

No. 143 (Cambridge)

Background (7/9/90, 1 hr.)

I joined the CCP as a high school student in Shanghai in 1946. His father was in the Guomindang, attended the military academy in Baoding. Had studied with Soviet military advisors, participated in KMT early on with Sun Yatsen, had taken part in Northern Expedition. His father had advocated resistance against Japan, he was in Gu Zutong's army, which was stationed in Anhui and Jiangsu. Because of this, in the early fall of 1941 was arrested and tortured to death by the military intelligence organization under Dai Li, as was his mother shortly thereafter. He was 10 at the time, and what happened was explained to him later by his relatives. In 1945 he was studying at a catholic school in Shanghai. He saw how the KMT was behaving after it returned to Shanghai, and he was finally told why his father was killed. He began participating in anti-KMT student movement. In December 1945 the KMT secret police killed 4 people in Kunming who had organized a pro-democracy movement. Began protesting in Shanghai over that issue, and got involved in the freedom and democracy movement. Shortly he discovered the movement was secretly led by the communists, and he joined the party as an underground member in 1946, March. Still was only 14 at the time. Continued to participate in anti-KMT movement and anti-American demonstrations (for removal of American soldiers, one of whom had raped a Beida coed).

In September 1948, he graduated and went to Yanjing University, on the industry and technology program. Head of program was an American named Ding, who stayed on after 1949, and was arrested during Korean War. Actually this was part of an effort to root out pro American sentiments at Yanjing and Furen; 4 professors were struggled against then, then they arrested Ding as a spy. This was the first time I ever saw this kind of struggle meeting. In summer 1952 the entire educational system in China began to change over to Soviet system from the predominant American system. Yanjing was dispersed and Beida moved to its campus. Furen was closed and combined with Beijing Normal. In December 1948 when the Red Army got to Beijing, I came out of underground to do youth league work, it was the New Democracy Youth League. Did youth league work. Head of league work then was Feng Wenbin, and no. 2 was Hu Yaobang. I did youth league work at Yanjing and Qinghua (his department was transferred over to Qinghua when Yanjing closed in 1952).

In April 1958 he was transferred to Beijing Ribao, first as a reporter and later as a commentator. Spring 1961 he was transferred to party central as a theoretical cadre, because they had begun their polemics with the Soviet Union. Each province sent 3 people to the CCP Propaganda department to work on this kind of theoretical work against revisionism. But I never did work on this, they changed their mind, and some of us sent to Propaganda Dept, some to Red Flag, some to Central Party school.

Hundred Flowers' Background

In the Hundred Flowers at Qinghua, I had a CYL congress right in the middle of the blooming and contending period. I made a speech saying that we should continue youth league work and political thought work, and that we should do so by opposing dogmatism and dogmatic thinking, just as Mao had said in his 1956 speech. This was in the middle of May, I didn't know that Mao's ideas had already changed. Our congress closed on the 25th, and Mao came out to have his picture taken with us. He told us at

that time that any talks that opposed socialism were reactionary. I didn't recognize at the time that this was a change in his thinking. Then a lot of wallposters criticized me for my speech, saying that I still supported the old ways of doing things because I still supported political and ideological work. They called for kicking me out of my position as head of Qinghua youth league committee, kicking me out of the party. They called me out for a debate that evening, no party cadres were around, so I just debated with students and explained my position about opposition to dogmatism in ideological work. In the end I convinced the students, and they applauded.

As soon as the meeting was over the secretary Jiang Nanxiang, president of Qinghua, asked me to come to his house. Apparently his secretary had listened and had phoned in a report from the debate. When I got there a lot of the party cadres from the university were there. The president told me that the situation at Qinghua was very tense, they couldn't even hold party committee meetings because as soon as they did, someone would leak it to the students. They were afraid of wallposters and weren't willing to go out and debate, but I didn't think it was any big problem. But they were very concerned to maintain their authority. They told me that the people making criticisms had serious problems and opposed socialism. They were trying to let me know how the movement would develop at the next stage. I still didn't catch on, I didn't know why they were so tense.

