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# Looking back at Tiananmen Square

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revolution in China

# Looking back at Tiananmen Square, the defeat of counter-revolution in China

We are publishing the paper, *Continuing the Revolution is Not a Dinner Party* written 20 years ago during the 1989 turmoil in China. Authored by Mick Kelly, a leading member of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, this paper was produced in the context of a major two-line debate in our organization on socialism and China.

We are publishing it now, because with the 20th anniversary of the events at Tiananmen Square upon us, there are already attempts underway to attack socialism, the Chinese revolution, and those that defend it. We do not see this paper as a definitive statement of our organization on the many political movements and great debates that occurred in China since 1949. Rather we think the paper stands as a rigorous effort to use Marxism to understand the near defeat of the Chinese revolution that took place some 20 years ago.

In *Continuing the Revolution is Not a Dinner Party*, Mick Kelly does a good job of explaining the origins, development, and reactionary reality of the Chinese student movement, as well as its relationship to Chinese society and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the 1980s. The paper supports Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese revolution while investigating and evaluating the problems faced and errors made by the CCP. The paper is provocative reading for Marxists because it challenges both social-democratic and ultra-left views regarding socialism and continuing the class struggle within socialist countries.

The author defends the leading party's attempts to develop a modern socialist society, the need to combat revisionism within the party and society, and to beat back counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism. On the down side the paper was overly hopeful about the outcome of the struggle against revisionism and capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe, and underestimated the growth of the capitalist sector of the Chinese economy in the years to come.

Many issues raised in *Continuing the Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party* were settled in the early 1990s. For example, some western leftists back then held that the overthrow of existing socialism would lead to a new improved socialism. Those who held this view were soon proved wrong by the counter-revolutions in Eastern Europe and the USSR, where restored capitalism led to mass unemployment, societal decay and wars that continue to this day. As the U.S. ruling class celebrated this, many of the counter-revolutionary Chinese students, hyped as heroes by U.S. corporate media, were able to escape justice, reappearing to make their fortunes in the west. These pro-imperialist reactionaries praised the armed attacks on the People's Liberation Army and openly expressed their dreams of bringing capitalism to China.

We hope that those interested in revolutionary change today can learn something from this paper. We are now in a situation where Marxism-Leninism is gaining strength and popularity around the world and the socialist countries are modernizing. Proletarian revolutionaries in many countries can make advances while the U.S. economic crisis deepens. Our hope is this paper will help to further the understanding of why supporting socialism and China is important to everyone who is fighting imperialism and to everyone who wants a better way of life.

– Freedom Road Socialist Organization, 2009

# Continuing the Revolution is Not a Dinner Party

By Mick Kelly

The recent events in China - the fighting in Beijing, the emergence of a mass “pro-democracy” movement and the decision by the leadership of the Communist Party of China to come down hard on counter-revolution - have caused more than a little debate and dismay among revolutionaries in this country. Many U.S. activists saw the Chinese student movement as a force fighting for the empowerment of the people and a renewal of socialism. Others have come to the conclusion that only “social fascists” would have made use of military force to suppress it.

This paper puts forward a number of views that are controversial. It argues that while the Chinese Party has made its share of mistakes, it nevertheless deserves the support of progressive and revolutionary-minded people. It also attempts to dispel some of the myths which have been propagated by the western media.

There are several assumptions built into this paper. The first is that revolutionaries and communists should seek truth from facts; in the face of a complex set of events, we should to whatever degree possible carry out independent investigation. The second is that this investigation should be carried out from a partisan point of view. There is no such thing as objective truth which exists outside the context of class struggle. Events welcomed by one class will be despised by another. It’s like Mao pointed out, “We should support what the enemy opposes and oppose what the enemy supports.”

Making use of a partisan and materialist method is of particular importance in dealing with China. The events of this past spring and early summer have been the subject of a huge propaganda campaign by the western media. Editorials in the press have been hammering on the theme of the “decline of communism” and the rise of democracy. We are being told that the USSR, Hungary and Poland are good because they are becoming more “like us” while the People's Republic of China, Cuba and North Korea are terrible.

In some ways, the U.S. left is ill-prepared to deal with this right-wing ideological offensive. The experience of ultra-leftism in the late 1960s and much of the 1970s disoriented a lot of solid activists. Combined with the fact that socialism seemed a very distant goal, many who were formerly staunch revolutionaries are now going in for a kind of social democracy which is reformist in content and practice. This social-democratic outlook is unable to comprehend the real tasks of socialist construction or the dictatorship of the working class in China or anywhere else.

Hopefully, people will be able to approach these issues with an open mind. The question of China is an important one. The liberation of more than one-fifth of humanity from U.S. imperialism in 1949 remains the most significant people's victory in the post-World War II period. An understanding of the nature of China is basic to any analysis of the international situation and the prospects for war and peace. Finally, the way we see the events in China will impact how we see our tasks in this country. It can be said that China poses the question, “Will we be revolutionaries?” – committed to the destruction of the existing order and the establishment of people's rule – “or will we be social-democrats?” – complicit in the anti-communism of our enemies.

## Two Roads

“The U.S. berates us for suppressing students. But when they handled student unrest didn't they send out police and troops to arrest people and cause bloodshed? They were suppressing students and the people, but we are putting down a counter-revolutionary rebellion.”

– Deng Xiaoping

In the last analysis, the basic conflict in China was a confrontation between two roads. One road offered a continuation of socialism with an eye towards creating a society without classes – communism. The other road had at its end the possibility of civil war and the establishment of a capitalist “democratic” republic. Saying this, however, does not really explain in a very in-depth way what happened. For example, it leaves unanswered the questions of “Why did so many people come out and participate in these actions?” and “How is it that nearly 40 years after the establishment of Chinese socialism that all sorts of reactionary elements jump out in an attempt to take power?”

To answer these questions, it is necessary to take a look at several interrelated contradictions that determined the actual motion of events. At the same time, we have to look at some of China's recent past so that a historical context is established.

First, a long-standing struggle over political line came to a head inside the Communist Party. There has always been a mix of views on how to build socialism inside the Communist Party of China. Since the early 1980s, several distinct trends of thought had emerged. At the point at which the turmoil erupted, the leadership of the Party split. To take a term from the Cultural Revolution, “two separate headquarters” had come into being.

Second, as Mao pointed out, there is a general contradiction in socialist society between the leadership and the led. Problems with political line or with a poor style of work intensify that contradiction. For example, errors such as the Cultural Revolution caused a fair number of people to burn out on Marxism. Also, during the past several years, the problem of corruption has become a major social question that has seriously undermined the prestige of the Party.

Finally, there was a contradiction between those who wished to continue to build socialism and those who picked up the banner of westernization and liberalization. While these right-wing elements are a relative handful in China as a whole, by articulating mass demands and acting in concert with the rightists in the Communist Party, who were grouped around then General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, they were able to gain more than a little influence.

## Some Background

Upon taking power in 1949, the Chinese communist movement looked towards a bright future but nevertheless understood that the road ahead would be a difficult one. There was the task of transforming industry and commerce so they would have a socialist nature. The process of land reform had to continue and agricultural production had to develop so that the food question could be solved. The worker-peasant alliance had to be strengthened so that political power could be consolidated.

Despite immense obstacles such as the need to throw much-needed resources into the war to beat back U.S. aggression in Korea, steady progress was made in the field of socialist construction right into the mid-1950s. In part, this was due to the correct approach put forward by Mao in 1952, which was to “bring about, step-by-step, socialist industrialization and to accomplish, step-by-step, the socialist transformation of agriculture,

handicrafts, and capitalist industry and commerce within a relatively long period.” This systematic approach was reaffirmed at the 8th Party Congress in 1956.

Unfortunately, use of this method did not persist. Instead, a political line came into being which advocated speeding up the tempo of construction in a big way while introducing more advanced relations of production as an engine to pull things forward. In principle, there is nothing wrong with this, but it does require some care. There is a dialectical relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production. (“Forces of production” refers to machinery, raw material and labor; “relations of production” refers to the way different people and classes relate to each other in the process of production.) In the main, advances in the forces will create the basis for advances in the relations, but it is also true that changes in the relations of production can speed economic development.

However, as this approach was put into practice it became clear that an ultra-left line (for which Mao was mainly responsible) was gaining momentum. The result was a series of disasters for socialism and the people. For example, in 1957 Mao stated, “In my view, we will be doing well enough if the cooperatives can be consolidated during the second five-year plan.” However, instead of a period of consolidation, there was a rush forward to the people's communes, which were characterized by much more advanced relations of production than the co-ops. In fact, roughly one year after Mao's statement on the need to consolidate, 99% of the peasants were commune members.

The negative consequences of this move were magnified by bad weather in 1959 and the cutoff of Soviet aid in 1960. While observers differ on the numbers who died of starvation, it is clear that if practice is a criterion of truth then an extremely serious mistake was made. Furthermore, Mao not only refused to admit he made any major errors but also organized a purge of comrades who had some correct criticisms. Not only did this serve to stifle inner-Party democracy, it also helped to set the stage for the factions struggle which would erupt during the Cultural Revolution.

