

Settling Accounts with the Cultural Revolution at Beijing University 1977-78

Robin Munro

The purpose of this report is to focus upon two events of some significance that took place at Beijing University (Beida) between late November 1977 and 1978. The first of these was a spontaneous, grass-roots polemic concerning an innovation of the Cultural Revolution period. At issue was the radically new approach to the problem of rearing new generations of proletarian intellectuals, namely, the "worker-peasant-soldier" student enrolment policy, whereby university students were selected through recommendation by the masses instead of on the basis of examination results. This polemic constituted an uninvited interlude in the carrying out at Beida of the nationwide "third campaign" in the criticism of the "gang of four," and focused upon the problem of how, in the light of recent changes in educational policy, the status of worker-peasant-soldier students was to be evaluated.¹

The second event, a movement directed against former Red Guard leaders at Beida, formed by contrast an integral part of the official third campaign. This movement provided interesting local documentation on the development of the third campaign from the criticism of the "gang of four" in the realm of theory and social science to a drive to eradicate the remaining radical forces and ideology of the Cultural Revolution.

The third campaign was launched nationally on the educational front in December, with the official repudiation in *Hongqi* of the "gang of four's" "two estimates."²

* The author was an exchange student in China from 1977-1979. Grateful acknowledgement is made to Jorgen Delman, my fellow student at Beida, for invaluable cooperation in the preparation of this report. We copied and discussed wall posters together, and exchanged much supplementary information. Thanks are also due to Lau Bing-sum for help in transcribing posters.

1. The first two campaigns in the criticism of the "gang of four" had concentrated on exposure of the corrupt life styles and plots to usurp Party and state power of the "gang of four."

2. *Hongqi*, No. 12 (1977). See also, *Peking Review*, 16 December 1977, and 3 February 1978. The *Hongqi* article states that the "two estimates" were formulated in 1971 by Chi Qun on behalf of the "gang of four," despite Mao's positive assessment of the intellectuals in the summer of 1971. The article said that Mao's line had in fact held the dominant position in education throughout the 28 years since Liberation.

At the beginning of November 1977 a new, three-man Party Committee was installed at Beida headed by First Party Secretary Zhou Lin.³ In his inaugural speech attended by lecturers, students and employees of Beida, Zhou Lin stated that he had just had a meeting with Deng Xiaoping.⁴ Deng had briefed him on the task ahead at Beida and had repudiated the “gang of four’s” “two estimates,” giving a new and positive evaluation of the 17 years on the educational front between 1949 and 1966. Zhou Lin said that although Beida should still be considered a great socialist university, it was nevertheless the one where the “gang of four’s” influence had been strongest. In the forthcoming third campaign in the criticism of the “gang of four,” all bad elements were to be purged from Beida, while those who showed a willingness to criticize the “gang of four” and to remould their world outlook would be allowed to continue in their jobs.⁵

Following the installation of the new Beida leadership on 27 November the “Worker’s Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team” (*gong-xuan dui*) left the campus. Its members were given an official send-off, with much banging of drums and cymbals, their task at Beida said to have been completed now that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had “reached a victorious conclusion.”

A number of wall posters were put up at this time, mostly containing criticisms of individual cadres or teachers.⁶ However, rather than being a genuine “mass movement,” this poster campaign was simply intended to communicate to the university population the progress that was being made in the work of rectification. In other words, it acted as a campaign of information.

3. The Cultural Revolution leadership of Beida – Wang Lianlong, Wei Yinqiu, Guo Zonglin and Li Bainian – took over in July 1968, as officers in charge of the “People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team.” They were all removed from office (along with Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi, both from 8341 Unit of the PLA and who had been in charge of Qinghua University) just after the fall of the “gang of four.” There then followed an interim leadership under Huang Xinbai, which was in turn replaced in November 1977 by the present leadership of Zhou Lin, Gao Tie and Wei Ming. Zhou Peiyuan, an eminent physicist, became vice-chancellor.

4. Zhou’s speech was published in the news-sheet *Xin Beida*, 14 November 1977.

5. The third campaign at Beida was to be expressed in the slogan “three thorough and one criticism” (*san chedi yi henpi*): exposure of the “gang of four’s” attempts to seize Party and state power, investigation into persons and events involved with the “gang of four,” exposure of the “gang of four’s” counter-revolutionary and revisionist line, and criticism of the mass criticism group “Liang Xiao.”

6. Most criticisms were directed against the Literature and History Departments and the Beida pharmaceutical factory. Posters were put up at the centre of campus, where in late 1975 posters had been put up criticizing the then minister of Education, Zhou Rongxin and Deng Xiaoping: see David S. Zweig, “The Peking debate on education and the Fall of Teng Hsiao-p’ing,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 73 (March 1978).

"Horns on Their Heads and Thorns on Their Bodies"

The issue that most concerned the campus in late December 1977 and January 1978 was the imminent reintroduction of examinations to assess and select students.⁷ This was a highly sensitive issue, involving the repudiation of the system of "recommendation by the masses," the system by which students already at the university had been admitted.⁸ The reintroduction of examinations meant a return to the pre-Cultural Revolution stress on academic criteria in the selection of students, and left in doubt the status of the "worker-peasant-soldier" students who had filled China's universities from 1970 onwards. Most worker-peasant-soldier students had not sat a closed-book examination for more than 10 years and those who had been Red Guard activists had themselves played a part in the abolition of such examinations during the Cultural Revolution. Students had known about the reintroduction of examinations since autumn 1977, and many had felt nervous and insecure about the forthcoming ordeal; in the event, most seemed to cope quite well with the class examinations that took place at the beginning of 1978.

Being the first students since the Cultural Revolution to be admitted on the basis of performance in entrance examinations, the new students were undoubtedly the cream of the land, academically speaking. There had been absolute stress on marks in the entrance examinations, and the odds against passing had been extremely high.⁹ Moreover, on arrival, at the end of February, they were examined once again, and streamed into fast, medium and slow classes. Young teachers at the university, themselves former worker-peasant-soldier students, soon found to their dismay that some of their first-year students already knew more than they did.

The convening of the Fifth National People's Congress in February 1978 prompted the writing and putting up of slogans and posters and illustrated blackboard displays. One such display at Beida contained a poem written by a newly arrived student in the Philosophy Department:

7. For details of the new enrolment system, see *Renmin ribao*, 21 October 1977. See also, "New college enrolment system," *Peking Review*, No. 46, 1977.

8. For descriptions of the worker-peasant-soldier student enrolment system, made at the time of its introduction, see "The wishes of workers, peasants and soldiers in their hundreds of millions have come true! – Hailing the workers, peasants and soldiers entering the new-type socialist universities," *Peking Review*, 30 September 1970. For specific reference to the situation at Beida, see "Taking all society as their factory – Peking University's achievements in educational revolution in the liberal arts," *Peking Review*, 2 February 1973. For a critique of the educational system at Beida and Qinghua University prior to the Cultural Revolution, see "Chronology of 17 years of the two-line struggle on the educational front" in *Chinese Education* (Spring 1968).

9. Some 5.7 million students sat the college entrance examinations in 1977, of whom 278,000 were selected and enrolled. *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part III – The Far East, FE/5800.

I come from Shanxi on the loess plateau
 where, longing passionately to be of more use to my motherland,
 I studied diligently for years.
 However, I couldn't even consider coming to University,
 for I had no horns on my head or thorns on my body
 – what's more, I used to study hard.
 For the “gang of four” were in control then.
 They branded me behind my back as a “white expert,”
 but now their rule has ended;
 I have entered this forbidden zone of theirs.
 The people have sent me to university,
 for Chairman Hua has issued a new command,
 and the Party Central Committee has carried out a really
 thorough rectification.
 The future of the motherland lies in the Four Modernizations,
 and to this cause I wish to contribute all my strength and vigour.