I had thought that Mao was out ahead of Khrushchev as someone who sought to reform the system, not just curse Stalin. I had heard Lin Xiling's speech at Beida, as had a lot of us from the youth league congress at Qinghua, and thought she was really daring but was basically still in accord with the lines of the Hundred Flowers. Didn't necessary agree with everything she said, but basically agreed.

It must have been about May 28, I was called to a meeting at the Beijing Party Committee offices with the president and some party secretaries. We were to hear a report by Peng Zhen, but he never showed up. So one of his secretaries gave us a report, said that some of the students' demands were reactionary, like making public the contents of their political dossiers, and that generalists could not lead experts. He said that the critics were blinded by their lust for gain. But he told us not to be afraid, let them continue to talk, but record what they were saying. He told me that I had done a good job, was a good party member and youth league head, because I had gone right out to debate them and was not afraid [all the others were hiding at home, didn't dare go out].

Zhang Nanxiang then gave me the task of organizing a democratic forum, and record everything that was said. So when the anti rightist campaign began, we had material on them. When the anti-rightist campaign began, I generally thought that the people who were attacked really did oppose the party leadership. But there were some others who were attacked that I didn't agree about, I knew them and they were not much different in attitude from me. So I didn't agree with the verdicts on all the people. There were no rightists in the CYL committee for the school, but quite a few in the branch organizations in various academic departments. So I didn't have any problems during the anti-rightist period.

Beginning of the Cultural Revolution

When the CR began I thought it was a movement for democracy. In April 1966 I wrote an essay about an essay Lu Xun had written criticizing Zhou Yang, but which it

was said that Feng Xuefeng had actually written it himself. Hu Feng was another person on Lu Xun and Feng Xuefeng's side against the CCP propaganda people. I had agreed with Lu Xun's side at that time and had discovered through research on my own that Feng had written only the first draft, under Lu Xun's instructions (he was ill then).

In April 1966 there was a communique issued after a PLA literature and art forum, led by Jiang Qing, which said that Lu Xun had been wrong. I then sent a short article agreeing with that idea, based on my research. I sent to Jiefang Jun Bao, they gave it to Jiang Qing, who gave it to Chen Boda, who sent his secretary to get me in the suburban village where I was helping to carry out the Four Cleans. They brought me back to Diaoyutai on May 23. I saw Chen Boda, Wang Li, Qi Benyu, Guan Feng, Mu Xin, Chen Yading and Ying Da. They all discussed with me how to revise my article. I had not brought up Zhou Yang's name, and originally had not even known that he was mixed up in it. But they made sure that I added a lot of material criticizing Zhou Yang for being involved in it, and trying to oppose Mao's line by engaging in a black line in literature in art that opposed Lu Xun and twisted the facts.

I had originally gotten interested in the subject because I really admired Lu Xun, and admired his fight with the left wingers in the underground party in Shanghai. They were too dogmatic. I was in favor of less dogmatism and more openness in literature. I had never had doubts about the treatment of Hu Feng, Feng Xuefeng in the 1950s. I supported what they had done when aligned with Lu Xun in the 30s, but after he died I wasn't sure that they hadn't joined some reactionary KMT organization like they said. So I didn't have any doubts about their verdicts before the CR.

I had always felt that dictatorship and oppression had no place in the party's practice. I had always considered myself to be very left wing, and I understood that to be to support democracy and openness, criticism of authorities. So at the very beginning of the CR I thought it was a democracy movement, and so I supported it. I also was very excited about the party rectification and hundred flowers in 1957 for the same reason.

