthen the ranks of Mao's proletarian revolutionaries.

{Instead, the result of leashing the PLA while unleashing the revolutionary Left was renewed violence and disorder.} Serious, large-scale clashes were soon reported not only in the provinces but in Peking as well. Developments in Peking provide a good case study of the chaos and disruption attending the new violent phase of the Cultural Revolution in April and May.

In brief, what happened was that the {Red Guards and revolutionary rebels utilised their new freedom of action to attack one another and, for good measure, the PLA as well.} According to wall-poster reports, a large force of Red Guards invaded Peking University to demonstrate against Nieh Yuan-tzu, chairman of the recently unified Peking Congress of Red Guards, charging her with incompetence and a selfish desire "to gain high office." When an "armed clash" developed and Peking garrison troops were sent to restore order, the Red Guards then directed their attack at the Peking garrison deputy commander. Instances of worker revolutionary rebels defying and even seizing PLA representatives were also reported in Peking at this time. As a result, leaders of the Cultural Revolution Group headed by Madame Mao convened a series of meetings in mid-April between feuding Red Guard and revolutionary rebel groups to chastise them for attacking the PLA and for engaging in "unprincipled civil wars."²⁸ }

The fact that these "unprincipled civil wars" broke out on the eve of the establishment of the Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee goes far to explain the nature of this new type of warfare in China. As opposed to the "principled" variety fought largely on ideological and political grounds, these wars are fought to determine who gets what share of the spoils in the new revolutionary order. It was ironic that the formal proclamation on 20 April of the new Peking Revolutionary Committee (in theory representing the achievement of a genuine and harmonious three-way alliance) should have been the occasion for intensified conflict within and among the components of this alliance.

²⁸ *Tokyo Shimbun*, 18 April 1967.

MAO'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN 1967

NEW CALLS FOR ORDER (MAY-JUNE 1967)

Recently our great leader Chairman Mao instructed us that we should trust in and rely on the masses, trust in and rely on the People's Liberation Army, and trust in and rely on the majority of the cadres. Chairman Mao also called on us to support the army and cherish the people. *People's Daily* editorial, "Further Strengthen the Unity between the Army and the People," 12 May 1967.

The disclosure in a 12 May *People's Daily* editorial that the People's Liberation Army was "resolutely carrying out the five tasks of supporting the Left, supporting industry, supporting agriculture, exercising military control, and helping in military and political training" merely confirmed what had already become abundantly clear; that (the army was now governing most of China) in place of the discredited, largely defunct party and government apparatus. In its party role, military control committees at all levels (provincial, county, municipal and even down to the level of individual enterprises and communes) were charged with leading the Cultural Revolution, held responsible for the creation of "true proletarian revolutionary great alliances" and of "revolutionary three-way alliances." This was a delicate political task for which, lacking guidance from Peking, it was singularly ill-prepared. In its government role, the army was responsible for administering the economy and for maintaining order, the latter task rendered virtually impossible by the 6 April Military Affairs Committee directive prohibiting the use of force.

As spelled out in the 6 April directive, the army in dealing with the revolutionary masses was "to learn to do mass work, trust the masses, rely on them and consult with them on important matters . . . to adopt skilful means of persuasion and education instead of adopting simple and crude means of issuing orders." For their part, the proletarian revolutionaries were also enjoined not to use force against the army (e.g., the demand in the 8 May *Red Flag* editorial that "On no occasion and under no circumstances should the spear-head of struggle be directed against the People's Liberation Army").²⁹

(Instead of mutual trust and co-operation, however, the principal characteristic of the Cultural Revolution in the months which followed was increased antagonism and hostility between the army and the revolutionary Left. In fact, neither performed according to Mao's high expectations.) Instead of increased strength through greater unity, there was a further splitting of the revolutionary ranks, a split brought on (according to Hsieh Fu-chih in a 7 May speech) by those demanding "a

²⁹ Editorial entitled "Warmly Respond to the Call to Support the Army and Cherish the People," *Red Flag*, No. 6, 8 May 1967, in *Peking Review*, 5 May 1967, p. 22.

great shakeup, great differentiation and great reorganization inside the Left wing." Instead of supporting army commanders, revolutionary mass organisations in the provinces and major cities launched bitter attacks against local military control committees, both for having suppressed them in the past and for failure to support them in the present. For their part, local military district commands continued to experience great difficulty, as Lin Piao had admitted earlier in a 30 March speech, in "finding out the difference between Left and Right" in their dealings with mass organisations.

Mao's solution to this problem, the single most important cause of tension between the military and the revolutionary Left, was typical. On 7 May, the Chairman directed Lin Piao to carry out an intensive two-week rectification campaign in the army, a summing-up (according to a 15 June *Liberation Army Daily* editorial) of its experience in the struggle to support the Left during the previous stage "in order to develop new merit, correct mistakes, and carry on the battle."³⁰ Central to this campaign was the demand that local military commanders atone for their past errors by engaging publicly in self-criticism, thereby securing the forgiveness and winning the trust of those proletarian revolutionaries whom they had previously wronged. Responding to this demand, the Shantung Provincial Military District Party Committee issued a public self-criticism on 31 May, a document which Mao enthusiastically endorsed as a model for general emulation. Of particular interest was the admission in this document that the decision to issue the self-criticism had sparked a "heated argument," with some arguing that such an action "would dampen the morale of the armed forces . . . might upset the armed forces . . . [and] . . . that the masses might use it against us."³¹

As a guide for the prevention of new mistakes by the army, the Tsinghai military district commander, Liu Hsien-ch'uan, published a lengthy article in the *People's Daily* in early June summarising his successful experience in identifying and supporting the Left in Tsinghai province.³² Although admitting that there had been "complicated struggle" and "all sorts of factions," Liu asserted that there were basically only "two kinds of factions" which could be clearly differentiated—a "Leftist" faction which "wants to revolt" and a "conservative" faction which "wants to conserve." Having conducted "investigation and study among the masses," he had been able to identify as genuinely Leftist those organisations which had first rebelled against, criticised and attacked "the handful of persons in the provincial party committee

³⁰ NCNA, 15 June 1967.

