

The road to capitalist restoration in the People's Republic of China

Part 1: From the Chinese October to the Cultural Revolution

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The People's Republic of China (PRC), which was founded on 1 October 1949 after a long period of national liberation and civil wars, has a special place in the experience of bureaucratic workers' states in the twentieth century. Being the most populous and one of the poorest countries of the world (with a per capita GDP even lower than India by 1950),¹ the PRC was an important factor determining the fate of revolution and socialism in the Third World. The importance and impact of the Chinese experience is not restricted to this fact. Unlike the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and despite several waves

¹ Maddison Project Database, 2018, <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2018>.

of purges, most leading cadres of the Chinese revolution retained their positions during the first thirty years of the PRC history. Moreover, a sizable part of these cadres initiated and led the capitalist restoration process after 1978.

The impact of Maoism should be understood within this context. Mao Zedong was an extremely important figure not only as one of the twelve founders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its undoubtedly most powerful leader from the mid-1930s to his death in 1976. For the purposes of this paper, Mao's importance reaches beyond these facts. Mao was a leader who frequently claimed (particularly in the 1960s) that the PRC had a serious bureaucratization problem and the proletariat and poor peasantry should struggle against it. For Mao, an unsolved bureaucratization problem might lead to capitalist restoration in which the former bureaucrats would transform themselves into a new bourgeoisie.

The developments after 1978 proved Mao's foresight to be true. This anti-bureaucratic posture clearly distinguishes Mao from all leaders of the bureaucratic workers' states in the last century, including Joseph Stalin, who declared the irreversible victory of socialism in the USSR. On the other hand, this fact does not mean that Mao was an anti-bureaucratic crusader such as Leon Trotsky without any responsibility for the bureaucratization and later capitalist restoration of the PRC. As we will see in the remainder of this paper, Mao's analysis of bureaucracy was thoroughly problematic.

More importantly, in the critical episodes of the Hundred Flowers campaign (1956-57) and Cultural Revolution (1966-69), Mao was scared that the anti-bureaucratic mass campaigns would get out of his control and thus ordered their demobilization (by force, if necessary). He was also the chief architect of the USA-PRC alliance against the USSR in the 1970s. In short, Maoism was not the solution but an important cause of the problem. However, since it was promoted by a prestigious leader (in one of two greatest socialist revolutions in modern history) through a massive propaganda machinery (of the PRC and its various allies and sympathizers across the world), Mao's theory of bureaucracy and capitalist restoration influenced a wide spectrum of the international left, especially the 1968 generation who was alienated from the USSR's ossified and reformist model. Despite its various weaknesses and betrayal in practice by its founding father, we should take Mao's theory of bureaucracy seriously and criticize it in the same manner.

Another important aspect distinguishing the Chinese experience from the Eastern European and Soviet experiences is the restoration of capitalism without a regime breakdown and under significant control of the party-state. In this respect, Vietnam is similar to China. And Cuba has been taking steps in the same direction since the withdrawal of Fidel Castro from political life. Capitalist restoration started in China earlier than in these two countries and somehow became a model for them. Finally, with the exception of a few partial and temporary success

stories (such as Poland and Vietnam), no previous bureaucratic workers' state other than the PRC achieved a significant economic growth momentum following a capitalist restoration. Various factors including China's historical peculiarities, significant leaps in physical infrastructure and the quality of the workforce (the so-called "human capital" of the non-Marxist development literature) in the Mao era, and a significant flow of industrial capital from the West to Asia in the late 1970s and after, underlined the tremendous economic growth of the country since the early 1980s. However, up until today, Chinese and Western academics and policy-makers have largely decontextualized this success and presented it as a triumph of capitalism (or the "socialist market economy" in the official Chinese parlance) over state socialism. In this way, China's economic success has inspired the restorationist bureaucracies of many states, which have taken significant steps towards capitalism. This is true even for Cuba, where socialism has the greatest prestige and legitimacy. For these reasons, Chinese experience deserves careful scrutiny.

The present paper (first part of a two-part paper) comprises six sections. The second section defines the character of the pre-1979 PRC as a worker's state and examines its historical achievements. The third section investigates the political power and material privileges of the bureaucracy. The fourth section critically analyzes Mao's ideas on bureaucracy and capitalist restoration. The fifth section explains the development and defeat of the anti-bureaucratic opposition before the Cultural Revolution. The sixth section focuses on the period between the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in Summer 1966 and the rise and fall of the Shanghai People's Commune in February 1967. Another paper (to be published in *Revolutionary Marxism 2020*) focuses on the remainder of the Cultural Revolution (1967-69) and other turning points on the PRC's path towards capitalist restoration.

PRC as a workers' state

The bureaucratic character of the PRC will be analyzed in the next section. Here I will discuss the fundamental characteristics and historical achievements of the PRC as a workers' state. Although the factories of the "national bourgeoisie" (the bourgeois fraction which did not ally with Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist Party during the civil war) were not expropriated in the first few years of the PRC, large-scale and heavy industry was organized based on state ownership by the mid-1950s. Medium and small-scale and light industries were organized by the cooperatives founded at the local (usually neighborhood) level. Eradication of unemployment was the most important achievement of the PRC for the welfare of the masses. Job security for everyone remained a principle in the entire Mao era. Moreover, workers benefited from free healthcare and education services provided by their workplace (*danwei*). Serious inequalities existed within the

proletariat. For instance, compared to their counterparts working in cooperative enterprises, the workers of the state-owned enterprises (especially the largest, “key” enterprises) enjoyed higher wages and pensions and were able to send their children to better schools. Nevertheless, due to strong job security and rapid expansion of social services, the urban proletariat enjoyed more favorable conditions of life and work after 1949.²

