

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WORKING CLASS AND ITS PARTY UNDER SOCIALISM



by FRED ENGST

The first draft of this article was presented at a conference held in September 2011 in Beijing on the occasion to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the death of Chairman Mao and the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CCP. The current (February, 2015) version is based on a revised and updated version of June 2012.

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Summary

As Lenin pointed out in *State and Revolution*, the state is the instrument for class rule. Since a class's interests can only be articulated and expressed fully through an organized party or parties of like-minded people, a class rule can only be carried out, in a modern state, by a party or parties of the ruling class, be it the working class or the capitalist class. Without making excuses based on the objective conditions, the failure of the first wave of modern socialist states in keeping the working class in power has made it crystal clear that the growth and domination of capitalist roaders within ruling parties of the working class were the fundamental reasons for states under working class rule (i.e. the dictatorship of the proletariat) being transformed into their opposites. The capitalist roaders were those with authority under the state of working class rule who

¹ The first draft of this article was presented at a conference held in September 2011 in Beijing on the occasion to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the death of Chairman Mao and the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CCP. The current (February, 2015) version is based on a revised and updated version of June 2012. The original text is in Chinese and was translated into English by the author. Without Jerry Leonard's excellent proofreading and revisions, that version might be unreadable. Any remaining errors are the responsibility of the author.

defended bureaucratic privileges, opposed supervision by the masses, and believed in capitalist logic for building socialism. By taking over the leadership of the ruling Party, these people were able to change the nature of the Party into one that serves the interest of the newly emerged capitalists, and turned the state into the instrument of their class rule.

Thus the question becomes, on what basis can the working class prevent its unified and centralized political party from turning into its opposite after seizing political power? The summary by Karl Marx of the two cardinal principles from the Paris Commune (“universal suffrage” and “public service” earning a “workman’s wage”²) no doubt is the most valuable summary of that experience. However, historical experience also demonstrated that a multiparty parliamentary system is inconsistent with the political and economic systems of the working class as the ruling class, and formal democracy will not keep the working class in power. Furthermore, the rule of law cannot stop the capitalist roaders from seizing control of the Party and the state. Therefore, based on the experience of the Cultural Revolution, I believe *the elimination of the material foundation that breeds capitalist roaders, and the eradication of the political environment that nurtures their growth*, are the modern equivalent of the said Paris Commune principles. They are the key ingredients for guarding against the rise of capitalist roaders under states of working class rule. Toward this end, one must make a strict distinction, on the one hand, between bureaucratic perks and privileges, and on the other, the privileges associated with regular “bourgeois rights.” This distinction promotes the ability to decouple one’s political standing away from one’s economic standing within the distributional system, so as to prevent the bureaucracy from

2 See Marx: *Civil War In France* (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm>) or Lenin’s summary in *The Dual Power* (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/09.htm>)

becoming an interest group. In addition, it is necessary to put into practice the formation of semi-independent, spontaneous mass organizations, such as those that emerged during the Cultural Revolution in China, as the main method of democratic supervision exercised by the working class masses over their leaders. To accomplish the latter, the working class needs to correctly handle factionalism within its rank in daily practices, and it need to correctly delineate boundaries on both the local party's leadership role and the rights of rank and file worker's oversight role in terms of organizational structure.

Contents

Summary 1

Foreword 7

I. A Rough Summary of the Historical Experience of the State of Working Class Rule and the Cultural Revolution9

1. Defects in the Traditional Theory of the Party... 9
2. The Challenge by the Capitalist Roaders 11
3. Means of Struggle Within the Party 15
4. The Practice of the Cultural Revolution 17

II. Naiveté of Emulating Capitalist Democracy and the Rule of Law21

1. A Multiparty Parliamentary System is the Denial of a State of Working Class Rule 23
 - A. Differences in Substances Between Democracy Under a Private Enterprise System vs. the one Under Ownership by the Whole People23
 - B. A Multiparty Parliamentary System Necessarily Denies the Overall Interests of the Working Class26
 - C. The Relationship Between Democratic Centralism and Planned Economy.....28
 - D. Aims of a State of the Working Class Rule ..30
2. Formal Democracy Will Not Keep the Working Class In Power..... 31
 - A. Ownership System Dictates the Contents of Democracy32
 - B. Capitalist Democracy Is, At Its Best, “One-Dollar-One-Vote”34

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 3. | The Rule of Law Cannot Stop the Ascendance of the Capitalist Roaders | 38 |
| A. | Rules Are Not Binding to the Rule Makers.. | 39 |
| B. | Binding Rules Reflect Class Struggle..... | 41 |
| C. | Rules are Tools for Struggle, Not the Goals of the Struggle | 43 |

III. Two Key Ingredients for Guarding Against the Capitalist Roaders45

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| 1st. | Eradicating Bureaucratic Privileges: The Material Basis That Breeds Capitalist Roaders | 47 |
| A. | Bureaucratic Privileges Were the Hotbeds for Breeding Capitalist Roaders | 47 |
| B. | Defining Bureaucratic Privileges..... | 48 |
| C. | The Rise of Bureaucratic Privileges | 50 |
| D. | The Significance of Abolishing Bureaucratic Privileges..... | 52 |
| 2nd. | Destroying the Political Environment That Nourishes the Capitalist Roaders | 56 |
| A. | To Recognize on a Theoretical Level the Dialectical Relationship Between the Leadership of the Party and the Democratic Supervision by the Rank-and-File Workers over the Party Leaders | 57 |
| B. | To Take the Kind of Cultural Revolution Style Mass Organizations as the Main Form of Checks and Supervision of Those in Power by the Rank-and-File Workers..... | 62 |
| C. | To Have a Correct Understanding of Factionalism and the Ability to Handle Factionalism Within the Working Class | 64 |
| D. | To Set Boundaries on Both the Leadership Role of the Local Party Committees and the Oversight Role of the Rank And File Workers..... | 67 |

Conclusion70

Foreword

A state of working class rule (i.e., the dictatorship³ of the proletariat) is realized or actualized through its own political party. Previous Marxist-Leninist theories about party building were based on summarizing the experiences of the working class fighting for political power. After the Party comes to power, however, the position of the Party undergoes a fundamental transformation. This transformation results in at least two problems. On the one hand, the vast majority of opportunists in society try their hardest to wiggle their way into the ruling party, and thus a more diffuse and less definite worldview comes to be reflected in the Party. On the other hand, as Marx once said, it is “their social being that determines their consciousness,” which means in these circumstances that the changes in the economic and social status of the Party leaders

3 The word “dictatorship” sounds bad in today’s language, but its usage is aimed at telling the real truth about a system. Under the capitalist system, mystifying phrases such as “private property is sacred” avoid saying that the property of a private (i.e., capitalist) enterprise is sacred. The question of course is, “sacred” for whom, for which class? If one believes in the capitalist system, then there is no oppression under this system, only protection. But on the contrary, for those who don’t worship capitalism but oppose it, this “sacred” system *is* oppressive and deadly. Whenever the working class under capitalism tries to free itself from the system of wage slavery, it has to face the overwhelming might of the state that protects the interests of the capitalists and the system in its totality. On the other hand, in socialism under the state of working class rule, ownership by the whole people is considered sacred. If one believes in *this* system – socialism – then it is certainly not oppressive, as in the case of workers forming their own organizations during the Cultural Revolution in order to freely voice their concerns about how best to run an enterprise or even the state itself. Yet under these social and political conditions, for those who hung onto the belief in capitalistic “free enterprise” and wanted to subvert the system of ownership by the whole people so that they could set up businesses for themselves, this system was seen as “oppressive.” Of course those who held such aspirations did not, at least openly, enjoy the freedom to do as they wished.

must have a detrimental impact on their thinking. As a result, the working class parties that were in power around the world – some may even say without exception – turned into political parties of the (bureaucratic) capitalists.

The main reason for this change is that the capitalist roaders inside the Party (those in the Party with authority, who defended their bureaucratic privileges, opposed supervision by the broad masses, and relied on capitalist logic to build socialism) have taken over the leadership of the Party and have seized control of the state. Faced with this reality, the working class must re-summarize the ways and means of achieving its class rule through its own political party, and it must modify and supplement its theories of the relationship between the working class and its party under a state of working class rule.

The subject of this essay thus requires us to compare and contrast the two different social systems (i.e., capitalism and socialism). First, I will summarize the historical experience of the state of working class rule in China. Then, delve into the true nature of the political system of capitalism to show that it is not possible to resolve the kinds of problems that a state of working class power faces if it employs political solutions and systems that were created by the capitalists and for the capitalist class. On this groundwork, the essay will analyze the material basis and political environment for the emergence and growth of the capitalist roaders. Armed with this understanding, the future state of working class rule will have a better chance of success.

I. A Rough Summary of the Historical Experience of the State of Working Class Rule and the Cultural Revolution

Since the working class cannot be the ruling class without its party, I will start with the role of the Party.

1. Defects in the Traditional Theory of the Party

Traditional Leninist theory emphasizes the leadership role of the Party. A centralized and unified leadership of the Party becomes the precondition for the success of a revolution. This is because when the working class is not in power, it is only possible to overcome the forces of capitalism and *obtain* political power by having all mass organizations of workers under the centralized and unified leadership of its political party. The correctness of this theory has been verified by the victories of the October Revolution and the Chinese revolution, for example.

Similarly, once the working class is in power, if there is not a group of devoted people to defend the long-term and overriding interests of the class, the state of working class rule will soon be overturned, due partially to the predominance of the capitalist and petty capitalist ideology among members of the working class. This group of devoted people makes up the political party of the working class. When conflicts arise between personal interests and the interests of the working class under socialism, the political party of the working class is the organization of the class that safeguards the overall interests of this class.

However, Lenin's theory of party building was based on the struggle against a capitalist state, not one based on the struggle against those people *inside* the Party with authority who tried to take the capitalist road under socialism, i.e., capitalist roaders. The fact is that after seizing state power, the status of the political party of the working class changes from a revolutionary party into a party in power. Under these conditions, the original theory of party building – with an emphasis on the mass line rather than an emphasis on the supervision of the Party by the broad masses of the people – becomes ineffective. Parties of the working class around the world have basically, sooner or later, turned sour after they have gained state power. In practically all cases, they change from revolutionary parties into their opposites. That is to say, they become the oppressors of the working class, and they become “party-state” bureaucratic capitalist parties, further exposed defects of the traditional theory.

Faced with this historical reality, it is insufficient to simply resort to a one-sided stress on the leading role of the Party, as Deng Xiaoping did, for example, in his so-called “four perseverances,”⁴ which effectively downplayed or altogether ruled out the supervision of the Party by the broad masses. As in Deng's case, such leadership will most likely become a fascist leadership fundamentally oriented toward the repression of the working class, as predicted by Mao in his speech to the Seven Thousand Cadres Meeting in early 1962⁵.

To answer why the parties of the working class around the world have degenerated and reversed themselves after acquiring state power, we, the Marxist-Leninist-Maoists, should not

4 Deng Xiaoping's “four perseverances” are as follow: perseverance of the socialist road, perseverance of people's democratic dictatorship, perseverance of the leadership of the Party, and perseverance of Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong's thought.

5 See <http://www.massline.org/PekingReview/PR1978/PR1978-27-MaoTalk.pdf>

simply be looking for answers by reading original writings from Marx, Lenin or Mao. That is not sufficient. We also need to start from current realities of these states, such as the Chinese regime being a capitalist state, and we should attempt to trace the origin of this change and analyze its evolution in accordance with the theoretical guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism.⁶ This, I believe, is the dialectical materialist's approach.

By observing the process of transformation of a state, such as in the case of China, we can clearly see that the main reason for this change was that the capitalist roaders inside the Party took over the leadership and seized control of the state.

2. The Challenge by the Capitalist Roaders

The rise of capitalist roaders is an extraordinary challenge to the traditional theory of the Party. As for defining who were the capitalist roaders, an analysis of the history of 30 years before and after Deng Xiaoping (this outstanding teacher by negative example) came to power in China can help us. The original definition for the capitalist roaders was "those in the Party with authority taking the capitalist road." However, a "capitalist road" under a state of working class rule was not all that clear. It now appears that the capitalist roaders were those people in the Party with authority who applied capitalist logic in building socialism.