³¹ SCMP No. 4061, pp. 11–12.

³² Peking Domestic Service, 8 June 1967.

who were in authority and taking the capitalist road." The "conservative" organisations, on the other hand, had been "controlled by" and had sought to protect this "handful" of Mao's opponents within the Party.

Liu's account of developments in Tsinghai had omitted one important fact—that his predecessor in command of the Tsinghai Provincial Military District had arrived at exactly the opposite conclusion in his investigation work and had been singled out for attack in the 6 April Military Affairs Committee directive as a "counter-revolutionary" who had "carried out savage, armed repression of revolutionary mass organizations."³³ That it was dangerous for a provincial military commander to decide on his own which mass organisations were "Leftist" was the most important lesson of the Tsinghai experience, a lesson confirmed in the provision of the 6 April directive prohibiting "taking any important action . . . toward large mass organizations" until a report had been "made to the Central Cultural Revolution Group and the All PLA Cultural Revolution Group and their advice sought." The net effect of this lesson and this prohibition was to suspend the PLA's "work in support of the Left" until such time as the party Centre had made its own investigation and determination of the revolutionary Left on a province-by-province basis.)

Related to this was the disclosure in early May that fighting between rival mass organisations had entered a new stage of "armed struggle." The extent of the new disorder in Peking was revealed by Hsieh Fu-chih in a speech on 14 May. As reported in a wall poster, Hsieh disclosed that production had declined 7 per cent. in April, a decline due chiefly to "armed struggles" but also to worker protest strikes. In the first 10 days of May, according to Hsieh, there had been 133 armed struggles and bloody incidents involving more than 63,000 people of which a "two-figure" number were killed. In addition, cases of beating, destroying, looting, searching houses and illegal arrest had been common and were increasing.

Not long before, on 5 May, Hsieh Fu-chih had revealed in a speech to students at Peking University that "armed struggles at factories, schools and various organs" were taking place not only in Peking but in many provinces as well. Despite the fact that "conservative factions" (the opposition) had not yet been defeated in various provinces, the "Leftists" there (as in Peking) had begun to "break up" by fighting among themselves. As a result, the original timetable for seizure of power in the provinces—originally scheduled to be realised "between February and May"—had to be extended. Hsieh concluded his gloomy

³³ *Yomiuri*, 9 April 1967.

assessment of the status of the seize power movement with the admission that the timetable would have "to be postponed for some time."³⁴

Hsieh's pessimistic view of conditions in the provinces was confirmed by wall posters reporting violent clashes and serious disorder in many parts of China throughout May, even to the point of disrupting service on several major rail lines. So serious was this disorder that it was necessary for the Central Committee, State Council, Military Affairs Committee and Cultural Revolution Group to issue a joint circular on 6 June forbidding armed struggle, assaults, destruction, pillage, house-raids and unauthorised arrests and calling on all revolutionary organisations to comply.³⁵ Although assigning general responsibility to the PLA for implementing this circular, it did not authorise the use of force against these contending revolutionary organisations. Lacking this authority, the army remained powerless to restore order and disorder continued to spread unchecked throughout much of China.

The contradictory elements in the prescription issued by Mao at this time for dealing with a situation of spreading violence and disorder stood out in sharp contrast. On the one hand, he warned that "disregard of discipline and trends toward anarchism existent in many places must be overcome without fail," and cited as a "crucial problem bearing on the victory of the great proletarian cultural revolution" the need "to guide the petty bourgeois thought in our rank and file to the orbit of proletarian revolution."³⁶ In accordance with this pronouncement, the principal manifestation of "anarchism"—"conducting struggle by force, such as assault, wrecking, robbery, search and arrest"—was condemned repeatedly in June and July. On the other hand, the one instrument capable of restoring order, the PLA, was still forbidden to use force, reminded once again (in a 27 June *Liberation Army Daily* editorial) that the only proper response to criticism and attack by the masses was "to do political and ideological work patiently among them."³⁷

As viewed from Peking, the status of the Cultural Revolution in mid-1967 was far from encouraging. Since February, only one new area, Peking, had been "liberated" by Mao's revolutionaries. The new revolutionary upsurge initiated in April had come to naught, the seize power movement had bogged down, and, even more alarming, the forces of the revolutionary Left had, as reported in wall posters in early June, grown weaker rather than stronger in many places, even in those provinces (such as Heilungkiang) where new organs of power had

³⁴ *Asahi*, 30 May 1967.

³⁵ *Yomiuri*, 8 June 1967.

³⁶ *SCMP* No. 3969, p. 1, and *SCMP* No. 3974, p. 5.