The achievements of the PRC in the countryside were also striking. For centuries Chinese peasantry had struggled with unemployment and underemployment, exploitation by landlords and moneylenders, poverty, famine, and the near absence of healthcare and education services. Rural plight gave way to numerous peasant revolts and finally to the communist-led peasant war that ended in victory in 1949. Rural plight was rapidly eradicated in the aftermath of the revolution. The collectivization of rural economy, which had been completed in the mid-1950s, made the provision of employment (and therefore a basic income) to every rural household. Rural collectives organized basic healthcare and education services (mostly) with their own financial sources. It was, of course, impossible to equalize the city and countryside rapidly. Hence, compared to the few urban areas, the crowded and impoverished countryside remained backward in terms of living and working conditions, scope of social security, and quality of education and healthcare services. For instance, unlike the retired workers of urban enterprises, elderly villagers did not receive a pension. Moreover, the PRC leadership quickly recognized the limitations of the urban areas in terms of infrastructure and employment creation. In order to prevent mass urban unemployment and ghettoization (which is often called as “Latin Americanization” in the Chinese academic and policy literatures), the Chinese government put strict restrictions to rural outmigration through its residential registration (*hukou*) system established in 1958. Hence, finding urban jobs with higher pay and benefits was out of question for the rural majority until the start of the *de facto* relaxation of the *hukou* system in the early 1980s. Also, unlike urban workers receiving standard wages, the members of the rural collectives received dividends from the total annual production according to their specific labor contributions measured by the “work points system.” Hence, the households with more able-bodied workers received higher income than others. Since rural production was predominantly agricultural, the villagers’ dividends seriously fluctuated due to changing weather conditions which affected agricultural production. Significant regional variation of natural conditions (climate, soil, water, etc.) led to significant income inequality among the villagers of different regions. Despite these serious limitations, after 1949,

2 Joel Andreas, “Reconfiguring China’s Class Order after the 1949 Revolution”, in *Handbook on Class and Social Stratification in China*, ed. Yingjie Guo, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016, pp. 22-25.

Chinese villagers experienced rapid improvement of welfare and tremendous equalization in terms of income and access to social services.

Founded on the basis of stark poverty and isolated in the international arena (as the Maoist leadership shares with Khrushchev the responsibility of the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s, a part of China's isolation was self-imposed), the PRC's economic development faced certain limits. In order to achieve rapid economic development without the Soviet aid, the Maoist leadership designed and implemented the campaign known as the "Great Leap Forward" (1958-61) in a haphazard fashion. A strange combination of bureaucratic commandism and boundless optimism led to setting scientifically impossible/unsound targets especially for agricultural production. Under the pressure of the nationwide frenzy of reporting record breaks in production, rural cadres grossly exaggerated local agricultural production. Both the upper-level local cadres and the planners in Beijing then set up higher tax requirements on these new figures. Weather conditions, which were favorable in 1958 and fed the bureaucratic optimism, turned out to be unfavorable in the following two years. Unfortunately, this was not enough to lead the Chinese bureaucracy to set up realistic production and taxation targets. Peasants were therefore forced to transfer increasingly higher quantities of grain to the state at the expense of their own consumption. This quickly led to an economic collapse and mass starvation (taking about 30 million lives). Strong ties between the peasant masses and the CCP leadership received a serious blow as a result of the miserable collapse of the GLF. Although China received significant economic assistance from the Soviet Union in the 1950s, this assistance dropped in the late 1950s and completely stopped in the early 1960s as a result of the Sino-Soviet split. In order to increase its influence over other Third World countries, the PRC provided significant foreign assistance and became the largest non-OECD donor country in 1972. As a result of its military competition with the US, USSR, and India, the PRC's military expenditure increased rapidly in the 1960s. Intensification of the economic pressure forced the PRC to rapprochement with the US, Western Europe, and Japan (on anti-Soviet basis) from the early 1970s on, before Mao's death in 1976. This rapprochement strengthened the tendency of capitalist restoration in the PRC.

Despite all its problems and limitations, the workers' state significantly contributed to the long-term development of the Chinese economy. Rural collectivization made the agricultural sector (which comprised 80% of the workforce and produced half of total output by 1952) a part of central planning. By direct taxation of agriculture and manipulation of trade terms between agriculture and industry in favor of the latter, rural collectives provided large funds to industry.³The provision of low-priced staple food to urban workers made an

³ For detailed statistical figures on the transfer from the countryside to the cities see

extra contribution to the industrialization effort. As a result, the share of industry within GDP quadrupled in the Mao era.⁴ Although a large body of literature claims that the agriculture in the collective period failed despite making large resource transfers to industry, the agricultural production did not fall behind the rapid population growth. This success cannot be easily downplayed. Its primary reason is the mobilization of rural labor by the collectives. During the slack seasons of agriculture, collectives mobilized villagers in infrastructure works. Strikingly enough, over a quarter of the total rural workforce was employed in infrastructure construction and maintenance activities without receiving much extra payment from the central government.⁵ Despite allocating the bulk of the central government budget to industrial and military buildup, based on the massive and low-cost mobilization of rural labor, the share of irrigated area within total cultivated area tripled (from 16.3% to 49.4%) between 1949 and 1982.⁶ This made China one of the most advanced hydraulic nations of the world. Furthermore, based on collective mobilization of labor and financial resources, an average Chinese commune had (at least) one primary and secondary school and a clinic by the 1970s. Another important characteristic of the rural collectives was their high capacity to absorb extra labor. Between 1960 and 1976, the government dispatched about 40 million people (comprising middle, high school and college students, workers, and technical personnel) to the countryside for various political and economic reasons. These people joined the collectives and made significant contributions to the development of basic education and healthcare services and the construction of small-scale rural industries in return to payments that were not much different from the rural average.⁷ Hence, a development process, which could have taken very long had it depended on government spending, was completed in a few decades. Rural collectives developed small-and-medium-scale

Kong Xiangzhi and He Anhua, “Xin Zhongguo Chengli 60 Nianlai Nongmin dui Guojia Jianshede Gongxian Fenxi”, *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu*, no: 9, 2009, pp. 5-13. For a historical assessment of this issue see: Ho-fung Hung, *The China Boom: Why China Will Not Lead the World*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 34-51.

4 Angus Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long-Run: 960-2030 A.D.*, Paris: OECD, 2007, p. 60; Lu Aiguo, *China and the Global Economy since 1840*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000, p. 91.