The poem was unremarkable from a literary point of view, but the attitude it expressed was clear enough. The phrase “horns on the head and thorns on the body” was not invented by the author herself; it had been widely used during the days of the “gang of four” in praise of their model student, Zhang Tiesheng,¹⁰ and referred to qualities of political toughness and rebelliousness. The worker-peasant-soldier students, therefore, took great exception to the implication that only those with “horns on their heads and thorns on their bodies,” Zhang Tiesheng-type students, had been admitted to university under the former enrolment system, and that there had been no room for those intellectually qualified. They immediately began to write wall posters in their own defence and in criticism of the general attitude of the new students. They defended the policy that had allowed them access to university, pointing out that it was Mao's policy and so could not just be written off as heterodoxy perpetrated by the “gang of four.”

The main political task before them was to argue convincingly that their coming to university did in fact owe more to genuine Cultural

10. “Comrade Mao Yuan-hsin's talks at the on-the-spot conference for learning the experience of revolution in education of Chaoyang agricultural college in Liaoning,” *Issues and Studies*, September 1976, p. 114. My thanks to Jenny Louie of Nanjing University for pointing out this reference. In this speech of 23 December 1974, Mao Yuanxin gives a vivid description of his personal experiences of the pre-Cultural Revolution educational system, as well as a lengthy justification for the worker-peasant-soldier educational system. As background, see Mao's “Talks with Mao Yuan-hsin (1964–66),” in Stuart Schram (ed.) *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1974), p. 248. For denunciation of Zhang Tiesheng, see *Peking Review*, No. 8, 1977. The State Council instructed in April 1973 that, under the new system of enrolling students from amongst outstanding workers, peasants and soldiers with at least two years of practical experience through the recommendation of the masses, consideration of the candidate's political qualities should come first, but there should also be a small examination to ascertain the candidate's educational level. The “*fan huichao*” opposition of 1973 to the re-introduction of examinations is now interpreted as having been an attack on Premier Zhou.

Revolution policies than to patronage by the "gang of four." They held that they were defending the worker-peasant-soldier student enrolment policy not only in order to protect their own reputations, but also in order to defend gains made during the Cultural Revolution in terms of class levelling. The other task before them was to prove that they were expert as well as red, that they could qualify as genuine intellectuals and were therefore entitled to a decent job after graduation where they could use their university training.

In the polemic that followed, the new students exploited the blurring of the distinction between the Cultural Revolution and the "gang of four" which had been taking place in recent months in order to cast doubt upon the political worth of the worker-peasant-soldier students. They also pointed to the worker-peasant-soldier students' lack of formal academic qualifications (many were only lower-middle school graduates) to show that they could not even qualify as genuine intellectuals.

Although the author of the poem was eventually persuaded to make an apology for her "unfortunate choice of words," this was not enough to put a stop to debate now that the issue had burst into the open.¹¹

The Polemic on the Worker-peasant-soldier Students

In one of the first wall posters protesting against the new student's poem, entitled "Refuting two viewpoints" and written by second-year philosophy students, two main misconceptions of the problem under discussion were singled out for criticism. First, those who held that the debate really concerned "an attempt to re-evaluate the Cultural Revolution" were accused of "regarding the 'gang of four,' public enemy of the people, as having personified the Cultural Revolution." Although these people seemed to be cherishing the memory of the "flaming red era," they were in fact merely hankering after the days of the "gang of four." Moreover, the poster added, "Beida has always been a starting place for political storms, so we must be on the lookout for trouble-makers." Second, the objection that "all this fuss . . . is quite out of tune with the prevailing situation" was dismissed on the grounds that the debate would on the contrary form a positive contribution to the criticism of the "gang of four" at Beida.

By refuting the first argument, the second-year philosophy worker-peasant-soldier students sought to dissociate themselves from the "ultra-Left" and to pre-empt possible accusations that their defence of the Cultural Revolution was in fact a defence of the "gang of four."

11. Many of the new students acknowledged that the poem had been excessively provocative towards the worker-peasant-soldier students, but they still held that, in expressing support for the new enrolment system, its basic orientation had been correct.

Having next justified the reasons for making “all this fuss,” they turned to the real substance of their complaints:

Comrades, what do these articles that have been appearing in the papers recently, satirizing and attacking the worker-peasant-soldier students, tell us? What does the fact that we have been discriminated against in this university, and given poor jobs after graduation, tell us?¹² What does the laughable distinction that has been made between “brilliant” new students and “stupid” old students tell us? What does the fact that teaching materials for the second and third years have been handed out late and sometimes not at all this term tell us? Doesn’t it all show that the “gang of four’s” rampant metaphysics has still not been thoroughly liquidated?¹³ Although the “gang of four” has been overthrown its ghost is still with us.

Unless we struggle against the vile practice of stamping on socialist democracy, it will be impossible to create a lively and vigorous political situation at Beida. Unless we meet head-on these attempts to suppress the revolutionary enthusiasm of the worker-peasant-soldier students, we shall find ourselves excluded from making our due contribution in the struggles ahead.

Several decades ago, Lu Xun said on behalf of the children of the poor:

“What they lack is money, not intelligence!” In today’s China, where the workers, peasants and labouring masses are masters in their own house, we say boldly and with confidence that we are lacking in neither intelligence nor ability.

The new students of the Philosophy Department responded vigorously to the challenge, and were soon competing with the old students for wall space for their posters. In one of their first posters, entitled “The new enrolment system brooks no denial,” the new students applauded the official repudiation of the “gang of four’s” “two estimates” and the reintroduction of the pre-Cultural Revolution system of student enrolment by examination. However, they avoided the question of whether the Cultural Revolution student enrolment policy was to be ascribed to Mao or to the “gang of four.” They replied to suggestions that political standards had been lowered to allow them to come to university and that they were “white experts,” and furthermore they claimed to have just as much right as the old students to the title of “worker-peasant-soldier” students:

Large numbers of workers, peasants and soldiers who had in the past been suppressed by the “gang of four” have now come to university, full of determination to make their contribution to the Four Modernizations.

The strange thing is, though, that the idea is being put around at Beida that political standards were lowered in the entrance examinations in order to

12. The first group of worker-peasant-soldier students to graduate after the fall of the “gang of four” were allocated jobs in August 1977. The worker-peasant-soldier students maintained that the controversy had a national significance but, according to one poster, Party Secretary Zhou Lin and Politburo member Fang Yi looked at posters on 12 March and determined that it was only a local debate.

13. This is a reference to one of Chairman Mao’s last directives, in which Mao said “metaphysics is rampant” (*xingershangxue changjue*). This directive is now interpreted as a criticism directed at the “gang of four.”

allow the new students to come to university. The people behind such rumours are no different from the "gang of four," who used to foam at the mouth about "white experts." Being attacked by the "gang of four" like this was no shame however, it was an honour! That this label is being used again now, after the smashing of the "gang of four," is something which merits the serious attention of all of us.

Some people have put themselves forward as being the representatives of the worker-peasant-soldier students. They profess to support the new student enrolment system, but they repudiate it in practice. They regard the new students as having come not from amongst the workers, peasants or soldiers, but from other quarters. This is incorrect, for the overwhelming majority of new students have come either from factories, the countryside or the People's Liberation Army.¹⁴ Some have come straight from high-school, but this is in accordance with Premier Zhou's directive and will speed up the training of specialists. The new student enrolment system is the concrete manifestation of Chairman Mao's educational policy of promoting the all-round moral, intellectual and physical development of the individual.¹⁵ Making an artificial distinction between students taken in under the old system and those taken in under the new system will only serve to create confusion in the class ranks and allow ill-intentioned people to fish in troubled waters.

The worker-peasant-soldier students dealt more boldly with the question of whether the Cultural Revolution educational policies were to be ascribed to Mao or to the "gang of four." Whereas the new students made use of the official repudiation of the "two estimates" to justify the re-introduction of the pre-Cultural Revolution student enrolment policy, the old students did so in order to justify the "worker-peasant-soldier" student enrolment policy. Their argument was that on the premise that "Chairman Mao's line held the dominant position in education during the 28 years (since Liberation)," the Cultural Revolution educational policies must also have been formulated by Mao, and so could not simply be dismissed as sabotage and disruption by the "gang of four."

