CHAPTER III
IDEOLOGICAL TOPOGRAPHY OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA: 1949-76

The academic writings on contemporary Chinese society and politics, quite often, treat ideology as synonymous with the articulated political thinking of the Communist Party of China (CPC). This approach usually leads to generalizations which often blur the meanings of those conflicts in the Chinese society at many levels. Most authors appear to have taken the cue from the commonsense understanding that ideology is a system of ideas which influence the political behaviour of an individual, group or organization. But, instead of exploring its further interpretative possibilities, the scholar on China seems to have ignored it. Accordingly all inquiries invariably focused on the interaction between the declared ideology of the CPC and its political practices. The relevant works on this subject, thus, contributed a simplified paradigm to the China field in the form of ideology-practice couplet which became a dominant one over the years.

The primary limitation of this framework is that it failed to explain the whole gamut of the Chinese political developments, especially during the Maoist era, beyond the formal ideology of the CPC. Keeping in view this state of art in China field, this chapter locates a host of new sources of ideologies in the Chinese society which had conventionally been left out. Though overall centrality has been given to the CPC, attention has also been paid to the democratic parties, non-party intellectuals, and unofficial journals.

The first part of this chapter would examine the ways in which the CPC strengthened its revolutionary power. The second part would document the political opposition to the CPC generated during the hundred flowers campaign. That will be
followed by a discussion on the ideology of the Great Leap movement. The marginalization of Maoist themes from the state media and the ensuing allegorical criticism of Mao by liberal intellectuals during the early 1960s have been examined in the fourth part. The ideology of the cultural revolution both that of the radical intellectuals and the various Red Guards groups, constitutes the subject matter of the fifth part. The concluding part deals with the anti-Confucian campaign and the conflict between the Shanghai group and party bureaucracy.

THE NASCENT REVOLUTIONARY STATE AND THE CHINESE SOCIAL CLASSES

Immediately after the politico-military victory in 1949 the CPC turned its attention to the establishment of a governmental system in China. During these early years of the post-liberation era, when the social basis for the new revolutionary state was yet to be consolidated, the CPC sought co-operation and support from the democratic parties and personalities. This line was theoretically in accordance with Mao Zedong's 1945 essay 'On Coalition Government'. However this policy of what is called the United Front with democratic parties did not by any chance, mean allocation of any meaningful space for them. Further, it was only intended for a short period. On the various factors which determined the CPC's tactical political wisdom Jurgen Domes comments:

Pragmatic considerations, too, made such a cooperation seem at least temporarily inevitable. The Party needed former KMT members for the lower and middle levels of the administrative apparatus, and it still required the support of liberal and nationalist intellectuals to preserve or attract the following of intellectual youth. Above all, it needed the private entrepreneurs of the light industrial, coastal cities of East and North China to reconstruct the economy of the nation.¹

In September 1949 representatives of eight democratic parties attended a meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) convened by the CPC which proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1. The CPPCC, the official platform of the United Front, functioned as the national legislature for five years until the election of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the promulgation of a constitution in 1954. The democratic parties were granted representation in the newly constituted NPC.

The liberal sections of the urban intelligentsia and those social classes associated with trade and business provided the ideological and social basis of the democratic parties. A very brief note on these democratic parties would shed more light on their source of political strength and ideologies.

1. The Guomindang Revolutionary Committee (KMTRC), comprised of defectors from Chiang Kai Shek's Guomindang (Nationalist Party). It is officially accorded seniority. The widow of Sun Yat Sen, Madame Sung Chi'ng-Ling belongs to this Party.

2. China Democratic League (CDL) drew strength from intellectual circles and subscribed to the ideas of western democracy. The CDL was the most important group among the non-CPC political formations.

3. China Democratic National Construction Association (CDNA) was largely a business men's party.

4. The China Chih Kung Tang (CCKT) was evolved from overseas Chinese secret societies. The Chiu San Society (CSS) was originally a discussion circle in universities led by Professor Hsu Teh-heng. The other parties include the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party (CPWDP) and the Taiwan Democratic Self Government
League. All these democratic parties had argued for cooperation with the CPC on matters of national unification and economic reconstruction.

On September 29, 1949 the CPPCC adopted a 'common programme' which outlined the basic political guidelines of the new government's. The common programme described the nascent Chinese revolutionary republic as a state of the 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' defining it as: "the 'State power of the people's democratic united front' of working class, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, national bourgeoisie, and patriotic democratic elements based on the alliance of workers and peasants and led by the working class."\(^2\) The programme contained explicit guarantee for private ownership of the means of industrial production. It also promised land reform to expand the peasant's private property through redistributing the land:

> The agrarian reform is the essential condition for the development of the productive power and the industrialization of the country. In all areas where the agrarian reform has been carried out, the right of ownership over the land obtained by peasants shall be protected.

> In areas where the agrarian reform has not yet been carried out, the peasant masses must be set in motion to organize peasant organizations and realize "land to the tiller" through such measures as the elimination of local bandits and despots, reduction of rents and interest and distribution of land.\(^3\)

The CPC's ideological need to define the linkages between political power and social classes in terms of Marxist-Leninist formula greatly obscured the Chinese social reality. The CPC's claim was that the state was 'led by the proletariat' and the notion of 'worker-peasant alliance' do not correspond to the actual social condition and thus are, to a great extent, imaginary ideological constructs. This also reflects the limitation of

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3 ibid.
Mao Zedong's 'sinification of Marxism' inasmuch as it worked within the strict Bolshevik problematic. More specifically the 'sinification' did not produce its own meaningful political categories in the sense that it relied heavily on the Bolshevik formulae for ideological expositions. These marked discrepancies in the relationship between political power and social classes in the ideological pronouncement of the CPC can be attributed to the peculiarities of the modern Chinese historical situation and the nature of the Chinese communist revolution. The CPC, owing to its agrarian revolutionary strategies, could not maintain any organic link with the industrial working class after the disastrous canton uprising in 1927. 'In modern China, because of the general weakness of all social classes, it was the holders of the politico-military apparatus that actually controlled the society.' The CPC came to power on the basis of the mobilization and political militancy of the peasantry without the active support and involvement of the urban proletariat, the class the CPC claimed to represent.

Following the capture of state power the CPC launched a nationwide mass study programme. The programme was intended to educate the people, especially the intellectuals, on the position of the left. During this movement the ideology of the old society and associated social practices were subjected to criticism. The CPC initiated a mass campaign to popularize Marxism-Leninism and those three documents adopted by the CPPCC, i.e., the common programme, the organic law of the Central People's Government and the organic law of the CPPCC. According to Guo Moruo, the Chairman of the Committee of cultural and Education Affairs of the Government Administration Council, such a campaign is necessary to consolidate the military victory with victory on the 'ideological front.' As on the achievement of this campaign he claimed that:

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The concept that labour is the creator of civilization has been decisively established among the broad masses of the working people and the intellectuals. Labour has become an honour, and labouring people are everywhere winning universal respect. Production emulation campaigns are being developed in many factories and mines side by side with the New Record Movement.\(^4\)

In order to provide a permanent institutional framework for this campaign the CPC established the 'Revolutionary universities' one in every 'military-politico region'. Among them the important examples were, the North China People's Revolutionary University in Beijing and the East China University of Political Science and Military Studies in Shanghai. The making of a new kind of revolutionary intelligentsia in provinces and smaller areas took place through various organizational devices such as 'political training classes', and 'off-hours study associations'. The students of these universities and training classes were taught the classical Marxist methodology of dialectical and historical materialism. According to an article in the official newspaper *People's China* on 16 April 1950 the North China People's Revolutionary University in Beijing provided intensive six-months course in political theory to 'weed out non-proletarian or anti-proletarian ideology', and produce a new type of intellectual 'devoted to the welfare of the masses.'\(^5\) The author of the essay Yueh Fung further proclaimed rhetorically:

> The college is turned into a battle ground of ideas, in which the first casualties are 'pure' theory and empiricism. Superstition and idealism wage a loosing struggle with the theory of evolution and historical materialism.\(^6\)


\(^6\) Quoted in ibid, p.18.
The CPC introduced radical changes in the educational institutions. The Party set up joint committees of faculty and staff members. These committees consist of professors, instructors, assistants, clerks and janitors and all had a say in the administration of higher educational institutions. The compulsory political class is also introduced as a technique to effect what is called ‘ideological change’ in the crucial centres of knowledge production. It was undoubtedly certain that these political study classes would contribute much to the constitution of a new individual subjectivity. However it seems that the organizers of these study classes failed to understand the complexities involved in the formation of world-view in individuals of different social and psychological origins.

In the backdrop of the general euphoria and hope aroused out of the political victory of the CPC ‘the political study classes’ mostly indulged in pedagogy and rhetoric whose main feature was the overplay of emotions. For instance, Xinghua university inaugurated its ‘study classes’ with a show of a five-act play staged by a troupe of cultural workers from the North China Revolutionary University. Edward Hunter summarises the plot of the play The Question of Thought as follows:

A group of intellectuals with unwashed brains are brought together. One is naively pro-American; another is a landlord’s son. There is a former Kuomintang army officer, a subdued clerk, and a pretty girl whose head is full of frills and boy friends – there is sex, intrigue and everything that Hollywood demands. Through the medium of democratic discussion alone, this diverse group goes through varying periods of organizing conversations until in the grand finale, all have become true communists, full of hatred for the United States and of eager to go to war against it – particularly the disillusioned former friend of America. They are full of love for the Soviet Union and fully indoctrinated with the conviction that the highest patriotism that a Chinese can show his own country is to support and defend Moscow.7

7 Edward Hunter, Brain Washing in Red China (New York, 1951), p.115.
The revolutionary state of the new China consolidated its political hegemony very swiftly. This has been achieved through the unleashing of, mainly, four mass campaigns, between 1949 and 1953. They were the land reforms, the Resist-America Aid-Korea campaign, ‘the three-anti’ and ‘five anti-’ campaigns and the ideological reform of the intellectuals. These popular movements provided a credible and radical alternative to the new China’s problems. The ‘three-anti campaign’ commenced in 1951 and at a later stage merged with the ‘five-anti’ campaign in the spring of 1952. These movements were of much significance inasmuch as they involved the intellectuals. The underlying goal of the government directive on the three-anti campaign appears to be economic. The official pronouncement which launched the movement declared increased production and national construction as the agenda. And corruption and waste remained as a serious hindrance to the economy and production activities. The breeding ground of this twin enemies of economy was bureaucratism. So, to combat and snuff out these three evils from the economy, the directive called upon the people for a national ‘anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-bureaucratic struggle’. The specific ‘evils’ to attack were bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of state assets and leakage of state economic secrets. These activities and such tendencies, charged the CPC, were the ‘sugar-coated bullets’ of the bourgeoisie.