5 Author’s calculation based on the following sources: James E. Nickum, “Labour Accumulation in Rural China and Its Role since the Cultural Revolution,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol: 2, no: 3, 1978, p. 280; State Statistical Bureau, *Statistical Yearbook of China 1983*, Hong Kong: Economic Information Agency, 1983, p. 120.

6 Zhongguo Shuili Nianjian Bianji Weiyuanhui, *Zhongguo Shuili Nianjian 1991*, Beijing: Shuili Dianli Chubanshe, 1992, p. 653.

7 Wen Tiejun, *Basi Weiji: Zhongguo de Jushi Jingyan, 1949-2009*, Pekin: Dongfang Chubanshe, 2012, pp. 32-72.

industry in the same manner. The output of “Commune and Brigade Enterprises” increased by 5.9% per year between 1962 and 1971, and 23.5% per year between 1971 and 1978.⁸ In short, the industrialization was not confined to the cities but spread to the countryside as well. This signified a great leap forward for a poor rural economy such as Chinese. Considering the continuity of rural industry’s contribution to the national economy (14.3% and 37.5% of the GDP in 1980 and 1995, respectively)⁹, it is clear that workers’ state significantly contributed to China’s economic development in the long run.

Nevertheless, all these leaps forward did not bring China closer to the necessary abundance for achieving socialism. First of all, the end of long external and civil wars, economic recovery, improvements in basic healthcare (especially the nationwide spread of vaccination), and the neglect of population planning resulted in the doubling of the country’s already huge population within three decades (541 million in 1949 to 961 million in 1978).¹⁰ Therefore, despite steady increase in total economic output, per capita increase was slow. Similar to the USSR, the production of goods for mass consumption did not increase in China fast enough. As a result, between 1952 and 1978 per capita consumption increased by 2.3% annually. Urban housing also remained a big problem.¹¹ Furthermore, the huge economic gap between China and the imperialist countries did not narrow down. China’s share in the world’s total output even decreased from 5.2% to 4.9%.¹² This illustrates the significant limitations of the progress a self-reliant poor country can make in a capitalist world economy. China’s persistent backwardness compared with the imperialist countries helped the capitalist restorationist wing of the bureaucracy led by Deng Xiaoping to take power shortly after Mao’s death. In brief, although the workers’ state managed to develop the economy and improve the welfare of the population, it lost its vitality since it failed to overcome the relative backwardness and poverty of China, and eventually capitulated to capitalism.

Material privileges and political domination of the bureaucracy in the PRC

The most important difference between the bureaucracy in the workers’

8 Chris Bramall, *The Industrialization of Rural China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p.23.

9 Chenggang Xu ve Xiabo Zhang, “The Evolution of Chinese Entrepreneurial Firms: Township-Village Enterprises Revisited”, International Food Policy Research Institute Discussion Paper 00854, 2009, p. 3.

10 China Today, <http://www.chinatoday.com/data/china.population.htm>.

11 Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, s. 205.

12 Maddison, p. 44.

states and bourgeoisie in capitalist states was that the former did not own the means of production. For this reason, bureaucracy could not obtain the surplus value and invest it in expanded production. Nor could it transfer it to personal property such as high volumes of cash, houses, luxury goods, and pass it to the next generation through inheritance. As Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union clearly demonstrated, inequality among the bureaucracy and ordinary workers in terms of income and wellbeing had two main sources. First, there was significant and increasing gap between the salaries of high-level bureaucrats and ordinary workers. Second, there were significant and growing inequalities between the two groups in terms of the quality of housing, education, transportation, and holiday opportunities. A huge gap between the mental and manual labor was the main source of this inequality. Material abundance and equality were two preconditions to bridge this gap to a significant extent. As long as the world revolution's progress was limited, capitalist world system remained intact, and workers' states were confined to the periphery and semi-periphery of the world economy, these preconditions could not emerge and mature. Moreover, in order to legitimize its existence and privileges, bureaucracy in a workers' state was always ready to prevent the implementation of the measures that might decrease the gap between mental and manual labor. In order to maintain the bureaucratic power and privileges, democratic debate and decision-making was ruled out. Trotsky clearly predicted that increasing power and privileges fed the bureaucracy's tendency to transform itself into bourgeoisie:

If the differences between city and country have been mitigated in certain respects, in others they have been considerably deepened, thanks to the extraordinarily swift growth of cities and city culture – that is, of comforts for an urban minority. The social distance between physical and intellectual labor, notwithstanding the filling out of the scientific cadres by newcomers from below, has increased, not decreased, during recent years. The thousand-year-old caste barriers defining the life of every man on all sides – the polished urbanite and the uncouth muzhik, the wizard of science and the day laborer– have not just been preserved from the past in a more or less softened form, but have to a considerable degree been born anew, and are assuming a more and more defiant character.

The notorious slogan: “The cadres decide everything”, characterizes the nature of Soviet society far more frankly than Stalin himself would wish. The cadres are in their very essence the organs of domination and command. A cult of “cadres” means above all a cult of bureaucracy, of officialdom, an aristocracy of technique. In the matter of playing up and developing cadres, as in other matters, the soviet regime still finds itself compelled to solve problems which the advanced bourgeoisie solved long ago in its own countries. But since the soviet cadres come forward under a socialist banner, they demand an almost divine veneration and a continually rising salary. The development of “socialist” cadres

is thus accompanied by a rebirth of bourgeois inequality.