Understandably, the new students were at first hesitant to get too involved or to let the discussion become too wide ranging. They had only just arrived at Beida and so were afraid of making mistakes and starting their university careers under a cloud. However, they appear to have received authorization from above, and perhaps even instructions as to the specific line they should pursue. On 15 March a whole series of posters showing new heights of self-confidence was put up by the new students. In one of these, headed "What 'Ideological Trend'?", the new students began by denying the existence of any "ideological

14. A few days after this poster was written, Deng Xiaoping said that science should be considered as part of the productive forces, and intellectuals and scientists as mental labourers. This gave the new students further legitimization for regarding themselves as members of the working class.

15. The most frequently quoted of Mao's sayings on education: "Our educational policy must enable everyone who receives an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become a worker with both socialist consciousness and culture," comes from his 1957 article "On the correct handling of contradictions among the people."

trend" within society of repudiating the educational line of the past 11 years and the Cultural Revolution in general. They then accused the "gang of four" of stressing the "July 21st universities"¹⁶ to the exclusion of all others, and stated that it was necessary to oppose this kind of "ultra-leftism" while continuing to uphold the "true Left":

Do the changes in the student enrolment system in fact mean that workers, peasants and soldiers will not now be able to go to university? Of course not. The "July 21st universities" enable workers, peasants and soldiers to go to university, and they are not the only means of achieving this aim. However, we must "walk on two legs"¹⁷ and so, with the new student enrolment system as the basis, there have now been established "key" universities, middle schools and primary schools.¹⁸ The essential thing to do now is to universalize, and at the same time raise the standard of, education at the base. Some people claim that before the Cultural Revolution the majority of workers' and peasants' children "regarded universities as the hereditary domain of bourgeois intellectuals." These people are just talking the language of the "gang of four," and their thinking is still poisoned by the influence of the "two estimates."

Even before the Cultural Revolution, the majority of students were either workers, peasants or soldiers, and this is even more the case now¹⁹; but

16. The Shanghai Machine Tools Plant provided the prototype for these "July 21st Universities" now run by many factories; it formally established a July 21st University two months after Mao's directive of 21st July 1968 that colleges of science and engineering should "take the road of the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant in training technicians from among the workers," see Theodore Hsi-en Chen, *The Maoist Educational Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 141-42. Since the early 1960s, the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant had been selecting students from amongst its workers on the basis of advanced political consciousness and production experience, through recommendation by the masses and authorization by the Party Committee. Technical studies were combined with the study of military affairs in army units, and of farming in people's communes. An even earlier form for combining work and study, applied in the countryside, was that of the Communist Labour Universities. It was decided at the National Conference on Educational Work in April 1978 to upgrade the status of July 21st Universities (SWB, FE/5795). July 21st Universities are now also starting to enrol students on the basis of performance in examinations.

17. In the official repudiation of the "two estimates" in late 1977, Mao's call to "walk on two legs" in education of 1958 was interpreted as meaning that both ordinary and "worker-peasant" schools should be run at the same time (i.e. not just the latter). See "Criticizing the two estimates," *Peking Review*, 3 February 1978.

18. See "Running key schools well," *Peking Review*, No. 8, 1978. The article says that the "gang of four" accused the system of "key schools" (which was abolished during the Cultural Revolution) of training "revisionist buds and intellectual aristocrats," and of providing "bourgeois education for geniuses." See also SWB, FE/5812 (13 May 1978); 88 "key" or "pilot" universities and colleges were set up by the middle of 1978.

19. The following statistics were given in "Jiaoyu zhanxian de yi chang da lunzhan," *Hongqi*, No. 12, 1977, concerning the class origins of college and university students of just prior to the Cultural Revolution:

from worker or peasant families - 64.6%

from exploiting class families - 9.4%

universities are places for training specialists, and surely the emphasis should be on this.

Surely this is the best way of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, rather than the "gang of four's" policy of keeping the people ignorant (*yu min zheng ce*)!

The new students then raised the issue which had perhaps been the greatest source of their resentment towards the old students in the past:

Everyone knows that the system of recommendation by the masses had a very bad influence at the grassroots level of society, because the best way to get to university was still to have a well-placed father. Consequently, lots of young people lost all motivation to study.

This was a reference to the corrupt practice of gaining admission to university "through the back door" (*zou houmen*) – that is, by manipulating personal connections and friendships with cadres responsible for approving the selection of students from amongst the masses. Many new students expressed resentment that they had earlier been denied access to university simply because they had lacked the right connexions. Although they never tried to quantify the extent to which "opening back doors" had been permitted, probably because to do so would have involved an evaluation of the extent of corruption within the Party organization under the "gang of four," it seems that corruption may have been fairly common in student enrolment, with recommendation by the masses often ending up simply as selection by the local cadre.²⁰

The most radical of the worker-peasant-soldier students still held to their main theme, namely that the discrimination against them as a group was actually an attack on the Cultural Revolution by supporters of the "gang of four":

Chairman Hua long ago pointed out the need to protect the worker-peasant-soldier students, and in his Report on the Work of the Government at the Fifth National People's Congress he again demonstrated the greatest concern for us. How proud and elated this made millions of worker-peasant-soldier students feel!²¹

20. It was admitted by Mao Yuanxin, in his speech of 23 December 1974 (pp. 118 and 121) that "opening back doors" did go on under the worker-peasant-soldier student enrolment policy. It seems, however, that the new enrolment system has not managed to put an end to "back door" corruption. *Renmin ribao* (12 December 1978) said that new forms of "opening back doors" had arisen under the new system. Discontented students held a demonstration outside the Beijing municipal headquarters in the middle of September 1979, protesting about having been denied university places despite passing the entrance examinations, and claiming that children of high officials had been corruptly admitted through the "back door" (*The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian*, 21 September 1979).

21. *Peking Review*, No. 10, 10 March 1978. In his Report, Hua said that the present college graduates "should be enabled to put what they have learned to good use and further efforts should be made to train them and raise their level," and that the worker-peasant-soldier students trained in recent years were a "new

However, revolution is a long process and the struggle is arduous. After the smashing of the "gang of four," all those whose interests were inextricably linked with the "gang of four" became even more cunning, and they continue to sabotage the Cultural Revolution from behind the scenes. These dogs have a keen nose for which way the wind is blowing, and they now jump from one extreme to the other, trying to write off the Cultural Revolution by painting it all black.

Obviously, with this degree of acrimony it would be no easy task to bring about a reconciliation between the two groups of students. However, the debate was suddenly given a significant reorientation by the appearance of a controversial small character poster which rendered such reconciliation both less likely and less necessary.

A "Reactionary" Small Character Poster

This anonymous small character poster was torn down within hours of its appearance and was quickly condemned as "reactionary" by the university authorities. It is impossible to say whether the poster was written by a student who was quite out of touch with the political realities of the day and with permissible limits of discussion, or whether it was put up for ulterior motives and as a deliberate act of provocation. Whichever was the case, the poster effectively ended discussion on the evaluation of the worker-peasant-soldier students.

Only a few people saw the small character poster, but news about it spread rapidly. The poster was later reprinted and distributed to students and staff as "negative teaching material," so that they could criticize its "reactionary" content and at the same time raise their own ability to distinguish between "reactionary" and "revolutionary" thinking:

There is at present an adverse current running through society, a torrent which seems to be swallowing all in its path. "The black cloud presses down, threatening to engulf the city." Protected by their superiors, all kinds of snakes, monsters and demons have been surging forwards, shouting themselves hoarse with abuse against the worker-peasant-soldier students, saying that they are all Zhang Tiesheng-type students. All big and petit-bourgeois elements are attacking at once, ordering people around and trying to have things their own way. They think that they are the saviours of the world, whilst the worker-peasant-soldier students are all degenerate idiots, "Ah Dous."²² They seem to think that without them the world would stop turning.