Interestingly enough, the crisis in agriculture only abated when a number of measures were introduced that have a marked resemblance to some of today's rural reforms. Of those who took the lead in putting the farm situation back in order, many would later be unjustly branded as “capitalist roaders” during the Cultural Revolution. Some were executed. Others were brought back when Mao began the policy of “liberating cadres” in the early 1970s. Still others would be restored to office following the fall of the Gang of Four in 1976.

## Class Struggle and Socialism

“They think that there is too little freedom under our people's democracy and that there is more freedom under western parliamentary democracy. They ask for the two-party system as in the West, with one party in office and the other in opposition. But the so-called two-party system is nothing but a device for maintaining the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; it cannot guarantee freedoms to the working people.”

– Mao Zedong, 1957

One of Mao's contributions to Marxism was the proposition that class struggle still continues to exist in socialist society, thus advancing our understanding of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin didn't live long enough to consider a lot of the problems of building socialism in a non-wartime context. Stalin tended to argue that class struggle was not a part of Soviet life after the period of agricultural collectivization. As a result, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union under his leadership had the tendency to explain away anti-socialist forces as the creations of foreign agents and spies.

In 1957, Mao pointed out, “The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the various political forces, and the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeois in the ideological field will still be long and tortuous and at times very sharp.” This formulation was developed in response to two very important incidents, the anti-communist uprising in Hungary and the trend towards bourgeois liberalization which arose during the “Hundred Flowers” campaign in China. As Mao's comments on both these situations have relevance today, it is worth taking a look at what he had to say about them.

On Hungary, Mao argued that the Hungarian communist party had not done a good job of handling contradictions among the people and as a result there was some mass discontent. This enabled domestic reactionaries in collusion with imperialism to take advantage of the situation and launch an uprising. Mao welcomed the suppression of the rebellion. According to one leader of the Hungarian rebellion, Chinese leader Zhao Enlai, who was in Eastern Europe at the time, pushed for Soviet intervention and “demanded blood.”

Mao made many points on the struggle against liberalization during the “Hundred Flowers” campaign and subsequent anti-rightist movement which are particularly relevant to the struggle going on in China today. The name of the campaign is drawn from the slogan, “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend.”

First, Mao noted that criteria were needed to “distinguish fragrant flowers from poisonous weeds.” The six criteria that Mao advanced are almost identical to the four cardinal principles - the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought - which many in the recent student movement attacked. Mao states, “Of these six criteria, the most important are the two about the socialist path and the leadership of the Party.”

Secondly, one can't help but to be struck by the similarity of the charges being made by the student movement then and the student movement now. For example, “the Communist Party has a monopoly on power.” The flip side of this is that some of the points raised by the rightists were correct, such as complaints about bureaucracy and “officials with bureaucratic airs.” In fact, it was mainly because of problems in style of work on the part of communists (and the dissatisfaction on the part of a small number of workers with their economic conditions) that the rightists were able to rally some people around them, including elements in the Party and the National People's Congress. In the end, the rightists were dealt with in a fairly resolute manner; their supporters in the National People's Congress were removed from office along with the vacillating elements inside the Party. Many of them did see the error of their ways, and those who didn't were subjected to some fairly intense criticism.

No matter what problems did plague the anti-rightist campaign, the fact that bourgeois liberalization had asserted itself with a relative degree of force showed that class struggle would continue to assert itself, independent of the Party's will.

## The Cultural Revolution

While the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) still retains a certain degree of support among leftists in the West, who view it as an anti-bureaucratic struggle fought to keep socialism red, the vast majority of Chinese communists see it as the worst period of China's post-liberation history.

In 1981, after a protracted struggle, the Communist Party of China adopted a lengthy resolution which summed up the experiences of building socialism since 1949. It stated that the Cultural Revolution was based on an “entirely erroneous appraisal of the prevailing class relations and political situation in the Party and state.” For



example, at one point Mao suggested that up to 50% of the factories were in the hands of capitalist roaders, and at other times he would say that 95% of the cadres were good.

The basic idea of the Cultural Revolution was that a substantial section of the leadership of the Party was on the capitalist road. To prove this, it was necessary to attack Marxist principles such as that under socialism people will be paid according to how much they work. People who saw raising the level of productivity as important were attacked for “failure to take class struggle as the key link.” In fact, no amount of class struggle will fix a tractor or, for that matter, construct anything material; it can only create more or less favorable conditions for construction to be carried out. Furthermore, the persecution of a large number of veteran communists, many of whom had committed relatively few mistakes, was outrageous. At the trial of the Gang of Four, it was pointed out that almost 38,000 people lost their lives during the course of the Cultural Revolution.

Mao's death and the arrest of the Gang of Four brought the period of the Cultural Revolution to a close. However, contrary to the expectations of many China-watchers, the Party did not carry out a process of de-Maoification. When Deng Xiaoping was asked by a journalist about the role of Mao in Chinese history, Deng responded: “We will reaffirm that his contributions are primary and his mistakes are secondary. We will adopt a realistic approach towards the mistakes he made late in life. We will continue to adhere to Mao Zedong Thought, which represents the correct part of Chairman Mao's life. Not only did Mao Zedong Thought lead us to victory in the past, it is, and will continue to be, a treasured possession of the Chinese Communist Party and of our country.... We will not do to Chairman Mao what Khrushchev did to Stalin.”

The basic point here is that not only did the Communist Party of China intend to continue to uphold the historical contributions of Mao but there was also recognition that Mao Zedong Thought was not the personal property of any one individual. It was the collective product of the Party in its effort to apply Marxism-Leninism to Chinese conditions, and as such it was perfectly appropriate for the Party to systematize it and to continue to propagate it.

## The Aftermath of the Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution, with its ultra-leftism, factionalism, and extremist measures, left Chinese communists in a difficult spot at its conclusion. Just as attempts to impose production relations that people were not ready for had damaged the economy during the Great Leap Forward, similar attempts during the Cultural Revolution led to a crisis in industry and agriculture. In fact, unless some drastic measures were undertaken to bring some measure of prosperity to the countryside, serious stress would have been placed on the worker-peasant alliance, which is the foundation of people's rule in China.

The Cultural Revolution also left a large number of people confused and demoralized. This alienation, or “crisis of faith” as it was sometimes called in the late 1970s, struck particularly deep among young people. To an extent, that this would occur is only natural. It is not surprising that people would be bummed out when they realized that a set of deeply held beliefs that had been forged in another period were not only wrong but had also caused immense damage to China. Nearly 700,000 people were persecuted to one degree or another between 1966 and 1976, and now people had to deal with the fact that it was a mistake.

It is not surprising that a number of public opinion polls taken on college campuses in the early 1980s revealed that a substantial section of students did not consider themselves Marxists.

## A Turning Point

In December of 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee met in Beijing. While it avoided some sticky issues such as putting together a comprehensive summation of the Cultural Revolution, it was extremely significant because it set China on the course to reform.

It was this meeting that brought to an end the mass campaign against the ultra-left Gang of Four and their followers and reoriented the Party's work towards economic construction. While it wasn't stated formally in any of the documents that came out of the meeting, it seems likely that the majority of the participants came to the agreement that the mass political campaign against the Gang of Four would be the last mobilization of this type.

This would explain in part the rather narrow character of subsequent political struggles, including those against capitalist liberalization and spiritual pollution.

Ending the mass political campaigns meant abandoning a key method for Party work. In general, these campaigns involved the mobilization of tens, and at times hundreds, of millions of people to criticize a given line and the practice that flowed from it. Adherents of the line being subjected to scrutiny were called upon to defend their views in front of the masses. Party units which carried out the erroneous line were expected to do public self-criticism.

In addition to deciding to place the primary focus on economic development (socialist modernization), the Third Plenary Session also reached the conclusion that class struggle, while remaining a fact of life, was not the principal contradiction. This was a return to the view that Mao advocated prior to 1962. The communiqué from the session stated: "There is still in our country a handful of counter-revolutionary elements and criminals who hate our socialist modernization and try to undermine it. We must not relax our class struggle against them, nor can we weaken the dictatorship of the proletariat. But as comrade Mao Zedong pointed out, the large-scale turbulent class struggles of a mass character have in the main come to an end. Class struggle in a socialist society should be carried out on the principle of strictly differentiating the two types of contradictions [between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people - MK] and correctly handling them according to the procedures prescribed in the constitution and the law."

The meeting also dealt with an important question of history - the events in Tiananmen Square in 1976. The April 5th Movement, as it is sometimes called, began when thousands of people, Party and non-Party, showed up at Tiananmen Square to mourn the death of Premier Zhou Enlai. It quickly turned into a mass protest movement against the policies of the Gang of Four, and a number of people were killed in clashes with troops. It seems likely that Deng had a hand in encouraging the actions in the square, and as a result he was kicked off the Central Committee. At the time, the majority of the leadership followed Mao's lead and denounced the events as counter-revolutionary. At the Third Plenary Session, that verdict was reversed.