³⁷ *NCNA*, 27 June 1967.

already been established. Since Mao's directives governing the development of the Cultural Revolution were by definition correct, the failure of the campaign to proceed according to plan could only result from faulty execution of these directives. (Given the premise of Mao's infallibility, the principal issue over which differences of opinion would arise within the central leadership at this time, then, was whether to assign primary responsibility for this adverse development to the People's Liberation Army (its failure to identify and provide adequate support to the Leftists) or to the revolutionary Left (its refusal to unite and observe revolutionary discipline as manifested in continuing factionalism and anarchism.)

The disclosure that differences of opinion had arisen within the central leadership was made in wall-poster reports at this time of "heated discussions" occurring within the Central Committee. Although these reports did not reveal the substance of the discussions nor identify the participants, it is a fair inference (based both on the previous record of the Cultural Revolution and on subsequent developments) that these differences concerned the conflicting claims of restoring order and maintaining revolutionary momentum, with one group (*i.e.*, Chou En-lai representing the government and presumably spokesmen for the military) arguing the need to restore order and another group (*i.e.*, such leading members of the Cultural Revolution Group as Madame Mao, Ch'en Po-ta and K'ang Sheng) advocating a more militant policy in support of the revolutionary Left.

One outcome of this debate was the decision to send a number of high-level government and military delegations to investigate and provide guidance on the conduct of the Cultural Revolution in the provinces. A major objective of the delegations sent out at this time was to put an end to the armed struggle which had broken out between contending factions and between these factions and local military commands. The means for achieving this objective was a six-point formula advanced by the Central Committee under which representatives of both factions agreed (1) to stop breaking into military organs, assaulting army officials, stealing weapons, and attacking each other; and (2) by means of rectification and self-criticism to form "great revolutionary alliances."³⁸ When agreements to this effect were negotiated in Yunnan and Anhwei in late June and early July, it appeared that Mao's Cultural Revolution had once again entered a more moderate phase, marked by a concerted effort to damp down violent struggle and reduce the antagonism which had arisen between army commanders in the provinces and the revolutionary Left.

³⁸ *Sankel*, 3 July 1967.

THE WUHAN INCIDENT (JULY–AUGUST 1967)

At present a large-scale movement for criticizing and repudiating the handful of top party and military persons in authority taking the capitalist road is sweeping over the whole country. This is the general orientation of the struggle. *Red Flag* editorial, "The Proletariat Must Firmly Grasp the Barrel of the Gun," 31 July 1967.

The significance of what has come to be known as the "Wuhan Incident" is that it sharply reversed this trend towards moderation, precipitating a short-lived "ultra-Leftist" phase of the Cultural Revolution extending from late July through most of August. The Wuhan Incident afforded extremist elements in the central leadership an opportunity, which they were quick to exploit, to focus once again on the "mistakes" of the People's Liberation Army as the primary cause of failures and setbacks. It was seized upon as a pretext for launching another great revolutionary upsurge from below, for exhorting the Red Guards and revolutionary rebels to rise up against their oppressors wherever encountered, whether in the military, the new revolutionary committees, or in the central government. The end result of this ill-advised venture was near anarchy and a further discrediting and weakening of the forces of the revolutionary Left.)

In bare outline, the story of the Wuhan Incident which unfolded during a seven-day period in mid-July concerns the failure of a high-level mission, headed by Hsieh Fu-chih and Wang Li, to persuade the two factions in this large central China city to stop fighting and accept the six-point formula for achieving unity recently issued by the Central Committee. As applied in Wuhan, however, this formula called for the preferment of one faction (designated an authentic "revolutionary rebel" organisation) over the other (labelled a "conservative" organisation) and, in so doing, reversed an earlier decision made by the local military. What is more, the leaders of the Wuhan Military Region Command were then ordered to make a public confession of error and conduct self-criticism before the revolutionary masses. Reportedly infuriated, some leaders of this command then encouraged (or at least did nothing to prevent) a demonstration by the much larger "conservative" faction (which included troops from the local military garrison) to protest against this decision, in the course of which the two leaders from Peking were seized and roughed up. Although this demonstration appeared intended primarily as a form of political protest, the response in Peking was one of outrage, coupled with prompt and effective measures to secure the release of Mao's emissaries and to call the

offending military commanders to the capital for denunciation and dismissal.³⁹

As noted above, the extremist elements in the Cultural Revolution Group of the Central Committee appeared determined to exploit this incident to further their own goals. Addressing representatives of contending factions from Honan in Peking on 21 July, K'ang Sheng attacked the Wuhan Military Region for having committed a "mutinous act" and warned of the possibility of "another Wuhan" occurring in Honan Province in the near future.⁴⁰ In an even more inflammatory speech on the same occasion, Madam Mao exhorted her audience of "young revolutionary fighters" not "to be naive," as their comrades in Wuhan had been, but rather "to take up arms to defend yourselves" when attacked by the "handful" using "pistols, rifles, spears or swords."⁴¹ On 25 July, Hsieh Fu-chih and Wang Li received a frenzied heroes' welcome at a million-strong mass rally in Peking, and throughout the following week Mao's propagandists mounted a series of editorial attacks on "capitalist roaders" in the People's Liberation Army, culminating in the shrill call in the 31 July *Red Flag* editorial to "bring down" and "sweep the handful of party and military persons in authority taking the capitalist road completely and totally into the junkyard."