The CPC unmistakably realized that if these practices were allowed to persist in China, it would weaken the nascent revolutionary society from within. In effect these campaigns turned out to be the urban equivalent of the land reforms. The ideological premises of these mass movements provided a radical critique of the manner in which the capitalist economy was organized and the natural maladies it gave birth. It appears

8 Chen, n.5, p.51.
that the CPC initiated such an organized attack on those deep rooted practices of corruption because they thought that a new form of economic organization, especially socialist, cannot be built up if bourgeois ethics in economies were permitted to exist.

The campaigns which were launched, initially, as a drive against certain economic practices of the bourgeoisie, gradually developed into a criticism of bourgeois ideology in general. The intellectuals in institutions of higher learning subjected to a new kind of evaluation from the point of view of Chinese Marxism. Confronting bourgeois ideology in the major centres of knowledge production appears to be a vital step towards the consolidation of revolutionary political power in China. President of the Hunan University Li Ta wrote in an article, that:

The three-anti campaign in the institutions of higher learning is not only a class struggle in political and economic fields, but also an ideological struggle. It aims not only causing the attacks of the bourgeois class, but also at eliminating the bourgeois mentality.9

Li Ta listed the following concrete expressions of 'bourgeois mentality' prevalent among the intellectuals in the higher education.

1. Pride and conceit. Looking down on labouring masses.
2. Objectivism. Holding one's self aloof from politics and class distinctions.
3. Hireling's view point. Working only for pay.
4. The sense of being a guest.
5. Regarding technical skill as the supreme factor.
6. Isolation of theory from practice.
7. Irresponsibility. Much overlapping and duplication of teaching material.
8. Departmentalism.
10. Pro-American outlook.
11. Resistance to the radical reforms of the schools and universities.
12. Neglect of students political education i.e., Marxism-Leninism.10

9 Li Ta, "The Three-anti Movement in Institutions of Higher Education Should be Coordinated with the Ideological Reform Movement", *Current Background* (Hong Kong), no.182, 15 May 1952, pp.3-7.

10 ibid.
Li Ta's identification of the above mentioned attitudes, dispositions and practices as expressions of bourgeois mentality which is in contraposition to the socialist values and world view clearly explains the magnitude to which the ideological struggle in the early PRC was entangled in.

'Individualism' came under severe attack as one of the major traits of bourgeois ideology. The CPC perceived that the pursuance of selfish personal interest of any kind, especially in an academic centre, is antithetical to the egalitarian social vision of the Party. Certain tendencies among the intelligentsia such as ignoring the 'masses', confining only to the specialized field in academic studies, and neglecting political practices were seen as antagonistic to the new social ideas born out of the Chinese revolution.

The waves of mass campaigns which swept across the nation strengthened the Chinese revolutionary state. However, the socio-economic policies of the new democracy were still in operation. A section in the CPC argued that the new democratic order should be consolidated further. Mao Zedong criticized this contention in one of his article written in 1953. Over the issue of 'consolidation', i.e., whether a stage of revolution can be, and ought to be 'fully consolidated' before moving on to the next stage he maintained that the attempt to fully consolidate the results of any stage, of the revolution, e.g., the new democratic order, will lead to the consolidation of the interests of an old set of forces and alliances. His conception was that all stages of revolution should be seen as transitional stages, i.e., stages that must and should give way quickly to another new stage, without allowing any stages to be consolidated. 11

particular context of 1953 Mao was opposed to "Firmly establish the New Democratic Social Order" in which national bourgeoisie is a part. He wrote:

This proposition is harmful. In the period of transition (things) are changing every day; every day, socialist elements come into being. How could this so-called "New Democratic Social Order" be "firmly established"? ... If a type of order is "established" in the latter half of this year, it will no longer be "firm" next year.... The period of transition is full of contradictions and struggles.... This is a revolution that will thoroughly bury the capitalist system and all other exploitative systems. 12

During 1954-55 socialism became the dominant political theme in the PRC. It was accompanied by a call for the removal of all ideological and social hurdles to the 'transition to socialism'. This appeal, consequently, renewed the campaign against 'bourgeois ideology'. China underwent repeated ideological campaigns in the realm of culture along with any major policy changes in economy and polity. The Party, time and again, reinterpreted the literary works and other cultural products of the pre-liberation China. In that process the Party extended its acquired teleological vision to the social history of the Chinese past. The 1955 debate over the interpretation of a well-known Chinese novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber* can be understood and explained in this context.

This was one of the most popular novels in China and was widely read by people from all walks of life. Professor Yu Ping Po, who was considered as an authority on the *Dream of the Red Chamber* was the central figure in the controversy. He had written extensively on the subject. His books and monographs, all had interpreted the novel as 'mystical, non-committal and naturalistic'. This interpretation was uncritically accepted by other writers and the reading public. But this dominant and accepted view of the

12 ibid.
novel was challenged by two young students of Chinese literature, Li Hsi-fan and Lan Ling through their reviews published in Wen-Yi-Pao (Journal of Literature and Arts). The young authors contested Professor Yu's characterisation of the novel and argued that the *Dream of the Red Chamber* reflects the eighteenth century Chinese society vividly and hence, a great work of realism. Li and Lan further criticised the methodology of Professor Yu as it 'attaches undue importance to textual criticism' which separates the text from the social reality. According to them literary criticism is an ideological weapon, that in any class society, the attitude of any social class towards literature, depends upon the political and economic interest of that class. Therefore, they argued, Professor Yu's literary criticism which detaches social and historical contexts is an offshoot of his 'art for art's sake' approach.

The reviews of the two young literature students were endorsed by the CPC. Their criticism was acclaimed as 'the first valuable shot fired against the ideology and methodology of the bourgeoisie in the thirties.' This was followed by a campaign against bourgeois idealism in literature which immediately spread to all corners of China.

THE HUNDRED FLOWERS: POLITICAL HOMOGENEITY CONTESTED

The 1956 campaign 'Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom; Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Content' marked a radical departure from the standard political practice of any ruling Communist Party at that time. After the revolution the CPC like any other Communist Party made repeated attempts to create a strictly uniform political order. This increasing focus on homogeneity in the realm of politics, culture and all kinds of

13 Li Hsi-fan and Lan Ling, "Comment on the Study of the Red Chamber", *Current Background*, vol.315, 4 March 1955, p.22.
14 Chen, n.5, p.82.
social practices only gave birth to a repressive state in which socialism degenerated into a mere legality.

For six years, the CPC made all efforts to revolutionise the intellectuals through what they called the ‘ideological remoulding’. The fact that most of the intellectuals came from those social classes, which were either not-so-enthusiastic about or antagonistic towards the Chinese revolution remained as a complicated problem to the CPC. The Party also cherished fears that the intellectuals non-commitment to Marxism-Leninism and socialism might provide potential challenges to the revolutionary state.

In 1956 the CPC embarked on a new policy towards the intellectuals. The most sensational slogan which intended to characterise this approach was; ‘Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom; Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend’. The six years of thought reform campaign had not brought out the expected results that such a policy shift was initiated. Secondly, the success of the socialist project also depended greatly on the enthusiastic participation of the intellectuals.

The first use of the slogan is credited to Mao Zedong’s address to the supreme state conference on 2 May 1956. The new Maoist policy was publically interpreted by Lu Dingyi, the head of the central committee’s Propaganda Department. The phrase ‘Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend’ applied to the scientific community, whereas "Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom" was referred to writers and artists.

The initial response of the intellectuals "to bloom and contend" was very cautious and lukewarm. In an evident attempt to impress upon the intellectuals that certain relaxation of control on thought and scholarship was genuinely intended, Guo Moruo, the President of the Academy of sciences, called a meeting of leading intellectuals in Beijing on 26 May 1956. The rationale behind the new policy was explained by Lu Dingyi, in
his lengthy statement on the new move. Lu explained that the basic reason for the new policy was to promote the 'Luxuriant development of literature, art and sciences'. 'To let a hundred flowers bloom and hundred schools of thought contend' implies, as Lu points out, 'freedom of independent thinking, of debate, of creative work, freedom to criticize, to express, maintain and reserve one's opinions on questions of art, literature, or scientific research.' However, these apparently wide range of new privileges was qualified with a criteria that all such activities should strengthen the socialist construction.

He reiterated the CPC's theory that literature, art and science are weapons in the class struggle. Freedom in the capitalist countries according to him, was restricted to a small minority. Contrary to the claim of the bourgeoisie, the labouring people in those countries did not have any freedom. Lu made it clear that the new freedom was not intended to apply to all matters. It was applicable only to certain points of difference within the ranks of the people. No debate was permissible and there could not be divergent views on the love of the fatherland, support to socialism and proletarian political power.

Unmistakably the most bustling period in the hundred flowers campaign was May 1957. Many scholars have observed that the month of May evokes a rebellious chord in the minds of the politically sensitive people in China. It is the month of patriotic demonstrations, of strikes and sometimes even riots. Over the years it has acquired a new political significance for the people of China inasmuch as it was taken to be the harbinger of loose explosive developments in contemporary China. The calendar of May

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is full of highly emotional anniversary dates, such as the May Fourth Movement, and the Japanese ultimatum of 1915.

In May 1957, the hitherto concealed discontent of the intellectuals burst out, albeit, cautiously and yet boldly. The first open criticisms were by the leaders of the ‘democratic parties’. The CPC had assured the democratic parties that they would have their role in the Chinese political system in the era of socialist transition. The Central Committee (CC) of the CPC had maintained a United Front Department to nurture the functioning of the democratic parties under the slogan of ‘Long-term co-existence and mutual supervision.’ However, over the years this promised sharing of power or at least political recognition, became mere slogans which operated only at the level of theory.