Verdicts were also reversed on a number of people who had the label "capitalist roader" stuck on them during the Cultural Revolution, including Bo Yibo, a former secretary of Mao's who is now a part of the Party's left, and Yang Shangkun, another leftist who organized the military aspects of the recent crackdown. (Here, as in other parts of this paper, the term "leftist" is used to describe forces that are pushing a correct line and working to combat right opportunism. Ultra-leftists are referred to as "ultra-leftists." In Chinese political literature there are a number of different ways of referring to ultra-leftists which people in this country might find confusing. For example, there is the practice of placing the word "leftist" in quotation marks – "leftist" – to indicate that someone is a fake or ultra-leftist.)



It should be said that none of the decisions reached at the Third Plenary Session were not easily arrived at. Party Chairman Hua Guofeng spearheaded much of the resistance. His continued opposition to the reforms led to his removal in 1982. His replacement, Hu Yaobang, was one of the leaders of the rightist trend within the Party. (1)

Against Hua Guofeng and his supporters was the “practice is the only criterion of truth” group. They took their name from a Mao quote which can be found in the article On Practice. This group argued that the only way to tell if something was true or not was to put it into practice. If it didn't work on the ground, it was incorrect, and it didn't matter who had come up with the policy being tested. Advocates of this view included Deng Xiaoping, Hu Qiaomu, and Hu Yaobang.

The incident that brought the conflict between the two groups to the boiling point was the suppression of an issue of China Youth which contained an article from the “practice is the only criterion of truth” group by order of ultra-leftist Wang Dongxing. The article itself was probably written by a theoretical group headed by Hu Yaobang.

Almost one year after the Third Plenary, the Central Committee Politburo held a series of meetings where the ultra-left errors of Hua were subjected to criticism. At these meetings it was decided to make several recommendations on personnel to the upcoming Party congress, including the replacement of Hua by Hu Yaobang as Party head and that Deng Xiaoping would take charge of the Party's Central Military Commission. Military Commission chair is an extremely important post, as it is the commission which has effective responsibility for the armed forces. During his lifetime, Mao was both Party Chair and Military Commission chair.

As the volume of anti-Hua criticisms grew, there were public attempts to link him to the Gang of Four. For example, Deng Xiaoping stated, “You all know what banner is being waved by the remnants of the Gang of Four and others who have ulterior motives. They used to wave the banner of the Gang of Four. What about now? Now it is the banner of Hua Guofeng...”

When the struggle against Hua was more or less wrapped up in 1982, Hu Yaobang emerged as General Secretary of the Party (the post of chairperson was abolished). Hua did, however, retain his seat in the Central Committee, a position he retains even today. (2)

## “Democracy Wall”

“Since the fall of the Gang of Four, an ideological trend has appeared that we call bourgeois liberalization. Its exponents worship the ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ of the western capitalist countries and reject socialism. This cannot be allowed in China. China must modernize; it must absolutely not liberalize or take the capitalist road as the countries of the West have done. Those exponents of bourgeois liberalization who have violated state law must be dealt with severely.”  
– Deng Xiaoping, April 1985

The so-called “democracy” movement did not fall from the sky one day in April of 1989. Like any other social movement, it has its own history and own process of development. While the movement for bourgeois liberalization of the 1950s has many features in common with the movement for bourgeois liberalization now, there are relatively few direct links between the two. However, a few of the rightists of 1957 did manage to appear on the stage of history for a second time in this latest round of turmoil.

In 1978, China's "pro-democracy" movement began to make itself visible to the public. Dissidents, who were by-and-large people who had been demoralized by the Cultural Revolution, began putting up big character posters at Xidan Wall in Beijing, which was subsequently popularized as "Democracy Wall" in the western bourgeois press. In the beginning, the posters placed there mainly dealt with grievances accumulated during the Cultural Revolution and some of the mistaken policies which were upheld in its wake. However, as time passed, the posters began to take on a more explicit anti-Mao, anti-Party and anti-socialist nature.

One aspect of the ferment at the wall was that it had the backing of elements high in the Communist Party of China leadership. As a part of the effort to weaken Party Chairman Hua Kuofeng, they encouraged the criticisms of the Party's past policies. Communist Party of China material that was implicitly hostile to the Hua group was also placed at Xidan Wall.

"Democracy Wall" eventually became a very big deal. It was a meeting place for dissidents and the focus of international press attention. It was probably the only place in China where a person could hear Mao denounced as a "fascist." After debate within the Party and the state apparatus, it was shut down. However, the motion which was generated there did not come to an end. Leftist central committee member Deng Liqun addressed this when he stated: "After Xidan Wall was stopped, so-called secret and illegal publications appeared in many places. Last summer, the bosses of these publications banded together to form the National Federation of People's Publications, and branches were set up in many places." Deng then goes on to say that the bosses of these anti-communist publications "might have stirred up a storm" had some of their leaders not been arrested. (3)

## New Phase of the Inner-Party Struggle

With Chairman Hua making a gradual departure from the central leadership and the "Democracy Wall" period coming to an end, the way was cleared for what on the surface appeared to be a minor political struggle. At issue was a film called *Unrequited Love*. In and of itself the debate was no big deal, but the way different forces came down around it foreshadowed future events.

The fight began when Liberation Army Daily attacked the film for having an anti-Party tilt. Rightists inside the Party became nervous about the criticism and worried that cultural circles would become alienated or frightened by the charges. Deng Xiaoping took a center/left position on the debate, acknowledging that while the film was indeed anti-socialist, the stuff raised by Liberation Army Daily was not entirely "reasonable." He then proposed that a literary magazine write a new critique and said that it "was no longer necessary" for the army paper to keep raising the issue.

This pattern, of the Liberation Army Daily speaking for the left and of the right wing of the Party trying to shield advocates of bourgeois liberalization, with Deng Xiaoping playing a center role, was to repeat itself again and again.

## Spiritual Pollution

In 1983, another struggle broke out, this time on a substantially larger scale. This time the target was "spiritual pollution," i.e., bourgeois liberalization and some of the negative ideological, cultural, and political stuff that was seeping in from the West. While this wasn't a big campaign by any means, there are a couple of things that should be said about it.

The fight against spiritual pollution received strong backing in military circles, particularly through the vehicle of Liberation Army Daily. At one point, the Daily went beyond what were acceptable political boundaries for the times by linking some aspects of the reforms with the spread of liberalization and “unhealthy tendencies” on the political/ideological front. As a result, the paper had to do a self-criticism. Also, one of the leaders of the anti-spiritual pollution struggle was Deng Liqun, whose militant approach would earn him many enemies on the right.

General Secretary Hu Yaobang opposed the campaign against spiritual pollution and worked to narrow its targets and to bring it to the most rapid possible conclusion.

Deng Xiaoping backed the campaign but took a center/left position. On October 12, 1983, he gave a talk in which he identified two dangers to the Party and socialism. The first danger was the ultra-left, supporters of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. Of them Deng says, “They are walking time bombs, and unless they are detected and defused...they will destroy us.”

Deng then goes on to say that Party workers in the political and ideological spheres are spreading spiritual pollution. In a statement that shows the depth of the confusion which had gripped a section of the Party, he says: “Even today there are still comrades who have doubts about the four cardinal principles (the socialist road, the leading role of the Communist Party of China, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought). For a while, not long ago, a few comrades doubted that our society was really socialist – that we can and should have a socialist system....Others argued that since we are still at the socialist stage it was only correct and natural to ‘put money above all else.’ Things came to pass that most of these mistaken ideas were published in newspapers...”

Despite the rightism which was growing in both Party and intellectual circles, the struggle against spiritual pollution lacked the length, scope and intensity to clean up much of anything.

A year later, in 1984, after things had pretty much cooled off, rightists in the Party took to complaining about “excesses” in the campaign – apparently some local Party leaders attacked western clothing fashions and makeup. Deng Xiaoping gave a speech urging the military to get behind the reforms. In it he said, “I hope to see more open-minded people in the army.” In China, to describe someone as being closed-minded or as having “ossified thinking” is generally the same as saying they are making ultra-left errors.

## The Struggle Sharpens

The following is excerpted from an article by James Tong which appeared in the journal Chinese Law and Government. While it is long, it is nevertheless useful to go through, as it gives a picture of some of the issues which were increasingly dividing the Party. (The article uses the terminology “conservatives” and “reformers.” This is somewhat misleading as there are very few people in the Communist Party of China who do not favor reforms. If there were no reforms, socialism would remain static. The basic issue being struggled over is what the nature, scope, and pace of the reforms should be. In this debate it is the right vs. the left. When bourgeois scholars or journalists refer to conservatives, they are usually referring to leftists.)

“With the advent of the Thirteenth Party Congress, which was to convene in late 1987, coalitions were formed and disagreements became crystallized and conflicting policy platforms as well as personal appointments proposed.