This little clown from the Shanxi loess plateau hates the workers, peasants and soldiers. She is, moreover, a typical example. The high-sounding poem which she has written expressing her feelings on coming to university really

force in our contingent of intellectuals and should be given every care and assistance to grow and mature."

22. Ah Dou was the son of Liu Bei in the "Romance of the Three Kingdoms," and was famed for his stupidity.

is an extraordinary piece of writing. The whole thing is a complete load of bullshit and turns right and wrong upside down.

She quite shamelessly fails to refer even once to the writings of Chairman Mao.

She says that in the past she couldn't even consider coming to university because she had no horns on her head or thorns on her body, but what she is really saying is that worker-peasant-soldier students are all Zhang Tiesheng-types.

As everyone knows, worker-peasant-soldier students coming to university was a pioneering undertaking in the history of mankind, a historical event without precedent. They came as a result of the victory of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and of Chairman Mao's brilliant revolutionary line. They were given the right to come to university by the great leader Chairman Mao himself. And how were they selected? On the recommendation of the broad masses and by Party organizations at all levels. Chairman Mao's revolutionary line is our lifeline; were it not for him where would we be today? To say that the worker-peasant-soldier students are Zhang Tiesheng-types with horns on their heads and thorns on their bodies is tantamount to saying that those selected by Party organizations at all levels are in fact counter-revolutionary elements. Is there really any logic in such an argument?

The author, moreover, depicts China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution as having been a complete mess, as if it was some kind of ice-age which is only now thawing out. The Cultural Revolution was indeed a stormy period; people were sent down to the countryside to temper themselves through labour, families were broken up, mothers were separated from their sons, some people even died. But different classes have always had different ways of looking at these things, and the proletariat regards the Cultural Revolution as having propelled forward the history of mankind. A new chapter in history has been written. The Cultural Revolution created a new generation of people, people who have a high ability to discriminate between genuine and false Marxism-Leninism; this makes it harder for the bourgeoisie to stage a comeback. All capitalist-roads and other members of the bourgeoisie can't stand hearing about the Cultural Revolution, because one by one during that time they became like dogs fallen in the water, howling in despair and presenting the most pitiful spectacle. Now that they have at last managed to crawl back out of the water, they are eager to do what comes naturally to them, which is to bite people.

Their moment has arrived and, while affirming Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in the abstract, they repudiate it in practice. They have launched a berserk counter-attack, viciously laying into the workers, peasants and soldiers as if we were the very basis of the "gang of four." This clown from the Philosophy Department is simply the mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie.

The worker-peasant-soldier students have taken a heavy beating at Beida, but the university Party Committee doesn't want to know about it. It still hasn't resolved this issue and, in the name of carrying out an investigation, it lets things drag on and on. What is the meaning of it? It really makes one think.

Owing to the restoration of the Chinese bourgeoisie, China's history has been turned back 10 years. Strikingly similar situations often crop up in the

course of history, for didn't the same thing happen in the Soviet Union following the death of the great Marxist-Leninist, Stalin?

However, the laws of history cannot be opposed; new-born things will eventually triumph over corrupt bourgeois things and youth will eventually replace the old. With Chairman Mao's fine successor Chairman Hua supporting us we fear neither heaven nor earth. Fellow worker-peasant-soldier students, the question of the evaluation of the worker-peasant-soldier students is quite simple: it is a battle for the defence of Mao Zedong thought! I hope you will all come forward to play your part.

Fight back resolutely against the insults of the bourgeoisie towards the worker-peasant-soldier students!

The enemies of the workers, peasants and soldiers will sooner or later be swept on to the rubbish heap of history!

Black clouds cannot blot out the sun; the darkness will pass!

While in some ways this poster merely reiterated points that had been raised before by the worker-peasant-soldier students, it did present them more forcefully, making it more explicit that the main issue at stake was the Cultural Revolution. It also differed from earlier posters in three other ways. First, the poster rejected the characterization of worker-peasant-soldier students as having "horns on their heads and thorns on their bodies" on the grounds that the conclusion could be drawn that the Party organizations at all levels responsible for their selection were composed of equally unsavoury elements. This was actually a roundabout way of defending the worker-peasant-soldier students against widespread accusations that they had got into university by "opening back doors."

Secondly, the poster used the phrases "capitalist-roaders" and "dogs fallen in the water" (*lo shui gou*) to denote the old Party cadres. Particularly offensive was the use of "dogs fallen in the water," since the most illustrious amongst those to receive this epithet in the past had been Deng Xiaoping.

Finally, by stating that a restoration of the bourgeoisie had taken place in China and implying that the country had gone "revisionist," the writer of the poster immediately invalidated all of his previous arguments by allowing his basic political line to be viewed as "reactionary." The fact that at the same time he declared support for Chairman Hua in no way let him off the hook.

Considering the rather low level of the arguments used by the writer to back up his dramatic assertions, the poster would hardly seem to justify the diversion of discussion away from the original topic of the worker-peasant-soldier students. However, the Beida leadership held a meeting with student representatives the following day and the poster was denounced as "reactionary." The whole university was mobilized to criticize it, and an investigation was ordered to find out who had written it. It seems that the worker-peasant-soldier students received something of a dressing down at this meeting.

"What is so Superior about the Political Level of the Worker-peasant-soldier Students?"

The leadership had linked the poster with the remaining influence of the "gang of four" at Beida, and this gave a great advantage to the new students in their debate with the worker-peasant-soldier students. The worker-peasant-soldier students' attempts to evaluate their own status and worth had, they felt, been sabotaged from within their own ranks, and this placed them in a defensive role in relation to the new students. Seeing that the course of events was getting them into deeper trouble, they felt they had no choice but to abandon the earlier issue and concentrate exclusively on the criticism of the small character poster.

The two groups of students were unanimous in condemning the small character poster's mention of "capitalist restoration," the comparison with the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, and the disparaging remarks about the old cadres. However, while the worker-peasant-soldier students had to work hard to dissociate themselves from the "reactionary" poster, the new students were able to take advantage of the situation in order to win a clear victory over the earlier issues. They were now quite confident of the line to take, and were in no doubt as to how the worker-peasant-soldier students were to be judged. One poster, written by new students from the School of Journalism and entitled "People should be aware of their own limitations,"²³ which appeared soon after the reactionary poster, began by denouncing as a sham the former procedure of selecting students on the basis of recommendation by the masses:

The worker-peasant-soldier students say they have a superior political level, and that if you write off the worker-peasant-soldier students you write off the Cultural Revolution.

In what way is their political level superior? The "gang of four" used their ill-gotten political power to sabotage normal socialist practice, and "opening back doors" was disastrously rife. You had to "open back doors" to get anything done, and getting admitted to university was no exception. Those who were in the best position to grease palms were the ones who went to university.

[Since the fall of the "gang of four," however] public opinion has been making them feel uncomfortable, and when they hear people say that the worker-peasant-soldier students are of low quality they get just as agitated as Ah Q used to do when people mentioned the mangy scabs on his head. They pull faces and get very angry indeed.

Why have the broad masses got such a bad impression of you? Would you dare to go outside the university gates, amongst the workers and peasants, and boast so loudly about yourselves? . . . People should be aware of their own limitations. We advise certain people to calm down and come to their

23. The classical phrase "awareness of one's own limitations" (*ren yao you zi zhi zhi ming*, sometimes translated as "people should know themselves") is often associated with Mao's letter to Jiang Qing of July 1966, in which Mao expressed suspicions about Lin Biao.

senses! In evaluating the worker-peasant-soldier students we don't go by their own bragging and boasting but by their record in revolutionary practice. Self-flattery just won't do – let's have a bit more humility!

The new students continued to maintain a clear distinction between the “gang of four” and the Cultural Revolution in their poster “Fight back resolutely against the class enemy's counter-revolutionary insolence.”