After I finished revising the article for the group in Diaoyutai, Tao Zhu came to talk to me around June 6. The Propaganda department was already being reorganized, and Lu Dingyi had already been purged. Tao Zhu was the vice head and was also the party secretary, he would become the new head of the propaganda department. Jiang Qing had had it in for Zhou Yang since the days in Shanghai in the 1930s, when she had lived with the director Tang Na. She ran off, he tried to commit suicide more than once, and eventually left China to open a restaurant in Paris after 1949. Everybody in Shanghai knew about this scandal then, had no connection with the party. But Jiang Qing was worried that somebody who knew about her past would reveal it and attack her. She didn't want anybody to know about it. So my article suited her longstanding plans to get Zhou Yang.

So I was to become the head of the office of Tao Zhu, new minister of propaganda. I held this office only a short time before they started organizing cultural revolution groups in ministries. I was selected a member, and then when Tao Zhu left to work in the party center, I replaced him as head of the cr small group in August.

My first impression of CR was that it really emphasized democracy. It talked about the Paris commune, elections for office holders, and so forth. I thought this was an attack on bureaucratism and special privileges, the biggest one since 1949. I didn't realize at the time that the CR was being used by people at the top to get rid of people they didn't like.

I went to Qinghua and Beijing Univ. to read wallposters, and then reported to Tao Zhu about what I had read and saw. I saw that this was not really giving play to democracy; the work teams under Wang Guangmei and Ye Ling were actually suppressing democracy and attacking people, and many people were criticizing the work team's behavior. All the early red guards were children of high level cadres, and they wouldn't let the students who didn't have red chushen participate in the movement. Kuai Dafu at Qinghua criticized this, but the work team said that anyone who criticized the work team in wallposters was counterrevolutionary. I was dissatisfied with this situation so I wrote a letter about it to Tao Zhu. Tao didn't approve of what was going on, he wasn't conservative like Liu and Deng, his standpoint was more like Zhou Enlai's. Mao sent Zhou to Qinghua to give a speech and see Kuai Dafu, and get him out of detention. He got all the students out who had been imprisoned by the work team, but he didn't make a big conflict about opposing the work teams like Chen Boda, Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng did through Nie Yuanzi at Beida. Zhou, Tao Zhu and others were in the middle on this issue, with Mao and others on the left, Liu and Deng on the right.

The Cultural Revolution in the Propaganda Department

He was head of the department's cultural revolution group from June 1966 until very early 1967. The main activity was the criticism of the various heads of the department: Lu Dingyi, Zhou Yang, Xu Liqun, Lin Mohan, Tong Dalin. We didn't have struggle meetings and beatings like they did out in society. We had meetings where people gave speeches, criticisms. We didn't put hats on people and struggle them. This was one type of CR work, the criticism meetings.

Another kind of work was to receive people who came from other units to struggle and criticize officials in our unit. E.g., Zhou Yang's wife was in the music conservatory, and the red guards had imprisoned her and struggled her. They tied her up and brought her to the courtyard of the propaganda department, and struggled her there. They wanted Zhou Yang to come out. I went out and told them he was sick and couldn't attend, but that we would take care of him. I also told him that we could take care of his wife, and I talked them into turning her over to us and then sent the both of them off to Tianjin to rest.

Our method of holding criticism meetings was thought to be too polite to the objects of struggle. Red guards came frequently to kidnap various dept. heads; two of them were taken off by red guards in one month alone, and Zhou Enlai had to try to find out where they were being held. Turned out they were at one of the universities, and he sent the military to get them and hold them in army bases. Later we turned all the directors over to the military.

So after Tao Zhu was knocked down, I was the highest ranking person left, but we couldn't hold the situation together. We couldn't hold back the red guards; they came for me. After this point, which coincided with the January Storm in Shanghai, the seizure of power period started, and the CR changed. Before it had been a movement where ordinary people had criticized leaders; now it was becoming a power struggle with different factions of leaders aligned with different factions of masses to seize power. This took place until the summer of 1967 when Mao realized that he couldn't control it. Then he called for everybody to form an alliance to seize power. This didn't work either, and Mao eventually had to send in troops, and of course the army had a different idea of how to pursue the CR than the CR small group.