“The first major battle was fought in the summer of 1966 in the Beidihe and Beijing conferences when top Party leadership convened the Sixth Plenum of the Twelfth Party Congress. The original agenda consisted of four major issues that pitted the reformers against the conservatives: (1) reforms in the political structure; (2) candidates to succeed the top Party leadership; (3) economic reforms and the open door policy; and (4) building socialist spiritual civilization. As views remained too polarized to reach a working consensus over these four issues, the formal meeting of the Sixth Plenum agreed to discuss only the last item and to produce a consensual statement on the subject. The final product that emerged after fierce debate and nine drafts entitled ‘Spiritual Civilization’ was a compromise that generalized much conflict and resolved little differences. The conservatives managed to include a reference to opposing bourgeois liberalization in the resolution, but the reformists succeeded in deleting statements like ‘Marxism is the core guiding ideology of spiritual civilization’ and ‘political work is the lifeblood of all tasks’ from an earlier draft.” (4)

Shortly after the struggle at the Sixth Plenary, Chen Yun, a veteran communist and economic specialist, gave a speech which received a fair amount of play in the Chinese press. It was significant because it had no references at all to a “left” danger in the Communist Party of China, which was fairly unusual right up until recent times. In addition, it links some aspects of the reforms with the “infiltration of decadent capitalist ideology and its work style.” Pointing to the economic sphere, Chen says: “According to surveys in a dozen provinces and cities since 1984, some 20,000 various companies have sprung up, a considerable number of which collaborate with lawbreakers and unscrupulous foreign businessmen. Taking advantage of the reforms, these new companies has been involved in all sorts of criminal activities, including speculating on the rise and fall of prices, engaging in illegal trade...”

Chen, a leftist, is today a strong proponent of using more regulation to control the commodity economy and was a supporter of the crackdown on counter-revolution.

## Round One

While the delegates to the Sixth Plenum were drawing their meeting to a close, a struggle was brewing on the campuses which would soon up the stakes of the inner-Party struggle. In the fall of 1986, a dissident by the name of Fang Lizhi was doing a speaking tour of college campuses, by all accounts drawing large crowds and receiving a warm reception.

Fang was a ghost of reactionary movements past who came back to haunt the present. Expelled from the Party during the anti-rightist campaign in 1957, he had developed into an out-and-out supporter of capitalism. From the mid-1960s on, he played the role of mentor to much of the leadership of the student movement.

On November 15, 1986, he gave a speech at Tongji University which is worth reviewing because it gives people an idea of where his head is at as well as the heads of those who cheered him.

“Talking about China's modernization, I personally like the idea of full-scale westernization.” After talking about his trip to Germany where he visited both Berlins, he gave the summation, “That's why I have come to the conclusion that socialism has failed, from Marx, Lenin, Stalin, all the way to Mao.” During his stay in the U.S., Fang was evidently quite impressed with the disguised pieces of campaign literature (congressional constituent reports) that he received in the mail (“Dear occupant...”). From this example of accountability, he drew the conclusion that such reports were “better than the inspection tours that our members of the National People's Congress make” and that “our so-called genuine democracy is not nearly as good as their sham democracy.”

On December 5, the first large-scale demonstration broke out at Hefei's China Science and Technology University, the school where Fang was vice-president. On December 9, Hefei's students staged another demonstration, this time joined by Wuhan students. Within weeks the demonstrations had spread to many other campuses, including Beijing and Shanghai. Most of the concrete demands raised in these demonstrations involved improving the conditions of students. These demands and some of the political themes which emerged deserve some comment.

As far as material conditions go, by U.S. standards Chinese students have it tough. Dorm rooms with six or more people, poor food, inadequate supplies, and crowded classrooms are all a part of the equation. However, there is another side to the coin. In the Chinese context, students are an extremely privileged group of people that many, especially other young people, envy. China is a third-world country where 20 million people depend on grain relief from the state to stave off hunger and starvation. Only a certain amount of the nation's resources can be committed to higher education or even secondary-level education. As a result, only a small number of those who wish to continue their education get the chance to do so in a university setting. Sure, life would be more pleasant on the campuses if the numbers were reduced, but that would also hurt the modernization drive, an effort which holds the promise of improving the quality and quantity of education in the long run.

While the practice of placing graduates in areas where they are the most needed is another source of discontent, from a socialist point of view how can it be said that in a society where only a few are able to receive a higher education, and the society in the main bears the cost of that education, that the graduate should not go to where they will do the greatest good for the greatest numbers?

To put it bluntly, there is more than a little selfish thinking involved in student demands to improve their own material well-being. In a socialist society, the point of universities and colleges is not to serve the personal interests of individual students but to produce trained personnel who are capable and willing to use their knowledge in the people's service.

Worse than the cry of "more for students" was some of the general political stuff that went with it. A document compiled by Deng Liqun for the Party secretariat contains a number of quotes from wall posters and leaflets. While Deng Liqun is a leftist who opposed the student movement from jump street and would furthermore land a blow on the right wing of the Communist Party of China if it could be established that the student movement was reactionary, there is no reason to believe that material he put together does not represent a major trend of thought in the student movement.

"What right does the working class have to exercise leadership over all others? In the new democratic revolution and the socialist revolution in China, how many of the revolutionary leaders came from a worker's background? Now intellectuals have been designated as part of the working class; this is incorrect. In our country, classes have been eliminated, and there is no more need to differentiate people into classes. Now in China, people are not differentiated by class status but by educational level. Whoever has the ability has the right to lead."

– Students of the Department of Social Science at Zhejiang University talk about the cause of the student demonstration, Guangming Ribao

"By taking a broad view of things in the world, you will find democracy is an irreversible historical process. It compels us to reflect when we see the difference in the speed of modernization on the two sides of the 38th parallel [Korea - MK], the Berlin Wall, and the Taiwan Straits. The tide of democracy will inevitably sweep away all conservatives, and the massive wheel of reform will certainly crumble the little reptiles that dare to resist progress."

– Handbill in the Chinese University of Science and Technology



“What is China's way out? The system of private ownership! The private ownership of a free economy and a society based on a free economy.”

– Handbill of the students in Jiaotong University

While the 1986 demonstrations were dwarfed in size if one compares them to the most recent round of actions, the interpenetration between the contradictions mentioned at the onset of this paper; between those who want to continue with socialism and those who don't; between the leadership and the led; and between the right and left in the Party, were clearly at work.

As the demonstrations spread, the struggle in the Party intensified and vice versa. One result was the removal of the top leader of the Party, the rightist General Secretary Hu Yaobang. In a report to an expanded politburo meeting, the leftist and veteran revolutionary Bo Yibo explained how Hu's errors had helped to lay the groundwork for the demonstrations:

“Comrade Hu Yaobang was quick to look for an excuse to put an end to anti-spiritual pollution after supporting it for a short time. When the Fourth Congress of the Writers Association met in December of 1984, he made a clear pronouncement that there should be no more reference to anti-spiritual pollution and no more reference to anti-bourgeois liberalization, thus creating a tide of bourgeois liberalization that flooded the fields of ideology and culture in the nation. [The movement against spiritual pollution was pretty much dead long before December 1984. - MK] This trend was curbed somewhat in 1985 after the Standing Committee of the Politburo repeatedly called for the need to oppose bourgeois liberalization. In 1986, when the political reforms were being implemented, however, those who promoted bourgeois liberalization seized upon the opportunity to express their political views. And since comrade Hu Yaobang and other comrades continued to retreat before such a trend of thought, the demand for liberalization was raised to high levels. There were even direct demands to revoke the Four Fundamental Principles, to adopt wholesale westernization and the capitalist political and economic system. These developments paved the way for the nationwide student disturbances in the winter of 1986.”

As many of the players would return to the stage for the next round of struggle, it's useful to take a look at how some other leading people related to this struggle.

It seems likely that Yang Shangkun, who played an important role in the Central Military Commission, wanted to proclaim martial law in Beijing. According to one Hong Kong newspaper, he made an independent decision to bring some troops into Beijing. Allegedly, Deng Xiaoping did not hear about the troop movements until after the fact and was furious that he had not been consulted. The same article asserts that a Party conference in 1987 made the decision that Yang would yield some of his responsibility for military affairs after the 13th Congress and that at this meeting a compromise was reached between the two wings of the Party; that the leftist Li Peng would become the next Premier; and that the rightist Zhao Ziyang would become the next General Secretary of the Party.

As for Deng Xiaoping's role in the events, a few things are clear. First, he was closely tied with Hu Yaobang and was backing him hard, right up until a few months before Hu fell. Deng told a foreign journalist that if the skies were to fall, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang could hold it up. On another occasion he identified these two individuals as the chief symbols of the reforms continuity. Second, Deng did take a tough stand on the question of bourgeois liberalization when the issue came to a head, and there are indications he was prepared to take action. At the time, he said that the struggle against liberalization should go on for 20 years.



This is not what happened. Even as the new push against capitalist liberalization was getting moving, the debate in the Party was resolving itself in such a way that insured that the movement would not be a major one. Shortly after Hu's downfall was announced, Hunan radio stated that an attempt would be made to mobilize the peasants to criticize capitalist tendencies. However, when the guidelines were promulgated for the campaign, cadre were instructed not to take the struggle into the countryside, which, of course, is where most of the population lives. The Central Committee gave the instructions that the anti-liberalization movement "is strictly limited to the Party itself." Also, Hu Yaobang was allowed to retain his spot in the Central Committee.