Reflecting this tough line towards dissident or potentially dissident military commanders in the provinces, Lin Piao delivered a major policy speech on 9 August to a gathering of top political and military leaders (both central and regional) in Peking.⁴² As he had on earlier occasions, Lin defended chaos or "upheaval" as essential to achieve the objectives of the Cultural Revolution (to "expose" reactionary things and reactionary persons) and counselled those present, even when unjustly attacked, "to stand up to it and restrain your anger." Lin's speech was directed primarily, however, at those who, through lack of understanding of the Cultural Revolution, had made "mistakes" in various military regions, reacting to attacks on their military district commands by "suppressing the masses." The remedy, as Lin reiterated for emphasis, was for these local military leaders quickly to admit their "mistakes" by carrying out public self-criticism (as the Wuhan Military Region Commander, Ch'en Tsai-tao, had refused to do), "so that the revolutionary rebels may be their teachers and their own mistakes their

³⁹ For a good account of the Wuhan Incident by a Japanese correspondent, see *Sankei*, 29 and 30 September 1967.

⁴⁰ For a summary of this speech, see *SCMP* No. 4023, pp. 20-21.

⁴¹ Canton *Kung-an Chan-pao* (*Public Security Combat News*), 1 August 1967, p. 4.

⁴² *SCMP* No. 4036, pp. 1-6.

teaching materials." If not, the fate of these military leaders would be the same as that of Ch'en Tsai-tao—"to have their pigtails grabbed."

Additional evidence of what might be called the over-reaction of the central leadership to the Wuhan Incident was the decision in early August to arm selected Red Guard and revolutionary rebel units, both in Peking and the provinces, to assist in safeguarding property, maintaining order and "assuring the smooth development of the Cultural Revolution." Authorisation for this potentially explosive move was attributed to Mao Tse-tung himself, quoted in a wall poster at this time to the effect that "everyone should be prepared to take up bayonets."⁴³ When combined with Madame Mao's earlier call of 22 July to Red Guards "to take up arms" under the slogan "attack by reason, defend by force," the stage was set for a new form of "revolutionary rebellion" directed towards a second seizure of power, this time from the military commanders and newly established revolutionary committees in several provinces. Mao's Cultural Revolution was about to enter an "ultra-Leftist" phase, as it was called after the violence and anarchy it unleashed necessitated a hasty retreat.

The rationale for this attempt to seize military power was, given the premises of the Cultural Revolution, quite logical. As revealed in Red Guard publications of the time, the reason why revolutionary rebels had been "suppressed" in various areas was that military power in these areas had been "usurped" by "persons of the Liu Shao-ch'i-Teng Hsiao-p'ing headquarters." In terms of the dialectics of the Cultural Revolution, the main contradiction was no longer one with "the handful in the Party" (who had been "dragged out" in the preceding year) but with "the handful in the Army." Aided by Red Guards sent out from Peking, local revolutionary rebels were, according to one plan, "to unite with the broad masses of People's Liberation Army cadres and fighters, drag out these executioners and recapture the military power usurped by them."⁴⁴

Paralleling this drive in the provinces, revolutionary rebels in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also incited by extremist members of the Cultural Revolution Group to seize a greater share of power over the conduct of China's foreign relations. In part a function of the continuing attack against Foreign Minister Ch'en Yi, this struggle within the Foreign Ministry also reflected pressures exerted by militants to inject a new "revolutionary" content into China's diplomatic relations, to convert Foreign Ministry and foreign service officials into "red

⁴³ *Sankei*, 22 August 1967.

⁴⁴ "On Military Power" in *Hung-se Pao-tung (Red Riot)*, 1 August 1967, *SCMP* No. 4071, pp. 13-17.

diplomatic fighters." Exemplifying this new type of revolutionary diplomat was Yao Teng-shan, who had returned in glory after being expelled from Djakarta in April and who, it was subsequently charged, headed the drive to seize power in the Foreign Ministry in August.⁴⁵

The results of this sharp turn to the left were nearly catastrophic. In foreign policy, a reign of terror directed at foreign diplomats was instituted in Peking, culminating in the ransacking and burning of the British Chancery and the manhandling of the British Chargé on 22 August. In domestic policy, although no single incident served to dramatise the damaging effects of the new militance of the revolutionary Left, the consequences were more serious, threatening the unity and stability of Mao's "proletarian headquarters," of the newly established revolutionary committees in the provinces, and also of the People's Liberation Army itself. The discovery that, at a time of mounting violence and economic disorder, factionalism had spread from the Red Guards and revolutionary rebels into the army was most alarming of all. There was no choice in late August but to apply the brakes, pull back, assess the damage, and initiate a trend towards moderation in the Cultural Revolution which lasted throughout the remainder of 1967.

RENEWED MODERATION (SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 1967)

This nation-wide disturbance is the last of its kind. The Army is also disturbed this time. After this disturbance, the whole country will be in peace and become the régime of the revolutionary rebels. It is the Party Central Committee that allows this nation-wide disturbance. Mao Tse-tung, quoted in Canton *Hung Wei-ping* (Red Guards), 23 October 1967.⁴⁶

The unfolding of Mao's Cultural Revolution had brought China by the end of August to the brink of anarchy, featuring pitched battles by heavily armed factions in nearly all of China's provinces. Recognising the gravity of the situation, Mao's new leadership team in Peking sought to achieve two separate but related objectives in the remaining months of 1967: (1) to carry out a series of measures designed to restore minimum levels of public order and production; and (2) to dissociate Mao and his Cultural Revolution from responsibility for the violence and lawlessness endemic in China by finding new scapegoats. The gravity of the crisis was such that for the first time it was necessary to sacrifice a number of prominent members of the Cultural Revolution Group, holding them, rather than the policies they were administering, responsible for the nation-wide disturbance in China.