From the point of view of property in the means of production, the differences between a marshal and a servant girl, the head of a trust and a day laborer, the son of a people's commissar and a homeless child, seem not to exist at all. Nevertheless, the former occupy lordly apartments, enjoy several summer homes in various parts of the country, have the best automobiles at their disposal, and have long ago forgotten how to shine their own shoes. The latter live in wooden barracks often without partitions, lead a half-hungry existence, and do not shine their own shoes only because they go barefoot. To the bureaucrat this difference does not seem worthy of attention. To the day laborer, however, it seems, not without reason, very essential.¹³

As long as a workers' state remains under the pressure of the world capitalist system and backward in comparison to imperialist countries, the bureaucracy can take the capitalist road as a vehicle of faster economic development and transform itself into a bourgeoisie in a way to advance its existing material privileges to the highest level possible:

The juridical and political standards set up by the revolution exercised a progressive action upon the backward economy, but upon the other hand they themselves felt the lowering influence of that backwardness. The longer the Soviet Union remains in a capitalist environment, the deeper runs the degeneration of the social fabric. A prolonged isolation would inevitably end not in national communism, but in a restoration of capitalism.¹⁴

Trotsky's analysis also holds true for the post-WWII era which witnessed the rapid increase in the number of bureaucratic workers' state. No such state was founded in rich countries. Workers' states which were founded in poor and middle-income countries could integrate with each other in a serious way. However, the two largest workers' states, the PRC and the USSR, became fierce enemies from the early 1960s on. Despite the opposite claims, Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy also applies to the Chinese bureaucracy. The collection of statistical data nearly halted in the first and most chaotic phase of the Cultural Revolution (1966-69). Even without this problem, collecting data on wage inequality was not easy due to the political risks involved. Nevertheless, the available data reflects the material privileges of a bureaucratic strata. As Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate, there was a significant gap both within the bureaucracy and between the bureaucracy and the ordinary workers.

13 Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where It is Going?*, New York: Pathfinder Press, [1937] 1983, pp. 237-239.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 300-301.

Table 1. Highest and lowest wages in the PRC in the 1960s (Yuan)¹⁵

Position	Highest salary	Lowest salary
State cadres	579.5	30
Judges and court personnel	522.5	33
Military personnel	414	33
Engineers and technicians	302.5	37.5
College teachers	372.5	49.5
Police	138	33
Industrial workers	99	33
Middle school teachers	155.5	43
Postal workers	124	33
Cooks	78	33
“Anti-socialist elements” (among technical school graduates)	33	23

Table 2. A special regulation on cadres’ housing prerogatives issued in Shanghai (1956)¹⁶

Grade A of special rank	a fine residence of 200 square meters with a large garden
Grade B of special rank	a fine residence of 190-195 square meters with a large garden
Rank 1	a fine residence of 180-185 square meters with a large garden
Rank 2	a private, modern-style apartment of 170–175 square meters
Rank 3	a first-class apartment of 160–165 square meters
Rank 4	an ordinary semiprivate apartment
Rank 5	a modern-style apartment of 120–135 square meters
Rank 6	an ordinary apartment of 100–115 square meters with a bathroom
Rank 7	a traditional-style apartment of 80–95 square meters without a bathroom
Ranks 8 and 9	simple board-assembled houses

Moreover, a significant gap existed between the educational opportunities of the high-level bureaucrats and ordinary workers. Even middle school graduation was considered a significant success for the latter group. Also, middle school graduation was the highest educational attainment of the great majority of the villagers. Access to healthcare was similarly unequal. High-level bureaucrats and their families had access to higher-quality healthcare facilities than the rest of the population. In short, although the PRC made a historic achievement by guaranteeing stable jobs and income to the workers and peasants, significant

¹⁵ Michel Korzec and Martin King Whyte, “Reading Notes: The Chinese Wage System,” *China Quarterly*, no: 248, 1981, p. 251.

¹⁶ Wu, p. 28.

inequalities among the high-level bureaucrats, workers, and peasants continued to exist. On the other hand, since Mao himself often brought these inequalities to the political agenda and encouraged the attacks on them especially during the Cultural Revolution, these inequalities did not reach a high level as in the USSR and Eastern European regimes.

The historic uniqueness of Mao Zedong's theory and practice

What distinguishes Mao Zedong from other leaders of the bureaucratic workers' states is his explicit recognition of the fact that bureaucratization was indeed a fundamental problem of the PRC which could be solved only by the mobilization and democratic supervision of the masses. Mao acknowledged that an unresolved bureaucratization would lead to capitalist restoration. According to Mao, material interests of the bureaucracy and ordinary people conflicted. The existence of a bureaucratic strata is based on the huge gap between the mental and manual labor. Bureaucracy legitimizes its existence by using its expertise in the areas of material and cultural production. As long as the masses' cultural level and capacity of supervision and governance remains low, bureaucracy could maintain its privileged position. For this reason, bureaucracy maintains itself by leaving economics and politics to the conduct of the so-called experts, suppressing all independent mass initiatives, and keeping the culture of the workers and peasants at a relatively low level. For Mao, all bureaucrats sharing these traits were potential capitalist roaders. They waited for the right time to completely overturn the revolutionary gains in terms of class equality. In Mao's perspective, despite all of their deficiencies, the great majority of the party and state cadres were not bureaucrats. According to him, the bureaucrats constituted a small but effective group occupying key positions in the party and state organs and carried out various sabotages to pave the way for capitalist restoration. In Mao's understanding, capitalist roadism included two sets of activities. The first one was blocking the attempts to bridge gaps between the mental and manual labor, city and the countryside, and worker and peasant. The second was giving concessions to private property and market mechanism:

Although classes may be eliminated in a socialist society, in the course of its development there are bound to be certain problems with "vested interest groups" which have grown content with existing institutions and unwilling to change them. For example, if the distribution according to labor is in effect they benefit from higher pay for more work, and when it came to change over to "distribution according to need" they could very well be uncomfortable with the new situation...No sooner do people gain some superiority than they assume airs

[...] It would be dangerous.¹⁷

With the socialist revolution they themselves come under fire. At the time of the co-operative transformation of agriculture there were people in the Party who opposed it, and when it comes to criticizing bourgeois right, they resent it. You are making the socialist revolution, and yet don't know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right in the Communist Party.¹⁸

They fight among themselves for power and money; they extend their hands into the Party; they want fame and fortune; they want positions and, if they do not get them, they are not satisfied; they choose to be fat and to be lean; they pay a great deal of attention to wages; they are cozy when it comes to their comrades but they care nothing about the masses. This is the bureaucracy that is fighting for power and money.¹⁹

It is known that some high-level party-state figures such as Liu Shaoqi objected Mao's proposal of rapid collectivization of the rural economy. They advocated the continuation of private land tenure and capitalist production relations – albeit with restrictions – for a longer time. By using his uncontested prestige in the society and the state, Mao defeated the opposition. Rural collectivization was completed within five years (1952-56), which was a huge success in a continent-size country like China. The contradictions between Mao and other leading cadres were not restricted to this issue. They arose again during the Great Leap Forward (GLF) campaign (1958-61). The campaign was conceived under the worsening of the relations with the Soviet Union with the expectation that the Soviet aid would halt in the near future.²⁰ In the same period, the United States repeatedly declared that it would consider using nuclear weapons against China. The main objective of the GLF campaign was to make China a strong industrial and military power in a self-reliant manner. By curbing consumption, increasing savings, and mobilizing the labor force without paying full wages, the GLF campaign aimed

17 Mao Tsetung, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977, pp. 62-63.

18 Quoted in: "Reversing Correct Verdicts Goes Against the Will of the People", *Peking Review*, vol. 19, no. 11-12 March 1976, p. 4.