## The Right Strikes Back

"Whenever I encounter people advocating abstract reason and super-class humanism and flaunting 'self-existence,' 'self-worth,' and out-and-out capitalist egotistical values...Whenever I see these things, hear these things, encounter these things, it is indeed like a nightmare, and I can only feel profoundly shocked. But I also feel alone, for I can hardly hear the sound of Marxism."  
– Xiong Fu, Red Flag editor, 1987

1987 began with a major blow to the Party's right wing in the form of Hu's removal from the post of general secretary. With the passing of a few months, the balance of forces would change, and the left would be once again on the defensive.

The key issue that would shape this phase of the inner-Party debate was the question of how far should the struggle against bourgeois liberalization go. The right wing of the Party rallied around Central Committee Document Number 4, which placed severe limitations on the struggle. On the local level, some leftists ignored the document while leftists in the national leadership tried to stage a "breakthrough."

Ta Kung Pao, a Communist Party of China-influenced paper in Hong Kong, ran an article which is useful for understanding some of the points the leftists were pushing, particularly in the field of economics. A fact that should be noted is that the connection of some aspects of economic policy with political problems was significant in and of itself. The article stated: "At the beginning of this year, when the Communist Party of China called for opposition to bourgeois liberalization, certain 'leftists' declared that the most profound root of bourgeois liberalization lies in the economic field. They described the enterprise contracting, leasing, and joint stock system as 'pursing the private ownership system,' described the plant manager responsibility system as 'doing away with Party leadership,' and set the planned economy against the commodity economy saying the former was socialist and the later was capitalist and that developing the commodity economy was the root of bourgeois liberalization."

That views like these were being put out in a semi-open way indicates that the left felt that it was finally strong enough to stand on its own and that the time had come to give the right a few more well-deserved kicks in the head.

In the spring of 1987, a conference was organized by Red Flag, Guangming Daily, and the periodical Theory and Criticism of Literature. At the conference, Red Flag editor Xiong Fu delivered a speech in which he called for a heavy attack on the right. The conference as a whole called for a movement to "right all wrongs in the area of the economy, philosophy, literature, and the arts since the Third Plenary Session." That it would openly be stated that the "wronges" began with the onset of the reform program at the 1978 plenary is, again, surprising.

The Hong Kong Standard quoted an unnamed and obviously rightist Chinese official as calling the conference a "rally of ultra-leftists" and stated that it was the largest such meeting of this type held since 1979.

Unfortunately, while the left was preparing for an “upsurge,” Zhao Ziyang, reportedly with at least some assistance from Deng Xiaoping, was organizing a counter-attack from the right. In an article entitled Zhao Ziyang Corrects Erroneous Tendencies, which appeared in the Hong Kong journal Wen Wei Po, there is a sum-up of Zhao's views at the time. While Zhao tipped his hat to the fight against bourgeois liberalization by saying it should be “deepened,” he then states that there should be no campaign against it and that it would be wrong to make everyone go through a test or to create a tense political atmosphere and that the criticism should not affect the economic field. He would have been more honest if he had said he wanted to “deep six” the struggle instead of “deepening” it.

By the end of the summer, it was the leftists who were being dislodged from their posts. Xiong Fu, the Red Flag editor, was fired, and soon after the journal itself, which was an important voice for the left, was closed down. Critiques of “leftism” flooded the Chinese press.

During this period, a Hong Kong paper carried some rather blunt remarks from Bao Tong, a close associate of the rightist Zhao Ziyang. He stated, “I do not agree with the view that there has been a much larger voice for bourgeois liberalization than for Marxism among theorists...If one says that the theoretical circles are no longer dominated by Marxism, is this not tantamount to implying that there is a need for another seizure of power?” The reference to “seizure of power” was an accusation that the left was trying to promote another Cultural Revolution. (5)

Before moving into the 13th Party Congress, a few more points should be made which indicate the stress that Chinese society was undergoing at the time. Several reports indicate that ex-chairman Hua and former general secretary Hu Yaobang were among the top vote-getters in the elections for delegates to the upcoming congress. If this is true, it could only indicate a great deal of dissatisfaction and polarization within the Party. A Hong Kong paper reported that a number of terrorist incidents took place that summer, including a bombing near Tiananmen Square, and a youth with hand grenades was stopped in his attempt to blowup Mao's body, which, like Lenin's, is embalmed and accessible to public viewing. Right-wing slogans such as “Down with the new Gang of Four – Peng Zhen, Bo Yibo, Hu Qiaomu, Deng Ligun” were painted around Beijing. According to Shen Zuying, a leader of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, 97 strikes took place that year, most in response to the worsening economic situation.

All in all, the period which began with the student demonstrations in late 1986 and ended with the opening of the 13th Party Congress on October 25, 1987, was one of the stormiest since the fall of the Gang of Four. The right had gained ascendancy within the Party. While Hunan radio had spoken at the beginning of the year of insuring that the fight against liberalization did not become “a gust of wind,” by the end of the year there was a gale coming from the opposite direction.

## The 13th Party Congress

Zhao Ziyang, who had been serving as acting General Secretary of the Communist Party of China since Hu Yaobang's dismissal, delivered the main political report of the Central Committee to the 13th Assembled Delegates of the 13th Party Congress. While there were no dramatic shifts from previous Communist Party of China thinking in the report, there is some stuff that is worth commenting on.

A key formulation raised in the report was that China was now in the “primary stage of socialism” where the main contradiction was between the growing material and cultural needs of the people on one hand and the backward level of the productive forces on the other. For China, a third-world country where most of the work is done by people with hand tools, this is a useful way of understanding the historical period. Implicit in this is

the idea that economic development for the purpose of meeting the needs of the people would be the central task for a long time to come.

The report also stated that within the primary stage of socialism there were “two basic points” – adherence to the Four Cardinal Principles and continuing the reforms – which would shape how the central task of economic construction would be carried out.

On paper, this is all well and good, and the theory of the “primary stage of socialism” provides a practical orientation to the real tasks at hand. However, there is a problem. Unless the first of the Four Cardinal Principles, i.e., “the socialist road,” is concretely defined and applied to economic work, the likely result will be serious right-wing errors.

Without a solid definition of what it means to take the socialist road while pursuing reforms, there arises an opening for the point of view that anything that advances the productive forces in the short run is positive for the development of socialism, and this is by no means the case. For example, enterprises in the printing and publishing industry, which published all sorts of garbage, including pornography, did nothing to strengthen the cause of socialism, and no amount of talk about the growth of the enterprises involved, the existence of a market for it, or “enlivening the economy” can cover this up.

While it is a good indicator that a country is failing to “advance on the socialist road” if the productive forces are not being developed, simply developing the productive forces in and of themselves is not necessarily the construction of socialism and therein lies the problem with the way the theory of the primary stage of socialism was presented at the 13th Congress.

An article published in Beijing Review entitled Productivity and Ideology ran out this line in a fairly crude manner and dealt with some of the debates that have come up in the Party as a result of some of the reforms.

The article begins by stating that “the 13th Party Congress has clarified a perplexing question which arose with the establishment of the socialist system in China” by pointing out that “the development of the productive forces should be the basic criteria for judging all kinds of work.” It then goes on to decry leftist thinking which “often manifests itself as the reforms proceed.” As an example of “leftist” thinking, the article cites the refusal of the Communist Party of China in Tianjin to admit a small employer as a member on the grounds he “engaged in the exploitation in hiring workers.”

When the local Party refused to admit him, the employer, Han Wengquang, wrote to a paper and asked, “Could it be I became a capitalist because I followed the state policies?” No matter what the Beijing Review author thinks, the answer is “yes.” China has decided to allow for the existence of small, privately-owned companies as a method of developing the economy. This has meant more services and goods are available to the Chinese people, and the policy has also created people like Han. Even though Han works hard, the simple fact that Han's employees generate surplus value which he then appropriates means that he has, in fact, become a “capitalist.”

The question then arises: was the Party in Tianjin right to “reject to this day” Han's application for membership? The answer is, again, “yes.” While Communist Party of China members are debating this issue and people like Han have been admitted in other places, generally speaking, people like Han should have no place in the Party. This is because a person's take on the world is affected by the sum total of social relations they enter into, and because the Communist Party of China holds state power the potential for a conflict of interest is too high. It should be stated that the situation in the countryside is somewhat different where the line between who is in business and who is not is less clear.

One thing this article demonstrates is that the view of “whatever develops the productive forces is good” can impact everything from economic construction to Party building. In academic circles, it has led to rightist historians denouncing the peasants’ uprisings for disrupting production and writing histories which glorify colonial domination.

Fortunately, some members of the Communist Party of China leadership have produced better material on the relationship between the reforms and the development of the productive forces. For example, Deng Xiaoping's speech “Reform is the Only Way” stated: “In the course of reform it is necessary for us to maintain our socialist orientation. We are trying to achieve modernization in industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology. But in front of the word ‘modernization’ there is a modifier, ‘socialist.’ The policies of invigoration of our domestic economy and opening to the outside world are being carried out in accordance with the principles of socialism. Socialism has two major requirements. First, the economy must be dominated by public ownership, which may consist of ownership by the whole people or ownership by the collective. Our publicly owned economy accounts for more than 90% of the total...The second requirement is that there must be no polarization between rich and poor. If there is, the reforms will have been a failure...”