On 8 May 1957, the New China News Agency (NCNA) reported that the leaders of the non-communist political parties in the United Front Work Department Forums Criticized the CPC. According to a report Zhang Bojun, the Vice Chairman of CDL raised the issue of the increasing marginalisation of democratic parties in the affairs of the PRC. Ch’en Ming-Shu, the member of the standing committee, KMTRC insisted that the Party committee system in schools and universities should be abolished. In another development, Chang Nai-Ch’i, Vice-President of the CDNCA and the Minister of Food, criticized the 22 April 1957 People’s Daily editorial entitled ‘Industrialists and Merchants should continue Reforming Themselves and Actively work’. He expressed strong objections to the editorial’s demand that the national bourgeois elements should be subjected to thorough ideological remoulding.\(^{16}\)

The moderate criticisms of the style of functioning of the CPC by the democratic parties further generated more serious dissenting voices on the fundamental issues such

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as, democracy, dictatorship and socialism. In a statement which had far reaching political ramifications that attempted to challenge the CPC’s claims on people’s democracy and United Front policy, Zhang Bo Sheng protested that:

There has been no socialist democracy in the years since the liberation, and what democracy there is only in form and there is not even the pseudo-democracy of capitalist countries. The constitution is a scrap of paper and the Party has no need to observe it. Outwardly we have democratic elections, a united front policy and non-party people exercising leadership; actually, the party exercises dictatorship and a few persons of the political bureau of the party centre exercise absolute power. As to freedom of assembly, association and publication, that is just something written in the constitution; actually, citizens can only become obedient subjects or, to use a harsh word, slaves. The Party is the emperor and an august and sacred body, who dares to oppose it when it holds the bible of Marxism-Leninism in the one hand the sword of state power in the other? You would either be labelled an anti-Marxist-Leninist or handcuffed with 'unfounded charges'.

After depicting the Chinese political reality in this fashion Zhang made a number of reform proposals which had striking similarities with the concept and practice of European liberal democracy. He argued that the introduction of general elections alongside the abolition of the absolute leadership of the CPC were essential for bringing any change in what he describe the repressive political system in the PRC. Furthermore, the people should be allowed to organize new political parties and social bodies, and bring out publications so as to open the channels of public opinion.

Hsu I-Kuan of KMTRC sheds light on the extend of psychological impact of the method of forced confessions of intellectuals during the thought reform campaigns. To quote:

Since 1952, campaign has succeeded campaign each one leaving a great wall in its wake, a wall which estranges one man from another. In each circumstances, no one dares to let off stream even privately in the

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17 ibid, p.107.
18 ibid.
company of intimate friends, let alone speak his mind in public; everyone has now learnt the technique of double-talk; what one says is one thing, what one thinks is another. 19

In Beijing University, a group of students inaugurated a new forum called "100 Flowers Society". What characterised, strikingly, this forum was that it was the first of its kind to openly argue for a system change in the PRC. It was reported that the core members of this society revealed that they were not going to restrict themselves within that officially sanctioned space in criticising the CPC and socialism. They declared that their purpose was to initiate a "movement for freedom and democracy", a "movement for the thorough reform of the political system". The "society" also reported to have rejected Marxism and the dictatorship of the proletariat and strongly urged a change in the whole political set-up. In this regard, they advocated learning from democracy and freedom of the capitalist countries and that capitalism itself needed to be interpreted in a new fashion. On July 12, the NCNA condemned the '100 Flowers Society' as the "first reactionary group of the right-wing bourgeoisie among the students in the institutions of higher learning in Peking to attack the party and socialism." 20

The "100 Flowers Society" did not have a clearly defined political programme as such. It appears that the movement sprang from the disillusionment of a section of the Chinese youth. A poem penned by Yang Lu, one of the leaders of the "society" reflects a kind of nihilist response to such a sense of disillusionment,

"I have never loved this world, nor has the world loved me;
Its filthy and foul breath I have never praised;
I have never knelt to its idolatrous dogmas,

19 ibid, p.68.
20 ibid, p.135.
Or smiling, obsequiously against my will, Swung their praises parrot fashion.

Therefore the world cannot regard me as a fellow being.

I am not one of them, and although I am among them,

My thoughts are entirely different from theirs...."21

The publication of a Journal/Newspaper Public Square was an important development in the blooming and contending period in Beijing for universities and colleges. The editorial committee of the Public Square was a collective of the 100 Flowers Society, the 100 Flowers Tribunal and the poetic group of Change (Yuan-hsun) and Shen (Tsei-i) from the Free Tribunal. The People's Daily termed this editorial committee as a "Grand Alliance of the Rightists."

According to the People's Daily, July 24, 1957, the fourteen principles adopted by the first preparatory meeting of the Public Square were anti-CPC and anti-Socialist. The principles include "Fight for the freedom of the press, thoroughly practice the rights of freedom of speech, publication, assembly and society;", "abolish censorship or publication, allow private newspaper enterprises, etc...."22

A Leitmotif recurring throughout the writings and the speeches of unofficial groups and societies formed during the period of blooming and contending was that the freedom of speech. Tan Tien-jung and Lui Chi-ti of Beijing University whom the official media termed 'rightists' argued that the root cause of the 'three evils' is what is referred

21 ibid, p.136.
22 ibid, p.138.
as the dictatorship of the proletariat. They further went on to argue that "socialism is not democratic as capitalism."²³

As we have seen, during the period of officially invited blooming and contending movement, criticism against the CPC had come from diverse socio-political sources. The opinions of different individuals, social classes and groups invariably agreed and focused on one prominent aspect of the Chinese political life, that the increasing undemocratic way in which the CPC functions in the PRC. Inasmuch as the CPC maintains an overall control and supervision of all major spheres of the Chinese social life, this criticism appears to be a natural as well a reasonable one. Though there were overstretched attacks that the Party should be overthrown and the CPC is worse than the Guomindang, it was unmistakably clear that such opinions were shared by very few individuals and groups. The people at large were primarily responding to the bureaucratic behaviour of their revolutionary party.

Marxism always had uncontested intellectual hegemony in the Chinese society from the time of liberation. The peasantry, the single largest social class and the most enthusiastic agency in the revolutionary process continued to provide strong social basis for state Marxism. In the cities the working class remained as the most active source of the official ideology. However, certain sections of the Chinese populous are yet to embrace the new ideology.

The campaign against the counter revolutionaries effectively eliminated the potential residues of reaction. But the manner in which the CPC achieved this objective, involved some degree of coercion against those forces antagonistic to the revolutionary power. Even after the ideological reform campaign of intellectuals, there remained in

²³ ibid, p.142.
1950s, a marked tension between the vanguardism of the CPC apparatus and the proud scholastic tradition of the intellectuals, who aspired to attain a relative degree of autonomy within the socialist social living. The objective of the 1957 policy, as it appears, was the furtherance of the CPC ideology as the hegemonic intellectual force vis-a-vis the scholar, artistic and the technical community.

The 1956 policy blossomed a wide range of criticism against the CPC. But the Party instead of reexamining its own style of functioning, reacted in the same manner which the critics suggested to change. The unleashing of anti-rightist campaign focused on those criticisms which the CPC described as intended to destroy socialism and the Party. This shift in mood and policy clearly found expression in Zhou Enlai’s report to the NPC on June 26, 1957. His report was in tune with similar deployment of conspiracy theory which the CPC had used time and again against the voice of dissent and differences. While addressing a host of serious criticisms against the party and the state which have cropped up during the blooming and contending movement the report stated that:

Certain right-wing elements have come out with quite a number of utterance of a destructive nature, on the pretence of helping the Communist Party with its rectification campaign. Not a few such views are aimed against the basic state system of our own country. The right wing elements have taken their stand on bourgeois democracy to attack our state system. They slander the people’s democratic dictatorship, describing it as the root of all mistakes and short comings.... We welcome criticism of short comings and mistakes offered with the purpose of perfecting and developing our social system. But what the right-wing elements are in fact trying to do is to drive our country from the socialism to the path of capitalism.24

The mobilization and deployment of the most abusive political categories against oppositional views and thus totally delegitimising those opinions as such is a standard

Communist Party method. The blanket labelling of certain political views as ‘rightist’ in the PRC would in effect place those ideas into the most hated enemy camp. This would in turn authorise the CPC and the state to take whatever action against those who professed such opinion. Lu Dingyi, the director of the Propaganda Department of the CC who made the first major statement on the hundred flowers policy in 1956 further explained the ‘rightist plot’. To quote:

The rightists actively disseminated ridiculous anti-socialist views. They attempted to seize leadership in the democratic parties and among educationists, writers, artists, journalists, scientists, technicians, jurists, industrialists and businessmen, as a step prior to seizing leadership of the country. They tried to provoke students to disturbances and judged that the ‘student question’ thus created had reached the point of explosion. They thought that once the students went on to the streets and the rightists stirred people up at the lowest louds, factory and office workers would join the students in making trouble; and they could come out and ‘clean up the mess’.  

It seems highly problematic if this description of the ‘hundred flowers’ scenario actually represented the political reality of that time. However, the CPC acknowledged that there exist a tension between the cadres and the masses at some levels. Subsequently on 30 April 1957 the CC of the CPC published a directive signalling the launching of a campaign titled, "movement for the rectification of style of work." The term ‘style of work’ refers to the approach and methods of Government and Party officials. The thrust of the campaign was the eradication of ‘Bureaucratism, subjectivism and sectarianism’ which were identified as the ‘three evils’ in the PRC. A short note on each of these three expressions would explain the ideological considerations of that movement.

Bureaucratism involves what is generally understood as the long-winded communications or reports replete with technical vocabulary from one office to another.

Lu Ting-yi, "Where We Differ from the Rightists", *People's China*, 1 August 1957, pp.4-13.
about a given matter, causing infinite delay. The feasibility of the disposal of one's grievances or the settlement of an issue would become highly complicated due to the lengthy official procedure which would involve unnecessary technicality. In a sense bureaucratism is an ideology which treats individuals only as legal subjects and operates monotonously and rigidly within those strict definition of rules, provisions, regulations, etc. Bureaucratism/Bureaucracy has been a serious problem to all known modern nation states in general and post revolutionary societies in particular. In China at the outset of the rectification campaign the limited scope of the movement was amply evident for it only sought to correct the bureaucratic attitude of the officials but not the bureaucratic edifice as such.