The reactionary small character poster, with the ulterior motive of suppressing the people's criticisms and accusations, seeks to cloak the “gang of four's” fascist line with the red banner of the Cultural Revolution. The traitorous seizure of Party and state power in recent years in no way represents the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

However, they now claimed that the whole controversy over the poem had been a deliberate act of disruption by the worker-peasant-soldier students who, in turn, had been manipulated by hidden “gang of four” supporters attempting to divert attention away from themselves. They ended by calling for a thorough and final purge of the “gang of four's” hidden supporters at Beida:

You remnant “gang of four” supporters have exploited certain ideological problems amongst the worker-peasant-soldier students, inciting them to make trouble and to create an upheaval on campus. You hope to stage a Hungarian Uprising at Beida, to destroy stability and unity. . . . Vigilance comrades! Serious class struggle has unfolded at Beida, so let us unite for battle. We must drag these jackals before Chairman Hua and the Central Committee. We must thoroughly wipe out the “gang of four's” poisonous influence at Beida and clear out once and for all the smell of the “gang of four” which has been pervading the atmosphere of the place for many years now.

In an atmosphere of mutual antipathy the polemic on the worker-peasant-soldier students soon drew to a close, and the Beida leadership was in a position to continue with the third campaign in the criticism of the “gang of four.” The scope of the next stage of the campaign went considerably further back in time, with the “gang of four” now regarded as having been an active counter-revolutionary force right from the start of the Cultural Revolution.

Down with Nie Yuanzi!

As criticism of the “reactionary” small character poster began to draw to a close, it became apparent that the new students had won a clear moral victory over the worker-peasant-soldier students. However, fundamental questions that had been raised during the polemic on the worker-peasant-soldier students remained unanswered, and so it seemed at first that the events which now followed merely constituted a continuation of the same polemic at a higher level.

On 29 March a slogan was pasted up at the side of the main road running through campus, which read as follows:

Follow closely our brilliant leader Chairman Hua; carry through to the end the great struggle to criticize the "gang of four"! Settle accounts with the bourgeois careerist Nie Yuanzi for her crimes in sabotaging the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution!²⁴

The Chinese students seemed puzzled at first by the slogan but over the next few days, as similar slogans were pasted on all main buildings, it became apparent that an official campaign to discredit the Red Guard movement was being launched at Beida. The nature of this campaign, which was later to be extended to national level, was not immediately evident however, since the Red Guards were never actually referred to by name. The term had been removed from the political glossary, and Red Guards were now referred to simply as "beating, smashing and looting elements" (*da-za-qiang fenzi*) – in other words, as common thugs.

Some typical slogans read as follows:

The dictatorship of the proletariat must be exercised against the evil ring-leaders of those who carried out beatings, smashings and lootings!

We must thoroughly settle accounts with the criminal activities of people like Nie and Sun who despatched agents all over the country to arrest and beat people!

Smash completely the gang network of Nie, Sun, Wang, Wei, Guo and Li!²⁵

24. Nie Yuanzi has been connected with high political circles since the 1950s. She is said to have been married to the Party secretary of Haerbin, and her brother Nie Zhen was vice-Party secretary of People's University in Beijing. She was employed as a teacher in the Philosophy Department of Beida, and from 1961 to 1962 held the position of acting Party branch secretary in the Department. From 1964 to 1965 she was involved in a struggle with members of the official work-team which was sent into Beida to carry out the Socialist Education Movement (see Victor Nee, *The Cultural Revolution at Peking University* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1969)). Following enthusiastic praise by Mao of her wall poster at Beida of 25 May 1966 ["China's first Marxist-Leninist big character poster" . . . "the manifesto of the Chinese Paris Commune of the sixties of the twentieth century . . .": see Schram, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, p. 253, and *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* (1969), p. 648], she rose rapidly to become the most famous of the "Big Five" Red Guard leaders of Beijing [*wu da xuesheng lingxiu*: Nie Yuanzi (Beida), Kuai Dafu (Qinghua), Han Aijing (Beijing Aeronautical Institute), Tan Houlan (Beijing Normal College), Wang Dabin (Geological Institute)]. In July 1968, the "Big Five" were called to a meeting with Mao and the Cultural Revolution Group where they were severely censured for their part in the spread of factional fighting and armed struggle, and large-scale intervention by the PLA quickly brought Red Guard activity to a halt. Nie Yuanzi's official posts included: chairman of the New Beida Cultural Revolution Committee (end of 1966), chairman of the Beijing Red Guard Congress (February 1967), vice-chairman of the Beijing Revolutionary Committee (April 1967) and alternate member of the Party Central Committee (April 1969). She is now in her mid-50s.

25. Sun Pengyi was a young teacher in the Philosophy Department until the Cultural Revolution, when he became second-in-command of Nie Yuanzi's Red Guard faction (the New Beida Commune Red Guards). He had been a work-team cadre in the countryside during the Socialist Education Movement. Like Nie, he was criticized in 1968 by the Workers' and PLA Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team, and he subsequently dropped from the limelight altogether. Wang, Wei,

Punish severely the executioners Nie Yuanzi and Sun Pengyi – their blood debts are numberless!

Nie Yuanzi, leader of the Red Guard rebel faction at Beida and foremost member of the “Big Five” Red Guard leaders of Beijing, had disappeared from the political scene after the Ninth Party Congress, and it is not clear what became of her from then until 1978. She may, as punishment for her part in the spread of armed struggle (*wu dou*) throughout China during the second year of the Cultural Revolution, have undergone ideological remoulding at the Central Committee cadre school between 1969 and 1971. During the years that followed she is said to have been employed in a minor job at Beida, probably sweeping the streets. However, as she apparently still held her Party membership card, she had not yet been completely disgraced. The case against her was now to be reopened, in order that she might serve not only as a symbol of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution but also as a focus for the criticism of the whole spirit of that period. The Red Guards were to be reviled, and the ethos of the Cultural Revolution – “to rebel is justified” – was to be repudiated.

Reasons For the New Campaign

The campaign against the Red Guards at Beida reflected not only local problems that had been encountered in the course of eradicating the influence of the “gang of four” but also two problems that had arisen at the national level.

The first of these problems related to the poor progress being made by certain areas and units in carrying out the third campaign. A movement had been under way in Hunan Province since November 1977, called the “one criticism, two blows and three consolidations” movement, or the “two blows” (*shuang da*) movement for short.²⁶ The movement had two main objectives: to expose counter-revolutionaries engaged in sabotage, and to expose those guilty of economic crimes such as speculation and profiteering. In the course of the “two blows” movement in Hunan, the work of investigation had come to focus more and more upon former “smashing, grabbing and looting elements.” These people were said to be at the root of the bourgeois factionalism that still persisted in certain leading bodies, for some of them apparently still held positions of authority. In June 1978 many other provinces announced that they too were starting to carry out the “two blows” movement; moreover, institutes of higher education became major targets for the movement. The campaign against the Red Guards at Beida seems to have been an early, local instance of the “two blows” movement, although the movement was not extended

Guo and Li comprised the Cultural Revolution leadership of Beida (from July 1968).