It should be noted that by “polarization” Deng is not referring to inequality, as inequality within certain limits is a feature of socialism. This is because under socialism it is necessary to apply the principle “from each according to their ability, to each according to their work.” Since not everybody does the same amount of work, either due to disposition or circumstances, absolute equality is impossible. By polarization what is meant is that relations of exploitation must not predominate.

Looking back, it is possible to make the assessment that the 13th Congress represented a certain high watermark for the right-wing of the Party. The political report given by Zhao and prepared by the counter-revolutionary Bao Tong, minimized the danger presented by liberalization and targeted the “hidebound” thinking of the left as the main danger to China moving forward. On the surface the event appeared extremely unified. A photo published in Beijing Review shows leftists Chen Yun and Li Xiannain and right opportunists Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang all sitting together with Deng Xiaoping. Because photographs like this are never accidents, its only purpose could have been to convey the idea that the Communist Party of China was united - at a time when disunity was, in fact, growing.

## After the 13th Congress

While the right had gained ascendancy at the 13th Congress, a number of factors were to mitigate its attempts to consolidate power. First, there were a number of leftists in the Party's leading bodies, such as Li Peng and Yao Yilin, who were determined to put up resistance. Second, ongoing economic problems and a lack of consensus on the pace and direction of reforms increasingly put Zhao on the defensive. Finally, the policy of placing leftists who were pushed out of direct Party leadership into the Central Advisory Commission had the effect of creating a second center of communist leadership.

As the Central Advisory Commission plays an important role in Chinese politics, a few things need to be said about it. The idea of forming advisory commissions was initially raised by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s as a means to deal with the problem of training revolutionary successors. The core of the Party leadership was old, and many were not really up to the tasks at hand. The formation of a Central Advisory Commission was seen as a means of utilizing the experience of veteran communists while placing comparatively younger people in the active Party posts.

Of course, the question comes up of who should retire to the Commission first. This is by and large a political question. Rightists want leftists there, and the left wants to send over the right. There is no doubt that the right envisioned the Advisory Commission as a sort of graveyard for the left, but, as it turned out, no one intended to stay buried there.

The Commission itself developed a very high level of activity, causing commentators in the Hong Kong press to remark that the leading bodies of the Commission were more active than the leading bodies of the Party. Organizationally, the commission is structured similarly to the Party, and members of its leading bodies are allowed to take part in the deliberations of the leading bodies of the Party, although they cannot vote. The relative ease in which Party veterans were able to mobilize against the turmoil owes itself in large part to the existence of the Commission.

Some communists here in the U.S. have argued that the activist role of the Advisory Commission is somehow out of sync with the principles of democratic centralism. This is wide of the mark. The leadership of the Commission is accountable to the Party as a whole, and its leadership must be approved by Party Congress. Talk of a “gang of elders,” operating at odds with the Party norms, is factually wrong and is an attempt to throw mud on those who actively defended socialism during the turmoil. (6)

## Price Reform

In the summer of 1988, a stormy debate took place over the question of reforming the pricing structure for commodities. This has been and continues to be one of the most sensitive questions in Chinese politics, as a relaxation of the long-standing system of price supports and controls would lead to higher prices for many products. Even public discussion of this topic by the leading bodies of the Party and state can give rise to panic buying and spot shortages.

Also, price reform contains within it a not-so-hidden agenda point. Right opportunists within the Party have taken a position that greatly overestimates the positive role of market forces in regulating the economy and by and large negates the positive aspects of economic planning and control measures. This is a view which is neither socialist nor based in Chinese reality. It is not socialist because it objectively runs against the goal of socialist production, which is to meet people’s needs. It places “money in command.” It is not based in Chinese reality because if extreme market measures were adopted the result would be both shortages that would hit working people the hardest while opening the door for another round of inflation.

While there was agreement among the Communist Party of China leaders that the price structure was irrational, there was far less consciousness about what should be done about it. According to an article in the Hong Kong press, Zhao Ziyang made a push to liberalize price controls on everything but minerals and utilities at a secret meeting held in Beihaha. Li Peng resisted the move, and the leftist politburo member Yao Yilin delivered an investigative report which indicated that Zhao had mismanaged the economy. Specifically, the report charged that Zhao had no overall plan for reforming prices, that he refused to consult with the state council - a Li Peng-led body that would have to act before any changes in prices became official - and finally that he had issued new guidelines on the commodity economy which were wrong. The article also states that it was at this meeting that Deng Xiaoping said, “I will not protect anybody, and whoever fails to make good account of himself should go.”

If Deng did indeed make this statement, it could only mean that the forces associated with Zhao were finding themselves in an increasingly difficult position. In any event, on August 30, China's official news agency reported that the state council “pledged not to initiate further price increases for the remainder of the year and



said those leading members responsible for indiscriminate price increases should be subject to disciplinary punishment.”

## Round Two

While the debate continued in Party circles, the forces pushing for capitalist liberalization were by no means inactive. In fact, they were emboldened because the previous campaign against them had broken down so quickly. Some had drawn the conclusion that they could freely oppose socialism. For example, Fang Lizhi made a public statement shortly before the 13th Congress in which he denounced Marxism as a worn-out dress that should be discarded and claimed that the Communist Party had not done anything positive for 30 years. With the contradictions sharpening in the Party and Chinese society, the advocates of bourgeois liberalization were poised to play an important role in Chinese politics for the first time in New China's history.

## Some Points on Free Speech

The question invariably comes up: if China is a socialist country which guarantees the right of people to air their views, why should the advocates of liberalization be fought and suppressed? In answering this, there are several points which should be looked at. First, under socialism there is no inherent freedom to push for a return to capitalism. It's like Mao said: anyone who wants to take power must create public opinion for it. Revolutionaries make no promises to those who would go in for a counter-revolution that they have some abstract “right” to speak out and organize.

Does this mean that everyone who calls for capitalism should be rounded up and thrown in the slammer? No, the degree to which a people's government will have to resort to coercive measures is determined by the kind of threat the anti-socialist forces amount to. If they don't have much support or potential for getting it, they can be allowed to run amuck. If they do have the potential for creating havoc, then it's like Lenin said, “Permit us to put you in front of the firing squad for saying that.”

Generally speaking, if a communist party does its work well, applies the mass line, and energetically wages a struggle on the political and ideological fronts, there shouldn't be much need for administrative measures. On the other hand, if political work is neglected and mistakes of policy are persisted in, problems are bound to occur.

It is not now, nor has it ever been, impossible to organize people into reactionary mass movements that go against their class interests. The German fascists were able to unite millions of working people around their banner. Likewise in China, tens of thousands of people, many with the best of intentions, were drawn into a so-called “democracy movement” that was marching down the road to capitalist restoration.

## Anti-Africa Student Demonstrations

The 1988 wave of demonstrations directed against African students studying in China is indicative of where a section of the student movement was at. While accounts in the western press certainly exaggerated their significance, there are some definite conclusions we can draw from them.

The first thing to note is that the demonstrations were not spontaneous. They were organized. Right-wing activists were able to take advantage of an event on a single campus, and, by whipping up the backward



sentiments that are present in many university settings, they were able to spread the reactionary motion to a number of other schools.

The second point is that “pro-democracy” slogans received prominent play in a lot of the actions. It is not unreasonable to draw the conclusion that behind the demonstrations were forces that were capable of making use of a particular resentment, the so-called privileges of African students, to advance a larger political agenda, i.e., liberalization. Finally, as soon as the demos got going, there were widespread reports of non-students joining in.

The purpose of raising this stuff is not to prove that the student movement as a whole is racist and chauvinist. However, events which take place in the real world cannot be ignored. The anti-Africa demos damaged China's standing in the Third World (Libya offered to open up its universities to the African students studying in China) and showed where at least some of the leadership of the Chinese student movement was at. Though timely action was taken to bring the demonstrations to an end and some people in the Party suggested there was a need to strengthen “internationalist education” on the campuses, it is undeniable that China's well-deserved reputation as a friend and supporter of the African peoples was harmed.

## The Turmoil Begins

On April 15, 1989 former Communist Party of China General Secretary Hu Yaobang died. The period of mourning which followed his death provided the opening that the “pro-democracy” movement was waiting for. Huge funeral wreaths began to appear on the martyrs’ monument in Tiananmen Square. On many of these wreaths inscriptions were written, attacking the Party leadership and demanding that the criticisms of Hu's rightist errors be dropped from the historical record.

Rumors were spread that leftist criticism had caused Hu to have a heart attack. These tales were then picked up by the Hong Kong press, the effect of which was to ensure that they received wider play in China itself. (7)

Both the rightists in the Party and the student movement used Hu's death as a stick to beat the left. The Party rightists saw Hu as a hero who had been the victim of a grave injustice. Even after his dismissal from the office of General Secretary, they hoped that he could stage a comeback. Getting all worked up about Hu's death was a way of repudiating the struggles against capitalist liberalization and spiritual pollution. An intense period of mourning for Hu could only improve the position of Zhao and his supporters.

As for the “pro-democracy” forces, they had their own reasons for rallying around Hu's legacy. The mourning period provided a political space in which they could run their rap. Secondly, a strong wind upholding Hu would have the effect of weakening the forces in the Party which were the most determined to fight liberalization. Finally, there was probably some genuine affection for Hu because he had protected bourgeois liberals in the past.