Subjectivism is one's inability to comprehend a problem in the light of objective concrete reality. In this kind of an approach personal considerations and subjective intentionality ultimately shape the decisions. Subjectivism consists of two associated failings i.e., dogmatism and empiricism. Uncreative and mechanical application of Marxist theory into all societies in every epochs is called dogmatism. The patent danger of this tendency is that it logically progresses towards deterministic conclusions. In essence dogmatism refuses to consider the practical situation adequately whereas empiricism overemphasises the role of the immediate reality.

In the context of a Communist Party, sectarianism refers to the practice of discriminating against the people who are not the members of the Party. Practically the CPC cadres enjoy some amount of immunity in society. The power and prestige of a cadre is often strengthened by the repeated rhetoric about 'the glorious' and 'the correct' Party, among other factors. In such a situation sectarian mentality is a natural outcome.
RADICAL FUTURE AS PRESENT-DAY PROJECT: THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD

The Great Leap Forward (GLF) campaign was launched in the early 1958 with a great deal of fanfare and expectations, but failed and abandoned by 1960, was a novel experiment with respect to a distinctive development paradigm and socio-political reorganization. Any attempt to explain this movement both in terms of the standard categories of classical political economy or as a hasty programme of modernization would obscure the radical social vision latent in that campaign. The ideological origins of the Great Leap can be located in the 'utopian' vision of Maoism at that time which inextricably linked the goal of developing China's material productive forces with popular consciousness.

The Great Leap can be described as the Maoist response to the social consequences of China's First Five Year Plan, which was a straightjacket copy of the Soviet developmental model. The social, political and ideological effects of China's early industrialisation were such that they paved the way for the emergence of new patterns of social inequality and privileged bureaucracy. The modernizing city exploited the backward countryside in the form of capital accumulation for industrialization. The radical social consciousness and revolutionary morale gradually began to diminish. It was against this backdrop that the CPC undertook the project of the GLF.

The second session of the CPC's Eighth Congress which opened in Beijing shaped the ideology and programme of the GLF. According to R. MacFarquhar, this session represented the high point of Mao Zedong-Liu Shaoqi alliance on development policy which argued for an all out economic drive based primarily on the mobilization of
China's five hundred million peasants. In his report to the session Liu Zhao-Chi summed up the theoretical rationale behind the GLF:

The fact is that the growth of the social productive forces calls for a socialist revolution and the spiritual emancipation of the people; the victory of this revolution and emancipation in turn spurs a forward leap in the social productive forces; and this in turn impels a progressive change in the socialist relations of production and an advance in man's ideology. In their ceaseless struggle to transform nature, the people are continuously transforming society and themselves.

The first part of this passage restates the Marxist view that growth of social productive forces, which would become acutely incompatible with capitalist relations of production logically leads to a socialist revolution. But, the second part which argues that tremendous development of productive forces after revolution in turn actuates a progressive change in the socialist relations of production and in social consciousness, appears to be a premature formulation. Because here Liu Shaoqi is pointing towards a communist mode of production and corresponding social organization and consciousness. This proposition is patently misconceived in the sense that it grossly simplifies the Chinese historical reality at the end of 1950s.

In 1958, hardly more than eight years after the birth of the People's Republic, the CPC announced that the transition to socialism had been fundamentally accomplished in China. This premature declaration about the arrival of socialism reflects two serious inadequacies in the prevailing notion of socialist society at that time. Firstly, it implicitly agrees with and mechanically restates the reductionist Soviet view that socialism is the nationalization of the means of production under a state organised and controlled by a Communist Party. Secondly, it reveals the general weakness of the Marxist theory on


27 Bowie and Fairbank, n.15, p.424.
this crucial subject which underestimates the role of historical totality which produce a
new individual subject, a society and organisation of life.

At a time when China's nascent socialist system was yet to be consolidated, then
this seemed to Mao Zedong more a convenient moment to move to a higher social stage.
He was against any kind of stabilization or institutionalisation of an existing system.
Contrary to the general perception within the CPC, Mao Zedong believed that the
relative immaturity of China's new social order offers enormous potential for radical
social change. He was so convinced that a social system become more resistant to
change the more consolidated and stable it is:

It is necessary to consolidate a definite social system within a definite
period of time. But there must be a limit to such consolidation. We
cannot go on consolidating for all time, otherwise we will allow the
form(s) of consciousness that reflect this system to become calcified. This
would make men's ideas unresponsive to new changes. 28

The decisive role of 'consciousness' in socio-historical development increasingly
became crucial in Mao's thinking. On the time and condition under which the
revolutionary transformation of social relation is to be carried out Mao Zedong's guiding
principle was, as he put it:

In making revolution one must strike while the iron is hot one revolution
must follow another, the revolution must continually advance. The
Hunanese often says, 'Straw sandals have no pattern - they shape
themselves in the making'. 29

After the revolution of the Chinese economic organization and educational affairs
were highly influenced by the Soviet experience and methods. This uncritical copying

28 Quoted in, Richard Levy, "New Light on Mao: His Views on the Soviet Union's

29 Mao Zedong, "Speech at the Supreme State Conference, 28 January 1958", in
Stuart R. Schram, ed., Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters, 1956-71
(Harmondsworth, 1974), p.94.
of the Soviet model played pernicious role in the transition to socialism in China. Dogmatism was so prevalent in economics mainly in the spheres of heavy industry, planning, banking and statistics. At Chengtu Conference Mao Zedong critically examined this aspect. He attacked the rigid adherence to the Soviet methods;

Codes and conventions constitute a problem, and I would like to use this problem as an example to discuss the question of ideological method - upholding principles while displaying the creative spirit.

Internationally we should be on friendly terms with the Soviet Union, all the people's democracies and the Communist parties and working classes of all nations; we should pay proper attention to internationalism, and learn from the good points of the Soviet Union and other foreign countries. This is a principle. But there are two methods of learning: one is merely to imitate, and the other is to apply the creative spirit. Learning should be combined with creativity. To import Soviet codes and conventions inflexibly is to lack the creative spirit. 30

Mao Zedong proclaimed the theory of permanent revolution which lend doctrinal legitimacy to the GLF campaign. His elaboration of the concept implicitly rejected the Marxist assumption that a high level development of productive forces and material abundance are preconditions for passage to a communist society. It also set aside the Stalinist dogma that all revolutions must proceed through distinct and well-defined stages of socio-political development. The Maoist version of the permanent revolution affirmed that the radical transformation of the superstructure that is in political forms, social relations, and popular consciousness must be accomplished as quickly as possible through 'qualitative leaps', that radical breaks with the past if the goals of the revolution are to be achieved.

The theory of permanent revolution which Mao Zedong advocated on the eve of the Great Leap revived and reinterpreted the core elements of the Chinese revolutionary

30 Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Chengtu Conference, March 1958", in ibid, p.96.
heritage such as the decisive role of human consciousness in shaping the course of history, the radical urge of the rural peasant masses and the revolutionary advantage of the backwardness. The elaboration of this concept by Mao Zedong found expression in his speech delivered to the supreme state conference on January 28, 1958 and in his report 'Sixty Article on Work Methods'. Liu Shaoqi publicise the term in a speech to the second session of the CPC's Eighth Congress in May when he claimed that 'the Marxist-Leninist theory of permanent revolution' always had been the guiding principle of the CPC. The concept prominently figures in the theoretical literature of the GLF period.

The theory of permanent revolution identified primarily with Leon Trotsky, one of the most creative intellectual and frontline leader of the Bolshevik revolution. However the term was initially employed by Karl Marx himself with special reference the mid-nineteenth century Germany. Karl Marx set forth the concept in his 1850 "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League". Here, he was responding to the political timidness and general weakness which the German bourgeoisie demonstrated during the defeated 1848 revolution. While presenting his views on as to the role of an embryonic proletariat in a country where the bourgeoisie is incompetent to perform its democratic tasks Karl Marx argued that once the proletariat intervene effectively in the political arena it could not allow a timid bourgeoisie to arrest the revolutionary process in midway. In this situation the responsibility to fulfill those tasks falls upon the shoulders of the working class. And then it would become imperative to the proletariat to achieve political supremacy and transform the bourgeois - democratic revolution into a socialist one:

31 Bowie and Fairbank, n.15, p.425.
While the democratic petty bourgeoisie want to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible, achieving at most the aims already mentioned, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far - not only in one country but in all leading countries of the world - that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers.32

Leon Trotsky at the dawn of this century confronted with a different political and historical circumstances revived and elaborately framed this theory. His attempt provided doctrinal authority to a socialist revolution in a dominantly agrarian society. The crucial aspect of his argument links the survival of any socialist revolutionary regime in a backward country with the timely outbreak of working class upheavals in the developed west. He firmly believed in revolutionary internationalism. He maintained that in such an era the working class in backward countries possesses more revolutionary potential than their counterparts in advanced West. Since the Russian bourgeoisie had proved its weakness and political timidity in discharging its democratic and historical tasks, the same has to be undertaken by the proletariat with the assistance of the peasantry. Once having achieved a hegemonic role, the proletariat would find it impossible to confine the revolutionary process to bourgeoisie limit; the logical growth of this situation would be the transformation of the revolution into a socialist one; that outcome, in turn, would motivate socialist revolution in developed Western Europe whose materialisation was necessary for the survival of proletarian power in backward homeland:

The maintenance of the proletarian revolution within a national framework can only be a provisional state of affairs, even though, as the experience of the Soviet Union shows, one of long duration. In an isolated

proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably along with success achieved. If it remains isolated, the proletarian state must finally fall victim to these contradictions. The way out for it lies only in the victory of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Viewed from this standpoint, a national revolution is not a self-contained whole; it is only a link in the international chain. The international revolution constitutes a permanent process, despite temporary declines and ebbs.\(^{33}\)

As we have noted earlier China lacked appropriate economic prerequisites for a communist society at the time when the CPC launched the GLF campaign. But for Mao Zedong the key factor in the transition to communism was a mobilized people armed with proper revolutionary spirit. The whole vision of an uninterrupted process of revolutionary change, that would be expected to transform China as economically modern and socially communist nation was based on a profound faith in the role of human consciousness and will to realize those goals. Another prominent aspect of the Maoist theory of permanent revolution was that it viewed the rural peasant masses as the residue of true revolutionary creativity. During the high tide of Great Leap Campaign the rural people's commune was seen as the agency to eliminate the differences between city and countryside, between peasants and workers and between mental and manual labour and even to abolish the domestic functions of the state.