For example, on the question of which way forward for agriculture collective movement in the 1950's, the three years of difficulties from 1959-1961 were clearly caused by the

⁶ Maoism refers to the theory and practice that Mao developed after the success of the Chinese revolution and the socialist transformation that were completed by 1956, and particularly the theories and practices leading up to and including the Cultural Revolution. This represented a major advance in Marxist-Leninist theory. By contrast, "Mao Zedong Thought" refers to the theories and practices Mao developed during the Chinese revolution by applying Marxism-Leninism to the Chinese conditions.

“communist wind”⁷ and the “exaggeration wind”⁸ pushed by Liu Shaoqi⁹ and Deng Xiaoping in 1958. But their proposed solution in 1962 was to decollectivize! In industry, for example, it was obvious that the problem with workers in some places who lacked enthusiasm for their work had to do with their leaders who were divorced from the masses and had their noses in the air. The solutions proposed by capitalist roaders, however, were to use material incentives and to impose strict workplace discipline to force workers to toe the line!

The reason for this line of thinking among the capitalist roaders was because, deep down, in their bones, their world outlooks were still capitalistic. They believed only in themselves, looked down on the masses, acted as either saviors of the world or judged others by how they themselves would behave. Instead of believing in the masses, relying upon the masses, and mobilizing the masses, they mistrusted the masses, detached themselves from the masses, and tried to manipulate them.

This orientation among the capitalist roaders can be seen initially, as Mao did, as a problem of understanding that could possibly be overcome with more education. If that was all, then this might only be a non-antagonistic contradiction among the people, rather than an antagonistic contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class. The more important problem, however, was that the capitalist roaders did not see

7 The “communist wind,” which developed during the early collectivization movement at the village level, refers to the sweeping practice of raising the accounting scale from a work-team of 30-40 families, which pooled their resources and shared their income together, to a level that encompasses a whole township or county with thousands or more families.

8 The “exaggeration wind” refers to the practice of boasting production figures up to 10 times the reality, which led to a higher agricultural taxation to the State.

9 Chairman of the People’s Republic of China and Vice Chairman of the Party before the Cultural Revolution.

themselves as the servant of the people. Instead, they saw themselves as the savior of the people, the righteous inheritor of power, and took credit for overthrowing the old system when it was obviously the accomplishment of the people working together. They tried to make mass movements into instruments for their ascendance to power, and make themselves the new rulers. They loved to ride roughshod over the masses and enjoyed their privileges. More than just using capitalist logic in building socialism, other characteristics of capitalist roaders are that they defend their bureaucratic privileges and opposed the supervision by the masses. This changed the nature of the contradiction between them and the masses.

In reality, the emergence of bureaucratic privileges was the starting point of the capitalist roaders' exploitation of surplus value; and having the masses lose their power of supervision over the bureaucrats marked the coming to power of the capitalists. This is because the nature of a state depended on the line, the policies, and the practices put forward by the power-holders in the state. So the difference between a socialist road and a capitalist road boils down to the nature of the state, i.e., on behalf of which class it was serving and working for.

Based on this, we can summarize some key characteristics of capitalist roaders: *they were those in power under the state of working class rule who defended bureaucratic privileges, opposed supervision by the masses, and believed in capitalist logic for building socialism.* I shall postpone until later a more elaborate argument for this conclusion, especially the corrosive nature of bureaucratic privileges and the importance of supervision by the masses. Before we move on, however, we must also distinguish between conscious and unconscious capitalist roaders, and in turn we must distinguish between those who were guilty of being capitalist roaders and those who were unrepentant capitalist roaders. One result of the Cultural Revolution was to turn people like Deng Xiaoping, who may

not necessarily have been a conscious capitalist roader, into unrepentant capitalist roaders.¹⁰

Mao's understanding of the capitalist roaders was shaped and perfected by his struggle against them. Ever since the completion of the socialist transformation in 1956, Mao, being an acute observer, soon noticed that there were two distinct kinds of contradictions within a socialist society. He put forward his timely writing *On the Correct Handling of the Contradictions Among the People* and spent nearly 20 years of his remaining life finding solutions to this problem.

By the time he recognized the dangerous nature of the capitalist roaders around 1962, they were already quite powerful and relatively well-entrenched. Mao launched the Cultural Revolution to fight a heroic battle, and he risked his own life and reputation for this last chance to save the Party. Mao tried to resolve this fundamental problem of how to prevent the political party of the working class from turning towards its opposite, or revolutionaries become rulers. He did it by observing and guiding the mass movement during the Cultural Revolution, as a way to discern the *objective laws* of this phenomenon. But he was too busy dealing with the complex struggle at the time, on top of his advanced age and illness, and was not in a position

10 It now appears that, due to the lack of experience and theoretical understanding, most of the Party cadres had, to varying degrees, committed the error of being capitalist roaders. This was not only true in China, but the errors were especially more extensive in the case of Stalin's period in the Soviet Union. Stalin himself was seriously guilty of committing the error of being a capitalist roader, although without him realizing it, one might say. He did not believe in the masses and preferred to act on their behalf. To control and manage the vast bureaucracy, he was left with only the means of bureaucratic privileges and perks. Thus, bureaucratic privileges during his administration underwent a gross expansion. This facilitated the conscious capitalist roaders coming to power.

to formulate and articulate a systematic summary. This task fell on the shoulders of the later generations.

3. Means of Struggle Within the Party

To summarize the historical lessons of working class rule, we should learn from Mao. Like the failure of the Red Army led by Mao in their first attempt to capture the city of Changsha in 1927, the Red Army commanders could have analyzed the specific battle plan and made corrective actions for their next attack. But Mao's summary did not deal with these kinds of details. Mao saw the disparity of strength between the two sides and quickly changed the direction of the armed struggle. He abandoned plans to attack major cities and embarked on a strategy of using the countryside to encircle the cities. Similarly, when summarizing the experiences of the Cultural Revolution, we should not get bogged down in specifics. Instead, we should learn from Mao, and we should try to identify *regularities and patterns* so as to develop a coherent theory of working class revolution under socialism, particularly the objective laws of inner party struggle within the Party of the working class.

Mao's summary of how to properly handle inner-party struggle as non-antagonistic contradictions among the people, beginning in his early Yan'an Rectification period, elevated the method of "criticism and self-criticism," all the way to the fundamental principles of "three to's and three not's". These were "to practice Marxism-Leninism, not revisionism; to unite, not divide; to be open and above board, not to engage in intrigue." This was the summary of his life-long struggle within the party: ideologically one must adhere to Marxism-Leninism, while behaviorally one must seek to unite the majority; in terms of working style, one must act openly and above-board. These three points are indispensable, but "to practice Marxism-Leninism" is the most fundamental. This is because only Marxism-Leninism is consistent with the overall

and long-term interests of the working class and the broad masses of the people.

“To unite, not divide” is to adhere to democratic centralism for struggles within the party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. It is to insist on majority rule. Those who engaged in separatist and sectarian activities in the revolutionary ranks were those who cared mainly for the interests of an individual or of a small group, rather than the long-term and overriding interests of the working class and the broad masses of people. But after one had deviated from Marxism-Leninism and had deviated from the socialist road, to then condemn Mao for violation of democratic centralism is pointless. Back in 1962, Mao warned those capitalist roaders in the party who believed in decollectivizing the people’s commune that if they insisted on doing so it would result in a split of the party. Democratic centralism is only a means or a system to handle disagreements among those communists who adhere to the socialist road. For example, between revolutionaries and reactionaries, such as Chiang Kai-shek, there would be no democratic centralism to speak of.

“To be open and aboveboard, not to engage in intrigue” is also an important condition to ensure the unity of the revolutionary ranks. However, this does not mean that the struggle within the party doesn’t involve strategies. Unite the majority, for example, is itself a basic strategy. Again, on the one hand, we should not conceal our views, and on the other hand, we should make room for incorrect approaches to have a chance to be fully exposed during a process. A case in point was that of the practice of Liu and Deng in mass suppression during more than 50 days in the summer of 1966, as the Cultural Revolution began. This is Mao’s “open strategy” of allowing them to be in charge so as to give them a chance to mend their ways or to fully expose them. The danger for revolutionaries is not in making mistakes, but in refusing to own up to their mistakes, as did Liu and Deng. The distinction between an

“open strategy” and “conspiracy” is that the former is open and honest, whereas the purpose of engaging in shady maneuvers is like that of Deng Xiaoping, who at first proclaimed, “never reverse the verdict (about the Cultural Revolution),” and then made an about-face and betrayed the people once he was in charge.

These were Mao’s summaries in terms of ideology, principles, and lines. As for how these embodied principles which could be translated into concrete policies, such as the wage system, the issue of mass organizations, and so forth, he was more cautious and had an attitude of exploration without firm conclusions.

4. The Practice of the Cultural Revolution

In retrospect, another important summation of the Cultural Revolution is that the methods of struggle are themselves a reflection of the class struggle. One method, for example, is to think of the emancipation of all humankind by the working class; thus it becomes important to conduct struggles through criticism and self-criticism as a way to achieve the purpose of “curing the disease and saving the patient.” Other methods start out with the mentality of capitalists’ or petty capitalists’ self-centered view of the world which strives to get ahead of others, to be the “top dog,” by pinning labels on others, finding faults in others, conducting mud-slinging and other unscrupulous methods to defeat rivals. The former method is based on a belief in and a reliance upon the masses, while the latter strikes against many to protect a few.

Many people committed Left-wing infantilism during the Cultural Revolution. Similar to kids who are just learning to speak and love to say “no,” many people like to rebel against all authorities. The phenomena of “down with everything” and “overthrowing everything” during the Cultural Revolution were nothing but a reflection of the fact that, once the broad masses

of the people learned that they did have the right to manage the affairs of the country, for some people, all they knew how to do was to say “NO” to everything.

In mass movements, the kind of people who often charge forward and take a lead tend to be short-lived in their leadership role. They tend to be like Kuai Dafu of Tsinghua University, who took up the vanguard position in his criticism of Liu Shaoqi, or like the warrior-fighter Wang Yulai, who emerged against the landlords in Longbow village during the land reform, as described in Hinton’s book *Fanshen*. They tend to go from historical heroes to historical villains.

Once Kuai Dafu became a student leader, his individualism exploded. He put small group interests above everything else. He lost all common sense and resorted to violent conflicts with the rival Red Guard faction in his university. He turned into his opposite faster than those he alleged were capitalist roaders, creating one of the most unbearable pains in history for the mass movement.¹¹ Similarly, once Wang Yulai became one of the leaders in Longbow, he rode roughshod over the people, abused his power, and tyrannized the villagers. He feathered his own nest and became the new bully of the village.

In the history of thousands of years of class struggle, the roles for individuals were either as the oppressors over the masses, or as the oppressed; thus only a few people have grasped the communist world outlook of liberation of the whole human race; therefore, this outcome is very understandable and to be expected. This is an important reason why the mass movement is not a substitute for the leadership of the Party.

However, I find that all the errors committed by the revolutionaries and rebels during the Cultural Revolution were minor issues. Most criticisms of such errors have not

¹¹ See “Tsinghua’s Kuai Dafu” by Xu Aijing, 2011, published by History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution Publishing House in Hong Kong (in Chinese).

touched on the fundamental problems. These errors were not the main reasons for the failure of the Cultural Revolution to prevent capitalism from taking over in China. This is because revolutions have always been carried forward by imperfect people. To have a mass movement, characters like Kuai Dafu must get on stage, and those in power (as in the June 20 incident in Wuhan¹²) will try every means to maintain their own power. These are *objective laws* of the class struggle. We must *first* understand the objective laws in order to apply them in transforming the world. Thus, before we know how to distinguish precisely between bureaucratic privileges and the so-called “bourgeois rights,”¹³ before we have a theory with a clear understanding of the contradictions between the Party’s leadership role and the supervision by the masses under socialism, and before we have a systematic approach to protect the right of the masses to supervise the leaders, all the other issues are minor problems.

It now appears that the revolutionaries’ initial ignorance of the nature of capitalist roaders before the Cultural Revolution was the main cause for the turmoil and difficulties that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. Even though Mao was the first to truly understand this new phenomenon and coin the phrase “the capitalist roaders,” by the time the revolutionaries like Mao understood what the capitalist roaders were really doing, it was too late. This is not to say that anyone can identify a new phenomenon before it appears. To do so would be to put the cart before the horse. However, Mao’s original thought of overcoming the problems through political rectifications and educational campaigns within the Party had failed. In hindsight, the revolutionaries did not realize in time that an informal

12 See “Annals of the ‘7-20’ Incident” by Xu Hai-liang, published 2010 by China Cultural Communication Press, and “Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan” by Wang Shao-guang, 1995.