Fang Lizhi told foreign reporters that during the period of Hu's leadership “it was the best time for intellectuals in China.” A wall poster at Beijing University announced that Hu's death “was a great loss for democracy and freedom.” In an apparent reference to the “hardliners” in the Party, another wall poster proclaimed that “a true man died, but false men still live.”

On April 18, 4000 students from Beijing University and People's University held campus rallies. Later that day about 2000 students marched to Tiananmen Square, carrying a banner with the slogan “Forever cherish the memory of Yaobang, the soul of China.” That night about 200 students stayed in the square. The Washington

Post reported the six demands that were put forward. The demands were: public disclosure of the income of national leaders; repudiation of the struggles against bourgeois liberalization and spiritual pollution along with rehabilitation for those who were criticized; increased funding for education; no restrictions on street demonstrations; freedom of speech and the press; and a reassessment of Hu Yaobang.

The issue of repudiating the campaigns against spiritual pollution and liberalization deserves some additional comments, as how one views these struggles says a lot about what one thinks about China's road forward. The political essence of both struggles was an effort to preserve socialism and socialist values. That students would call for the reappraisal of long-past political battles might at first sight seem strange. In reality, it showed that some fairly sophisticated political thinkers had a hand in the actions. It represented an attempt to sharpen the conflict in the Party and strengthen the position of the Communist Party of China rightists.

A report which appeared in Beijing Review indicated that the China Democratic Alliance, a U.S.-based outfit which favors the establishment of capitalism in China, had issued an "Open Letter to Chinese University Students" which had been posted at many Beijing schools prior to the April 18 action. The letter advised the students that "the complete negation of the anti-liberalization movement of 1987 should be used as a breakthrough point."

On April 19, 5000 people rallied at Tiananmen Square. This time a number of participants attempted to storm Zhongnanhai, which is the headquarters of the Party. Police eventually cleared away the demonstrators. The next day 15,000 people demonstrated in the square, many of whom tried to place funeral wreaths on the gate leading to Zhongnanhai. According to the New China News Agency (see Washington Post, April 21), rocks and bottles were thrown at security forces sent to deal with the disturbances. By this time the demonstrators had begun to raise slogans against Premier Li Pen, which were to grow in volume in the weeks to come.

Out of fairness, it should be noted that there were differences in the student movement towards some of these anti-Party actions. For example, some students tried to discourage others from storming the Party headquarters. Student leader Wan Dun told the western reporters that he did not agree with the marches on Zhongnanhai nor did he participate in them. (The Chinese government says that Wan Dun was present at the actions and he took off when the fighting began.)

While student support for these actions was by no means unanimous, the attempted storming of Zhongnanhai, as well as the attempts to storm other government buildings which have been described in the western press, was important if one wants to understand how the Chinese leadership viewed the movement that was developing. One person's "scuffle" is another person's fight. How one describes it depends on the impression one wants to convey. The U.S. media chose to portray the "pro-democracy" forces as models of non-violence and self-discipline. However, it is unlikely that the leadership of the Communist Party of China based their assessment of the situation on New York Times commentary. The fact that there was an attempt by people to fight their way into the operational base of the central leadership could not help but to affect their take on things.

On April 22, the official memorial service for Hu Yaobang took place in the Great Hall of the People, the seat of government which is located adjacent to Tiananmen Square. Inside, General Secretary Zhao delivered the main speech, making no mention whatsoever of Hu's mistakes. While one would not expect that a memorial speech would be devoted to an extensive trashing of someone who passed away, in this context Zhao's statements amounted to a reversal of the verdicts of Hu Yaobang.

Outside the hall, nearly 150,000 people assembled, many as contingents organized by work units, university departments, etc. The Washington Post commented that the degree of organization indicated that the “pro-democracy movement had been building long before Hu's death.”

On April 23, the Shanghai-based World Economic Herald, a newspaper which frequently expressed the view of the far right in the Communist Party of China, published an article calling for the re-evaluation of Hu Yaobang. That a paper edited by a Party member would ignore organizational norms and discipline, coupled with the fact that semi-governmental institutions had joined the “pro-democracy” demonstrations in Beijing, were the first public manifestations of what would soon be obvious to the world - from top to bottom, a section of the Party was splitting away. The Zhao/Hu wing of the Party was casting its lot with the growing turmoil in an attempt to consolidate and expand its influence at the apex of political power.

## Patriotic or Counter-Revolutionary?

On April 24, the Political Bureau reportedly met in Beijing to analyze the mass movement. Zhao was in North Korea at the time. The mayor of Beijing, Chen Xitong, stated that two major decisions were arrived at. First, “a consensus was reached that all signs at the time showed that we were confronted with an anti-Party and anti-socialist political struggle conducted in a planned and organized way, manipulated and instigated by a small handful of people.” The second decision was to establish a working group in the central leadership of the Party to cope with the growing disorder. The Beijing Municipal Party Committee was told to “mobilize the masses fully, so as to win over the majority and to isolate the minority...” The following day, Deng Xiaoping made a speech which backed the decision.

On April 26, the line of the politburo was run out in a People's Daily editorial. The editorial made note of the good intentions of many of the demonstration's participants and pointed out several areas where the desires of the student movement overlapped with those of the Party. However, what really grabbed people's attention was the charge that the protests were being manipulated by forces that wanted to do away with socialism and negate the leading role of the Party.

Was the charge correct? The bulk of evidence indicates that the answer is yes but with one very important qualification; that is, the trend of thought which could be characterized a “pro-western democracy” extended to more than a handful of organizers. Bill Hinton's assertion in The Guardian that the bulk of the student demonstrators were bourgeois democrats is probably accurate. While numerous interviews with activists and leaders of the movement would tend to back this up, there are some other indicators as well. For example, the fact that the movement advanced the slogan of democracy as opposed to socialist democracy says something. In China, Marxism-Leninism is taught in schools. That there are two types of democracy, capitalist and socialist, is something that every Chinese student has been taught long before they get to college. A movement that raises slogans like “Long live democracy, down with the dictatorship” in the Chinese context is saying something about itself and its world outlook.

As one might expect, the response of the “democracy” movement to the April 26 editorial was far from favorable. The edit itself became one of the movement's main grievances. Several weeks later student leader Wuer Kaixi would raise the issue in a discussion with Premier Li Pang saying, “...People's Daily should put out another editorial to negate its editorial of April 26 and apologize to people all over the country and acknowledge the great significance of the current student movement.”

While the April 26 editorial probably did not change many minds, it is unlikely that the Party leadership expected that it would. In the struggle for public opinion, it is first necessary to develop a core of activists who

will wage the fight. The purpose of the People's Daily editorial was to establish a pole of resistance to liberalization and to provide Party members with direction. It was meant to be the beginning of the process of separating the good from the bad – the people who were concerned with issues like corruption and accountability from those who wanted to do away with socialism. To provide the Party and its supporters with direction (there are about 40 million Party members in China and 10,000 Party secretaries in Beijing alone), it was essential to draw a sharp line of demarcation and to bluntly identify the nature of the movement's leadership.

Beijing's mayor, Chen Xitong, devoted a substantial section of his speech to the National People's Congress Standing Committee (June 30, 1989) to explaining the role of the editorial. He stated:

“The editorial made the overwhelming majority of cadres feel reassured. It clarified the orientation of their activities, thus enabling them to carry out their work with a clear cut stand.” He then went on to describe the political developments that followed: “After the editorial of People's Daily was published, the Beijing Municipal Party Committee and the people's government under the direct leadership of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee and the State Council, convened in quick succession a variety of meetings inside and outside the Party to uphold principle and unify their understanding, then proceeded to clear up rumors and reassure the public by any means, render support to the leadership, Party and Youth League members and student activists in educational institutions, encourage them to work boldly, and persuade those students who took part in demonstrations to change their course of actions, and to actively conduct a variety of dialogues to win over the masses. The dialogues...all achieved good results.

“Meanwhile, earnest work was being carried out in the factories, villages, shops, primary and secondary schools, and neighborhoods to stabilize the overall situation and prevent the turmoil from spreading to other sectors of society.

“Leaders of the student demonstrations originally planned to stage ‘a hundred-day demonstration and a student strike of indefinite duration.’ But the students lost such enthusiasm after the publication of the editorial.

“Compared with the demonstration of April 27, the number of students taking part on May 4 dropped from over 30,000 to less than 20,000, and the on-lookers decreased by a big margin. After the May 4 demonstration, 80% of the students returned to class as a result of the work of the Party and administrative leaders of the various universities and colleges. After the publication of the People's Daily April 26 editorial, the situation in other parts of the country became stabilized quickly. It was evident, with some more work, the turmoil instigated by a small handful of people making use of the student unrest, was likely to calm down...”

So what happened? As it turned out, the calm was the calm before the storm. While determined grassroots work by the Party was able to bring a measure of stability to society and mount a challenge to bourgeois liberalization on the ground, another contradiction was about to become primary and all hell would break loose.

## The Dialectics of the Crisis

A dialectical outlook is helpful for getting a handle on how the crisis in People's China unfolded. As was stated earlier, there are three contradictions that need to be looked at (as well as how they interacted with each other) in order to get a sense of why things happened as they did.