Closely associated with the emphasis on subjective factors in historical change and revolutionary potentialities of the countryside was another long-held Maoist belief revived on the eve of the Great Leap Campaign, i.e., the perception about the 'advantages of backwardness'. This view received its most radical formulation in the 'poor and blank' thesis, the special revolutionary virtues that Mao Zedong attributed to the Chinese people. In April 1958 he remarked:

Apart from their other characteristics, China's 600 million people have two remarkable peculiarities; they are, first of all, poor, and secondly, blank. That may seem like a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it, the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it.\(^{34}\)

The underlying proposition of this statement is that the Chinese people are gifted with unique revolutionary potentialities because of the inherent backwardness of the country. The condition of being 'poor' and 'blank' calls for a revolutionary process to overcome that condition. Mao Zedong believed that these virtues were characteristic of two sections of the society, i.e., peasants and youth. While poor peasants wanted radical socio-economic change the youth were receptive to revolutionary spirit and ideology.

In relation to Marxist theory, Mao Zedong's conception of permanent revolution represents a break and continuity. It is a matter of great significance that Mao Zedong employed this Marxist concept at the backdrop of its blasphemous standing in the Soviet Marxist Leninist orthodoxy. The selection of the term undoubtedly marks Mao Zedong's determination to pursue a distinctively Chinese road to communism independent of the Soviet ideological guidance. The Maoist exposition of the concept restated the general notion that a backward country might telescope stages of historical revolutionary process. However, it rejected many of the original premises. Marx and Trotsky proposed the idea of a permanent revolution at a time when it was believed that an international revolutionary situation was emerging. However, what they had in mind was the bourgeoisie democratic stage. But the Maoist theory addressed exclusively a single nation with reference to the transition from socialism to communism. Moreover, it perceived rural peasantry as a main source of revolutionary creativity.

During the summer and fall months of 1958 the Chinese countryside underwent radical changes. The existing agricultural collectives expanded into rural communes where thousands of peasants started a collective living and engaged in agricultural works. This new movement drastically changed the life patterns of 500 million peasants as they gave birth to new social, political and administrative organizations. However, this vast communization movement, in the beginning, was not the product of any detailed plan but had occurred largely spontaneously. It involved, the complex interplay of the spontaneous radicalism of the rural cadres and peasants from below and the radical utopianism of Mao Zedong and his enthusiastic supporters in the CPC. Though the movement initially lacked official sanction and central direction, it had political support from the CPC ideologues. The term ‘people commune’ was firstly used by Chen Boda, the leading Maoist theoretician and Mao Zedong’s personal secretary at that time. In his eulogy of Hupei commune which appeared in the July 1, 1958 issue of the *Red Flag*, Chen maintained that the commune had succeeded in combining agricultural and industrial production. It had produced new ‘all-round men’ who were acquiring scientific and technological knowledge in the course of the movement. They are also learning administrative functions as well as advanced production methods. Therefore, he went on to argue rhetorically that, the commune is in the process of realizing the Marxist goals of eliminating the three great distinctions that exist between mental and manual labour, industry and agriculture, and city and country side and thereby the country can smoothly pass over from socialism to communism.

Chen Boda’s problematization of communism in terms of these three distinctions calls for a serious and close examination. Undoubtedly, the birth of the communes in China’s countryside during 1958 marks a unique stage in the social organization known
hitherto in history. It had practically brought about many aspects of communism that was envisioned in the writings of Karl Marx. However, the point to be noted here is that the communal organization did not survive even a full year term. It was not just sustainable primarily because it counted upon the radical enthusiasm, spontaneity, and collective will. In a broad sense it was the outcome of ultra-voluntarism.

Secondly, any vision about communism cannot be reduced into those three great distinctions which Chen Boda talked about, though they are crucial ones. The underlying premise of his argument is that communism is a system and organisation of material production. It would also implicitly suggest that communism can be achieved by eliminating those negative aspects which are the products of industrial revolution.

The rural communes spread across the countryside swiftly in a far more radical direction than the CPC leadership anticipated. By the end of September, at least ninety percent of peasant households had formally embraced the structure of communal organization. And many communes progressed to such an extent to introduce communist forms of social life, work organization and distribution. Against this backdrop of great popular enthusiasm Maoist leaders trumpeted that Marxian utopian goals are immediately realizable ones. It generated illusionary hopes about a future economic abundance and egalitarian communist society. The theoretical over-simplification of these historical stages were such that the ultimate goals of classical Marxism including the 'withering away of the state' were popularized as the instant task of the day assigned to the people's commune.\(^{35}\) A typical description of the commune at that time maintains that it is a new kind of social organization that 'combined economic, cultural, political and military affairs' and thus merged 'workers, peasants, students, and militia men into a single

entity'. The commune replaced the political form of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in all its functions of revolutionary transformations. Accordingly the commune was conceived as a embryonic communist society that was taking shape here and now.

The commune, acclaimed the Maoists, is both the product and producer of 'new communist men', the ideal 'red and expert'. Alongside they heralded that 'everyone will be a mental labourer, and at the same time a physical labour; everyone can be a philosopher, scientist, writer, and artist'. To support this vision the Maoist literature on the GLF frequently quoted the more utopian themes and passages from the writings of Marx and Engels. To cite such an instance was the following passage from the *German Ideology* where Marx envisioned a 'communist society':

(Where) nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each one become accomplished in any branch he wishes (a society that) regulates the general production and thus make it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, to criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.  

THE THEORETICAL ORIGINS OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The failure of the GLF movement produced a new political climate where mass campaigns and revolutionary rhetoric were conspicuously absent. Merle Goldman (1981) observes that during the immediate post-Great Leap period, the utopian socio-economic paradigm of Maoism was replaced by a more orderly and disciplined Leninist rationality. An economic readjustment programme was initiated under the direction of the party bureaucracy led by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Certain amount of intellectual

36 ibid, p.234.
freedom was also encouraged. Even several of Mao Zedong’s close associates argued for intellectual autonomy as a prerequisite for economic development. Vice Premier Chen Yun in a speech in August 1961 stated that the years of thought reform had made the intellectuals politically trustworthy. Therefore, it is unnecessary for them to engage in political session or manual labour at the cost of their work. The primary responsibility of the intellectuals is to contribute to the development of modern industry, agriculture, science, and culture. They need not commit wholly to the party ideology.

The CPC, during 1961-1962, convened academic forums across the country where the intellectuals were allowed to debate their views relatively freely without ideological surveillance from above. This approach was justified in an editorial in the Party’s theoretical organ, Red Flag (Hongqi) in March 1961:

The atmosphere becomes lively in any field so long as there are controversies, mutual exchanges of opinion, and mutual criticism. Such a lively atmosphere is extremely beneficial and very necessary for the development of science.... Questions of right and wrong in arts and science should be settled through free discussion.38

The CPC in its effort to enlist the cooperation of intellectuals, acceded greater freedom in their respective areas. In this regard, the Party went to such an extend to admit that the theory of Marxism-Leninism and class struggle had certain limitations in respect of certain academic areas, especially the natural sciences. And courses were given in western sciences and scientists such as Copernicus, Newton and Einstein received favourable treatment. The relaxation was also extended to social sciences and humanities. The Chinese scholarship began to acknowledge the contributions of western, non-Marxist thinkers. The Shanghai Society of Economics initiated debates on the

38 "Let 100 Flowers Blossom and 100 Schools of Thought Contend in Academic Research" reprinted in Peking Review, 24 March 1961, p.6.
capitalist economists such as Adam Smith, Ricardo, Marshall, and Keynes; and the Department of Philosophy of the Beijing University introduced courses in Hegel, Kant, the existentialists and Lukacs, as well as in the traditional Chinese thinkers like Lao Zi, Confucius and Mencius.

In that comparatively relaxed cultural atmosphere of the early 1960s a small number of prominent intellectuals who had many associations with the Beijing party committee and the central propaganda department openly criticized, albeit subtly, the policies of Mao Zedong. Deng Tuo, the head of the Beijing Party Committee Secretariat, was the central figure in this writers circle. His creative contributions in the field of journalism, history, poetry and calligraphy are well acclaimed. Deng Tuo worked closely with Wu Han, a Vice-Mayor of the capital city and an eminent scholar of Ming history. Beginning in the 1930s and well passed over into 1950s, Wu Han had long association actively with the Democratic parties. He was on the standing committee of the CDL in the post-liberation period. After his prolonged involvement in the democratic parties and with liberal ideological strand he joined the CPC in 1957. The writer Liao Mosha who was the director of the United Front Work Department of the Beijing Party Committee, and a member of the central propaganda department was also in the intellectual circle believed to be protected by the Secretary, Peng Zhen. The three writers come from different intellectual upbringing, nevertheless had long personal association and had a consensus in their opposition to the policies of Mao Zedong.

These three intellectuals, collectively and individually through their numerous pieces of writings unleashed severe criticism against Maoist policies. The political significance of this episode is that all their anti-Mao literature got published in the official print media. Important newspapers like the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao) and the
*Beijing Daily* (Beijing Ribao) and the theoretical journal of *Frontline* (Qianxian) generously allotted spaces for their essays which were written in subtle and sophisticated style. It is highly improbable that the general public understood the political meanings concealed in such refined, and apparently innocent historical commentaries. But the political and intellectual elite quickly grasped the indirect message buried in them.