13 See Marx’s “Critique of the Gotha Program.”

bureaucratic capitalist clique within the Party had taken shape long before the Cultural Revolution.

As a result, the Cultural Revolution involved two inevitable “errors.” First, given the presence of a bureaucratic capitalist clique within the Party, the movement had no choice other than “making the revolution by kicking the Party Committee aside.” Otherwise, the ordinary masses could not have been aroused. However, this created a power vacuum. Due to partisan “warfare,” anarchy prevailed in many places. In this case, a simple implementation of universal suffrage as in the Paris Commune would not have worked. It would only have deepened the intensity of the factional wars. The second “error” committed during the Cultural Revolution was the dismantling of all spontaneous and semi-independent mass organizations after the formation of the Revolutionary Committees and the restoration of the Party Committees (Shanghai perhaps was the only exception). This may have been a necessary measure to prevent an all-out civil war at the time, but it also deprived the masses of their ability to effectively supervise those in power, thus foreshadowing the coming-to-power of the capitalist roaders.

It is not enough to have only a few people with a correct understanding of the historical experiences of the state of working class rule in order for it to work. It necessitates the same understanding by the vast majority of the Party members *and* of the working class. This requires the majority of party members, cadres, and workers to recognize the nature of the capitalist roaders in their own struggles against them. Without this practice, they would not have gained this understanding. The Cultural Revolution was the first time the working class, after it took over state power, had a comprehensive contest with the capitalist roaders. During this period some people learned about this very quickly, while most people recognized this more slowly. The inevitable failure of the Cultural Revolution in stopping the capitalist roaders from coming to power could

be compared to the initial wobbling and fall of a child learning to walk for the first time. However, it was also an indispensable step for the working class on its journey toward its final victory.

Upon summarizing the historical experience of states of working class rule since the October Revolution, we can see that the relationship between the working class and its party – in future socialism under states of working class power (i.e., under the dictatorship of the proletariat) – there must be a return to the two cardinal principles of the Paris Commune, as summarized by Marx: namely, abolition of bureaucratic privileges and adherence to the principle of democratic supervision by the working class over the leaders and their leadership.

Later, I shall make further arguments regarding this thesis. But now I need to address the following question: since the Cultural Revolution failed to keep the working class in power in the end, are there any useful things that the working class can learn from the capitalists? In other words, as proposed by some, shouldn't the working class borrow bourgeois governmental structures to resolve some of the problems that were faced by a state of working class rule?

II. Naiveté of Emulating Capitalist Democracy and the Rule of Law

There are a few related lines of thought currently popular among the Chinese left which deviate from class analysis as well as from the two central ideas summarized by Marx after the Paris Commune. One line of thought is that only a multiparty parliamentary system is capable of effectively supervising the ruling party. A similar line of thought is that only with formal democracy and universal suffrage – by “returning the

constitution to the people, and returning the governance to the people” – can there be effective supervision by the people. Another line of thought believes in the rule of law as a means to restrain the ruling party and resolve the issue of the supervision of the government by the people.¹⁴

I believe that these views reflect illusions that people have of capitalist democracy and constitutionalism, as well as of the rule of law. They also reflect the lack of clarity about the nature of socialism among some people. Since the principle of the working class as the masters of socialist society needs to be demonstrated not only at the political level, it must also be manifested in the arena of production. So for those who are keen on bourgeois democracy, we have to ask: in socialized production, how will their principles of multiparty parliamentary democracy become implemented in a socialist country with ownership of the means of production by the whole people? In other words, how can we organize production, such as running rail lines, aviation and other transportation systems, or in running steel, automotive and other industrial productions, or running schools and other functioning organs and units based on a multiparty parliamentary system? The answer is obvious.

I think that if the future party of the working class wants to avoid the fate of the past, it must conduct a comparative analysis between the practice of capitalist democracy, constitutionalism, and the rule of law under capitalism versus the experiences of socialism during Mao’s era. Through such a comparative analysis, we may develop a scientific summary based on Marxism-Leninism.

14 In fact this idea was very popular even before the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1974, as reflected in the influential poster “On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System” signed by Li Yizhe. This poster was very thought-provoking, and for the generation without the experience of living in a capitalist society at that time, like this writer, it was easy to be swayed by its views.

1. A Multiparty Parliamentary System is the Denial of a State of Working Class Rule

A state of working class rule cannot be realized through a multiparty parliamentary system. This conclusion can be made only after one comes to a real understanding of the foundation of a multiparty parliamentary system under capitalism.

A. Differences in Substances Between Democracy Under a Private Enterprise System vs. the one Under Ownership by the Whole People

We know that internally, within a capitalist organization, such as a company or an enterprise, or those that serve the interest of capitalism as a whole, such as a standing army, there is no multiparty system. This is because the maximization of self-interest is the intrinsic nature of capitalism. Other than internally suppressing the resistance of the working class and externally engaging in imperialist expansions, there is no overriding interest among capitalists. Nonetheless, there must be a system which establishes the rules of the game for the competition between capitalists, and this system must be accepted by all. The formulation of this set of rules is the fundamental task of capitalist democracy. The whole point of a multiparty parliamentary system within capitalism is to set up a mechanism or platform for developing a set of acceptable rules of the game for the system as a whole in order to mediate between and among diverse interests, so as to avoid a life and death struggle between different capitalists, a struggle that could potentially bury the whole system.

Furthermore, under capitalism there is a distinction between the so-called “public” and “private” domains. Capitalists treat both their personal life and their control over capital as activities within the sphere of a “private” domain. Thus, according to the logic of capitalism, while political activities are within the “public” domain, economic activities

(such as the operations of business enterprises and companies) belong to the “private” domain. As a result, the organizational forms of the two types are diametrically opposed. In the so-called “private” domain, i.e., within a company or enterprise, the capitalist is the king with strict dictatorial rules, while within the so-called “public” domain, i.e., the political institutions that serve capitalism and coordinate and mediate between diverse interests among capitalists, the dominant organizational form is often a multiparty parliamentary system.

Since capitalists compete with one another over markets and power, their interests are not consistent with each other. Thus, the core principle of bourgeois democracy under capitalism (under what is actually the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie) is to maintain the fundamental characteristics of shareholding – that is, the principle of “one-dollar-one-vote,” in which lesser money is ruled by greater money. The parliamentary system is thus in reality a mutually restraining kind of “democracy of the dollar.” The independence between the capital interest groups determines their political independence. This is the economic foundation of the multiparty parliamentary system.

Contrary to the logic of the capitalist, the pursuit of maximization of personal interest cannot free the working class. Only through the liberation of humankind, only by destroying the system of oppression of some people over others, can the working class finally achieve its own emancipation. Thus, except for those opportunists who wish to achieve personal emancipation through individual means (i.e., escaping from their class), there is no fundamental conflict of interest within the working class.

For those concerned with the interests of the working class as a whole, the debates and arguments within the working class center around the nature of the overriding general interest of the class, not the rules of the games that allow individuals

to achieve personal interest maximization. For example, during Mao's era in China, the debates centered around the prioritization of developments between heavy industry (such as machine building), light industry (consumer products) and agriculture, or the priority on the improvement of educational standards versus popular education, and so on. In the future, on the premise of pursuing and maximizing the overall interests of the working class and broad masses as a whole, there will still be debates, such as over the safety of genetically modified food. Only by "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend" can members of the working class achieve a clear understanding of what exactly represents the overall interests and goals for the class as a whole, and through this process the class may reach a consensus of opinions on specific questions.

Therefore, in socialism, under the state of working class rule, both political activities and all economic activities that involve mutual cooperation and coordination outside of the private life of individuals are part of the so-called "public" domain. Thus, there is no longer the need for diametrically opposite forms of organization as between political and economic activities.

From the perspective of pursuing and maximizing the overall interests of the working class as a whole, and before classes and class struggle withers away, only the system of democratic centralism is consistent with the long term and overriding interests of the working class. By democratic centralism, we mean a system where the minority abides by the decisions of the majority, subordinates obey the decisions of their superiors, and the whole party of the working class obeys the decisions of the central committee of its party. Thus, it is not possible for a multiparty system to represent the political interests of the working class as a whole; only a centralized and unified party based on democratic centralism can achieve this.

The consistency between the overriding interests of the working class as a whole and the interests of individuals within the class dictates this. A multitude of political parties representing the same overall interests of the working class at the same time does not make logical sense. Only a centralized political party practicing democratic centralism is in line with the overall interests of the working class. When there are internal disagreements within the working class, the only way out is for the minority to obey the decisions of the majority, and not to split into different political parties based on different political views. If there is a multitude of parties of the working class, this can only be in situations where the class is not in power, and this is a sign of the immaturity of the class.

Although the truth sometimes lies in the hands of a few, the question of what exactly constitutes the overall interests of the working class must be decided by the majority. The way Mao conducted his struggle during the Jing-gang mountain period in the 1930's exemplifies this point. While trying to convince everyone of the errors of the dominant adventurist line at the time, Mao had no choice but to patiently wait for the realization of the truth through practice. Mao did not engage in separatist activities, reasoning that so long as everyone's orientation and goals are the same, the revolutionaries have no other choice. Once the orientation and purpose of participating in the revolution deviates, for some people, from the overall interests of the working class, a split within the party becomes inevitable. The Russian Bolshevik and Menshevik split was an example.

B. A Multiparty Parliamentary System Necessarily Denies the Overall Interests of the Working Class

If divisions and political dissent within the working class were allowed to split the working class into different political parties under socialism, let us imagine what a so-called "multiparty system of working class rule" would be like. One

possibility would be to form parties based on industries, not unlike trade unions. For example, one party would represent the interests of steel workers, and another party would represent the interests of autoworkers, and so on. Different political parties would thus compete with each other over political power. Under such circumstances, it is not possible for an industry-based party to consider the overall interests of the working class as a whole!

Another possibility would be to form parties according to different points of view. Putting this into practice in an enterprise would result in members of different political parties competing for the leadership of the enterprise. This was precisely the kind of factional battle that erupted during the Cultural Revolution throughout China! A fundamental characteristic of factionalism is the orientation around individual or small group interests as opposed to orientation around the overall interests of the class. With factional battles, no one is considering the overall interests of the class.

The absurdity of these two cases is obvious.¹⁵ From this we can see that only the establishment of a political party based on democratic centralism is in line with the overall interests of the working class. Since all political and economic activities of the working class should be subordinated to the overall interests of the working class, in socialist society under the state of working class rule, in principle, the organizational forms for politics and economics are the same. Except for personal life, there is not a gulf between the so-called “public” and “private” domains. Any theories of party building for the working class must go through this verification in the economic domain in order to understand how the theories might be carried out in practice. Through this inquiry it becomes clear that the capitalist multiparty parliamentary system has never been carried out in

15 Other airheaded utopian proposals are similarly absurd, such as dividing the Party of the working class into a party for education, a party for production, etc. The “theorists” of such schemes seem to not have understood Lenin’s “State and Revolution.”

the production arenas and has never been implemented within a capitalist enterprise, nor can it be. The multiparty parliamentary system, from its very conception, was established outside of individual enterprises as a mechanism to mediate and weigh the conflicting and hostile interests between different capitalists.

This shows that the so-called “multiparty system of the working class” as raised by some people is as bogus and absurd as the so-called “socialist market economy.” We judge everything based on its true nature, not on its label. For example, in today’s China, even if those unscrupulous sellers of *recycled gutter oil* as cooking oil labeled their product as “socialist recycled gutter oil,” that would not change the nature of the gutter oil at all. Adding a “working class” or “socialist” name cannot change the nature of the multiparty system nor the market economy, just like adding a “socialist” label in front of the word “brothel” or adding a “working class” label in front of the word “gambling hall” changes neither the nature of a brothel nor a gambling hall.

C. The Relationship Between Democratic Centralism and Planned Economy

In all societies, the organizational forms in production dictate the organizational forms in politics. The latter is to serve the former. Certain organizational forms and methods of production must have a set of corresponding state apparatus or political organizations. The form of organization in production is the economic base, and the form of political organization is the superstructure. That the superstructure must adapt to the economic base is a basic principle of historical materialism.

For example, in a feudal society with self-sufficient and small-scale production as its main form of production, the size of the feudal kingdom has little impact on the production process (except for the ravages caused by warring monarchs). Therefore, the size of a kingdom mainly depended on

differences in language and culture as a product of natural conditions, especially in Europe.