⁴⁵ Peking *Wai-shih Hung-ch'i* (Foreign Affairs Red Flag), 12 September 1967, p. 1.

⁴⁶ SCMP No. 4075, p. 27.

The vehicle for announcing the sharp reversal in policy was a 5 September speech by Madame Mao in Peking which was subsequently disseminated for study to all revolutionary committees, military control committees and revolutionary mass organisations throughout the country. As a confirmed extremist and a confidante of Mao, Chiang Ch'ing was no doubt selected as a spokesman whose pronouncements would be accepted as authoritative by the revolutionary Left; the more so since most of the policies she now criticised in this speech were ones with which she was formerly associated. The central theme of her speech was a vigorous defence of the central leadership, the newly formed provincial revolutionary committees and the People's Liberation Army against the recent attack ("a gust of foul wind") launched by "wicked people . . . appearing either as 'ultra-Leftist' or 'Rightist'" who were attempting to undermine the Cultural Revolution. Exemplifying this new threat by "ultra-Leftists" was the 16 May Corps, a "counter-revolutionary organization" which sought "to undermine the Party Central Committee headed by Chairman Mao" by "centring its opposition on Premier Chou En-lai." Another objective of these "bad people" was "to dissolve all the revolutionary committees" which had been set up in the provinces "with the approval of the Central Committee," thus depriving the revolution of its vital leadership organs.

The bulk of Madame Mao's speech, however, was devoted to repudiating the "armed struggle" by Red Guards and "revolutionary rebels" incited by the slogans "seize a small handful in the Army" (which had appeared in the 31 July *Red Flag* editorial) and "attack by words, defend by force" (which she herself had advanced in a speech of 22 July). The wide-ranging assault on the PLA which had taken place in response to these exhortations was revealed in her statement: "Everywhere we seized their guns, beat them up and scolded them. But they did not strike back or argue." Although praising the forbearance of the military under this attack, Madame Mao made clear that there were limits to this forbearance, warning repeatedly of the danger of "creating chaos" in "our field armies." And to ensure that these attacks would cease, she stressed that it was no longer permitted for Red Guards to travel about the country "kindling the fire of revolution and exchanging revolutionary experience" as they had done a year earlier.⁴⁷

On the same day as Madame Mao's speech, the Central Committee issued a directive "forbidding seizure of arms, equipment and other military supplies from the PLA" and ordering, in addition, that all

⁴⁷ "Important Speech Given by Comrade Chiang Ch'ing," Peking leaflet, 18 September 1967, in *SCMP* No. 4069, pp. 1-9.

such arms and equipment that had been seized "must be put under seal and stored and a time limit set for their return." And for the first time since the Military Affairs Committee directive of 6 April, the PLA was authorised to "hit back in self-defence" (i.e., open fire), but only when attacked by "mass organizations or individuals" attempting "to seize their weapons."⁴⁸

Other measures indicating a firm resolve to put an end to "armed struggle" appeared in a 1 September resolution passed by the Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee. The first of these forbade payment of wages to workers who had left their production posts to engage in "armed struggle." The resolution also demanded that Red Guards who had gone out to the provinces to take part in these struggles "must return to their original units immediately and unconditionally." As stressed in a *Liberation Army Daily* editorial of 7 September, these steps were necessary in order to carry out "Chairman Mao's great strategic plan."⁴⁹

This plan was expounded in a series of "supreme instructions" issued by Mao Tse-tung during the course of an extended tour in September through North, Central-South and East China, the tour itself was an indication of the gravity with which Peking viewed this crisis in the Cultural Revolution. Although somewhat vague and oracular in tone, these instructions showed that Mao not only approved the series of measures under way to restore order but viewed them as necessary to make further progress towards the goals of his Cultural Revolution.

Most of the principles outlined in these instructions were not new, having been enunciated in earlier stages of the revolution. What had produced the recent nation-wide disturbance was not the principles themselves, but rather, as Mao took great pains to demonstrate, that these principles had been misunderstood and mistakenly applied. In fact, the principal lesson which Mao appeared to derive from his September review of developments in the Cultural Revolution was that all three components of the new revolutionary organs of power (the PLA, the revolutionary cadres, and the revolutionary rebels) had made mistakes and would therefore (as pointed out by Lin Piao in a 1 October National Day speech) once again have to undergo rectification and ideological education.

The most pressing problem was "educating" the Red Guards and revolutionary rebels in order to prevent, as Mao put it, their "turning to the extreme Left." This, of course, had already occurred, creating what Mao referred to elsewhere as "the chief danger at the moment"—"that some people want to beat down the PLA," to "incite the soldiers

⁴⁸ SCMP No. 4026, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁹ NCNA, 7 September 1967.

to oppose their officers" and to create "chaos in the Army."⁵⁰ Another manifestation of this phenomenon of "ultra-Leftism" was factionalism, a problem which had bedevilled the Cultural Revolution from the outset and to which Mao now turned his attention.

First were the Olympian pronouncements, widely publicised, to the effect that "there is no reason whatsoever for the working class to split into two great irreconcilable organizations" and "there is no conflict of fundamental interests in the ranks of the Red Guards and revolutionaries."⁵¹ Next was the admission, made more explicit in speeches by other top leaders at this time, that radical Red Guard organisations in Peking had been responsible for spreading factionalism into the ranks of the workers in July and August. As stated by K'ang Sheng on 20 September, the "two great factions struggling in factories have been influenced by the two factions struggling in colleges and universities."