Under the collective pen name of Wu Nanxing, Deng Tuo, Wu Han and Liao Mosha jointly wrote sixty seven pieces entitled "Notes from a Three Family Village", in the form of *Zawen*, a short subtle satirical essay form that Lu Xun had used effectively against the Guomindang. Their crafty and devastating *Zawen* directed indirectly at Mao Zedong was published in the *Frontline* (Qianxian). They articulated allegorically through the *Zawen* the political opposition to Mao Zedong, a view shared by the party bureaucracy. In "Notes from a Three-Family Village" the trio went so far as to even suggest mental abnormality to Mao Zedong. According to them Mao suffered from a form of mental disorder which made him to take irrational decisions (such as the dismissal of Peng Dehuai and the launching of the GLF). They observed that the disorder "will not only bring forgetfulness, but gradually lead to abnormal pleasure or anger...., easiness to loose one's temper and finally insanity."\(^{39}\)

The work of arts and academic writings produced during the early 1960s as we have already seen made indirect political criticism on Mao Zedong and his ideas. The most celebrated among them was a historical play *The Dismissal of Hai Rui* written by Wu Han. The play was on the life and times of Hai Rui, an imperial official in the sixteenth century. At a work conference held in late 1965, Mao Zedong instructed that

\(^{39}\) Wu Nanxing, Notes from the Three-Family Village, "A Special Treatment of Amnesia", *Current Background*, no.792, 1962, p.4.
Wu Han’s play be criticized publicly. *The Dismissal of Hai Rui’s* striking allegory to the removal of Peng Dehuai in 1959 had a serious political meaning. The head of the Beijing Party Committee, Peng Zhen had been assigned to carry out the public criticism of Wu Han. However Peng Zhen did not initiate any action in this matter despite being the head of the Group of Five which had special powers to reform culture since 1964 (Wu Han, too was a member of the Group of Five). In such a situation where official party machinery and cultural establishment maintained an indifferent attitude to Mao’s renewed call for reform in culture, he turned to his wife and her radical associates. Finally Yao Wenyuan published an erudite critique of Wu Han’s play in *Wenhui Bao*, on 10 November 1965. He remarked that, in the play, the heroic image of Hai Rui constructed by Wu Han is far more noble and greater than that presented in the numerous operas and novels written in the bygone feudal age.\(^40\) Yao Wen Yuan’s comments made clear the Maoist critique that the play is a political statement on the contemporary China. To quote:

> The Hai Rui in the play is a figure recreated from a bourgeois point of view. Historical plays require artistic refinement and restructuring, and we do not expect a new historical play to agree with history in every minute detail. But we do expect conformity to historical realities in the portrayal of the class stand and class relationships of the characters.... The image of Jui in the new historical play has nothing whatsoever to do with rational imagination and typical generalization. It belongs to the sphere of "distortion, fabrication and using history to criticize the present."\(^41\)

Wu Han, in turn, wrote a self criticism in the wake of Yao Wenyuan’s observation. Nevertheless, he downplayed the alleged allegorical significance of the play to contemporary politics. Instead he acknowledged that his mistake in the case of the play


\(^{41}\) ibid, pp.27-28.
was more serious as he was divorced from both politics and reality and was directed by bourgeois ideology. Further, he confessed that he had forgotten completely the unshakable principle that the literature and art of the proletariat must serve contemporary politics.⁴²

The retreat from the Great Leap and the consolidation of the party bureaucracy gradually marginalised the Maoist ideology. Though Mao Zedong enjoyed enormous prestige in the Chinese Society the organizational apparatus of the CPC functioned like an effective wall that separated the people from the original ideas of Mao. After the disastrous Great leap campaign, the main objectives of the CPC were the economic recovery and the restoration of the socio-political order. In that attempt, the party compromised to some extent, the egalitarian and radical thrust of the Chinese revolution. This process resulted in the weakening of the collective economy and opened up rural markets. Gradually there emerged apparent divisions in the social and economic status of various social classes.

The introduction and provision for a hierarchical wage system by the CPC towards increasing production were in direct contrast to the Maoist egalitarian principles. Mao Zedong viewed such far reaching changes in the socio-economic policies of the CPC and corresponding ideological orientation of the cultural and academic products as 'revisionist' tendencies, pernicious to socialism.

The reappearance of a host of old social practices, incongruous with the principles of socialism, again furthered the process that was depoliticising the Chinese social life. The erosion of Maoist values, beliefs, and policies from the mass media, propaganda

⁴² Wu Han, "A Self-Criticism of the Dismissal of Hai Jui", *Chinese Studies in History and Philosophy*, n.40, p.73.
measures, and education system were strikingly noticeable. The worldview of a revolutionary society was under transformation.

It was against this backdrop that Mao Zedong developed the theory of 'capitalist restoration'. In the course of 1961-1962, he perceived that the retreat from the GLF had generated the social basis for such a reversal. In January 1962 Mao hinted at the emergence of "new bourgeois elements" in a socialist society. And at the Tenth plenum of the Eighth Central Committee in September, he sketched out the history of 'restorations':

The bourgeois revolutions in Europe in such countries as England and France had many ups and downs. After the overthrow of feudalism there were several restorations and reversals of fortune. This kind of reversal is also possible in socialist countries. An example of this is Yugoslavia which has changed its nature and become revisionist, changing from a worker's and peasant's country to a country ruled by reactionary nationalist elements.43

Mao Zedong or the Chinese press have not elaborated the proposition of capitalist restoration as a mature theory. However, the basic postulates of their arguments were presented in a rudimentary form in their analysis of Soviet social formation in 1964. In many of the pamphlets published during the acrimonious exchanges between the CPC and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) it had been asserted that the accession to power in the CPSU of Khrushchev and his political associates represented the restoration of capitalism. Closely integrated to this thesis was the state capitalist and the new class analysis of the Soviet Union which identified a privileged stratum in the Soviet socialism. According to the pamphlet, On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism and Its

Historical Lessons for the World, prepared by the editorial departments of People's Daily and Red Flag the social composition of such a stratum is:

(the) degenerate elements from among the leading cadres of Party and government organisations, enterprises and farms as well as bourgeois intellectuals; it stands in opposition to the workers, the peasants and the overwhelming majority of the intellectuals and cadres of the Soviet Union.44

The authors of the pamphlet argued that, this social group is the principal component of the bourgeoisie in the Soviet Union and the main social basis of 'revisionism'. It further explained the exploitative nature of this social group:

The members of this privileged stratum appropriate the fruits of the Soviet people's labour and pocket incomes that are dozens or even a hundred times those of the average Soviet worker and peasant. They not only secure high incomes in the form of high salaries, high awards, high royalties and a great variety of personal subsidies, but also their privileged position to appropriate public property by graft and bribery, completely divorced from the working people of the Soviet Union, they live the parasitical and decadent life of the bourgeoisie.45

The project of theorizing capitalist restoration was undertaken by western Marxists who advocated the Chinese view. The major contribution in this subject has been that of the French economist Charles Bettelheim. In his criticism of the 'orthodox' conceptions of the transition period Bettelheim identified three conceptual error.46 Firstly he attacked the view 'which makes a mechanistic identification of legal forms of ownership with class relations, particularly where the transition to socialism is concerned. He emphasised that it should rather be recognized that:

Nationalization of the means of production by a proletarian state results first and foremost in the creation of Politico-juridical conditions favourable to the socialist transformation of production relations and to the

45 ibid, p.332.
socialization of the means of production but it is not to be identified with this transformation.\footnote{47}

Secondly, a belief in the primacy of the development of the forces of production in the socialist transformation of the post-revolutionary social formation.

The third error according to Bettelheim is the thesis that, with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the state apparatus necessarily becomes the embodiment of the proletarian political power. He pointed out that it is a mistake to assume that a repressive state apparatus can arise only on the basis of class antagonism; on the contrary it can occur on the basis of political differentiation within a post-capitalist social formation. Further, in certain conditions, it can become the agent of 'state capitalism'.

The inherent weakness of the thesis of capitalist restoration is the difficulty of defining 'class'. With the nationalisation of the means of production the bourgeoisie would cease to exist as a social class. Mao Zedong appears to have overcome this problem by defining class in terms of consciousness, as a derivative of his greater attention to the political and ideological superstructure of the society. It could be argued that, in Mao's theory, the concept of class operates primarily in the domain of politics than as an economic category. However there remains some degree of ambiguity in defining the class as a political concept. According to Joseph W. Esherick, this ambiguity has largely been resolved by viewing the origins of classes substantially in terms of power.\footnote{48}

As we have observed earlier Mao had located the emergence of a new 'strata' in socialist society. He maintained that although a socialist society abolishes classes in the

\footnote{47 Cited in ibid, p.174.}

\footnote{48 Joseph W. Esherick, "On the 'Restoration of Capitalism': Mao and Marxist Theory", \textit{Modern China}, vol.5, no.1, January 1979, p.56.}
process of its development it may have certain problems with vested interest groups of which he later called the 'new bourgeois elements'. His explanation of the process that produces the new bourgeois elements under socialism has been summed up by Joseph W.Esherick thus:

If (party) cadres and/or technicians acquire unmediated authority over the means of production, they will use that authority to protect their own political and bureaucratic interests, and with their higher salaries, powerful connections, access to better urban schools, and other privileges, will be able to guarantee for their children superior opportunities to obtain favored political or economic positions. When this happens, a new bourgeois class will have emerged. Not only will it control the means of production, but it will be able to pass that control on to future generations of new bourgeois elements.\(^{49}\)

As the ideological criticism of Mao Zedong and his policies by the academic and cultural establishments started gaining strength, he enlisted a group of intellectuals in the mid 1960s for his defence. These radical intellectuals were comprised of two overlapping groups. The one from the philosophy and social sciences department of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) was oriented more towards academic activities; the second group of young intellectuals was mainly from the Shanghai party committee propaganda department. Their basic training was in the field of creative art and journalism.

In their response to the emerging anti-Maoist thinking in the cultural and academic practice the radical intellectuals interpreted most of the utopian themes in Mao's thought. Their writings, characteristically, emphasised more on the voluntaristic aspects of Maoism. As Mao maintained repeatedly, they argued that the socialist transformation of the economy would not necessarily transform the ideas and values automatically and correspondingly.

\(^{49}\) ibid, pp.67-68.
At a national conference of the heads of cultural departments in September-October 1965, the leading officials of the CPC proclaimed the successful completion of the rectification movement. Zhou Yang described that the 'revisionism' in the cultural realm as nothing more than 'a question of cognition'. This proposition explicitly rejected the Maoist view that revisionism in culture is a concrete reality which expresses bourgeois ideology. Peng Zhen's conclusion on the same issue went a step further than that of Zhou Yang. He dismissed the charge of revisionism altogether. Peng argued that the majority of the cadres on the cultural front are good or basically good.

Mao Zedong's incredulity towards the state of China's new culture reached a flash-point in the fall of 1965, when began the struggle shifted from the domain of intellectual debate into an open political conflict. Despite his repeated attempts to reorganise and transform the Chinese cultural landscape in conformity with his radical socialist vision the cultural establishment and the party bureaucracy remained rigidly reluctant as they wanted to avoid an economic and social disruption. The 1964-65 Party rectification campaign did not bring out any substantial change in the ideological proclivity in the filed of creative arts, education and journalism. Moreover, several of the cultural products, academic writings and journalistic pieces demanded more liberal space for their activities.