In the capitalist society dominated by commodity production and market economy, socialized production gradually becomes the main form of production. On the one hand, the size of the market is closely related to the territorial coverage of a state, so the bourgeoisie will not easily allow individual independent kingdoms to impose restrictions on the full market. On the other hand, due to the intensified contradictions between socialized production and private ownership of the means of production, the bourgeois state is forced to intervene ever more in the “private” economy (e.g., the current economic crisis sweeping the globe and various national “rescue” measures), bombarding the separation between “public” and “private.” These are examples of superstructures adapting to economic base.

In a socialist country where the working class is in power, the socialized nature of production will also be increasing; more and more people need to collaborate during production processes. If the purpose of any production is to service the overall interests of the working class, then, the class interest requires that the individual interests be subservient to the general interest, the immediate interests be subservient to the long-term interests, the local interests be subservient to the global interests. The form of economic organization that is most adapted to this necessity can only be a planned economy that is based on considerations of the overall interests of the working class, rather than a fragmented market economy. In other words, only a planned economy is consistent with the overall interests of the working class.

It becomes clear that aside from the principle of democratic centralism, in which the minority yields to the majority, the individual is subservient to the class, the local subordinate to the global, there can be no other forms of superstructure that

are also consistent with a planned economy. For example, can a multiparty parliamentary type of a system be consistent with a planned economy? No! For it is based on a private enterprise system with conflicting interests competing for control.

D. Aims of a State of the Working Class Rule

Many people are against the authoritarianism of the current regime, but the issue is not authoritarianism *per se*: the central issue is the question of which class is exercising its authority. This is because; as long as there are classes, there will be a dictatorship by the ruling class over other classes. Furthermore, a socialist economy under the state of working class rule must be a planned economy, but a society based on a planned economy might not necessarily be a socialist society under a state of working class rule (such as a family dynasty). Similarly, the political party of the working class must be a centralized and unified party, but a centralized and unified party might not necessarily be the political party of the working class.

The consistency between the overriding interests of the working class as a whole and the interests of an individual member of the class is not a denial of the diversity of political life within the working class, rather the foundation of this diversity *is* this consistency. In other words, the reason that there is a diversity of political life within the working class is that there is consistency between the overriding interests of the working class as a whole and the interests of any individual as a member of the class; this diversity does *not* include the desire to escape from the class. As long as there are some people within the class who are being oppressed, the whole class cannot achieve its final freedom.

Within the working class, therefore, there is a diversity of concerns and areas of focus. For example, while some people focus mainly on economic development, others focus mainly on science and technology, others focus mainly on environmental protection, others focus on women's liberation,

and others focus on national equality, while others focus on cultural and educational issues, and so on. Regardless of each sphere of concern, as long as the basic orientation for all is consistent with the overall interests of the working class, and everyone strives to create a new world devoid of oppression and exploitation, where everyone has an equal standing, as long as everyone sees their own area of concern as an integral part of the general interests of the working class, then such a diversity *is* the very foundation and means for clarifying and articulating just what are the overall interests of the working class. But this diversity of the political life of the working class has nothing to do with a “multiparty system” based on opposing and hostile interest groups. Instead, the consensus among the working class is achieved through the extensive democracy of the working class.¹⁶ Indeed, by sharp contrast, a multiparty system will be a means for the capitalist roaders to split the working class; it merely provides a convenient means and justification for capitalist roaders to seize control over the party and state.

The analysis above should have clarified why simply emulating a capitalist multiparty parliamentary system will not resolve the problem of how to prevent capitalist roaders from seizing control over the party and the state under a state of working class rule.

2. Formal Democracy Will Not Keep the Working Class In Power

Our approach to analyze the essence of capitalist democracy needs to be based on the relationship between democracy and the ownership systems.

¹⁶ See Fred Engst, 2008 (in Chinese), *On the Extensive Democracy of the Working Class*.

A. Ownership System Dictates the Contents of Democracy

Even though the core principle of democracy is majority rule, under different ownership systems, the content of what the majority is ruling over would be completely different. For those having illusions about capitalist democracy, they forget or without realizing that the choice of ownership system is never decided by democracy, but rather that the content of democracy is dictated by the system of ownership that is in place.

The reason that formal democracy will not keep the working class in power is because democracy is always secondary to class rule, to the system of ownership, to who owns the means of production. The latter has always been decided through violent revolutions or counter-revolutions, not through democracy. For example, the US gained its independence through a revolution, not through democracy; the southern slaves in the US won their freedom through a civil war, not through democracy; the peasants in China were able to implement a program of land to the tiller through a revolution, not through democracy. Only after the question of ownership has been decided through violent means can questions of how to run a society with a *given* system of ownership be addressed through democracy. The system of ownership has hardly ever been decided by democratic means.

Reflecting on William Hinton's *Fanshen*, I thought about the relationship between democracy and land reform, for example, and wrote (in 2011):

“The precondition for the toiling masses to become the master of society is to change the ownership system. If a class desires democracy, it must first rise to become the ruling class. Without overthrowing the feudal system of land ownership, how can the Chinese peasants become the master of their destiny? A democracy without land reform is what kind of democracy? If China had the kind of so called democracy like the ones in India,

without overthrowing the feudal land ownership system as the precondition, how can landless peasants change their fate?

“We all know that in ancient Greece, democracy then was a democracy of the slaveholders, and slaves did not have any democratic rights. After the American War of Independence, the democracy practiced then was actually a democracy of the slave owners, the capitalists and plantation owners. Not only did black slaves have no democratic rights, women and those who lacked sufficient assets also had no democratic rights. One of the authors of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, had hundreds of slaves himself. His concept of democracy simply did not include the democratic rights of the black slaves.

“Even in today’s developed capitalist countries, the working class can only participate in the capitalists’ democracy when they can express their own opinions and cast their own votes on disputes between capitalists (such as whether it is better to have a big government with higher taxes for the workers or a small government with cuts in education), where they can ‘freely choose’ their own boss under the rules of the game set up by the capitalists. But the working class cannot be the master of society, because under the system of private enterprise, they do not have the rights of management, supervision, or the right of decision-making over the activities of capital.

“Without this right, in order to survive, they have to seek the ‘grace’ of those with capital and be slaves for capital. Without this right, the kind of democracy they can be a part of is only the kind that is dictated by the interests of the capitalists, the kind of democracy that meets the need for the expansion of capital. Without this right, they cannot restrict the ability of the capitalists, under the pretense of so-called ‘free speech,’ to manipulate popular opinion through their control of the media. As a result, the kind of democracy that exists for the working class is nothing but the kind that sucks-up to capitalists.

“In 2008, didn’t the United States government throw trillions of dollars at the greedy and shameless Wall Street giant financial oligarchy to ‘punish’ their criminal acts? Didn’t the people around the world pay for Wall Street’s sins? Without overthrowing the system of private enterprise, what other choices do the people of the U.S. and the world have?”¹⁷

This is not to belittle formal democracy. Democratic elections are of course important, but they will not solve the underlying problem of which class is in power. We only have to look at the general election results of the developed capitalist countries. Democratic elections are a necessary condition of the working class in power, but they are not, in and of themselves, a sufficient or complete condition for sustaining and consolidating the power of the working class *as a class in power*. In other words, the political power of the working class cannot do without formal democracy, but formal democracy by itself is not sufficient.

B. Capitalist Democracy Is, At Its Best, “One-Dollar-One-Vote”

As mentioned above, in the final analysis, democracy under the system of private enterprise is a kind of democracy that caters to the interests of capitalists and tries to curry favors with capitalists. Under the system of private enterprise, rights of private property are sacred, so capitalists will definitely *not* allow the people – through however democratic means – to change private capital into ownership by the whole people, thereby destroying the system of private enterprise. The question of whether or not to maintain this type of ownership structure is never up for a vote, if the capitalists have their say. One of the points stressed for democracy under capitalism is to guard against the so-called “tyranny of the majority.” The system of universal suffrage was implemented only after

17 Fred Engst, 2011 (in Chinese) *On the Relationship Between Democracy and Land Reform Through William Hinton’s Fanshen*.

the broad masses of people had bought into capitalism and respected the property rights of capitalists.

Once people stop buying into the system of private enterprise, the capitalists will no longer uphold universal suffrage. This was true in the early days when capitalists first came to power, where they set property requirements for voters. The future will be the same if people start to question the rights of capital. Instead, the capitalists will then uphold only the right of private enterprise in the name of protecting private property. Their concept of democracy only came afterwards, after the broad masses of the people respected the rights of capital. Thus, it is clear that the center of power of a capitalist society is capital.

Given this, the best that democracy can do under capitalism is “one-dollar-one-vote.” The alternative to “one-dollar-one-vote” under capitalism is dictatorship of a small clique, not “one-person-one-vote.” This is the inevitable conclusion based on the logic of capitalism. First, democracy of the marketplace is “one-dollar-one-vote”. Those that have more purchasing dollars or can entice more consumers’ spending have more say in what gets produced or who gets paid by how much. Second, democracy of the workplace is “one-dollar-one-vote.” Those with more investment in a firm get more say in what goes on in a firm. Finally, as a result, the most “democratic” democracy of the ballot box, in reality, can be nothing but “one-dollar-one-vote” under capitalism.

For example, if capitalists are unhappy with any candidates or regulations favored by voters, aside from vigorous publicity campaigns through the media they control to sway public opinions, or more violent means, such as a coup d’état or an assassination, the least that the capitalists can do is to withhold their investments in that region, in other words, to divest. This will inevitably cause an economic downturn, and more people will lose their jobs. So long as the majority of the voters buys into the system of private enterprise, they will not blame the

downturn on the divesting capitalists, but rather on those politicians or regulations that “forced” the capitalist out. They will have great sympathy for the capitalists, thinking that they themselves would do the same if they were in that position (as if that is a real possibility). Thus, under capitalist democracy, if the voters believe in capitalism, they have no choice but to obediently plead for the capitalists to reinvest, to welcome them back. Those with the more capital, thus, will have more influence and will be sought after more by the voters. Not those with more capital have better ideas, but because they have more economic power. To please the investors, the voters will have to overturn regulations to suit the capitalists, or to remove any candidates with whom the capitalists are unhappy. It is clear from this, bourgeois democracy means, in reality, that the voters have a choice in the ways and means to curry favors with capitalists. And that is all! Without overthrowing the system of private enterprise, the broad masses of people cannot free themselves from the control of capital.

Aren't the people in the Euro area currently facing this very problem? Capitalist media, both in China and around the world, continue to emphasize the “truth” about capitalism. The only way for the Eurozone's economy to recover, they claim, is to restore the “investors' confidence.” Survival of the capitalist system does depend on buttering-up the “investors.”¹⁸

In contrast, due to the internal consistency of the fundamental interests of the working class, the core principle of socialist democracy under a state of working class rule is to maintain this class' overall interests through mutual consultation and democratic centralism, in which the minority is subordinate to the will of the majority. Likewise, in socialism,

18 In rural Shanxi's Lucheng county during the summer of 2012 one could see such an extremely explicit slogan across the main highway: “Investors are our benefactors, those who attract investors are our loved ones, and those who undermine the investment environment are criminals.”

with ownership by the whole people, the working class will not allow anyone to change – through ostensibly “democratic” means – any enterprises originally belonging to the whole people into private enterprises. Such changes will shake the very foundations of ownership by the whole people, eventually causing the socialist system to collapse.

As for why democratic elections alone under socialism will not hold the working class in power, in the final analysis, it is because the dominant ideology among the broad masses of the people is still that of the capitalists. This is because, on the one hand, the broad masses of the people have a strong desire for the socialist road (the banner of socialism being waved by numerous capitalist regimes is clear evidence¹⁹). On the other hand, there is also a stubborn tendency or force of habit among the broad masses of people to believe in the notion of their individual emancipation only through their individual efforts. When personal interests and the overriding interests of the class come into conflict, people tend to be shortsighted and not as caring about the overall interests of the class. This is the underlying reason why during the socialist period the working class must adhere to the leadership of its own political party in order for it to remain and grow in power.

Only by democracy founded on the base of ownership by the whole people, as was the case of Chinese socialism during Mao’s period, can it be possible to achieve the kind of real, extensive, comprehensive, and in-depth democracy that is the closes thing to “one-person-one-vote” for which the broad masses of people are truly craving.