The solution to this problem appeared in another instruction by Chairman Mao given wide publicity in mid-October—"to build revolutionary great alliances on the basis of trade, profession, department or class in school."⁵² (It was necessary to break up the mass organisations (consisting of students, workers, peasants and cadres) which had become unmanageable, dissolving these organisations into their separate components which then would become easier to control.) A prime objective of this reorganisation was to get student Red Guards, carriers of the virus of factionalism, out of the factories and the countryside and return them to the class-room where they would once again (as had happened in February and March) undergo rectification and a course of "military-political training" conducted by the PLA.

How to promote "great unity" and establish "great revolutionary alliances" between formerly feuding factions was the theme dominating discussion of the Cultural Revolution in September and October. As explained by Chairman Mao, there were "two prerequisites for a great alliance," prerequisites embodied in his call addressed to the revolutionary Left at this time "to combat selfishness and criticize and repudiate revisionism." Exemplifying the first, three prominent leaders of contending Red Guard organisations in Peking engaged in self-criticism at a 20 September meeting of the Peking Red Guard Congress of Colleges and Universities and pledged to form a "great alliance" in advance of National Day.

The second prerequisite referred to the launching of still another "campaign of mass criticism and repudiation directed at China's

⁵⁰ "Chairman Mao's Latest Instructions" in *Wen-ke T'ung-hsun (Cultural Revolution Bulletin)*, 9 October 1967, SCMP No. 4060, p. 1.

⁵¹ NCNA, 25 September 1967.

⁵² NCNA, 17 October 1967.

Khrushchev," redirecting "the spearhead of struggle" away from internecine strife towards "the handful of top party persons in authority following the capitalist road." As spelled out in a 17 September *Liberation Army Daily* editorial, the intent was to "guide the revolutionary masses to look forward instead of backward," to dissuade them from demanding a settling of "old accounts." As this editorial also made clear, the PLA was assigned the main responsibility for promoting "revolutionary great alliances" in both schools and factories.⁵³

Although assigned major responsibility for restoring order in the ranks of the revolutionary Left, the PLA was still denied the authority necessary to carry out this assignment. As had been the case ever since the 6 April Military Affairs Committee directive, the PLA was still generally prohibited from using force and in addition was specifically forbidden by Chairman Mao at this time to suppress revolutionary mass organisations. Limited to the instrumentality of ideological and political training, the PLA's authority was further restricted by the requirements that only "a handful of bad persons" in these organisations were to be held responsible for factionalism, and that it was necessary (as pointed out by Chou En-lai in a 9 October speech) "to rely on the revolutionary masses in these organizations to expose and deal with them."⁵⁴ Compounding the difficulty was the admission (in an article discussing the problem of the "ultra-Left" in Hunan at this time) that "the broad revolutionary masses . . . find it more difficult to distinguish clearly the class enemy coming from the Left." Forbidden to use force and unable to secure voluntary compliance, the PLA was powerless to carry out its assigned mission.

Further complicating their task, PLA cadres were informed at this time that they too would have to undergo "training and education" to atone for and prevent the repetition of mistakes they had committed in supporting the Left in the previous stage of the Cultural Revolution. As reported by a high-level official who accompanied Mao during his September tour of the provinces, "the Chairman was very concerned over this question and repeatedly asked the comrades of various units how and why they made mistakes." The most important reason, according to Mao, was that "Army cadres have not been educated over a long time and have no experience in this connection." To help correct this deficiency, training classes for senior military cadres from the provinces were held in Peking beginning in September and extending through the remainder of the year.⁵⁵

⁵³ NCNA, 16 September 1967.

⁵⁴ NCNA, 10 October 1967.

⁵⁵ "Chairman Mao's Latest Instructions" in *Hung-cha-pao* (*Red Combat News*), 10 October 1967, SCMP No. 4072, p. 2.

A quicker, more effective remedy for these mistakes committed by the PLA in supporting the Left (i.e., supporting "conservative" rather than "revolutionary" mass organisations) was to order the army to disengage from factional struggles altogether. This order appeared in a 17 September *Liberation Army Daily* editorial in the injunction to army troops "not to involve themselves in struggles among groups" and, more succinctly, in the slogan enunciated in speeches the same day by Chou En-lai and Madame Mao: "support the Left and not just factions."⁵⁶ An important ancillary purpose of this directive, of course, was to prevent the virus of factionalism from spreading further into the army.

(Civilian party and government cadres)—the third component of the "three-way alliance"—were to be given still another chance "to correct their mistakes" by taking part in this training programme in the fall of 1967. As suggested by another Maoist instruction ("it is necessary to expand the area of education and diminish the area under attack"), however, the principal concern of this programme was to protect these cadres from the punitive, wholesale attacks to which they had been subjected by revolutionary rebels. The time had come to reassert Mao's ("mild cadre policy") as exemplified in his admonition that "it is not good to beat the cadres, punish them by making them kneel on the ground, hang sign boards on their necks and put dunce caps on them."⁵⁷

As discussed in an authoritative *People's Daily* editorial of 21 October, this new policy was based on the recognition that "correct treatment of cadres" was "the key to realizing the revolutionary three-way alliance, consolidating the revolutionary great alliance and making a success of the struggle-criticism-transformation movement in each unit." There was an urgent need to recruit "revolutionary cadres" who, because of their "richer experience . . . better organizing and working ability and higher understanding of policy," would "serve as the core and backbone in the revolutionary provisional organs of power": the revolutionary committees. And since, the editorial asserted, "the ranks of our cadres have become purer, stronger and more vigorous," it would be possible "to let large groups of revolutionary cadres . . . join the provisional power organs for a three-way alliance on all levels."⁵⁸

The final and perhaps most important instruction conveyed by Chairman Mao during his September tour was that the process of

⁵⁶ "Premier Chou's Important Speech" in *Chu-ying Tung-fang-hung*, 1 October 1967, *SCMP* No. 4066, p. 5.