19 Mao Zedong, "Twenty Manifestations of Bureaucracy", February 1970, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_85.htm.

20 Chris Bramall, *In Praise of Maoist Economic Planning: Living Standards and Economic Development in Sichuan Since 1931*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 281; Stephen Endicott, *Red Earth: Revolution in a Sichuan Village*, Londra: I.B. Tauris, 1988, p. 46. Soviet aid completely stopped in 1960. An abrupt halt in 1957 was an early signal of it and a factor that motivated the CCP leadership to implement the Great Leap Forward (Wen, s. 48).

at constructing a strong agricultural and industrial infrastructure rapidly and with minimum cost.

Table 3. Grain production and death rate in China (1957-1962)²¹

Year	Grain production (Milliontons)	Death rate (per 1000 people)
1957	195	10.80
1958	200	11.98
1959	170	14.59
1960	143	25.43
1961	147	14.24
1962	160	10.02

However, this campaign led to the collapse of the economy very quickly. Adverse weather conditions led to a sharp drop in agricultural production in 1959. Since the CCP leadership put unrealistically high production targets and the low-level bureaucrats did not dare to report the sharp drop of agricultural production, the state failed to make a downward readjustment of the agricultural taxes (collected in kind). This led to mass starvation in the countryside, taking at least 30 million lives. As the situation in the countryside worsened to the extent that food supply fell sharply and created food shortages in the urban-industrial areas, the GLF campaign was abruptly terminated in 1961. Although Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping did not object the GLF, they used its collapse in order to increase their power in the party-state, especially in the realm of economic decision-making, at the expense of Mao's. Starting with 1961, they approved the expansion of household plots (from nearly zero to about 15% of the available farmland) and relaxation of the state monopoly of the rural trade (by allowing limited trade in the open rural markets).

Mao viewed these measures as serious concessions to private property and free market. In order to counter this tendency, he launched a new campaign known as the "Cultural Revolution" in 1966. The Cultural Revolution was organized through bypassing the party's established hierarchy and mobilizing the masses around Mao's personal charisma. At the beginning of the campaign, Mao declared Liu and Deng as the leading representatives of bureaucratic reaction and bourgeois tendencies inside the party-state. According to Mao, Liu, Deng and (thousands of) their followers had secret relations with the ruling classes of the pre-revolutionary era, specifically with the Guomindang regime in Taiwan with the purpose of restoring capitalism in China. Mao called the masses to mobilize against this reactionary bloc. For Mao, masses should stop obeying orders from

²¹ State Statistical Bureau, p. 105, 108.

the party center and start a new revolution that would complement the 1949 revolution and enable China's complete transition to socialism. Masses should purge the capitalist roaders from the party-state and seize power. In order to govern the state better than the capitalist roaders, masses had to raise their consciousness (through studying the so-called "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought") and develop their cultural, scientific, and technical capacities. Educated cadres, high school and university students had to go to factories and farms to participate in production, whereas ordinary workers and peasants should receive scientific and technical training. Following the purge of the reactionary elements, party and state organs should take all necessary measures to transform culture, science, and technology from being elites' exclusive realm to the common property of working masses. Hence, Mao dubbed his campaign the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Maoist leadership expected that three great contradictions (between the mental and manual labor, city and the countryside, and the worker and peasant) would vanish and socialism would win a decisive victory at the end of the revolution.

Considering the developments after his death, it is clear that certain aspects of Mao's view were proven correct. Deng Xiaoping returned to the party, seized its leadership only two years after Mao's death, and led the process of capitalist restoration until the mid-1990s. In this process, all the previous initiatives to solve the contradiction between the manual and mental labor were suspended, elitist character of the education system was strengthened, expertise was glorified more than ever, and technocratic approach in economic and political affairs was adopted completely.²²

Nevertheless, later confirmation of Mao's predictions does not change the fact that his theory of bureaucracy suffers from serious shortcomings. The Maoist critique was stillborn and never had a chance to succeed due to three main reasons. First, unlike Trotsky, who predicted that as long as the world revolution was unable to include the advanced countries and confined to underdeveloped countries, the first bureaucratic degeneration and then capitalist restoration would be inevitable consequences, Mao and his supporters embraced the goal of world revolution only on paper and as a distant ideal, not as an immediate, practical task. They never criticized the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country" and never identified the isolation of the PRC and the USSR as the fundamental material cause of their bureaucratic degeneration. For this reason, the vicious cycle of bureaucratic degeneration can be broken not by a cultural revolution but

22 For a good account of this process see Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 213-259.

the world socialist revolution. Only if the advanced countries share their cultural, scientific, and material privileges with the backward countries without national selfishness, it will be possible to overcome poverty, achieve abundance, reduce work hours, and thereby increase the control of the working masses in the realms of economics, politics, science, and technology. In short, if there is a great cultural revolution, it can happen only as part of an advancing world socialist revolution. Mao and his followers never had such a theoretical perspective and therefore failed to provide a realistic alternative against bureaucratic degeneration and capitalist roaders.