To achieve this, the working class must engage in a long-term and unremitting struggle against all kinds of capitalist

19 The British Labor Party only in recent years removed the goal of socialism from its party’s constitution. In Western Europe, the majority of the ruling party manifestos contain some talk of socialism. The ruling party in Spain before 2011 was actually called “The Socialist Workers Party”!

and petty-capitalist ideologies within its own ranks. Without this struggle, popular opinions will be swayed left and right by representative figures of the capitalist class, and a simple formal democracy will subvert the state of working class rule. The main political body that adheres to this struggle is the political party of the working class. It must be composed of those who see the interests of the class above one's own narrow interests, those who defend the ownership by the whole people. Once these people become the majority of the population, then class, class dictatorship, and the state will wither away.

By then, and only by then will "one-person-one-vote" finally become the norm. That is, conscious of the impact of one's action on the humanity (e.g. ecological footprint), caring for what is the best for others at large will have become most people's natural behavior. These behaviors will become the norm, like the way people in develop countries customarily follow traffic laws. Yet, by then, formal voting will also become obsolete. This is because the validity of a science, such as debates over global warming or safety of genetically modified food, will be based on evidence, not on anyone's vote.

Thus, to be sure, a socialist country under a state of working class rule cannot do without formal democracy. However, it will be futile to pin our hope of guarding against capitalist roaders taking over the leadership of the party and seizing the power of the state by relying on formal democracy.

3. The Rule of Law Cannot Stop the Ascendance of the Capitalist Roaders

Some people pin their hope on the rule of law as a means of defending socialist ownership by the whole people, as a guard against the capitalist roaders taking over the leadership of the party and seizing state power. This, however, is an unrealistic and harmful fantasy concerning the role that the rule of law can play in a class society.

A. Rules Are Not Binding to the Rule Makers

Similar to the above discussion, internally, within a capitalist enterprise or corporation, or within those which serve the interests of capital, such as the standing army, the basic rule is to obey the authority, not the rule of law. Today in China, as we are told that the rule of law becomes ever more “robust,” we witness official corruptions becoming only more abundant. This shows that the rule of law does not restrain the ruling class! The rule of law is nothing but a form of class domination and repression.

Widespread, forced demolitions to make way for real estate development, which are so common in today’s China, show that the oppressed cannot rely on the so-called rule of law to safeguard their most basic and vital interests. Another example is the toothless labor laws in China. When workers are relatively powerless to fight back, these laws are not worth the paper they are written on. This is because people with political and economic powers make laws, so they will certainly not make rules that tie their hands. China’s current reality illustrates the fact that rights that are on the books might not be real, and the powers and rights that some people do have might not be on the books.

Let’s take a deeper look at what the rule of law means for the Chinese working class in today’s conditions, where their status has fallen into the so-called “vulnerable groups.” Guangdong Province promulgated in 2010 a misleading “Ordinance on Democratic Management of Enterprise.”²⁰ Its only regulations concerning the democratic rights of workers were actually about how the union should be run. Workers were not given any decision-making power over business management. Even in “direct matters involving the interests of the employees,” workers were given only “the rights to be

²⁰ Guangdong Province Democratic Management of Enterprises (Exposure Draft Bill 3rd Revised), 2010.

informed, the rights of expression, participation, consultation, and supervision.” Workers have no rights or say in any other matters of an enterprise. The employers can even veto employees’ representatives. The ordinance stipulates that “once a representative of the employees has quit, been suspended or terminated the employment relationship within an enterprise, its representative status is to be terminated as well.” In other words, once the employer fires a representative of the workers who had been leading the fight against the employer, he or she can no longer represent the workers! What is more, the ordinance also denies the workers’ right to strike. It stipulates that during wage negotiations, “workers are to refrain from work stoppages and slowdowns, or other aggressive behavior.” The only right that the ordinance gives the workers is the right to complain (or to bitch)!

Even in a country with a so-called “sound legal system” like the United States, if the regime believes it is being threatened, it will resort to any means necessary for its own survival, not allowing any of its own laws to get in the way. For example, after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II, the U.S. government indiscriminately detained all West Coast U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry in internment camps, irrespective of their constitutional rights of citizenship. Those that didn’t like it, they can and did file lawsuits, and when they win (some 40 years later), most of them were dead! The case of the prosecution of communists during the McCarthy period is similar.

It is clear from these examples that if the right of free expression threatens the rule by the capitalist class, it will not hesitate to abolish and to trample those democratic rights of the people. In a class society, only that speech which does not threaten the system is “free.” The more confident a state is of its power, the more it can be tolerant. For example, once the communists were driven out from the labor movement and cleared from various governmental agencies, the US

government expressed a high degree of “tolerance” towards the US communists. Thus, whether there is freedom of speech for the opponents within a regime reflects more the degree of confidence of the regime, and less on the nature of the state.

B. Binding Rules Reflect Class Struggle

The above analysis does not imply that the rule of law is unimportant. Compared to rule by personal wish, the rule of law is a form of rule-based rather than an arbitrary governance. This can be seen as a structured class oppression, for it still relies on force to restrain “wrongful” acts. Therefore, the rule of law, in the final analysis, achieves governance through repression. Under the system of private enterprise, the point of having provisions of law and regulations is to maintain a normal operation of the private enterprise system; the purpose is to have an operational set of rules for the mediation between private owners with fundamental conflicts of interest, so as to avoid a life and death struggle between them. Private owners must abide by the rules of the game in their competition with each other.

Speaking in the abstract, any system of rules and regulations must have an interest group behind it to promote its establishment, urge its development, and oversee its implementation. This is the unavoidable conclusion from observing the reality of contemporary capitalist society. On the macro level, without a majority of members of the capitalist class willing to risk everything they have to defend the capitalist system, the establishment and consolidation of private enterprise is impossible. On the micro level, considering regulations on food safety as an example, without an interest group that benefits from these regulations, promotes their establishment, urges their development, and oversees their implementation, the results would be the same as the current state of Chinese food safety. The regulations look good on paper, but the execution or implementation of them is altogether

another matter, making the high standards nothing but window dressings. Thus, all the talk about the rule of law become meaningless if one leaves out this basic reality of a class society.

Within the ruling class, the existence of a rule of law is predicated on all parties with conflicting interests consenting to it. In other words, all parties in battle must weigh how best to protect their own interests. They have at least three choices: protect their own interests by playing under the existing set of rules; change the rules; or overturn the existing set of rules. If a party to the conflict feels that its own interests cannot be guaranteed or properly protected under the existing set of rules, it might resort to extralegal means.

The U.S. Civil War is a good case in point. The reason the Southern plantation and slave-owning class provoked the Civil War in a country with a so-called “sound legal system” was that it decided that it could no longer tolerate the “incursion” on its interests under the existing rule of law. The Northern industrial states were pushing for limitations on the spread of slavery and for higher tariffs to protect industrial interests at the expense of the Southern plantation owners. Since the South didn’t have enough votes to change the rules of the game, they tried to break away and overthrow the prevailing system in order to protect their own interests.

Further analysis makes it clear that under the system of private enterprise, the rule of law simply refers to the relationship between private property owners. Within the so-called “private” sphere, such as within a capitalist company, there is no “rule of law,” nor is there “democracy” to handle internal conflicting interests; there is only the will of the owners of capital who practice authoritarian rule, no matter how large the company that may be. This is where the boss has the final say. This is their paradise. The “rule of law” at most only applies to labor standards and environmental considerations (only so that capitalists can have “fair” competition between

themselves). All other matters of a firm are considered private domain, and the “rule of law” does not apply within this context.

Observing the evolution and the current state of the legal systems in Western countries, we find that all the rights conferred by the law require one’s struggle to maintain them, and all the rights which were not recognized by the law require one’s battle to gain them. For example, the right to strike was obtained by conducting illegal strikes, the right of association was obtained by organizing illegal associations, the right of migration was achieved by illegal migration, and so on. All the rights that people have were illegal at first, and they won those rights through illegal means. Illegality turns into legality when too many people revolt against the law. In comparison, legal struggles can at best only maintain existing rights, not win the rights deemed illegal.

The rule of law and regulations are nothing but tools for battling parties engaged in a class struggle. However, these tools don’t serve the weaker side automatically. For example, the minimum wage law gives workers a legal advantage in demanding a higher wage, but the workers themselves must fight for any actual increase in wages.

C. Rules are Tools for Struggle, Not the Goals of the Struggle

Thus, for all the laws that are actually binding, the specific terms of the laws reflect a balance of power between opposing forces. The laws and their terms reflect the results of the struggle, not the end point or the goal of any parties to the struggle. It is the change in the balance of forces between classes that causes a change in regulation or law, not the other way around. What is not achievable in the battlefield will not be achievable on the negotiation table.

For all laws and regulations, there are winners and losers. Thus, any particular regulation reflects the balance of forces

between interest groups or entities in which one side benefits from the rule and the other suffers from it. Weakness on one side gives rise to offensive measures on the other. We need not go back far to see this. For example, the nationwide strike of French workers in 2010 was an attempt by the French working class to hold on to their own interests. Recently there were the struggles of the people of Greece and Spain. The working class has been trying to fend off rampant attacks on its interests by the capitalists. If workers do not fight back, who will protect their interests?

If those who benefit from a regulation or law do not take the initiative to defend the favorable terms on their own, then the side which “suffers” from it will attempt to look for any opportunity to change the terms. The most basic means for any interest group to strengthen its position is through the formation of associations. This is the fundamental reason for the freedom of association. Any abstract theorizing about the rule of law devoid of this battle of interests between classes, devoid of the balance of forces between conflicting interest groups, can only be the empty talk of an airhead or a bookworm. We often hear such phrases as “We need to protect the basic rights of the people through the rule of law,” or “Return the constitution and the civil governance to the people.” However, if people do not take the initiative to defend their own rights, who will defend these rights for them? Why should those elites who make up the laws and regulations, who are not members of the working class, defend the rights of the working class? What are their motivations?

Within the ruling class which defends private enterprises, of course laws and regulations do provide a set of rules for the game as a means to handle contradictions within the ruling class. These rules can also be used by the oppressed, but this is very limited. Once the oppressed class tries to pin its hopes on these regulations, it can no longer change its situation in any fundamental way.

Without the freedom of association, freedom of speech cannot be guaranteed. After the Cultural Revolution, why weren't the rights of free speech, such as the rights of "speaking up and loudly, holding public debates, and writing big character posters" being guaranteed? Besides the betrayal of the working class by its Party, which is the fundamental reason, another reason is the lack of freedom of association. Without freedom of association, freedom of expression is an empty freedom.

An interest group without an organization is a vacuous interest group. In order for the working class to protect its own interests and maintain its political power, this class must be organized. An organized working class can assume a variety of forms, but the form of organization which represents the overall interests of the class, as argued above, can only be a unified and centralized party of the working class. Without it, the working class cannot exercise its own power. Thus, the center of power of a socialist society under the state of working class rule is the political party of the working class.

Of course, a socialist country under the state of working class power cannot operate without laws, regulations, discipline, and the rule of law (I shall return to this point towards the end). But once again, it is futile to pin our hopes on the rule of law as a means of guarding against capitalist roaders taking over the party and seizing the power of the state.

III. Two Key Ingredients for Guarding Against the Capitalist Roaders

Over a long period of development, capitalists have perfected mechanisms to place checks on the governmental

powers, which serve their interests, and to supervise and monitor the bureaucrats they've hired, i.e. the separation of the three branches of government and the multiparty parliamentary system. The working class also must carefully observe and summarize the historical experience of states of its own class, so as to find a mechanism to effectively monitor and oversee the managers it appoints at all levels.

Since a multiparty parliamentary system is inconsistent with the political system of the working class as the ruling class, a formal democracy does not guarantee that the working class stays in power. The rule of law does not stop the capitalist roaders from seizing control of the Party and the State. What can the working class rely on to prevent its unified and centralized political party from turning into its opposite after it has seized political power? The only way out is to combine the two principles of the Paris Commune with the historical experience of States composed of working class rule.

Without making excuses based on the objective conditions,²¹ the historical experiences of the failure of modern socialist states in keeping the working class in power are outstanding proofs that the growth and expansion of the capitalist roaders in states of working class rule is the main danger for turning states of working class power into their opposites. Therefore, what we need to study is *how to eliminate the material basis that breeds capitalist roaders and the political environment that nurtures their growth*. This is where we need to supplement the Marxist-Leninist theory of party building under socialism.