26. *SWB*, FE/5837.

to all units in the Beijing area until several months later.²⁷ At the same time that the “two blows” movement was being launched nationwide there were official reports of wide-spread attempts to “keep the lid down” on the criticism of the “gang of four.” Some leading cadres were afraid of going too far in their criticism in case official policy should undergo yet another reversal.²⁸

The second major problem relevant to the campaign against the Red Guards at Beida was one which had arisen at the National Educational Work Conference in April 1978,²⁹ when certain high-ranking delegates had criticized the new student enrolment policy. These delegates said that the new enrolment policy would result in “widening the three gaps,”³⁰ that it had “enrolled several hundred thousand and offended several tens of millions,” that in the 1977 enrolment of students “stress was laid on the towns and the rural areas were rejected” and that “the proportion of those from worker and peasant families declined and the Party’s class line was not implemented.” These views were expressed again by certain delegates at the provincial educational and student enrolment conferences that were subsequently held. All of these viewpoints were officially denounced as representing a reactionary trend of thought, and repudiation of these viewpoints was deemed to be a fundamental question of two-line struggle. Those who had expressed opposition to the new student enrolment policy were largely identified as being the same ones responsible for suppressing the criticism of the “gang of four” – the political problem of “keeping the lid down” was seen as directly related to the educational problem of opposition to the new student enrolment policy. Moreover, it seemed that both problems were to be dealt with in the course of conducting the “two blows” movement.³¹

27. *SWB*, FE/5833, FE/5834, FE/5843; see esp. FE/5852. The “two blows” (*shuang da*) movement, with its exposure of Red Guard “thuggery” and other criminal activities, complemented the demands for a proper legal system which were being expressed in the national press around the same time. The main places where the “two blows” movement was to be carried out were the provincial organs, and institutes of higher education (*SWB*, FE/5841).

28. See *SWB*, FE/5841, FE/5843 and FE/5846.

29. For Deng’s speech at the conference, see *Peking Review*, 5 May 1978; for Liu Xiyao’s speech, see *SWB*, FE/5843.

30. “*San da chabie*” – the three major distinctions, between town and country, industry and agricultural, physical and mental labour. Apparently, fierce opposition had also been expressed towards the new system of “key schools”; critics of “key schools” said that they involved taking the revisionist road, conducting education for geniuses and preaching that intellectual knowledge comes first (*SWB*, FE/5843).

31. The “two blows” movement was also carried out at Nanjing University, slightly later than at Beida, with the two Nanjing Red Guard leaders Zeng Bangyuan and Zhou Wenchang being criticized at “criticism-struggle meetings” in June and October. Foreign students were invited to attend both of these meetings. For guidelines on the scale of the “two blows” movement and the criteria to be used in dealing with individuals, see *SWB*, FE/5841.

Nie Yuanzi Faces the Masses Again

On 8 April 1978 a large meeting was held on a sports field at Beida at which Nie Yuanzi and Sun Pengyi were presented for criticism by the masses. It was the same sports field on which the two Red Guard leaders had held similar mass “criticism-struggle meetings” (*pi dou da hui*) against many people during the Cultural Revolution. A crowd of several thousand people seated on small stools was facing a large stage above which had been draped a red banner bearing the slogan “Meeting to criticize and struggle against the black agent of Lin Biao and the ‘gang of four,’ the counter-revolutionary Nie Yuanzi.” The Beida Party Committee were seated at a long table in the middle of the stage. In front of them sat eight men including Sun Pengyi, heads bowed and with two guards watching over them. To the right of the leadership sat a plump woman with shortish hair, wearing a grey work jacket and dark blue trousers, also with her head bowed. This was Nie Yuanzi. A female guard sat just behind her.

Two people came on to the stage to recount their personal tales of alleged persecution and suffering at the hands of Nie Yuanzi and her Red Guards. The tale recounted by one of them, a woman, was a particularly sad one. Her husband, who had been a teacher at Beida, was, she said, imprisoned several times by Nie during the Cultural Revolution. He had been shut up in the “Reform through Labour Compound” (*lao-gai da yuan*) which Nie had set up at Beida, where he had endured frequent beatings. His family had undergone such privation and harassment that not only did his wife suffer a miscarriage, but their young son had died as well.

After the two people finished giving their accounts, a young woman at the side of the stage began to shout out slogans such as “overthrow remnant elements of the ‘gang of four’!” and “Punish Nie Yuanzi in accordance with the law!” After each slogan the crowd raised clenched fists and shouted out the slogan themselves. Those who had been criticized were then led off the stage. On her way down from the stage, Nie Yuanzi turned to the crowd, raised her arm and shouted defiantly at them. The “old buddha,” as she was commonly referred to, was evidently unrepentant.³² The guard behind her quickly pulled down Nie’s arm and hurried her down the steps.

More shouting of slogans followed and then the summing-up speech was delivered by Party Secretary Zhou Lin. He talked about Nie’s connection with Lin Biao and the “gang of four,” and said that she

32. This was not the first time that Nie Yuanzi had been made the target of a campaign of vilification. The special case group (*zhuan an zu*) of the Jing Gang Shan Red Guards of Beida (the faction opposed to Nie’s) in 1967 compiled a dossier of unpleasant facts about Nie. They claimed that her husband, the Party Secretary of Harbin, had been denounced as a “Rightist” in 1957 and that she had divorced him; her next husband, an aged member of the Central Committee’s Commission for the Inspection of Discipline (*Zhongyang jilu jiancha weiyuanhui*) was also branded as a renegade; worst of all, they claimed that her brother Nie Zhen was married to an ex-wife of Liu Shaoqi.

had also been involved in the counter-revolutionary activities of Wang, Wei, Guo and Li, the former Beida leadership. Zhou Lin then read out 10 or more case histories concerning people who, he said, had been unjustly persecuted by Nie Yuanzi and Sun Pengyi, and he announced the restoration of Party membership for all these people.³³ This announcement brought the meeting, which had lasted for about two hours, to a close. Neither Nie nor Sun had confessed to the crimes with which they were charged, and at the very beginning of the meeting it had apparently been necessary for the crowd to “struggle” them to make them bow their heads.

New posters were put up soon after this meeting, many of which presented case histories of people who were said to have been persecuted by Nie and Sun during the Cultural Revolution. Some were written by those said to have been victims themselves, others by groups of teachers on behalf of colleagues who had since died or been transferred to other areas. According to these accounts most of the victims had spent up to six months in the Reform through Labour Compound, supposedly for criticism and investigation. Conditions there were said to have been dreadful, with prisoners frequently being held in cells where they could not see the light of day, denied all treatment for injuries suffered during their detention and denied all contact with their families. The guards in the Reform through Labour Compound were alleged to have used torture and other forms of coercion in order to make people sign confessions of counter-revolutionary crimes, and had then made convictions on the basis of these extorted confessions.³⁴ Some of the victims had died, others had been crippled, while many had suffered severe psychological damage. Those responsible were described as “fascists,” “thugs” and “murderers,” and it was demanded that they be tried by law and severely punished for their crimes. Some of the culprits were said to still be holding high posts at Beida, and appeals were made to the entire university population to show solidarity by co-operating with the university leadership in the exposure of crimes dating from the Cultural Revolution.

The Party Settles Accounts

According to the first wall poster to be put up at Beida after the 8 April criticism meeting, one written by cadres from the Beida Office for the Revolution in Education:

33. The Party slogan guiding rehabilitations at this time was “carry out the Party’s policy on cadres and intellectuals” (*luoshi dang de ganbu he zhishifenzi zhengce*). From November 1978 onwards, the slogan used was “mistakes must be rectified” (*you cuo bi zheng*), marking the transition to more wholesale and top-level rehabilitations.

34. These extortive practices (known as *bi-gong-xin*), described as having occurred in nearly all cases raised, were condemned by Mao in the 1969 New Year’s Day editorial of *Renmin ribao*.

In the winter of 1966 Nie Yuanzi went to Shanghai to carry out counter-revolutionary intrigues, under orders from the old witch Jiang Qing (Li Na gave Nie the message). On arrival at Shanghai, the first thing that Nie did was to accuse the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee of shielding the "big renegade" of the Socialist Education Movement at Beida, Comrade Chang Xiping, and to incite members of Jiang Qing's faction to attack him from all sides.³⁵ She used all kinds of despicable means to persecute him, and tortured him to extract a confession. Later on Nie went again to Shanghai and this time she arrested him. She struggled brutally with him, beat him mercilessly and wasn't satisfied until he had died.

Chang Xiping, as municipal head of education in Shanghai, was the man responsible there for the official work-teams which had presided over the early phase of the Cultural Revolution, and for several months even before Nie Yuanzi's arrival in Shanghai he had been under fire from the rebel faction for trying to suppress the student movement in Shanghai.³⁶ The implication of the poster was, therefore, that the Red Guards had been wrong to oppose the official work-teams during the summer of 1966.