I lived in my home and they pasted wallposters around my front door, and they

had some struggle sessions with me. But I could also debate with them, sometimes people even clapped for me. In reality I still had my freedom. All of us in the so called black gang of the department were treated this way. Nobody really managed the department or controlled us during the period from early January to July 1967. The Guan Feng and Wang Li had us taken over to the municipal party school for a xuexi ban, but before long they were arrested, and later in August Qi Benyu was too, so we were left pretty much on our own until 1968, when the military control groups came in the fall--troops from the Lanzhou Military district. Up to this point in time I had never been beaten or put into a cowshed. In fact, there wasn't any of this at all in the central departments until after the military came. Then they started to purify the class ranks. They labelled me a class enemy, said I opposed Chen Boda and tried to bombard the headquartesr. People put up wallposters attacking me. Held large criticism meetings, still didn't beat me or put me in cowshed. There was not much to it. Then after the 9th party congress was over, they sent us all to a May 7 Cadre school in Ningxia. It was only after I got to Ningxia that Chen Boda called to curse me out and the military leaders then put me in jail.

Red Guards and Factionalism in State Organs (7/10/90, 1.5 hrs.)

I thought the purpose was to oppose bureaucracy, allow the masses to expose and criticize their leaders. I approved of this, and I disapproved of the way things were going under the work teams. Especially in the high schools a lot of violence against teachers and others with bad chushen by groups like Liandong, groups of people with good class background. I thought that these were people who long ago had been beaten by the party. What the CR was supposed to be was to criticize those in power, and to shake up the actual structure of power. I never expected that the movement would become so violent, and I disapproved of the violence of the red class red guards at the beginning. But the radical red guards were also violent, although their targets were in fact those in power. But they doubted too many people. The standard for being a true red guard was unclear: Mao's line. You can find a Mao quote to support different positions, so Red Gaurds went after anybody and everybody. But even the radical red guards were a democracy movement that was independent. It was always being controlled by a group at the top, in the social sciences section at the Academy of Sciences, people like Guan Feng's associate Wu Chuanqi, a researcher who was the head of the zaofan pai movement in the academy. Guan Feng supported him in his activities--he had earlier worked together with him as a researcher. Tao Zhu decided to have him investigated, since his background was complicated and he couldn't decide who were the real revolutionaries there. So he sent a work team there to investigate, and put the materials in the ministry's offices. As a result, students from Guangdong and all over came to demonstrate at the ministry to remove Tao Zhu, and Wu Chuanqi himself came with some red guards and seized the materials, carted the filing cabinet off.

On January 3, 1967, Guan Feng had Wu Chuanqi go into Zhongnanhai to capture Tao Zhu and struggle against him, but they couldn't find him because Zhou Enlai was protecting him. On the fourth, however, Mao said that Tao Zhu should be knocked down, and so he was the next day.

By October of 1966 I was already beginning to sense that the red guard movement in the capital was being controlled by people like Guan Feng. After Tao Zhu was knocked down, Wu Chuanqi came to my house to ask me to cooperate with him in attacking Tao Zhu. I refused, and then he attacked me as Tao's running dog. He had

his red guards came to struggle me.

Wu Chuanqi's organization was in reality an organization used for control of the movement. It had direct connections with those above. The reason he came to our unit is that we were in the same building as Red Flag, where Chen Boda was editor in chief, Fan Ruoyu, Hu Sheng, Deng Liqun were assistant editors. At the beginning of the CR the three vice editors were removed from their positions. Fan Ruoyu was declared a capitalist roader around June 1966 and was put in jail, was considered a chief target of the movement. The othe two stood aside. Wang Li, Guan Feng, Mu Xin were appointed vice editors, all were members of the CCRG. They never came to the office to work, they worked at Diaoyutai. In fact, the four directors were all at Diaoyutai working on the CCRG. In reality, the work was carried out at Red Flag by two people: Lin Jie, Zhou Ying (Guan Feng's wife). All the other publications in Beijing were considered to have political poblems. The Red Flag considered itself the proletarian headquarters, because they had no political problems, and were directly connected to the CCRG. They published directives and made connections with rebels organizations throughout the country. When delegations of rebels came from other parts of China, they couldn't get into Diaoyutai, so they came to Shatan Dalou, a five story building; on one side was the propaganda department, on the other side was Red Flag.