The second major flaw of Mao's theory of bureaucracy is its failure to recognize the process of bureaucratization of the Soviet Union. Mao denied Stalin's major responsibility in the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and insisted that Stalin had been a great revolutionary leader who had made fundamental mistakes. Moreover, Mao repeated all of Stalinist lies about Trotsky and his followers. According to Mao,

After Lenin's death Stalin as the chief leader of the Party and the state creatively applied and developed Marxism-Leninism. In the struggle to defend the legacy of Leninism against its enemies – the Trotskyites, Zinovievites and other bourgeois agents– Stalin expressed the will and wishes of the people and proved himself to be an outstanding Marxist-Leninist fighter. The reason Stalin won the support of the Soviet people and played an important role in history was primarily that he, together with the other leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, brought about the triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union and created the conditions for the victory of the Soviet Union in the war against Hitler; these victories of the Soviet people conformed to the interests of the working class of the world and all progressive mankind. It was therefore quite natural for the name of Stalin to be greatly honored throughout the world. But having won such high honor among the people both at home and abroad by his correct application of the Leninist line, Stalin erroneously exaggerated his own role and counterposed his individual authority to the collective leadership, and as a result certain of his actions were opposed to certain fundamental Marxist-Leninist concepts he himself had propagated.²³

His failure to acknowledge the process of bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR in the Stalin era and retelling Stalin's lies to legitimize that process demonstrate that Mao did not have the degree of theoretical sophistication and revolutionary honesty required to provide a serious analysis of bureaucracy in the PRC and a genuine strategy to fight against it. We should also keep in mind

23 Mao Zedong, "Stalin's Place in History", 5 April 1956, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-7/mswv7_467.htm.

that Mao did not criticize Stalin's policies with regard to the USSR when Stalin was alive and made the limited critique quoted above three years after Stalin's death, following the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union where Stalin's "personality cult" was criticized. Moreover, following the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s (which came after a brief honeymoon of Mao and Nikita Khrushchev, the new leader of the USSR), Mao condemned Khrushchev for betraying Stalin's revolutionary heritage.

Finally, as a natural result of these two problems, Mao failed to identify the material foundation of the Chinese bureaucracy. Rather than viewing it as a tendency stemming from the isolation of the PRC that had been born and grown inside the party-state, Mao tended to explain it with reference to the conspiracies of the dominant classes of the pre-revolutionary period. The unscientific definition of the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era as a capitalist, imperialist, and fascist state fed Mao's theoretical blindness further with regard to the material foundations of the Chinese bureaucracy:

Class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment are the three great revolutionary movements for building a mighty socialist country. These movements are a sure guarantee that communists will be free from bureaucracy and immune against revisionism and dogmatism, and will forever remain invincible. They are a reliable guarantee that the proletariat will be able to unite with the broad working masses and realize a democratic dictatorship. If in the absence of these movements, the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and monsters of all kinds were allowed to crawl out, while our cadres were to shut their eyes to all this and in many cases fail even to differentiate between the enemy and ourselves but were to collaborate with the enemy and were corrupted, divided and demoralized by him, if our cadres were thus pulled out or the enemy were able to sneak in, and if many of our workers, peasants and intellectuals were left defenseless against both the soft and the hard tactics of the enemy, then it would not take long, perhaps only several years or a decade, or several decades at most, before a counter-revolutionary restoration on a national scale inevitably occurred, the Marxist-Leninist party would undoubtedly become a revisionist party or fascist party, and the whole of China would change its colour.²⁴

In short, Mao was right to acknowledge the trends of bureaucratic degeneration and capitalist restoration, but failed to develop a theory about them and a political strategy against them.

24 Mao Zedong, "We Must Prevent China from Changing Colour", 14 July 1964, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_24.htm.

Mass movements against the bureaucracy (1949-1965)

The most important feature of the anti-bureaucratic mass movements of the Mao era is that they were initially encouraged by the party-state, but as soon as they became independent political actors and trespassed the boundaries of the system, they were repressed by the same party-state (with the approval of Mao, who always claimed to be anti-bureaucratic). Chinese leadership started the “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend” campaign in 1956. The main logic behind it was that the expansion of the freedom of thought and expression would create a significant mass pressure over the cadres, save the regime from bureaucratic ossification, and thereby increase its prestige in the eyes of the ordinary people. The “Hundred Flowers” campaign soon created a significant atmosphere of freedom. Many newspapers, journals, and books were published and many protests, demonstrations, debates, and art events were organized. Thoughts expressed in this atmosphere of relative freedom soon trespassed the limits that could be tolerated by the regime. Students and intellectuals directed bold (rightist and leftist) critiques against the regime. More importantly, a big strike wave shook big industrial centers (centered in Shanghai) in 1956 and 1957. Permanent workers demanded wage raise and greater freedom of expression in the factory management. There were significant disparities between permanent workers and other type of workers (including apprentices, interns, and temporary workers) in terms of wage and social rights. Chinese state extended the duration of apprenticeships and internships in order to keep wages at a low level and increase investment. For this reason, apprentices and interns were the leaders of the strike movement. Temporary workers demanded job guarantee. The workers sent to the countryside demanded to be returned to the cities. During the first half of the 1950s, industrial capitalists were not expropriated. In order to get along well with the workers’ state, they raised wages and improved working conditions significantly. In the second half of the 1950s, these factories were first transformed into mixed public-private enterprises and then were completely nationalized. In order to increase the investable surplus for rapid industrialization, the state cut back much of these concessions. Angered by these austerity measures, workers organized about ten thousand strikes. 1300 actions (strikes and demonstrations) happened just in Shanghai between March and June of 1957. In order to defend their strikes, the workers armed themselves and set up militias in the factories. Despite the tension between Mao Zedong and Deng-Liu duo, the entire party-state leadership was dissatisfied with these developments. Uprisings in Hungary and Poland, which coincided with the developments in China, fueled the leadership’s fear. As a result, the party-state leadership decided to suppress the movement. During the “Anti-rightist Campaign” between 1957 and 1959, thousands of workers, students, intellectuals, and artists were arrested.