⁵⁷ "Chairman Mao's Latest Supreme Instructions" in *Cheng-fa Hung-ch'i (Politics and Law Red Flag)*, 17 October 1967, *SCMP* No. 4070, p. 3.

⁵⁸ NCNA, 20 October 1967.

setting up a new governmental structure (the revolutionary committees) in all the 29 provinces and major cities of China be speeded up and completed by the end of January 1968. Whereas only seven of these had been formed in the first nine months of 1967, it was now intended to create 22 in the ensuing four-month period in order (in Mao's words) that "problems of the whole country could be solved basically and the whole situation put into the normal track before the Spring Festival."⁵⁹ To meet this deadline, it was no longer possible to rely on the long, drawn-out, cumbrous and generally unsuccessful method of seizure of power from below. Instead, it was necessary to impose solutions from above, hammering out agreements in Peking on the basis of Mao's directive "to solve the problems of various provinces one by one." As reported by Chou En-lai on 26 September, delegations from 12 provinces had come to Peking for just this purpose, a development which Chairman Mao had hailed as "good," because "they have all come to look to the Central Committee to solve their problems."⁶⁰

Chou's prediction in this speech that "it is not possible to solve very quickly the problems of the 12 provinces" was an accurate one. Emphasising that "we must seriously discuss these problems in a responsible manner" with the representatives of the PLA, revolutionary leading cadres and representatives of revolutionary mass organisations assembled in Peking, the Premier indicated a major stumbling-block which would prevent rapid establishment of these revolutionary committees; that the composition and membership of such committees could not be decreed arbitrarily from above but would have to be approved by all three groups comprising these revolutionary organs of power. This meant that top leaders of the party Centre (notably Chou himself) would be forced to spend night after night in protracted and exhausting negotiating sessions lasting a month or more, during which the two factions from the province concerned wrangled over the degree of representation and share of power to be allotted each. As a result of the delay imposed by this time-consuming and laborious process, only seven additional provinces and major cities had succeeded in proclaiming revolutionary committees by or near the time of the Spring Festival.

Although the trend towards moderation initiated in late August continued, two major components of the effort to restore order had run into difficulty by the end of the year. First, the attempt to restore order from below by "establishing revolutionary great alliances on the basis of trade, profession, department or class in school" was foundering

⁵⁹ *SCMP* No. 4070, p. 3.

⁶⁰ "Speeches by Leaders of the Central Committee," Canton pamphlet, October 1967, in *SCMM* No. 611, p. 8.

because of the refusal of revolutionary mass organisations in many areas to comply voluntarily with this directive. Forbidden by Mao to use force or to suppress revolutionary mass organisations, the PLA was powerless to cope with the fresh outbreak of factionalism in November and December which threatened once again to plunge large areas of China into "armed struggle" and anarchy.

The undertaking to restore order from above by speeding up the establishment of a new government structure had also fallen far short of the original goal. Here again the principal reason this programme had not progressed faster was Mao's insistence that the representatives of revolutionary mass organisations be heard in the negotiating process and receive genuine representation in the new organs of revolutionary power. Despite the reverses encountered in 1967, Mao Tse-tung appeared determined at the close of the year on carrying his Cultural Revolution through to the end.

PROSPECTS

The Chairman has called for setting people in motion the first year, winning victory in the second year and finishing the work in the third year. Hsieh Fu-chih, speech on "Fight Self, Repudiate Revisionism," 5 October 1967.⁶¹

The announcement in the fall of 1967 that the timetable for completing the Cultural Revolution had been extended to mid-1969 reflected a new appreciation of the difficulties involved in carrying the revolution through to the end. Central to this new appreciation was the realisation that the struggle to seize power in 1967, which had started so exuberantly in the January Revolution, had been a failure.

The admission of failure in the seize power movement appeared in a remarkably candid speech by Chou En-lai delivered in Peking on 8 November to representatives of rival worker and Red Guard groups from Canton. With the exception of Shanghai, Chou explained, the rebels had not been able "to seize power in a proper way" because of their inability to form "great alliances," a result in turn of their inability to understand and act upon "Chairman Mao's revolutionary line." What had happened in most cases was that "power was seized by only one faction," which invited counter-seizure by another faction, so that "seizure of power became surrender of power and power could not be retained." After the army had been called in to exercise this power temporarily, a second attempt (beginning in April) had been made to unite the revolutionary masses into "great alliances" under the slogan "take the Left as the core." But this attempt also had failed

⁶¹ *SCMP* No. 4076, p. 2.