The above described conflict between Mao Zedong and the party bureaucracy which was incessant from the post-GLF period finally led to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. As Merle Goldman has observed, Mao Zedong launched the Cultural


51 "Counter-revolutionary Revisionist Peng Zhen's Towering Crimes", Survey of the China Mainland Magazine (Hong Kong), no.639, p.23.
Revolution as an ad-hoc effort to motivate an ideological struggle that the Party's rectification campaign failed to produce. But when it met with indifferent response and then with stiff resistance from the cultural and political bureaucracies, the Cultural Revolution exploded into a fullscale movement of unprecedented ferocity and unexpected dimensions.  

For Mao Zedong the basic assumption underlying the Cultural Revolution was that the existing state and party apparatus was dominated by 'bourgeois ideology' and thus was producing and continues to produce capitalist type socio-economic relationships. Only by raising the political consciousness of the masses, revitalizing the socialist spirit and ideals of the revolution, and refashioning the institutions of the state guided by 'proletarian ideology' he believed, could forestall the danger of regression to capitalism. The declared objectives of the Cultural Revolution as presented in the 'sixteen point decision' of the CC of the CPC adopted on August 8, 1966 was firstly, to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, secondly, to criticize and repudiate the ideology of the bourgeoisie especially in academics, and thirdly, to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base. This document maintains that the overthrown bourgeoisie is still trying to stage a comeback through corrupting the masses by employing their old ideas, culture and habits. Hence the task before the proletariat is to practice the exact opposite - to challenge the

52 Goldman, n.50, p.111.
53 Meisner, n.35, p.311.
bourgeois ideology and change the mental outlook of the whole society by using the proletarian ideas, culture and habits.

Here this chapter would argue that the ideology of the Cultural Revolution cannot be understood primarily from the declared objectives of its protagonists or its staunch critics. It is essential to examine, closely, that the most unprecedented upheaval in the history of the PRC from a new insight, which should go beyond the formal ideology of its participants and its victims. First of all, this chapter would contest the Maoist problematic of culture. That, what is implicit in the latter is a premise according to which there can be only two cultures i.e., bourgeois and proletarian, in a society where peasantry constitutes the majority social class. Further Mao Zedong's definition of culture insisted on blanket homogeneity for 'proletarian ideology'.

Secondly, the personality cult of Mao which has been built up into an immeasurable scale operated itself as the most powerful ideology, in the sense that, it restricted every analytical categories within its own theoretical arsenal. During the Cultural Revolution, the only authentic and credible intellectual source was the quotations, instructions and the writings of Mao Zedong. As Lin Biao undertakes the most idolatrous mass indoctrination campaign, Mao's thought becomes absolute. The infinite extent to which Lin Biao and the Chinese propaganda machine deified Mao Zedong can be found in the following two statement of Lin:

Is there anyone higher than Chairman Mao among foreigners or among the ancients? Is there anyone with such a mature thought? A genius such as Chairman Mao occurs only once every several centuries in the world and only once every several thousand years in China. Chairman Mao is the greatest genius in the world.55

The Cultural Revolution was professed to be aimed at the revolutionization of the Chinese popular culture. The "Destroy the four olds", campaign rejected the very rationale for the existence of everything that sprang from what is called the traditional culture. The Red Guards, whose members lacked any adequate training in the subject of culture and were equipped with a kind of crude and trivialized dogmatic Marxism, instigated the destruction of ancient artifacts and books. Physical violence was perpetrated against opposing political factions, unacceptable ways of life, hair style, dress etc. The traditional works of art like sculpture and painting were criticized as an effective method of combating the old culture. For instance, on 25 August 1966 the official New China News Agency published a report about the 'revolutionary' activities of the Red Guards at the Central Fine Arts Institute, Beijing. To quote:

"(the Red Guards)....In the clamour of gongs and drums, they held high in their hands axes, mattocks, and crowbars; and then, from class rooms to display rooms, they smashed and burned down all historic statues stored therein, including Buddhist statues, Buddhist altars, statues of the so-called 'intellectuals, beauties, emperors, kings, generals, and premiers', and those of the Goddess of Mercy, of various princes, and the Generals Heng and Ha which where collected from temples all over the mainland, and the stone hares and tigers from all imperial graves as well as those brought from foreign countries such as statues of King David of Israel, Venus, and Appollo."56

According to the report, the Institute had been in the tight grip of 'some anti-Party, anti-socialist rightists'. They had been using those destructed statues to the ideological poisoning of the youth for the 'restoration of capitalism and anti-revolutionary activities'.57


57 ibid, p.67.
"The Twenty Sixth Middle School" or the Red Guards of the Peking Maoism School, so claimed, compiled and published a booklet titled 'One Hundred Examples of Destroy the Old and Construct the New' for the Red Guards. The extent of oversimplification and crudeness in such a serious issue as to how to address the problems of traditional culture in a revolutionary society can be found in the following directives of the Red Guard Booklet:

a) All old book stores must be closed immediately... book stores and libraries must all conduct inventories to weed out all poisonous grass to prevent bourgeois thoughts being instilled into the youth. (Example 34)

b) No elements in the bourgeois classes including landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements, and rightists are allowed to keep Yellow books (anything which is not red is necessarily only pornographic). Violators will be charged with attempting restoration (of the old order) and the books will be destroyed. (Example 35). 58

When the schools have been gradually reopened after the aggressive campaign against the "four olds" and the physical destruction of creative works of an era the students had nothing much to read except Mao's writings. Compelled by this situation, government removed the prohibitions of certain works including classical novels and history books. Those works have been reprinted with strict political revision of its contents, and with a 'Foreword' cautioning the readers to approach them with 'correct' political consciousness.

The "Editorial Department of the Chung Hwa Book Store", in its foreword to the reprint of Chou Shu (official History of the Northern Chou Dynasty) wrote that:

The Chou shu lauds the feudal rulers, and admires their ability and intelligence. The whole book is permeated with a reactionary historic view point of heroism.... Its purpose is to obliterate the accomplishments

of the masses in historic development, to paralyse the fighting will of the people, and to advocate the reign of the landlord class.\(^5\)

When the People's literature press reprinted some of the classical novels the foreword of each book provided similar ideological guidelines. The foreword to *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* comments:

(It) contains a great deal of feudalistic trash. The author did not appreciate the truth that the people were the drive which created history; therefore, he used the idealistic historical view of heroism and the theory of the dynastic cycle to interpret the history of the three kingdoms, and thus maintained a negative attitude towards the great peasant revolutionary wars, lauded the representatives of the feudal class, and exalted the virtues of loyalty, filial piety, chastity, righteousness of feudalist ideology...\(^6\)

The Red Guard factionalism perpetuated violence both at the physical level and at the domain of ideology. A close examination of their proclaimed ideology is vital to understand the Cultural Revolution. Such an effort would reveal that the amateur Red Guards were not genuine agencies in the radicalization of the Chinese society, as claimed by Mao Zedong.

The 'May 16 corps' in Beijing was an underground Red Guard organization with activists in many parts of China. The organization was reported to have been very critical about Zhou Enlai and a 'handful in the army'. Most of its attacks were targeted against Zhou Enlai and 'some figures' in the People's Liberation Army (PLA). But, immediately after its formation the government forbids its activities. There are very few sources which can provide any detailed information about this group and the profiles of its major figures. The Maoist Red Guards had conducted some investigation on this matter to liquidate the remaining sympathizers and members of this organization. As a result the Revolutionary Rebel Commune of the Beijing Iron and Steel Institute released

\(^{59}\) ibid, p.47.

\(^{60}\) ibid, p.48.
a pamphlet entitled, "Revolutionary Students Unite and Smash the Counterrevolutionary Conspiracy of Black May 16 Corps" in September 1967. This pamphlet, replete with standard Red Guard political jargons accused the 'May 16 Corps' as 'Counterrevolutionary cliques, conspirators, sabotagers' and so on. Its accounts are mainly on factional strife erupted in those utter chaotic circumstances. According to the pamphlet, the 'black bandits' of the 'May 16 Corps' had used one hundred and one ways to sabotage the relations between Premier Zhou Enlai and the Central Cultural Revolution:

The 'May 16 Corps' members clamoured 'chou XX is the root of the Capitalist restoration'. 'With the downfall of Liu and Teng after the 11th Plenary Session of the Party's Eighth Central Committee, Chou XX becomes the general representatives of all reactionary forces in China'. 'Chou XX is a power holder following the capitalist road.' Knowing that Premier Chou enjoys enormous prestige among the masses, they said nonsensically, 'Just because you (the masses) are emotional about him, he can Sway you'. This is the epitome of a reactionary statement.61

In the colleges and universities in Beijing the Red Guards formed three organizational centres which they called the 'headquarters'. Each headquarters represents separate factional allegiance to different narrowly defined 'ideological positions'.62 The first one refers to the Maoist group. The supporters of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping formed the second and pro-Zhou Enlai students constituted the third. The 'May 16 Corps' established itself as the 'Fourth headquarters'. This political act has been severely attacked by another Red Guard faction called 'May 7 Corps' in an article 'Exposure of a Counterrevolutionary Conspiracy Clique of the Hu Feng Type'. The authors of this article condemned all those who had not joined the ideological and political projects of their particular faction as 'double dealers, imperialists, KMT agents, 

61 ibid, p.108.
reactionary officers, and capitalist roaders'.\textsuperscript{63} The article further declared that the 'fourth headquarters of the May 16 Corps' as nothing but a bourgeois headquarters! and a 'big chopsuey of secret agents, renegades, Trotskyites and capitalist roaders'.\textsuperscript{64}

The most striking feature of the ideology of the cultural revolution was the Maoist theory that the main source and site for the struggle between 'socialism and capitalism' was the state apparatus itself. An important circular released by the Central Committee in May 1966 forewarned in its subordinate branches that:

\begin{quote}
Those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the Party, the government, the army, and various cultural circles are a bunch of counter-revolutionary revisionists. Once conditions are ripe, they will seize political power and turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.... Party committee at all levels must pay full attention to this matter.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

This directive was based on the assumption that the consciousness of those who control the state determines the direction of social development. The cultural revolutionary criticism alleged that the 'bourgeoisie' reside right inside the CPC. And the production of 'revisionist' socio-economic relationships, which would finally restore capitalism in China, is a project executed by those who are in authority 'taking the capitalist road'.