However, we should try to avoid being designers of a future society, and avoid becoming self-righteous, arrogant intellectuals. We should learn from Mao. He was not a lonely

21 There have been many analyses that tried to explain the failure of the first wave of socialist states in keeping the working class in power. They tend to be based on a long list of objective conditions, such as the strength of capitalism-imperialism, the backward nature of production in those socialist states, the predominance of peasantry, etc.

inventor behind a closed door. Neither the Big Character Posters nor the Red Guards were his inventions (the former by the so-called “Rightists” in 1957, and the latter by children of high ranking party officials in 1966). What he was good at was summarizing the experiences of the mass movements. We should be like Mao in summing up the experience from the past, especially the experience of the Cultural Revolution, so as to extract and strengthen those measures which were successful, and we should own up to the failure of some of the decisions that were made.

Based on this approach, our preliminary finding entails first eradicating the material conditions for the rise of capitalist roaders, so as to prevent the formation of a bourgeois interest group among bureaucrats. And secondly, we must find a more effective means for the broad masses of the people to supervise the ruling Party in order to use the power of the masses to oversee and unearth capitalist roaders.

1st. Eradicating Bureaucratic Privileges: The Material Basis That Breeds Capitalist Roaders

A Bureaucratic Privileges Were the Hotbeds for Breeding Capitalist Roaders

I believe that bureaucratic privileges and perks constitute the material foundation which spurs political opportunism and capitalist roaders. To eliminate this material basis which breeds capitalist roaders, we must strictly distinguish between bureaucratic privileges and bourgeois rights; we must create a distributional system that decouples one’s political and economic standing so as to prevent the formation of bourgeois interest groups within bureaucracies built on the basis of bureaucratic privileges.

The restrictions that the capitalist class places on its bureaucrats are for the same purpose: to prevent the government

bureaucracy from transforming into a special interest group that in turn would bargain with the capitalists over the control of capital. Even more important for the working class, is to prevent its entrusted agents who manage institutions at all levels from becoming a distinct interest group.

Mao did not use the phrase “bureaucratic class” in his later life for a good reason. Bureaucratic mentality is not necessarily a class relation. Before the demise of classes and the state, any class in power needs to have a bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is a function, not necessarily a separate class or stratum. Those who committed bureaucratic errors did not *necessarily* want to go down the capitalist road. Even Mao admitted that he was guilty of bureaucratic errors sometimes.

Thus, the fundamental problem is not whether or not there is a bureaucracy.²² Instead, the root of the problem is whether this bureaucracy becomes a bourgeois interest group. Therefore, the terms “cadre class”²³ or “bureaucratic class” are inaccurate. “Bureaucrats” and “capitalist roaders” are quite different concepts. Capitalist roaders were the disguised capitalists within the Party during the period of socialism in China; they were an interest group. Mao later defined those disguised capitalists within the Party as “capitalist roaders.” This is a more scientific definition because it requires that we know whether an interest group exists.

B. Defining Bureaucratic Privileges

Although bureaucratic privileges can be seen as a part of a broader definition of bourgeois rights, such as reward according to investments, according to risks, or according to

22 The Trotskyist concern with bureaucratization is a misplaced concern. To manage and coordinate large industries or the whole economy requires specialized and dedicated personnel, or bureaucrats. It is the inevitable outcome of socialized production.

23 See *Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan*, Chapter II, by Wang Shao-guang, 1995.

responsibilities, the distinction between bureaucratic privileges and other bourgeois rights (such as income distribution according to work) is still far reaching.

In economically underdeveloped countries that have pursued a socialist road under states of working class rule, bureaucratic privileges enjoyed by the party and government officials have manifested themselves in all aspect of daily life, such as privileges in food, clothing, housing, transportation, as well as in healthcare and children's education, and so on. Yet these bureaucratic privileges and perks have an essential difference from those other inevitable legacies of privilege from the old society originating in bourgeois rights, such as the three great differences between workers and peasants, cities and countryside, and mental and manual labor, as well as income distribution according to technical level, seniority, work performed, etc.

These bourgeois rights under socialism were based on the principle of pay according to performance, and more pay for more work. The purpose was to link living conditions to skills and qualifications. This reflects the concessions made by the working class party (e.g., Lenin's "New Economic Policy", a concession to the economic failure of "Wartime Communism") in order to unite the vast majority of the people when the dominant ideology among the masses was still the ideology of capitalists and petty-capitalists, as well as when there existed a substantial number of small producers. Marx argued that such concessions were inevitable.²⁴

Bureaucratic privileges were different. These privileges linked *pay scale and individual living standards* of party and government officials to their rank within the *leadership hierarchy*. This system of privileges "mixed-up" what was needed for the officials' work and what was needed for their personal lives. In other words, such privileges blurred the line

²⁴ See Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

between what was in fact *necessary* for the officials to carry-out their duties under conditions of material shortages (such as housing, transportation, communications, security, health care, etc.) based on their levels of responsibility and needs of work on the one hand, and individual pay and family accommodation according to rank within the leadership hierarchy on the other hand.²⁵ Differences in living conditions according to the rank within leadership hierarchy, however, did not merely reflect a concession. Rather it indicates that the fundamental worldviews among some people within the ruling party were essentially capitalistic.

While “to each according to one’s work” is bourgeois right, “to each according to one’s rank” is bureaucratic privilege. The regular “bourgeois rights” are based on the principle of equality of exchange, i.e., more pay for more work. In contrast, the bureaucratic privileges are based on the principle of *control* over the means of production, i.e., more pay for more “responsibility.” Bureaucratic privileges thus transform the intrinsic superior/subordinate relationships within a bureaucracy into a hierarchy of material rights. They transform the full-time responsibilities for organizing and managing production and society – roles which are necessary for and commissioned by the people – into *capital* for the rights of individual, material well-being or wealth accumulation.

C. The Rise of Bureaucratic Privileges

Modern, developed capitalist countries often do not allow their bureaucracies to be so privileged. This is where capitalists are the masters. Bureaucrats are only their employees, fulfilling needs and in service for capitalists. Bureaucrats generally do not

²⁵ The distinction sometimes might not be all that clear. When airplanes and soft sleepers can only meet the needs of a handful of people, allocation according to the needs of work versus allocation according to official rank may be difficult to distinguish. Yet it is also true that specifically reserved supplies for senior officials had a very obvious character of bureaucratic privileges.

enjoy any special privileges. These officials will generally not be allowed to “cash in” their positions into capital or to bargain with the true masters of capital. Many bureaucratic privileges that the Paris Commune opposed, and those that existed during Mao’s period, had feudal characteristics.

Thus, treating bureaucratic privileges only as part of bourgeois rights, without making a distinction,²⁶ is not conducive to class analysis in the socialist period. Even worse, this can also be a deliberate attempt to confuse the two different types of rights: one type should be protected while being only gradually eliminated under socialism, and the other should be banned from the very beginning. Confusing the two actually helps to protect the latter, as in the case of the revolutionary-sounding slogan, to “sweep away all demons and snake spirits.” This slogan was widely propagated during the start of the Cultural Revolution, but the actual target was so broad that it served to protect the handful capitalist roaders; thus it was actually a reactionary slogan.

No matter what the publicity said, the wage reform of 1954-1956 in China created a *fait accompli* of *wealth grows along with promotion*, in which officials’ income and accommodations changed along with changes in duties or responsibilities inside the Party or government. Thus a vast array of questionable characters or opportunists tried to worm their way into the ruling party. On the other hand, a *fait accompli* of *poverty goes along with demotion* was created from the time of the 1957 anti-rightist campaign all the way up to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, when all the officials who were removed from office not only lost their political standing but also their economic status for the whole

26 This might be a fundamental flaw of the discussion about bourgeois rights in the late 1950s characterized by Zhang Chunqiao’s article, “Get Rid of the Thinking of Bourgeois Rights.” The main problem lies not in whether there is a difference, but the basis of this difference, and its relation to the official position.

family. The contrast between these two phenomena could be the material basis for the belief among party/government officials that “it is better to commit an error in political line than it is to commit an error in organizational line,” for the latter might lead to a demotion. This was in direct contrast with party cadres before the revolution, when the vast majority of them risked their lives to fight for the truth.

The more important reason for the emergence of bureaucratic privilege and perks, aside from feudal remnants, or theoretical defects, and/or a tendency for China originally to copy from the Soviet model, is, I think: in the absence of supervision by the masses, bureaucratic privileges and perks became a powerful tool in the hands of superiors to ring-in their subordinates. This is especially true as an extremely effective means for the central authority to have tight control over a huge bureaucracy in the whole country. This requires that one who is dismissed from office pay a hefty price. Otherwise, in the absence of other means of deterrence, superiors will have difficulties in controlling those subordinates who do not obey their commands, and the principle of subordinates obeying their superiors cannot be guaranteed. This might be the true reason for the rapid rise of bureaucratic privileges during Stalin’s time in the USSR.

D. The Significance of Abolishing Bureaucratic Privileges

The existence of bureaucratic privileges created a serious distortion in the nature of the two-line struggles within the Party. Although line struggles had always been considered non-antagonistic contradictions among revolutionaries, there were fundamental differences between the nature of the inner-party struggles before and after the 1949 liberation. The inner-party struggles before the liberation were not, or were unlikely to be, linked to an individual’s personal economic well-being. After the liberation, the status of the Party changed into a ruling party, a party with economic decision-making power. As a

consequence, winners or losers of the inner-party struggles not only led to promotions or demotions of individuals; when there were bureaucratic privileges, this change of official positions also affected the economic status of the individuals involved. The fact that line struggles do affect one's economic status changes the nature of this struggle. It breeds a speculative motive into this struggle; it fuels the tendency towards the struggle for power.

Thus, we can assert that the bureaucratic privileges are the economic foundation for political speculations and the rise of capitalist roaders.

Bureaucratic privileges were shattered for the first time during the Cultural Revolution. Due to the freeze on wages, the Cultural Revolution, intentionally or not, implemented a system of decoupling one's political and economic standing. A large number of workers were promoted/elected into all levels of leading positions, and a new generation of worker and peasant representatives were promoted into the central government, such as Wang Hongwen,²⁷ Wu Guixian,²⁸ and Chen Yonggui.²⁹ Additionally, all of the representatives of the masses at all levels of the Revolutionary Committees received only their wage (or work points) before their promotions.³⁰ They did not enjoy any

27 A rebel leader from a Shanghai textile mill who later rose to be the Vice Chair of the Party before being arrested along with others in the so-called "Gang of Four" in October, 1976.

28 A model worker from a textile mill who later was promoted to become a deputy prime minister during the Cultural Revolution.

29 A peasant leader from the model village called Dazhai who later become a deputy prime minister in charge of agriculture during the Cultural Revolution.

30 See Tian Jia-li's 2011 article (in Chinese) entitled "No fortune with promotion but cuts in grain rationing" in which he details how during Mao's period all those workers who were being promoted into leading positions in factories during the Cultural Revolution not only didn't get any raises in wage, they had to work longer hours and endure cuts on their grain rationing, since the rationing gave a higher rate for manual labor than office work.

of the bureaucratic privileges associated with their positions. Meanwhile, the vast majority of those who were removed from office or sidelined from power were taking their wages as usual, occupied their housing just as before, and their daily lives were not much affected, aside from those being known as people “sent down” to cadre school to participate in labor.³¹

The point of distinguishing between bureaucratic privileges and bourgeois rights was that, on the one hand, it preserved the kind of belief in bourgeois right according to which long-standing party members or revolutionary veterans should enjoy superior economic status. On the other hand, it essentially separated one’s economic status from one’s hierarchy within officialdom. Before bourgeois rights could be completely wiped out, this separation served to eliminate, as much as possible, the corrosive effects of a superior economic status.

For example, we should investigate the origin of the “exaggeration and boasting” phenomenon during the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950’s. Many people do not distinguish between mistakes that were due to “eagerness” on the one hand, and on the other, the “man-made” disasters that were due to “falsifying figures”, which led to the three difficult years (1959-1961) in China (aside from the debt payments demanded by the USSR at the time when there were also wide spread acute natural disasters hitting many provinces). The former quickly calmed down in the face of reality, as did Mao, while the latter generated new lies to cover the old, as in the cases of Wu Zhipu in Henan province and Zeng Xisheng in Anhui province. But we should not stop at the level of who should be blamed for the “exaggeration and boasting” phenomenon. Ample historical documents have adequately exposed Liu Shaoqi’s role in promoting and encouraging this “wind” of exaggeration and

31 Seeing this as a punishment actually reflected a certain privileged way of thinking in itself.

boasting. The question is: why were there so many people in the Party interested in exaggerating and telling lies? What was the economic basis for it?