Wu Chuanqi in the past had worked together with Guan Feng in the social science department of the Academy of Sciences. He later became the head of the rebel faction in his unit, and he kept his connections with Guan Feng. So Wu Chuanqi knew all about what was going on in the power struggles at the top; he knew early on of the growing contradiction between Tao Zhu and Jiang Qing, and acted on it before other people in society knew about it. This is how Wu could play such an important role in our unit.

He came to our unit to get rid of Tao Zhu, but his organization was acting on behalf of his associates in the CCRG, whose goal was to get Tao Zhu first and then get Zhou Enlai.

Wu Chuanqi was about 45. Before 1949 he had been a member of the KMT and an editor of Da Gang Bao in Wuhan, a KMT paper. His organization in the CR was called liandui, mostly made up of cadres in the organizations and researchers. The other faction was zongdui, they were made up mostly of workers, fewer intellectuals. Liandui was zaofanpai, zongdui was baoshoupai. But in reality they were both rebel organizations, both had opposed the old leadership, Guan Shanfu and Yang Su. They were put out of office in June, at the beginning of the CR. After they were knocked down, the two factions divided up over the issue of whether or not they should continue to root out the new leader, Zhang Jichun, a relatively old cadre sent by Tao Zhu to take over after the old leaders were thrust aside.

Tao Zhu sent him because the Academy was under the Propaganda Department, like xinhua she, Renmin Ribao, Education Ministry. Tao Zhu had sent a work team over wih the new leader, Zhang, and Wu Chuanqi opposed his leadership and the work team. So this was the issue over which the two factions split. There was also a cadre in Wu's faction named Pan Zinian. The zongduui declared that Liandui was reactionary because Wu had been in KMT and Pan had been in jail before and was therefore a secret agent. But Jiang Qing and Guan Feng declared that Wu Chuanqi was a rebel, and supported him, but Tao Zhu refused to accept this, and said that he and his organization had political problems. This was an important reason for the split between Tao Zhu and the CCRG.

The split between factions which had mostly cadres and intellectuals on one side and workers on the other was pretty common in the government organs. I think this is because the workers react to new situations more slowly, intellectuals more quickly. Second, I think this is because intellectuals are basically more obedient, but workers are more independent minded. If you look at who rebelled first in the CR, the first rebels were people with connections to leaders above, like Nie Yuanzi and the good class red guards. The workers didn't have connections like this; they opposed bureaucratism but not necessarily the party. If you got rid of the old leader and replaced him they were more likely to be satisfied with the outcome.

Both the factions wanted the support of the CCRG, both tried to show that they truly represented Mao's thought. Zhang, the new leader of the academy, had been inclined toward recognizing zongdui, and they sensed this even though he wasn't supposed to be inclined toward either faction. Whoever was recognized by the [legitimate] leaders above would be considered the true zaofanpai. And the upper levels who gave this recognition always were changing in their membership and strategies due to power struggles within them. So it was very complicated. But the basic activity at this point in the CR was that mass organizations were seeking approval from above. But different factions were trying to use different groups below as tools in their struggles. So the Jiang Qing faction used Lin Jie and Wu Chuanqi to attack Tao Zhu. They also brought in a bunch of red guards from Wuhan to go into our courtyard and call for Tao Zhu to come out, and they began a hunger strike. This was around December 25 or so, 1966. Tao Zhu agreed to come out and talk, and the red guards said that they wanted to record the discussion. Tao Zhu said he didn't want to, said he resisted it (kangyi). But in reality they had recorded this statement secretly and gave the tape to Lin Jie and Jiang Qing, and they used it to convince Mao that he had used a violent attitude in opposing the red guards. That was one thing that sealed his fate. These sorts of connections and influences were behind power seizures all throughout the country: from Red Flag to the provinces to the cities and to the counties. The masses didn't know about this but this was behind all of the power seizures in 1967. The mass organizations weren't really controlling the direction of the movement; they were being pushed in this direction and that by those above.