The Cultural Revolution identified the Chinese Party/ State as the source of bourgeois degeneration. The movement dismantled much of the party's organizational structure in that process. A situation, wherein the existing Party/State establishment lost its credibility, engendered a debate on the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

\textsuperscript{63} ibid, p.87.
\textsuperscript{64} ibid, p.88.
Here, a brief discussion on the ideological history of the concept, seems highly relevant as it is essential to understand the background.

In 1956, as a response to Khrushchev's de-stalinization speech the CPC introduced a significant change in the terminology with which the Party defined the nature of the state power. The new description replaced the term 'the People's Democratic Dictatorship' for the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. However the official canonization of the term took place only in 1975 when the CPC promulgated a new constitution. Nevertheless the invocation of the original Marxist concept in 1956 cannot be conceived as a mere semantic change. It also reflected the CPC's radically new socio-economic policies since then.

In the ideological expositions of the CPC "the People's democratic dictatorship" corresponded to the essentially bourgeois nature of social transformation in the early years of the PRC. A political formula meant only for the period of new democracy which involve national unification, maintenance and regulation of 'national capitalism' under a strong central governmental power and the land reforms. The proclamation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, on the other hand, refers to the period of 'socialist transition' which essentially include the abolition of private property and private ownership of means of production and the collectivization of agriculture.

During the Cultural Revolution different social forces articulated, through theory and practice, their views on the concept. The prominent among them was the claim made by the radical civilians who advocated that the proletarian political power should be modelled in accordance with the principles of the Paris commune of 1871. Of the three great revolutionary act of the European working class, the Parisian event was the

66 "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", in Bowie and Fairbank, n.15.
most radical one. And the most insightful statement on the Paris Commune came from Karl Marx:

The Commune, the reabsorption of the State power by society, as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own forces instead the artificial force (appropriated by their oppressors) of society wielded for their oppression by their enemies. This form was simple like all great things.67

The establishment of Shanghai People's Commune in January 1967 was a major political development and a theoretical articulation for a new model for proletarian power. The central factor which kept the workers of Shanghai united during the January uprising was the promise that the new order would employ the mechanisms of popular control over the agencies of the state. That the officials would be democratically elected and subject to mass supervision and immediate popular recall. But in February 1967, Mao Zedong concluded that the Paris-Commune style governments were 'too weak when it comes to suppressing counter-revolutionaries'.68 And he directed Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan that the Shanghai People's commune should be transformed to revolutionary committees.69 This observation sheds light on the limitations of Mao Zedong's perceptions on mass radicalism.

The leaders of the Cultural Revolution searched fruitlessly for alternative forms of political power through which a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat can function. In that situation, the people who had been called upon to rebel against the alienated political power of the CPC/State apparatus submitted their collective will to the all


68 Mao Zedong, "Talks at Three Meetings with Comrades Chang Ch'un Chiao and the Yao Wen-Yuan", in Schram, ed., n.29, pp.277-8.

69 ibid.
embracing wisdom of a single leader. This sad historical irony has been aptly summed up by Maurice Meisner:

The cult of Mao Zedong was one of history's most extreme examples of the alienation of social power and a grotesque outcome of a movement that had been launched under a doctrine that demanded the restoration to society of the powers usurped from it by the state. At the end the only solution for the political and ideological chaos wrought by the cultural revolution was to resurrect and rebuild the Chinese Communist Party. 70

Meisner observes that the CPC's theoretical literature on the state make three prominent Maoist propositions. Firstly, Mao argued that class struggles would inevitably and necessarily continue in a socialist society. More distinctively, he maintained that, such struggles are primarily ideological i.e., that between social class viewpoints. Secondly Mao contended that bureaucracy can establish itself as a new ruling class. He perceived that in a socialist society the principal social contradiction is no longer economic but rather ideological that between those who hold political power and those who do not. China's bureaucrats, according to him constitute a new exploiting class, "bourgeois elements sucking the blood of the workers". 71 The third Maoist proposition announced the separation of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat from the institution of Communist Party.

There has always been a conflict in Mao's approach between his Leninist faith in the Organized Vanguard Party and spontaneous revolutionary creativity of the masses, especially the rural peasantry. For a short period during Cultural Revolution he declared his loyalty to the spontaneity of the people. Nevertheless he did not came out from the


71 ibid, p.123.
Leninist framework which defined the proletarian state power in terms of the leading role of the Communist Party.

THE SHANGHAI GROUP AND THE PARTY BUREAUCRACY: CONFLICTING VISIONS ON SOCIALISM

The ideologues of the Shanghai group and bureaucratic leaders clashed at the Tenth Congress of the CPC in August 1973. The thrust of Zhou Enlai's report to the Congress was on consolidation and party discipline whereas Wang Hongwen's report on the revision of the party constitution called for rebellion against party authority. He reminded the delegates that:

We must have the revolutionary spirit of daring to go against the tide.... When confronted with issues that concern the line and overall situation, a true communist must act without any selfish considerations and dare to go against the tide, fearing neither removal from his post, expulsion from party, imprisonment, divorce and guillotine.\(^{72}\)

In opposition to the party bureaucracy's view that modernization would be achieved through the development of science and technology and increasing production, the Shanghai group argued that modernization can be achieved by breaking the power of the elite.

In the fall of 1973 an ideological campaign was launched against Confucianism. On the surface the attack on Confucianism appears to be yet another attempt to eradicate those traditional habits, beliefs and attitudes that had persisted despite more than two decades of the revolutionary transformation in culture. This movement called for rejection of the Confucian values of idealism, humanism and conservatism. It swiftly provoked intense ideological debate between the Shanghai group and the party.

bureaucracy. Both faction expressed their views within the context of a discussion on the conflict between the Confucian and the legalist thinkers in the fourth and third century B.C. Through the deployment of historical analogy and symbolism, they debated on the decisive issues of the Cultural Revolution and whether the party should continue class struggle, or give priority to national and social unity and economic and scientific development. The conflicting interpretations of the ancient episode were mainly ideological statement on present day politics. The Shanghai group used anti-Confucianism to attack socio-economic policies of Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. In that attempt, they revived and promoted revolutionary fervour and anti-intellectualism of the Cultural Revolution. Similarly, the party bureaucracy used anti-Confucianism to attack the ideology of the disruptive group such as Lin Biao's followers and, by implication, the Shanghai group. They emphasised the Leninist discipline, unity, institutionalization, production and science.

The Confucian-Legalists conflict in the fourth and third centuries B.C. had been treated as analogous to the present time. Immediately after the failed GLF movement the liberal intellectuals used Confucian values of harmony and compromise to promote stability and unity and legalism had been criticised for increasing the antagonism between the people and the rulers. During 1973-74 the roles of these historical movements were transposed. Accordingly the campaign chose denunciation of Confucianism and praise of legalism as a medium of political debate. The roles of the legalists in Chinese history were praised for introducing universal law, centralization and unification. The Confucianists were criticized for emphasizing spirit, decentralization, and factionalism. On this strange theoretical practice of the Chinese intellectuals Merle Goldman comments:
A positive view of an historical character could (thus) be changed to a negative one, depending on the political circumstances. Neither the interpretation nor even the historical record were consistent or historically accurate. Historical truth was secondary to the appropriation of China’s part for current political purposes, a traditional Chinese as well as a Communist use of history.73

In early 1975, as the anti-Confucian campaign faded away the Shanghai group launched another wave of media campaign against the leaders of the party bureaucracy. This political conflict was, however, disguised as a doctrinal debate over the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was the Fourth National People's Congress, held in January 1975, which endorsed Zhou Enlai's proposals to modernize the economy, that sparked off the campaign. At the Congress, Zhou set forth the project of four modernizations - in agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defence. The general political mood of the NPC was in favour of stability and it approved relatively pragmatic economic programme.

The campaign began with a renewed attack on material incentives. The post Cultural Revolution emphasis on economic development rekindled the old fear that material incentives would produce an elite of intellectuals, specialists, and administrators who would undermine the Chinese socialism. In a much publicised article, Yao Wenyuan argued that due to continued persistence of material incentives and bourgeois rights, a small number of new bourgeois elements will emerge in the ranks of the party. According to him the pernicious bourgeois right had not been removed, the emerging new bourgeois elements will transform the Chinese socialism to capitalism:

When the economic strength of the bourgeoisie has grown to certain extent, its agents will demand political rule, demand the overthrow of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the socialist system, demand a complete change over from socialist ownership, and openly restore and develop the

73 Goldman, n.50, p.168.
capitalist system. Once in power the new bourgeoisie will start with sanguinary suppression of the people and restoration of capitalism in the superstructure, including all spheres of ideology and culture.\textsuperscript{74}

The ideology of the Shanghai group as it was expressed during the debate was not strictly coherent. Zhang Chunqiao rejected Lian Xiao's call for immediate radical rupture in property relations as a measure to achieve communism. He also denounced the GLF's voluntarist approach of realizing communism economically in a short period of time. Zhang presented a more conventional Marxist approach, emphasizing that communism would come only under material abundance. Although he restrained and cautioned against radical action which may prove disruptive in the economic sphere, he was not so cautious about direct radical action in political and social field. He argued for a violent and protracted struggle against China's new bourgeois elements through the instrument of the repressive state:

Today there are still many 'fortified villages' held by the bourgeoisie when one is destroyed, another will spring up, and even if all have been destroyed except one, it will not vanish of itself if the iron broom of the dictatorship of the proletariat.\textsuperscript{75}

The theoretical writings of the Shanghai group increasingly emphasized the repressive role of the state apparatus. The state was viewed primarily as an instrument of political oppression. Their argument alarmingly echoed Bonapartist tendencies. And in 1976 when the Chinese revolution had completed two and a half decades, it had almost lost coherence in its direction. The official ideology was torn apart between competing articulations, each proposing conflicting vision for the future. The prominent among them was the project of 'modernization' which gradually reformulated the historical

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} Yao Wenyuan, "On the Social Basis of the Lin Biao Anti-Party Clique", in Lotta, n.68, pp.199-200.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Zhang Chunqiao, "On Exercising All Round Dictatorship over the Bourgeois", in ibid, pp.215-16.
\end{itemize}
purpose of the Chinese revolution. The modernization theory, in fact, effected a
paradigm shift in Chinese Marxism. The ideological implication and the popular
response to this shift will be examined in the next chapter.