Strikes were banned and workers' militias were abolished.²⁵

Cultural Revolution: struggle inside the bureaucracy, potential for political revolution, and bureaucratic consolidation

During the first (and most important) episode of the Cultural Revolution (1966-69), a similar process of initial support and subsequent repression took place in a more lively and dramatic manner. As noted above, Mao was unhappy about the growing power of Deng-Liu duo and the concessions towards private farming and market economy after 1961. He started the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," the last radical campaign of his life, in summer 1966. The harsh attack of Yao Wen yuan, who later on became one of the top leaders of the Cultural Revolution known as the "Gang of Four", against the Beijing opera titled *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* written by the famous historian Wu Han, who was also the vice mayor of Beijing at the time, was published in November 1965 and was the first signal of the coming storm. According to Yao, the cocky emperor in the play symbolized Mao Zedong and the dismissed official Hay Rui symbolized Peng Dehuai, who was dismissed by Mao due to his bold criticism of the Great Leap Forward campaign in 1959. Yao claimed that Wu's play was a hidden counter-revolutionary propaganda.²⁶

After the publication of Yao's article, a violent struggle started between the leftist (Maoist) and rightist (Dengist-Liuist) factions of the party-state bureaucracy. On 25 May 1966, Nie Yuanzi, a female academic at the Peking University, hung on a campus wall a "big character poster" (which became the main propaganda tool of the CR period) titled "Ignite the Cultural Revolution!" The poster accused the university administration to be counterrevolutionary and called for a struggle against it:

At present the people of the whole nation, in a soaring revolutionary spirit that manifests boundless love for the Party and Chairman Mao, and their inveterate hatred for the sinister anti-Party anti-socialist gang, are making a vigorous and great Cultural Revolution. They are struggling thoroughly to smash the attacks of the reactionary sinister gang, in defence of the Party's Central Committee and Chairman Mao.

25 Elizabeth J. Perry, "Shanghai's Strike Wave of 1957", *The China Quarterly*, no: 137, 1994, pp. 1-27; Marc Blecher, "Working Class Re-formation and De-formation in the PRC", in *Handbook on Class and Social Stratification in China*, ed. Yingjie Guo, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016, pp. 337-343.

26 Yao Wen yuan, "On the New Historical Play 'Dismissal of Hai Rui'", <https://www.marxists.org/archive/yao-wenyuan/1965/november/10.htm>.

But here in Beida [Beijing University] the masses are being kept immobilised. The atmosphere is one of indifference and deadness, whereas the strong revolutionary desire of the vast number of the faculty members and students has been suppressed. What is the matter? What is the reason? Something fishy is going on...

The revolutionary people must be fully aroused to vigorously and angrily denounce [enemies of the party]. To hold big meetings and put up big character posters is one of the best ways for the masses to do battle. By 'guiding' the masses not to hold big meetings, not to put up big character posters, and by creating all kinds of taboos, aren't you suppressing the masses' revolution, not allowing them to make revolution and opposing their revolution? We will never permit you to do this!...

All revolutionary intellectuals, now is the time to go into battle! Let us unite, holding high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought. Unite round the Party's Central Committee and Chairman Mao, and break down all the various controls and plots of the revisionists. Resolutely, thoroughly, totally and completely wipe out all ghosts and monsters and all Khrushchevian counter-revolutionary revisionists – and carry the socialist revolution through to the end. Defend the Party's Central Committee! Defend Mao Zedong's Thought! Defend the dictatorship of the proletariat!²⁷

In his short piece titled "Bombard the Headquarters," Mao supported Nie and attacked the right wing faction of the party:

'China's first Marxist-Leninist big character poster and Commentator's article on it in *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily) are indeed superbly written! Comrades, please read them again. But in the last fifty days or so some leading comrades from the central down to the local levels have acted in a diametrically opposite way. Adopting the reactionary stand of the bourgeoisie, they have enforced a bourgeois dictatorship and struck down the surging movement of the great cultural revolution of the proletariat. They have stood facts on their head and juggled black and white, encircled and suppressed revolutionaries, stifled opinions differing from their own, imposed a white terror, and felt very pleased with themselves. They have puffed up the arrogance of the bourgeoisie and deflated the morale of the proletariat. How poisonous! Viewed in connection with the Right deviation in 1962 and the wrong tendency of 1964 which was 'Left' in form but Right in essence, shouldn't this make one wide awake?²⁸

27 Nie Yuanzi, "Ignite the Cultural Revolution," 25 May 1966, <http://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/ignite-cultural-revolution-1966/>.

28 Mao Zedong, "Bombard the Headquarters: My First Big Character Poster", 5 August 1966, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_63.htm.

The publication of this text was a turning point. Afterwards, Mao and his protégés called the masses to establish their own organizations to struggle against the capitalist roader bureaucrats and reconstruct the party and state on firmer socialist foundations. Three days after the publication of Mao's essay, the Central Committee of the CCP published the famous "16 Points" document which defined the CR with the following terms:

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do the exact opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society. At present, our objective is to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic "authorities" and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.²⁹

The document promised the masses freedoms of discussion and organization:

In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the only method is for the masses to liberate themselves, and any method of doing things in their stead must not be used.

Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative. Cast out fear. Don't be afraid of disturbances. Chairman Mao has often told us that revolution cannot be so very refined, so gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. Let the masses educate themselves in this great revolutionary movement and learn to distinguish between right and wrong and between correct and incorrect ways of doing things.

[...] The method to be used in debates is to present the facts, reason things out, and persuade through reasoning. Any method of forcing a minority holding different views to submit is impermissible. The minority should be protected, because sometimes the truth is with the minority. Even if the minority is wrong, they should still be allowed to argue their case and reserve their views. When there is a debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force.³⁰

29 Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", 8 August 1966, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1966/PR1966-33g.htm>.

30 Ibid.

Streets, factories, and campuses were soon covered with slogans, big-character posters, and wallpapers. A vast volume of books, journals, and brochures were published. Street demonstrations, debate meetings, new artistic experiments became a part of daily life. Students of junior and senior middle schools and colleges formed many organizations generally labelled as the “Red Guards.”

For many people and organizations, the Cultural Revolution did not mean anything more than Mao’s manipulations, personality cult, destruction and chaos. This is normal given the fact that numerous organizations fought against each other, claiming to represent the correct version of Maoism against others who were usually condemned as counter-revolutionaries. Numerous crimes (torture, lynch, executions, plunder, vandalism, etc.) were committed in the name of the revolution, as Mao’s personality cult reached its zenith. Nevertheless, historical materialist analysis cannot stop there. Within this chaos, a serious showdown took place both within the bureaucracy and between the bureaucracy and the left opposition.