—“no matter which group you took as the core, things did not work out”—because it too had promoted factionalism, leading to the indiscriminate labelling of mass organisations as “Rightist,” “conservative” or “royalists with guns.” The way to overcome this factionalism in the new stage of the revolution, Chou emphasised, was to recognise that all mass organisations were revolutionary, that “all the masses are determined to make revolution.” As was to be expected, the Premier spent little time explaining why the seize power movement had failed, merely pointing out that the “question of power seizure” was a new one (Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin had never discussed it) which Chairman Mao had brought up and therefore required “study in the course of practice.”⁶²

The failure of Mao's grand design to mobilise the forces of the revolutionary Left to seize power from below necessitated a fundamental change in strategy in the fall of 1967 to one emphasising control from above. An important part of this effort to re-establish centralised control over the political and economic life of the country was the decision at this time to convene the long-delayed Ninth Party Congress in 1968. As revealed by Hsieh Fu-chih in a 26 October speech⁶³ and in accompanying commentary, this decision reflected an intention to bring to an end the chaos which the practice of “extensive democracy” had produced in the preceding year, a situation in which party leadership had consisted largely of bringing “Mao Tse-tung's thought into direct contact with the masses.” It also reflected disenchantment with the performance of the People's Liberation Army in 1967, specifically its failure to recognise and provide adequate support to the revolutionary Left.

Hsieh's speech suggested that another important reason for resurrecting the Party was the need to recruit experienced cadres quickly in order to restore orderly processes in the government and economy of China. This goal was to be achieved by organising the party congress “from the top downward,” by having the Central Committee select those who would attend. With the inducement of a chance to resume positions of authority within the party, government and economic apparatus, it could be expected that a large number of veteran party cadres would step forward to denounce Liu Shao-ch'i and join the ranks of the Maoists. Although there was some uncertainty as to the timing (Hsieh mentioned both May and September as possible dates),

⁶² “Premier Chou En-lai Gives Important Instructions” in *Kung-nung-ping Chan-pao* (Worker-Peasant-Soldier Combat News), 14 November 1967, SCMP No. 4078, pp. 4–5.

⁶³ “Vice Premier Hsieh Fu-chih's Important Speech” in *Wen-ke T'ung-hsun* (Cultural Revolution Bulletin), 11 December 1967, SCMP No. 4097, pp. 1–4.

the convening of a Ninth Party Congress in 1968 attended by carefully selected delegates would permit the voting out of office of the "handful" of Mao's opponents within the Party,⁴⁴ the formal investiture of Mao's new leadership team, and the proclamation of another great victory achieved in the great proletarian Cultural Revolution. The creation of a revitalised Chinese Communist Party staffed by trustworthy "revolutionary successors" has, of course, been a primary objective of Mao's Cultural Revolution from the outset.

Progress towards the original goals of the Cultural Revolution in 1967 was minimal and achieved only at great cost. The first goal—that of discrediting and overthrowing Mao's major opponents within the Party—was achieved readily enough, but in most cases the power "seized" from these opponents had then to be relinquished to the army. Another important result of Mao's call to seize power from below had been to inculcate widespread contempt among Red Guards and revolutionary rebels for authority of any kind, including the authority of new "revolutionary" institutions and even that of the party Centre. For these reasons, Mao's power to control developments in China—like that of other leaders—probably declined in 1967.

Progress towards the second goal—that of identifying and training trustworthy "revolutionary successors"—was limited and uneven. At the outset, many youthful Red Guards and revolutionary rebels appeared to be enthusiastic in their support of the revolution. After more than a year of violence and bloodshed, and especially after their recent demotion to a position of secondary importance, it is likely that many among the younger generation in China have grown cynical and would welcome the opportunity to resume their studies in a quieter and better ordered society.

Failure to make progress towards the third and final goal—that of achieving an ideological revolution—was most noticeable of all. Instead of smashing the "four olds" (old ideas, culture, customs and habits) and creating a new Chinese man devoted to Mao's conception of the good society (featuring class struggle, heroic poverty and collective enthusiasm), the end result of the Cultural Revolution in 1967 was to make the "four olds" more prevalent than ever, to revive traditional relationships and intensify the pursuit of narrow, selfish interests (the most basic, of course, being personal survival) by both legal and illegal means.

⁴⁴ Although only a rough estimate, the "handful" (the term employed in the original 8 August 1966 Central Committee decision on the Cultural Revolution) had probably grown by the end of 1967 to encompass several thousand leadership cadres including nearly two-thirds of the Politburo, half of the full members of the Central Committee, and three-fourths of the provincial party first secretaries.

MAO'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN 1967

Given these setbacks and failures, it was a fair question to ask at the close of 1967 whether the Cultural Revolution was coming to an end. The answer to this question, however, depends upon the answer to another more basic question: whether Mao Tse-tung still dominates the central party, government and military leadership in Peking. The record of developments in the Cultural Revolution in 1967 demonstrates, it is believed, that Mao remained in charge throughout, initiating or at least approving all changes in policy, including the sudden retreat towards moderation in late August forced by objective circumstances. These circumstances—principally a damaged economy, a disturbed army, a fragmented revolutionary Left, a breakdown of party and government machinery, and the consequent threat of anarchy—have forced Mao to call a halt to the destructive, mass phase of his Cultural Revolution and press ahead with the construction of a new “revolutionary” government and party apparatus.

This shift in strategy should not be construed, however, as a change in basic goals. In the eyes of Mao, the Cultural Revolution—as the ultimate expression of his views on the nature of man and society—can never end. As long as Mao Tse-tung continues to dominate his Party and people, the “great proletarian cultural revolution” will continue in Communist China.