This was how the poster described the methods used by the Red Guards to carry out the Cultural Revolution at Beida and which were quickly adopted by Red Guards throughout the country:

In June 1966, Jiang Qing and her cronies . . . turning right and wrong upside down, carried out a frantic suppression of the broad masses of cadres at Beida. Jiang Qing clapped her hands with delight at the so-called June 18th Incident, at which cadres were viciously beaten and then carted around different work units to be struggled against.³⁷ The evil influence of the June 18th Incident immediately spread throughout the country, stirring up foul practices such as roaming the streets and beating people up, sticking tall hats on their heads and hanging black signs around their necks. By this time, Nie Yuanzi had become the highly esteemed favourite of Jiang Qing and her cronies, and together they raised high the cudgel of fascism.

However, perhaps the most striking aspect of the poster was that

35. Nie stated at a rally in Shanghai on 22 November 1966: "The case of Chang Xiping is not an isolated phenomenon. It is intimately connected with two sources of authority: one is the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee under Mayor Ts'ao Ti-ch'iu, the other is the secretary-general of the Party, Teng Hsiao-p'ing." See Neale Hunter, *Shanghai Journal: An Eyewitness Account of the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 154.

36. See Schram, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, p. 256: "Speech at a meeting with regional secretaries and members of the Cultural Revolutionary Group of the Central Committee, 22 July 1966," for Mao's criticisms of the obstructive tactics of the work-teams.

37. The "June 18 Incident" at Beida involved the public criticism and humiliation of the University Party Committee, the work-team, and many teachers and cadres. Liu Shaoqi publicized it immediately afterwards as an example which was not to be repeated; Jiang Qing, however, claimed that Chairman Mao regarded this incident as being a revolutionary one [see *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, pp. 259, 341, n. 5; see also *Current Background* (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate General), No. 892, p. 39]. See also *Beijing ribao*, 19 January 1979.

Nie Yuanzi's crimes were traced back even to before the Cultural Revolution. For Chang Xiping had not only been in charge of the work-teams in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution, but had also been one of the leaders of the work-team which carried out the Socialist Education Movement at Beida in 1964. According to the poster, he had opposed the work-team's policy of treating Beida as a completely corrupt (*landiao*) institution during the Socialist Education Movement, and of carrying out large-scale rectification of cadres in emulation of the "Peach Garden experience."³⁸ The work-team's line was that of Liu Shaoqi, "Left in form but Right in essence," and ran contrary to Chairman Mao's instructions.³⁹ Chang Xiping had regarded Beida as being a genuinely socialist university with only a handful of bad cadres, but his views were opposed not only by the rest of the work-team but also by Jiang Qing and Nie Yuanzi; the work-team, in fact, praised Nie's faction as being "Leftist."

The message seemed to be that the methods used by the Red Guards in carrying out the Cultural Revolution had amounted to a return to the erroneous line of large-scale rectification of cadres which the work-teams had pursued during the Socialist Education Movement. This served incidentally to quash the hitherto widely accepted assessment of Nie Yuanzi, namely, that she was seen as having played a progressive role at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution by helping to topple Peng Zhen and the Beijing Party Committee, but as later having led the Red Guard movement into destructive armed struggle and divisive bourgeois factionalism. At the same time, the implied redefinition of the Cultural Revolution as that stage of the movement presided over by Peng Zhen and the first Cultural Revolution Group, with the events following the fall of the Peng Zhen group in June 1966 now to be regarded as "sabotage" of the Cultural Revolution,

38. Chang Xiping served as deputy secretary of the Party Committee of the Socialist Education Movement work-team at Beida from November 1964 to June 1965 (SWB, FE/5852). The Party secretary of the work-team was Zhang Panshi, then also the deputy minister of the Party Central Committee Propaganda Department. (See Nee, *The Cultural Revolution at Peking University*, p. 44, fn. on Zhang Panshi). The "Peach Garden experience" derived from a social investigation conducted by Wang Guangmei, the wife of Liu Shaoqi.

39. Mao and Liu issued a series of conflicting directives during the Socialist Education Movement. Liu refused to accept Mao's "23 articles" when they were put forward in January 1965 [Schram, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, p. 345, text 21, n. 1. See Richard Baum and Frederick C. Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing: Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968), p. 120, for text of the "23 articles"], and had proposed a much more radical policy than Mao for the rectification of cadres during the Socialist Education Movement, in his "later 10 articles" and in the "Peach Garden experience." (Neale Hunter, in *Shanghai Journal*, points out that Liu greatly consolidated his power-base by way of the appointments of cadres made by the Socialist Education Movement work-teams in factories and villages.)

provided a theoretical legitimation for stopping short of an all-out repudiation of the entire Cultural Revolution.⁴⁰

It was announced in the poster that Chang Xiping, who had died in 1968 as a result of persecution by Nie Yuanzi, had recently been posthumously rehabilitated by the Central Committee. A final demand for revenge to be taken against Nie was typical of many other posters describing similar cases, as was the general implication that much of the conflict of the Cultural Revolution had merely consisted of score-settling and personal vendetta. The political justification given in the past by those responsible for this conflict was now dismissed as false, as mere cosmetic covering for the criminal actions of a network of "ultra-leftist gangsters" directed by Lin Biao, the "gang of four," the "Big Five" student leaders and groups such as "Liang Xiao."

Nie Yuanzi Takes a "Plane Trip"

A second large meeting was held to criticize Nie Yuanzi on 19 April, in the same place as before. Nie was made to take a "plane trip" (*zuo feiji*)⁴¹ at this meeting, perhaps to give her a taste of her own medicine, while a speech denouncing her was read out. She had been stripped of her Party membership and placed under formal arrest, as had happened recently to the rest of the "Big Five" student leaders, but refused once again to confess to the charges laid against her.

After this second "criticism-struggle meeting," many new wall-posters appeared in and around the new compound that had been erected in mid-April. It was not made known at this time how those accused in wall-posters were being dealt with, but it was probable that they were all under investigation.

The Intellectuals Settle Accounts

Wall-posters that appeared after the second "criticism-struggle meeting" differed in content from earlier ones. Denunciations of Red Guard atrocities gave way to more direct attacks on people who still held positions of authority at Beida, and it was the History Department that came under the strongest attack from this time onwards until July, when the poster campaign was brought to an end. Most of the students knew nothing about the specific issues being raised; whereas the teaching staff had largely kept out of the polemic on the worker-peasant-soldier students, it was they who now came forward to settle accounts with the movement which for many of them had brought disgrace and humiliation.

The first criticisms of the History Department leadership were made in a long poster describing the persecution and eventual death of Jian Bozan, a famous historian and a professor of the Beida History Department.

40. Peng Zhen was rehabilitated in February 1979, and is now in charge of the Legal Commission. Liu Shaoqi was rehabilitated in March 1980.

41. A form of punishment whereby the arms are held up behind the back, making a V-shape, with the head pushed down towards the knees.

ment until the Cultural Revolution. In an article in *Hong qi* in April 1966, Jian was accused by Qi Benyu of pursuing a bourgeois historicist line in research and writing, and Jian subsequently endured continuous criticism until his suicide in 1968.⁴² According to the account given in the poster, Nie Yuanzi and Sun Pengyi had compiled a "black list" in late 1967 of the names of 30 teachers from the History Department whom they regarded as being reactionary academic authorities (*fandong xueshu quanwei*), and Jian Bozan had been one of five whom Nie and Sun had eventually persecuted to death.

A second poster concerning Jian Bozan, entitled "The time has come to change the leadership of the History Department," said that the compiling of "black lists" of names had been faithfully continued under the former Beida leadership of Wang, Wei, Guo and Li and; moreover, that those responsible for the death of Jian Bozan were still in charge of the History Department. The Department had given the impression of being very active in carrying out the campaign against the "gang of four" but had in fact been "keeping the lid down" on the criticism of certain people.