The struggle within the bureaucracy was complex and multi-dimensional. It had two main sides. Mao and his closest followers (who were later on branded as the “Gang of Four”) comprised the left-wing, anti-restorationist faction of the bureaucracy. The main goal of the Maoist bureaucracy was to liquidate the restorationist bureaucracy led by Liu-Deng duo. Maoist bureaucracy forced the intellectuals, scientists, and state officials to engage with manual labor alongside workers and peasants. It also tried to prevent the concentration of educational and healthcare services and economic investment in relatively advanced coastal regions, broadened the basis of development by investing in the central and western provinces, and emphasized rural development. It aimed at accomplishing four main goals through these policies. The first goal of the Maoist faction was to raise a new generation of bureaucrats who would be more disciplined, selfless, and modest. Secondly, it wanted to reduce the three contradictions and thereby establish hegemony over the ordinary people. Thirdly, by achieving these two goals, Maoists intended to prevent the capitalist restoration in the PRC. Finally, Maoist leadership wanted to increase China’s power on a global scale not simply through economic and military means but also by providing an alternative political and ideological project. Maoists desired to make the PRC the leader of the Third World through a politics of the “third path” that was alternative to both the US-led imperialist and the USSR-led “social imperialist” camps. Maoist bureaucracy successfully liquidated the Deng-Liu duo in the first phase of the Cultural Revolution. Liu died in custody in 1969 and Deng was placed under house arrest. Many bureaucrats, experts, and intellectuals close to them shared a similar fate.

However, in a populous and highly complex country such as China, organizing

purges within the bureaucracy was extremely difficult. Many bureaucrats, their families and personal networks quickly conformed to the new standards set by the Cultural Revolution and reorganized themselves under various organizations. One of the most effective theoretical weapons of their organization was the so-called “bloodline theory”, from which the Maoists could not break apart even in their most radical times. According to the bloodline theory, the children of those who had been party members before 1949 and especially of those who had played leading roles during the fight against Japan and the Guomindang constituted the most revolutionary generation. Hence, fearing the dismissal from office and physical repression during the new campaign, thousands of bureaucrats, their families, and personal networks claimed that they were the best Maoists due to their superior bloodline and soon founded various organizations, including their own versions of Red Guard organizations, and joined the bandwagon of the Cultural Revolution. Many bloody conflicts took place between these two bureaucratic factions, including the street fights in Beijing in 1966.³¹ When those conflicts got out of control and a fully-fledged civil war became a real possibility, Mao hit the brakes and ordered the People’s Liberation Army to restore order. The military finally ended the street fights in 1968 and punished many members on both sides. Those punished were not just the bureaucrats who rebranded themselves as radical Maoists based partly on the bloodline theory, but also those who seriously believed the original anti-bureaucratic stance of the early days of the CR. In fact, Mao viewed the Red Guards as a serious threat of the new status quo that was being established and therefore sent them to the villages accompanied by a heavy dose of agitation-propaganda celebrating the youth’s contribution to the revolutionary transformation of the countryside. Some of the sent-down youth returned home after a few months or one or two years, but many could not return until Mao’s death in 1976.

Struggle within the bureaucracy was not the main reason behind Mao’s intervention to stop the CR abruptly. As a genuinely socialist and anti-bureaucratic line started to emerge, real limits of the CR were tested. Mass workers’ struggles (demonstrations and strikes) took place in Shanghai, the largest industrial city, in late 1966 and early 1967. Workers’ committees and militias took control of the factories. At the same, contract workers with rural residency who were employed in urban factories started to struggle. Contract workers were receiving wages one-quarter lower than urban workers for the same job. They also lack the social rights and services enjoyed by urban workers. They could be sent back to their villages any time. In order to get equal rights to those of urban resident workers, the contract workers quickly organized and waged militant struggles.

31 For detailed information about the “bloodline theory” and its manifestations during the CR see Wu, pp. 53-94.

In November 1966, the Workers' General Headquarters (WGHQ) was founded under the leadership of Wang Hongwen, an ex-soldier and factory cadre and a member of the group of Maoist leaders later on labeled as the "Gang of Four." The WGHQ was a coalition of different workers' organizations. All China Red Laborer Rebels' Headquarters, an organization founded on 15 November, 1966, with 400 hundred thousand contract workers, was one of the largest organizations under the umbrella of the WGHQ. On November 22, 1966, Shanghai municipality announced that it would not fire any contract workers and rehire those that were fired before. This did not calm the movement in Shanghai. Mass strikes shook the city in the first two months of 1967.³²

On February 5, 1967, the Shanghai People's Commune was founded with a mass demonstration of one million workers. This was the peak-point of the radicalization process. In this case, workers clearly trespassed the boundaries set by the CCP Central Committee and used the model of the Paris Commune not merely for electing small-scale committees and congress elections but for governing the country's largest industrial city through direct democracy. Unsurprisingly, about ten days later Mao condemned the Shanghai Commune as "extreme anarchism" and proposed its liquidation and replacement by the "triple alliance" of the party, army, and workers. Wang Hongwen and other Maoist leaders intervened to comply with Mao's wish. They argued that rightists and counterrevolutionaries disguised as leftists were using the commune model to disorganize and weaken production. Despite its mass support, the recently founded Shanghai Commune was an immature/inexperienced political formation. It could not resist the top-down interventions of Mao and his closest aides. Therefore, the commune was quickly fractured. The people and organizations resisting the commune's liquidation were soon suppressed by the army. On February 24, 1967, the Shanghai People's Commune was formally dissolved and replaced by the Revolutionary Committee of the Municipality of Shanghai (representing the so-called "triple alliance" under the strict top-down control of Mao and his aides).³³ This was the turning point of the Cultural Revolution and a move from socialist democracy in the making towards the re-consolidation of bureaucratic control over the masses.

³² *ibid.*, p. 108.

³³ Wu, pp. 95-141. Also see Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, pp. 176-180.