This brings us to the problem of bureaucratic privileges. If the practice during the Cultural Revolution of *promotion makes no fortune* and *demotion loses no fortune* had been implemented during the wage reforms of the early 1950's in China, those in the Party who dared to speak the truth would *not* have been greatly reduced; the motivation for exaggerating and telling lies *would* have been greatly reduced; and those cadres who were more inclined toward protecting the interests of higher officials *would* have been greatly reduced. For example, if the wage level for cadres had been based on some objective criteria such as seniority, tenure in the Party, experience, skill level, education, or working hours – rather than being based on political views, rank within the bureaucracy, or position within the leadership, then it would have been possible to achieve a system of income distribution that decoupled one's political and economic standing.

This decoupling is very important. One of the reasons that the working class during Mao's era could be the master of society had a lot to do with having job securities, or the so called *iron rice bowls*. This is because only through economic security can there be genuine freedom of speech and the proliferation of more people who dare to tell the truth. This is why in capitalism people may very well be able and willing to "tell the President off," but they don't dare to tell-off their bosses, for it is their bosses, not their President, who exercise control over their wallets and purses.

The failure to separate bureaucratic privileges from bourgeois rights could have been the root cause for the exaggeration and lying. Mao was surprised to find that there were so many cadres inside the Party who were willing to tell

lies, who lacked the spirit of “five fear nots,”³² and who were willing to protect their own posts at the expense of people’s lives, all of which resulted in the “man-made” aspect of the three difficult years. This harsh reality forced Mao and other revolutionaries inside the Party to think deeply about the root cause of the problem and to explore the means of struggle against the capitalist roaders inside the Party, thereby leading to the Socialist Education Campaign and the Cultural Revolution.

Thus, in order to eradicate the material basis that breeds capitalist roaders, we must decouple one’s political standing from one’s economic standing as much as possible.

2nd. Destroying the Political Environment That Nourishes the Capitalist Roaders

It is not enough just to eradicate the material basis that breeds capitalist roaders, for the capitalist world outlook entails not only the pursuit of material interests. More importantly, capitalist ideology promotes intense competition over the power to enslave others, to get ahead of others, to become “top dog.” Capitalists care a great deal about who is in charge.

Thus, to destroy the political environment that nurtures the growth of capitalist roaders, it is necessary to address at least the following four points:

A. To recognize on a theoretical level the mutual indispensability of the leadership of the Party and the masses’ democratic supervision and checks on Party leaders.

B. To take the kind of spontaneous, semi-independent mass organizations, like those that emerged during the Cultural Revolution, as the main form of the masses’ checks and supervision of those in power.

32 “Fear not of dismissal, of being expelled from the Party, of divorce, of being put in jail, or of decapitation.”

C. To have a correct understanding of factionalism and the ability to handle factionalism within the working class.

D. To set boundaries on both the leadership role of the local party committees and the oversight role of the rank and file workers.

I will elaborate these 4 points in turn. First, we need:

- A. To Recognize on a Theoretical Level the Dialectical Relationship Between the Leadership of the Party and the Democratic Supervision by the Rank-and-File Workers over the Party Leaders

On the question of why a state of working class rule cannot endure without its Party's leadership, Marxism-Leninism and Maoism have covered this subject profusely, and I have addressed it a bit earlier also, so I do not need to repeat these expositions here. I only wish to identify a basic fact. No dictatorship by a class exists merely in the abstract. They all depend on individuals from the class with class consciousness in order to carry out the task, for the interests of a class can only be articulated and expressed fully through an organized party or parties of like-minded people. This is true both for the working class and for the capitalist class.³³

At the same time, as I have said before, those who strike first in the beginning of a mass movement are often those characters who are short-lived in their working class stand. Yet this is also quite natural, since in the thousands of years of class struggle and class oppression, only a relatively few people have possessed the communist outlook of liberation of the whole human race. The factional battles that occurred during the Cultural Revolution proved that without a politically

³³ Former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, for example, is a politician with strong class-consciousness. He took many turns in the corporate and governmental worlds in the U.S., but he was not bent on making money just for himself. He dedicated his whole life to defend the hegemony of U.S. imperialism in the world.

conscious, mass social body to act in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism as the center of power, the core interests of the working class cannot be guaranteed. This is the fundamental reason why a spontaneous movement of the masses cannot replace the party's leadership.

In Lenin's opposition to Trotsky's idea after the October Revolution of making the trade union the supreme decision making body in economics, above the leadership of the Party, Lenin emphasized the role of trade unions as a conveyor belt between the Party and the masses. At that time, the question of the effectiveness of putting checks on and supervision over the Party was not yet on the agenda of the working class revolution.³⁴ Similarly, after the revolution in China, mass organizations such as the trade unions, the women's federations and others were basically under the leadership of party committees. It was impossible for them to effectively check and supervise their own leaders.

The emergence of capitalist roaders raised the question of the masses' supervision and check of those in power onto an indispensable theoretical level for all revolutionaries to consider under socialism.

What we need to explain here is why the masses' democratic supervision and checks over those in authority are essential under a state of working class rule.³⁵ If the political party of the working class is divorced from the masses before it takes over state power, the revolution will fail. But once in power, the danger of the Party separating itself from the masses is not so obvious. Once in power through a working

34 As noted earlier, the Trotskyist concern over bureaucratization is a misplaced concern. The issue is not whether there is a bureaucracy but whether the bureaucracy evolves into a bourgeois interest group.

35 This question may seem to be a no-brainer for those who don't believe in the necessity of the leadership of the Party: of course the people have to oversee those in power. But for those who believed *only* in the leadership of the Party, it was a real question to be addressed.

class-led revolution, if the system is such that the Party cadres are responsible only to their superiors – without an equal accountability to their subordinates, as well as being compelled to hear and consider the criticisms from and supervision by the masses – then it becomes all too easy for the Party cadres to “sour,” degenerate and evolve toward their opposite, changing into capitalist roaders.

On the one hand, this is because those people who join the Party with more or less politically “speculative” motivations will intentionally (consciously) or unintentionally (unconsciously) use the ruling position of the working class party as a means to enslave others, to acquire the power to dictate over others, and consciously or unconsciously to realize the goal of “getting ahead” of others and rising to the position of “top dog.” Many cadres who resisted the supervision by the masses during the Cultural Revolution reflected this sentiment. On the other hand, within the Party and among the masses there were a large number of independent thinkers and revolutionaries who cared about the overall interests of the working class and who were aware – or who learned – that they could be subject to repression and attack³⁶ by capitalist roaders within the Party.

36 A good example was Zhang Kai-fan from Anhui province during the late 1950’s. Top officials in Wu-wei county had engaged in exaggeration and boasting about crop yields and pushed for equalitarian communism. Facing a crop failure in 1959, they insisted that there was still a bumper crop and demanded more grain from the peasants. When they couldn’t find more, they resorted to fascist extortion in an attempt to cover their own hides; this resulted in famine. Zhang Kai-fan, then Vice Governor and deputy general secretary of the Anhui provincial party committee, came to Wu-wei to see what was going on in his hometown. Zhang found widespread corruption and abuse of power by the local officials who, in the name of “communal kitchens,” ate more and took more for themselves. He ordered the local officials to return the occupied housing and private plots to the peasants, and to return food to families. He also ordered them to open the local markets and fishponds. The local officials, however, instead of owning up to their misdeeds, reported to the provincial Party committee that “Zhang Kai-fan asked us to investigate the changes in

The successors to the cause of working class revolution thus lack opportunities to grow. Therefore we can say that this lack of consistency between cadres' responsibility to their superiors on the one side, and accountability to their subordinates and the masses on the other, constitutes the political environment that is responsible for the growth of the capitalist roaders. This is why checks and supervision by the masses are crucial.

The leadership of the party and the supervision by the masses are contradictory, just as democracy and centralism are contradictory. They are the mutually indispensable two sides of the same coin or of the unity of opposites in a socialist society. Just like the unity of opposites of alertness and sleep for a person. On the surface, it seems that one must negate the other. For example, either one has the right to lead, or one has the right to oversee, and we have either democracy or

labor power, farming tools, housing, cadres' work style, and medical care before and after the formation of the people's commune. We don't understand what his motive was. We ask the provincial Party committee to have an investigation of him." Together with the then Governor Zeng Xi-sheng, who was one of the leading figures for exaggeration and boasting about crop yields, the men sent a report all the way to the Central Committee that said: "Our deputy general secretary of the province, comrade Zhang Kai-fan, when he went to Wu-wei to investigate the local conditions, ordered the dismantlement of the communal kitchen, and with a suspicious attitude asked the local officials to investigate the changes in a few areas before and after the formation of the people's commune, causing a great confusion in the work for the locals. The Wu-wei party committee complained about Zhang's work, and they think his approach violated the policies and directives from the Central Committee. We are sending both reports from Wu-wei county and Wu-hu prefecture party committees for your review." On August 10, Chairman Mao mistakenly wrote on the report that Zhang Kai-fan was "a right deviationist" and "an opportunist who sneaked into the Party." Afterwards, Zhang Kai-fan was expelled from the Party, removed from his vice governorship, was repudiated for 51 days, locked up for more than 200 days, and then was sent to a coal mine for labor reform. It was not until the Seven Thousand Cadres Meeting in early 1962 that he was vindicated and restored to his original post as Vice Governor. See <http://www.ahage.net/BBS/read.php?tid-57611.html> (in Chinese) and http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4e5f987f0100hj9d.html.

centralism. It seems that a person cannot be both asleep and awake at the same time. But Marxian materialist dialectics is fascinating. If what we mean by “at the same time” is *at the same second*, then it is true that it will be hard to be asleep and awake at the same time. However, if our “time” refers to the same day, for example, then our wakefulness and sleep do occur at the “same time.”

The same is true for democracy and centralism. For example, during a battle, the Red Army soldiers must obey orders. But afterwards, while doing the summing-up of the war experience, the soldiers can exercise their democratic rights through criticism of the way their commander conducted his/her leadership.

Contradiction does not necessarily imply incompatibility. This is the main difference between dialectics and the so-called “golden mean” of the Confucian school (or the pursuit for a “happy median”). Any attempt to achieve the so-called “golden mean,” such as a state of semi-consciousness between sleep and waking, is contrary to the laws of nature. Likewise, any pursuit of eclectically achieving a balance between two contradictory sides, without an understanding of their internal relationship and without differentiating between the primary and secondary aspects of the relationship between the two, is as unrealistic as having a “little bit” of democracy and centralism thrown together.

The relationship between the leading role of the Party and the supervision by the masses is like waves with alternating primary and secondary roles for each. Sometimes the leading role of the Party should be stressed, while at other times the supervision by the masses should be stressed. That is why we need to have mass movements from time to time to get rid of the bad leaders, and yet we can't remain in mass movements all of the time. Even elections in the West are only periodic.

This contradiction within socialism between the leadership of the party and the supervision by the masses is one of the most telling examples of the contradictions among the people. This contradiction within a socialist society can only be overcome once classes have dissolved, after the withering away of the state. All other attempts to emphasize only one side in order to overcome this contradiction are futile. If one stresses only the leading role of the Party and resists or opposes mass supervision, then the Party will deteriorate and slide into its opposite. If one stresses only the supervision by the masses and resists or denies the leading role of the Party, then the mass movement will go astray, be manipulated by devious elements, and erupt in factional battles that will lead to the demise of a state of working class rule. This is a fundamental experience of the Cultural Revolution.

Having a sound theoretical understanding is insufficient, however. We also need

- B. To Take the Kind of Cultural Revolution Style Mass Organizations as the Main Form of Checks and Supervision of Those in Power by the Rank-and-File Workers

I make this point because it is my view that in the history of mankind there has never been such a comprehensive, effective mechanism to have the broad masses of the people become involved in the democratic supervision of the Party, government, and military leaders at all levels. The spontaneous, semi-independent mass organizations of the Cultural Revolution took up this role. This is practically the only means for the cadres of the Party to truly realize the necessary consistency between responsibility to the Party and accountability to the masses.

The capitalist system's separation of the three branches of governmental power (the multiparty parliamentary or legislative branch, the centralized and unified executive branch, and the

independent judiciary branch) is predicated on a fundamental conflict of interest between capitalists; therefore, this organizational form does not apply to the need of supervision in a situation where there is a fundamental consistency of interests within the working class. Thus, although we cannot simply copy the form of capitalist democracy, there are lessons to draw from it. The most important of these lessons is how to create a check on those in power.