After Guan Feng, Wang Li, Qi Benyu were arrested in mid-1967, there was no way that the CCRG could control the mass factions below. They had a huge network of connections throughout the country and were influencing the direction of the movement in various areas. Once they were arrested, they lost control, and they had to call out the army to control it.

There was a workers' organization called hanwei tuan in Beijing, they never got the support of the CCRG so they couldn't last. They were active in the fall of 1966, but didn't really last into 1967. During the period of criticizing Liu Shaoqi, they opposed criticizing him. This was a fairly large organization. There was also a Beijing gongren zaofan tuan active about the time of the power seizure in January 1967; they were quickly arrested and dispersed, because they were independent. They opposed the direction of the CR. The same was true for sheng wu lian in Hunan later on. They had a theory and were independent, Kang Sheng had to have them suppressed. These were workers, not intellectuals; same is true for the Li Yizhe group in Canton later on. I don't understand much about this aspect of the CR but I think it is very important. Also, the movement in the provinces was more independent, they weren't easily controlled and didn't always take orders from leaders in the center.

Reflections

At the beginning of the CR I thought it was a movement against bureaucratism. Tao Zhu told me that Mao had said that it would take about half a year, then they would have a big meeting to study Mao's thought. But by the time Wu Chuanqi began to attack people on the behest of the faction in the CCRG, it became clear that this was a struggle for power in which people were being used. I realized this about December 1966. I didn't approve of the violent methods often used by the rebels, but I did agree that the people who were being attacked, those in our ministry, had made mistakes and deserved to be criticized. I criticized them too for taking special privileges, being bureaucratic and undemocratic. But I didn't approve of violent struggle sessions that other units were using, neither did Tao Zhu, and we didn't do it that way.

We felt that the problems of bureaucratism was mainly because the central organs were too large and bloated. We advocated abolishing several agencies, combining them and reducing the size of many others. We mainly wanted to reduce the size of the administrative apparatus. E.g. the ministry of culture was entirely abolished and there was no noticeable effect on anything. And they did reduce the size by a lot in the CR; they really cut back on the number of organizations and the number of people in them. When I finally got back to Beijing from Ningxia in 1973, the streets and old buildings of the government seemed almost empty, so mainly people had been sent down. I thought this was fine; we didn't need so many bureaucrats. And to this day I think that the CR was not mistaken in this regard.

I also liked very much what they said at the outset about the Paris Commune and elections for office. But by 1967 I realized that the goal of the Cultural Revolution in fact had not been realized, but had degenerated into power struggles and the old methods were returning. This was wrong. I liked the CR for the same reasons I approved of the party rectification of the Hundred Flowers period. I approved of exposing the dark side and rectifying the system from the bottom up. This was to promote democracy, improve the system. I thought the CR would be an even more thorough version of this.

Some people thought this was a trap like the Hundred Flowers was. But I didn't. And in fact it really wasn't in the end. They never really had an antirightist campaign to control things in the end, they used the army. In reality the cultural revolution was a movement in which people were used to attack others in order to reinforce dictatorship and gain the ends of some of the leaders. This was something that I realized only much later. In fact, I had written Chairman Mao a letter in 1970 to tell him all the bad things that Chen Boda was doing in the name of the CR, this was when he was starting to get into trouble. I still didn't realize though that Mao had other motives for the CR; I still thought he wanted to implement democracy. In fact I still believed in Mao in 1975, he was bringing back Deng in order to oppose the Gang of Four. To this day I think that Mao was a tragic personality who had made huge mistakes, but I still think of him as a basically good person, if a complex and changing one. I don't see him as an evil person who manipulated others and cheated people.