The reorganization of the History Department that followed culminated in the removal from office of three departmental leaders at the end of July. Leadership changes also seem to have taken place in several other departments, but there was no large-scale dismissal of staff at Beida and it is probable, in view of the usual practice during rectification movements of affirming the innocence and good intentions of the great majority, that only a few top ringleaders were "pulled out" and made examples of. However, a large number of staff, young teachers in particular, were now stigmatized by the fact that they had been promoted to their present positions under the former education system. The widespread doubt as to their academic worth left them with little prospect of career advancement, and, even if they avoided being directly criticized on account of their political records, much time and effort would be required to regain the confidence of their colleagues.

The status of the worker-peasant-soldier students who were about to graduate remained unclear, and the various official indications which had been given regarding their forthcoming employment were ambiguous. The minister of Education had called for efforts to be made to strengthen the unity between new and old students and for as much help as possible to be given to the old students, and the State

42. Jian Bozan published articles in the early 1960s opposing the tendency in historical research of using the methodology of class analysis as a simple formula instead of making concrete analysis of people and events. He stressed the need to combine the class approach with that of historicism (*lishizhuyi*). Qi Benyu criticized Jian Bozan on four main counts: opposing the theory of class struggle, denigrating peasant revolutions, praising emperors and kings and applauding conciliatory policies. Jian Bozan had already been criticized by Mao at the end of 1965 (see "Speech at Hangchow," Schram, *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, p. 234; see also pp. 256 and 268 for further comments by Mao on Jian Bozan).

Planning Commission had affirmed that a considerable number of worker-peasant-soldier students had studied conscientiously and obtained fairly good results despite interference by the “gang of four.” However, in May the Ministry of Education called for the strengthening of political and ideological work for the 170,000 students who would shortly be graduating, and a strong warning was later issued to all worker-peasant-soldier students against refusing to accept posts that were assigned to them.⁴³

The events of the previous few months at Beida were first brought to national attention by an article in *People's Daily* at the beginning of September 1978.⁴⁴ The article, entitled “Beida is conscientiously carrying out the Party's policy on cadres and intellectuals,” stated that the Beida Party Committee had announced two major decisions at a recent meeting: first, unjust cases in which the followers of Lin Biao and the “gang of four” at Beida had branded people as “capitalist-roaders” or as “reactionary bourgeois academic authorities” were to be revoked; second, the false “model experience” of Beida in carrying out the purification of class ranks (*qingli jieji duiwu*) in 1968 was to be repudiated, and those denounced during the movement were to be rehabilitated.⁴⁵ Out of 143 high-ranking cadres at Beida, 130 had been branded as “capitalist-roaders” during the Cultural Revolution, and in the course of Beida's so-called model experience in purifying the class ranks over 1,000 people had been arrested, several hundred imprisoned and five professors and assistant professors persecuted to death. The article then affirmed that the Party Committee of Beida before the Cultural Revolution had faithfully adhered to the line of Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee, and that the vast majority of cadres and professors at Beida before the Cultural Revolution had in fact either been good or relatively good.⁴⁶ The implication was

43. See *SWB*, FE/5843, FE/5834, FE/5835, FE/5852 and FE/5812.

44. *Renmin ribao*, 3 September 1978; the article did not refer to the worker-peasant-soldier students or to Nie Yuanzi.

45. See *Guanyu qingli jieji duiwu de cailiao huibian* (Yunnan, September 1968, reprinted by Centre for Chinese Research Materials, No. 10), and “Investigation report on cleaning up the class ranks in Shanghai, Peking etc.,” *Current Background*, No. 864.

46. Reference was made in this article to “wrong, false and unjust cases” (*cuo, jia, yuan an*). The use of this phrase soon became general, in connexion with the move towards wholesale rehabilitation of those denounced during the Cultural Revolution. A major step towards an official repudiation of the Cultural Revolution was taken with the publication on 15 November 1978 of an article attacking Yao Wenyuan's criticism of the play “Hai Rui Dismissed from Office.” Yao's criticism of the play, which was published in November 1965 and marked the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, was now described as having been written as part of a conspiracy plotted by Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao. All the other “black articles” written by Yao Wenyuan had already been criticized, and it was now said to be time to remove this “foundation stone” of the “gang of four.”

clearly that the Cultural Revolution had been quite unnecessary at Beida.

In mid-November it was announced in *People's Daily* that criticism of Nie Yuanzi and the other four Red Guard leaders was to be organized in Beijing, and that the "two blows" movement was to be unfolded throughout the city.⁴⁷ The five's "counter-revolutionary crimes" were listed as "opposing the army, beating, smashing and looting, and trampling on the socialist legal system," and the article went on to affirm that the work of the Beijing Party Committee and of the vast majority of cadres prior to the Cultural Revolution had been good. Public criticism of the five Red Guard leaders began in December with a mass rally at the Capital Stadium in Beijing⁴⁸ and the following month full and detailed descriptions of the criminal activities and political connections of Nie Yuanzi and Kuai Dafu appeared in *Beijing ribao*.⁴⁹ The conclusion of the "two blows" movement by the end of the year also concluded the third and final campaign in the criticism of the "gang of four," and it was announced at the Third Plenum that the major class struggles of the past were now coming to an end, and that the nation's energies were henceforth to be directed towards the task of socialist construction. Criticism of the "gang of four" had lasted for two and a quarter years in all.

Conclusion

Probably the most sensitive issue to arise in the course of the third campaign at Beida concerned the evaluation of Mao.⁵⁰ Although this issue was never confronted directly, it nevertheless continued to loom larger as the debunking of the Cultural Revolution gathered momentum.

In the polemic on the worker-peasant-soldier student enrolment policy, both sides were agreed that it had been Mao's policy, a genuine Cultural Revolution policy, and a clear distinction was maintained between Mao and the Cultural Revolution on the one hand and the "gang of four" and ultra-leftist ideology on the other. However, while the worker-peasant-soldier students argued in essence that the policy

47. *Renmin ribao*, 16 November 1978. Perhaps delaying the "two blows" movement in Beijing had been one of the ways in which Wu De had held back criticism of the "gang of four," as he was indirectly accused of having done in *Renmin ribao* following his replacement by Lin Hujia.

48. *SWB*, 30 December 1978. *The Daily Telegraph* reported that calls were made at this meeting for the death sentence to be passed on all five Red Guard leaders. See *Zheng Ming* (Hong Kong), December 1978, for a further discussion of the political implications of the criticism of the Red Guard leaders.

49. See *Beijing ribao* of 19 January 1979.

50. The issue of the evaluation of Mao acquired critical importance in the light of the reversal of the official assessment of the Tian An Men Incident, the rehabilitation of the "rightists," and the rehabilitation of Peng Dehuai, and surfaced with a vengeance during the Democracy Movement at the end of 1978.

would have yielded better results in more favourable political circumstances, the new students held that the thwarting of the policy in practice—both by the “back-door” political dealings of the “gang of four” and by the general neglect of examinations—had to a large extent also discredited the theoretical content of the policy.

Although the worker-peasant-soldier students suffered a severe loss of status as a result of the rejection of the Cultural Revolution educational policy, it would be wrong to regard them as having been treated as scapegoats for the policy. In the case of the Red Guards, however, the depoliticization of the conflict of the Cultural Revolution which was achieved by presenting the Red Guards as no more than common criminals made it possible to lay responsibility for the chaos and violence of the Cultural Revolution on their shoulders, without at the same time having to expose to criticism the overall political context of their actions. The lack of reference to Mao's role in events was a striking aspect of this later stage of the third campaign.

The period from 1977–78 at Beida was a transitional one which saw the change-over between two very different generations of university students and also the firm establishment of the principle that to rebel was far from being invariably justified. The criticism of the Red Guard leaders paved the way for a final purge of “gang of four” supporters, and it appears that the ghost of the Cultural Revolution at Beida has now at last been laid to rest.