The reason for the relative independence of the mass organizations under a state of working class rule originated not from the mutual independence of interests among the people, but rather from the need of effective supervision. People are still amazed at how effective this Cultural Revolution “style” of check on the powers of the bureaucracy. Without the relative independence of the mass organizations, this kind of check is inconceivable. It cannot be accomplished simply by “big character posters” or individual freedom of speech by themselves. The dispersion of the strength of individuals cannot be compared to the strength of the organized and aroused masses.

The “semi-independent” mass organizations that sprung-up during the Cultural Revolution were spontaneous mass organizations that emerged within enterprises, work units, or within the various provinces, municipalities and regions. The reason I say these mass organizations were “semi-independent” is because, at all levels, they had only a relative independence, not an absolute independence. First, funding for their activities was arranged by the state; otherwise, their office space and staff could not have been sustained. Second, although the spontaneous mass organizations at each level of society were not obligated to follow the leadership of the party committees at their same social level in terms of how they were organized, they were nevertheless subject to the permission of the superior party committees; otherwise, they could have been outlawed. For example, Red Guards and rebel mass organizations in

schools and factories did not have to obey the leadership of the party committees at the factory or school level in terms of their organization, yet they were subject to approval by the provincial, municipal or other superior party committees. Likewise, municipal and provincial rebel organizations were subject to approval by the central authority before they could be considered legitimate.

These mass organizations differed from political parties in that they had neither full independence nor were they national in scale. Nationwide mass organizations challenging the central authority of the Communist Party during the Cultural Revolution were not allowed, and they were strictly banned, reflecting the hold on the state by the working class.

Some people complain that Mao did not establish – or “invent” – a new oversight mechanism during the Cultural Revolution. But in fact, this *was* the mechanism summed-up by Mao! Many leftists in China cannot see this, especially some of the older rebels. It reminds me of the Chinese proverb, “can’t see Lushan Mountain’s view due to Lushan Mountain’s fog.” Are there any more effective oversight mechanisms in history than this?

These measures by the Central Committee during the Cultural Revolution were effective means for dealing with the problem of how to maintain the leadership of the Party, while at the same time, through the relatively independent mass organizations, having an effective means to oversee cadres within the Party.

However, if we want the mass organizations to come into existence, then we need

- C. To Have a Correct Understanding of Factionalism and the Ability to Handle Factionalism Within the Working Class

In a class society, because of the existence of various capitalist and petty-capitalist ideologies, these ideologies must be reflected within the working class. As a result, there will also inevitably be different factions based on those ideologies. The appearance of factionalism, however, is more than just the existence of differing opinions within the working class. Factionalism also reflects different interests.

While the Party of the working class *is* the organized “faction” in society that defends the interest of the working class, organized factions within this party can only be defenders of interests *other* than the class as a whole. The difference between belonging to a particular organized faction versus possessing a particular idea about how to build socialism, for example, is that the people within an organized faction must have their loyalties to that faction, whereas the people in different informal “factions” based on their ideas can still have their loyalties to the class.

Precisely because strength goes with organization, we believe in organizing the working class to fight the capitalists on the one hand; on the other hand, we are opposed to the kind of factional organizing within the party of the working class that fights for partisan interests which are different from the interests of the class as a whole. Once a particular idea is organized into a faction, it takes on a life of its own that might not be consistent with the interest of the whole or collective class.

The factional warfare among the mass organizations during the Cultural Revolution which almost brought China to the brink of a civil war is a case in point. Had factions been allowed to be organized inside the Party, the factional warfare would have been sure to bring down the state of the working class much sooner. Our orientation toward factionalism needs to be aimed at preventing the factional interests of a small group from operating at the expense of the interests of the class as a whole. Factionalism is, thus, contrary to the principle of democratic centralism.

Although within the Party of the working class, no organized factions are allowed,³⁷ and only democratic centralism is supposed to be practiced (the minority being subordinate to the will of the majority), still the struggles over the correct line and disguised factional fights within the Party – as well as a variety of capitalist and petty-capitalist ideologies within the society – must also be reflected in the factional struggles among and within mass organizations. How to deal with the problem of factionalism inside of the working class is a crucial issue for a state of working class rule. The political party of the working class cannot but oppose the various conflicting partisan activities among the masses, but a simple banning of sectarian mass organizations is not the best way, nor is it an effective way of combatting factionalism.

Just as in the field of the arts, as Mao said, on the one hand we cannot let the so-called “poisonous weeds” take over, but on the other hand we should not simply eliminate the presence of “poisonous weeds.” Without the presence of “poisonous weeds” it will not be easy for the people to distinguish what are “fragrant flowers” and what are “poisonous weeds” in the first place. Mao always attached particular importance to the role of “teachers by negative example.” It is only in comparison that people can identify what is good and what is bad. Similarly, we should oppose factionalism, but we should also recognize its existence and the existence of factional elements. The method of opposition to sectarian positions is to point out their errors through criticism and self-criticism in order to achieve a unity of opinions, not to enforce a ban on factional mass organizations before the problems of factional thinking are resolved. As long as the mass organizations are legitimate (i.e., they do defend the ownership of the means of production by the whole people), we

37 In 1921, after summarizing the actual experience of the October Revolution, Lenin correctly suggested that the Party ban all organized factional activities within the Party. See Lenin’s speech to the Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) in March, 1921.

can only deal with them through criticism and self-criticism, through the method of speaking up loudly and holding public debates.

The solution of having democracy within the class can't be achieved by allowing factions to form within the Party, but rather by allowing factions to form among mass organizations so as to challenge the power-holders within the Party. As for how to ban organized factions within the Party on the one hand, and yet allow factions to exist among the masses on the other hand, this question remains to be explored further in future practice. But in any case, any power that is not checked and subject to supervision is not only a dangerous power, but also is contrary to the fundamental principle of the working class being the master of society. To resolve this contradiction, we need

D. To Set Boundaries on Both the Leadership Role of the Local Party Committees and the Oversight Role of the Rank And File Workers

For each locality, to properly handle the relationship between the leadership role of the Party committees and the oversight role of the rank and file workers, an important ingredient, it seems, is to set up a structure that clearly delineates the limits and boundaries of each side's power and rights. We don't worship structures, but neither should we believe they are useless. In summarizing the experience of the Cultural Revolution, especially the experience of the movement in Wuhan as described by Wang Shaoguang, we learned the importance of having limits on both sides for a mass movement.

An important reason underlying the sectarian battles during the Cultural Revolution was the lack of clear understanding about the limits on power and rights for all sides. Factional conflicts, especially the factional wars between different rebel groups, were often caused by fights over which faction would get to put their people in office within the newly-formed Revolutionary Committees. Since those spontaneous, semi-

independent mass organizations were organized by like-minded people and easily split into different organized factions when there were major differences, democratic centralism was not practiced among them. Moreover, for reasons stated above on the solution for democracy within the class, these mass organizations needed not practice democratic centralism within their own groupings. Thus, in principle, no group or individual who does not practice democratic centralism should have the right to dictate who should be in office. Only democratically elected organs which *do* practice democratic centralism, such as a local workers' representative congress, should have such a right.

The most important duty or right for mass organizations is to keep a check on the people in authority through public opinion. Thus, their rights are mainly in terms of freedom of expression, such as the rights of publication, assembly, and demonstrations. They don't have the right of suppression or imposition in relation to other mass organizations or people, such as infringing on the rights of others for publications, assemblies, demonstrations, and so on. Such infringement (not merely verbal excesses) should be considered out of bounds.

Similarly, the power of the party committees at all levels should also be limited. They should not have the right to ban those spontaneous, semi-independent mass organizations that they do not like at their level of authority. Only their superior organ should have this power. When dealing with the public opinions of the masses, leaders at all levels can only use the powers of persuasion and patient explanation. The overwhelming majority of the people are reasonable; troublemakers are only a tiny minority.

Of course, it is inevitable that some mass organizations may be exploited by opportunist criminal elements or be manipulated by capitalist roaders. The internal contradictions within an enterprise, a work unit, or even within the whole

party, will be reflected in the mass organizations. Nonetheless, as Abraham Lincoln famously said, “You may fool all of the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all of the time; but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.” As long as the supreme leadership of the Party and the country lies in the hands of the working class, then any manipulation by a few “bad guys” and capitalist roaders will only be temporary. In other words, so long as the state still rests in the hands of the people who safeguard the overall, long-term interests of the working class, rather than in the hands of those who serve the interests of a “party-state” bureaucratic capitalist group, then the capitalist roaders who manipulate from behind the scenes will not be successful for very long. This, of course, is predicated on the Party’s leadership at all levels acting in accordance with the democratic centralism. If this is true, i.e., if these underlying conditions exist, the masses in their struggle against the capitalist roaders will gradually recognize them *as* capitalist roaders. Besides, the true capitalist roaders can only be identified through a mass movement. There is no other way.

In the event of trouble or strikes led by mass organizations, for example, or if those in power try to ban some mass organizations, these unusual phenomena are reflections of the intensity of the contradictions on both sides. They reflect a mishandling of the contradictions among the people. Such instances require that the upper-level leadership come forward to help resolve the problems. The limitation of rights I’m talking about here concerns the relationship between the two sides under normal circumstances. If the rights of both the local party committees and the masses are correctly identified, then the contradictions between the two, in general, should not become highly intensified.

Those in power certainly do not like opposition by people with different views. However, this is the basic requirement of democratic oversight. Even in capitalist countries, the existence of trade unions exerts a constraint on the employers’ actions. Of

course, the rights of these trade unions are very limited within the social horizon of the capitalist system. They only have a say in connection with such questions as wages, benefits, working conditions, etc. In all other areas, the employers dominate and workers possess little or no rights of collective intervention. However, when the working class is the master of society, the situation is completely different. In this case, there are no issues that are off-limits to the working class.

How working class mass organizations should be operated in the future can only be explored and answered through the practices of the future. For example, how should they relate to the leadership of the higher party organizations? How should they conduct their internal management? How should they handle differences, oppositions and conflicts between different organizations? Such problems are very similar to those that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. But differences and oppositions are normal phenomena in an extensive democracy of the working class. There is nothing to fear in them. Only violent confrontations should be strictly banned, and violators should be dealt with according to the criminal code. Based on the experience of the Cultural Revolution, those who refuse to accept the leadership and supervision from any source (like Qinghua University's Kuai Dafu) have to be banned. This is why the mass organizations have only a relative rather than an absolute independence.

Conclusion

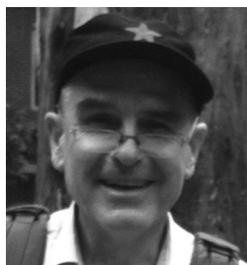
The Party's leadership and the supervision by the masses are two indispensable sides of the *unity of opposites* in one of the important contradictions of a socialist society. The specific method or content of how to deal with this contradiction on

the grass-roots level is to place limits on the respective rights and duties of each side.

The successors to the cause of the working class revolution cannot be “cultured” in greenhouses or classrooms. Instead, they can only be tempered through mass movements, through the inevitable struggle against the capitalist roaders. Only those who become capable of correctly handling the relationship between the leading role of the Party and the supervision by the masses are likely to become the next generation of working class revolutionary leaders. History has shown no other road.

The working class’s understanding of the capitalist roaders can only be formed in their struggle against them. From the analysis above, we can clearly see why the concept of “capitalist roaders” is and should be defined as those who defended bureaucratic privileges, those who opposed supervision by the masses, and those who believed in using capitalistic logic for building socialism under a state of working class rule (i.e., under the dictatorship of the proletariat). Privileges are the starting point of the bureaucratic exploitation of surplus value, and the loss of the rights of oversight by the masses is a sign that capitalists are in power.

If future political powers of the working class can strictly, conscientiously and persistently eliminate bureaucratic privileges from the outset while at the same time make supervision by the masses becoming more routine in the form of spontaneous and semi-independent mass organizations, (i.e., modernizing the two cardinal principles from the Paris Commune) then Parties of the working class will be much less likely to gravitate and change toward their opposites, and states of working class rule will be greatly strengthened.



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democratic revolution and socialist construction. He was a "Red Guard" during the Cultural Revolution, and later was a factory worker for 5 years before moving to the U.S. in 1974. He continued to work in various factories for a dozen years more, while studying part time during college and later through graduate school. In 2007 he returned to China to pursue his research interests which include the socialist economy and the Cultural Revolution, among others. Today, he often gives lectures to college students in China on various topics such as *Where is Happiness - Why Two Americans Stayed in Mao's China*, *The History of the New Republic - A Story of How the Revolutionaries Become the New Rulers*, *The Rise of China and its Implications*, etc.



*Fred and his mother,
Joan Hinton*