The most basic contradiction at work was, to borrow a phrase from Mao, “between the leadership and the led.” Or to put it another way, between the Party and the people. This means that the leading core of the CPC was

ultimately responsible for the problems on the economic, political, and ideological fronts, and created the material conditions for the turmoil. This does not mean that anti-socialist elements and imperialist backed forces (KMT) did not play a role, because they did. However, a small “handful” cannot accomplish very much unless they are able to place themselves at the head of a mass movement. In the final analysis, it is the people, not small groups that make history.

Even noting that the CPC made errors, such as adopting economic policies which created social forces which were intrinsically hostile to socialism (small business people who were able to evade economic controls), political methods which at times separated the Party from the people (after the last major rectification campaign, most working people thought that the style of work employed by Chinese communists deteriorated rather than improved) and a lack of emphasis on ideological education and struggle; it would be foolish to conclude that the CPC should be overthrown.

It is like Mao said, in the long run “political and ideological line determines everything.” If a political party meets with defeats or setbacks it should take a hard look at its own line and approach. For example, revolutionary organizations that have tried to take power, but have not been prepared to wage armed struggle, have been smashed (Chile, Indonesia). But this does not mean that they “got what they deserved.” It only means that when mistakes are made, they have to be summed up and corrected so that the revolutionary process can once again advance.

In China, errors old and new brought together the social dynamite which was detonated by the advocates of liberalization. Were all sections of the Party responsible for this? No. It is the right-wing of the Party (Zhao, Hu) as well as those who backed it (to a certain extent Deng Xiaoping) which must bear the lion’s share of the responsibility for the problems which occurred. (8)

While the errors of the Party shaped the problems in Chinese society, it would be wrong to say that the aforementioned contradiction, that between the leadership and the led alone, determined the course of events last spring and summer. Rather there were two other contradictions which interacted with each other, and at times emerged as the principal contradiction.

From April 15th, when the motion following Hu Yaobang's death occurred, up until April 26th, the struggle essentially pitted the student movement, led by pro-liberalization forces, against the CPC. The movement gained support because it articulated some mass demands, thus it based itself on the contradiction between the Party and the people. Because a substantial section of the leadership advocated capitalist liberalization, the contradiction between these forces and the CPC majority was between revolution and counter-revolution.

After April 26th, three things happened which determined the nature of subsequent events. They are:

1. The “pro-democracy” movement made an abrupt change in its tactics, and on the surface became much more pro-socialist and pro-Party.
2. The inner-Party struggle sharpened, and two clearly defined headquarters emerged in the central leadership. After May 4th, the right would do openly what it had been doing covertly from the beginning, i.e. strengthen and assist the street actions to ensure its dominance in the Party.
3. The Party's grassroots campaign to stop the turmoil would last for about a week. The breakaway by Zhao had the effect of paralyzing the Party's basic units.

To put it another way, from April 25th to May 4th, while the main contradiction was still between the forces led by pro-liberalization elements and the majority of the Party and its supporters, the relationships between the two



aspects of the contradiction had changed, and were close to making a qualitative leap. The Party was on the offensive and it seemed as if the leadership of the student movement was on the path to isolation.

However, during that same period, the secondary contradiction; between the right and left within the Party was in the process of becoming the primary contradiction. Until the decision was made to declare martial law, it was a combination of pro-liberalization forces and Party rightists who would have the political initiative.

Before looking at how this process went down, a side point should be made; the events in Beijing will be focused on. In some cities, the situation was different, and no major split was apparent in the local Party organizations. At some universities, particularly those in the more isolated regions, there was relatively little agitation for liberalization prior to the hunger strike, which affected the nature of the movement which developed. In Xian, the movement developed quite differently than Beijing. At the demo following Hu's death, criminal elements took advantage of the situation to engage in wide scale looting (this is agreed on in both Chinese and Western press reports) and as a result, the completion of the "pro-democracy" movement was altered.

## A Tactical Shift

On April 27th, the Washington Post reported "As evidenced by their shouts, chants, and banner slogans, the students appear to have moderated their demands." The article went on to describe a march in which many activists carried banners in support of the Communist Party and socialism. A student in a later Post article gave the following description of the movement's tactical orientation, "Many of us want democracy along Western lines. But we know we cannot criticize the Communist Party publicly. So we wave the red flag to criticize the red flag."

One of the more interesting slogans, which also showed up in some interviews with student leaders (Wan Dun) was, "Support the correct leadership of the Communist Party." This slogan had a united front nature because the question of who was the correct leadership could be answered by Party rightists as "Zhao" and as "none of them" by bourgeois liberals.

In his speech to the National People's Congress, the Leftist Beijing Mayor Chen Xitong gave the following description of the new tactics:

"The clear cut-stand of the April 26th editorial forced the organizers and plotters of the turmoil to make an about turn in strategy. Before the editorial, large numbers of posters and slogans were against the Communist Party, socialism and the Four Cardinal Principles. After the publication of the editorial, the illegal Beijing Federation of Autonomous Student Unions in Universities and Colleges issued 'No. 1 Order of the New Student Federation to change their strategy, urging students to 'march to Tiananmen under the banner of supporting the Communist Party' on April 27th. The designated slogans included 'Support the Communist Party,' 'Support Socialism,' and 'Safeguard the Constitution.' It also, at the suggestion of Fang Lizhi, changed their subversive slogans such as 'Down with the Bureaucratic Government,' 'Down with the Corrupt Government,' and 'Down with Dictatorial Rule,' etc., into those like 'Oppose Bureaucracy,' 'Oppose Corruption,' and 'Oppose Privilege,' and other slogans that could win support from people of various circles."

Chen's talk of designated slogans might surprise some folks who picked up what might be termed the "parliament in the streets" aspect of the movement that received so much press play. The other side of the coin



was that some sections of the student movement were able to achieve a relatively high degree of centralization and organization. For example squads of students were put together to insure that the slogans were “proper.” This led some foreign observers to remark that the students were emulating the organizational methods of the CPC. (The LA Times ran an article by one such traveler, who was extremely disappointed by the bureaucracy the students had organized at Tiananmen Square, concluding that the students were reproducing some of the negative features in Chinese society.)

## Breakaway

“WE SUPPORT ZHAO ZIYANG”

--slogan written by demonstrator on side of military vehicle.

May 4th - unlike previous weeks the most important events did not take place on the streets or campuses of Beijing. The demonstration in Tiananmen was relatively subdued. That morning 10,000 youths gathered there to take the oath of admission to the Communist Youth League, pledging themselves to strengthen the reforms and the cause of communism. Later in the day 20,000-30,000 students marched to the Square. Considering the fact that May 4th, the anniversary of the anti-imperialist student struggle which rocked China in 1919, had been kicked around as a target day for demonstrations since the beginning of the year, the low turnout was an indicator that the Party's work was meeting with some success at the universities.

The big happening of the day turned out to be a speech given by General Secretary Zhao Ziyang to representatives of the Asian Development Bank. In this talk, Zhao dropped a bombshell by speaking of the student movement in a way that cut directly against the spirit of the April 26th editorial. Beijing Review, which was at the time in the hands of rightists (despite some major improvements, right up until today this journal continues to snipe at the line of the Party), carried a piece subtitled Students in Favor of Zhao's Words. The article stated that, “They [the students] were pleased to hear the Party leader considered them patriotic and they were not believed to be manipulated by anyone...”

In his critique of Zhao's May 4th speech, Beijing's Mayor, Chen Xitong stated that there were three major political errors in the talk:

“Firstly, as the turmoil had already come to the surface, he said ‘there will be no big turmoil in China,’ secondly, when a host of facts had proved that the real nature of the turmoil was the negation of the leadership of the Communist Party and the socialist system, he still insisted that ‘they are by no means opposed to our fundamental system. Rather they are asking us to correct mistakes in our work,’ thirdly, although facts had shown that a tiny handful of people were making use of the student unrest to instigate turmoil, he said it was ‘hardly avoidable’ for ‘some people to take advantage of this,’ thus totally negating the correct judgment of the Party's Central Committee that a handful of people were creating turmoil.”

There is little room to doubt that Zhao's speech and the wide airplay it received dramatically altered the situation. For Zhao's part, the talk represented a public break with the majority of the Party's leadership from which there could be no turning back. The talk was a signal to Party rightists to go against the adopted line. Zhao was also giving the green light to those who wanted to press ahead for liberalization. Everything indicates that Mayor Chen was correct in pointing out, “Comrade Zhao Ziyang's speech on May 4th was the turning point in escalating the turmoil.”

The actual author of Zhao's May 4th speech was Bao Tong, a leading light in what is sometimes referred to as Zhao's think tank - a grouping of intellectuals with a basically social-democratic orientation. After the speech was given, Bao proceeded to push for its broadest possible dissemination, including front page treatment in the People's Daily and multiple TV showings. The result was to give some cadre the impression that this was the new line. Some middle level cadre tried to put a good face on the whole affair and said there was no contradiction between the April 26th edit and Zhao's talk. Most Party members (and other people) quickly grasped the fact that the leadership was deeply divided, and became confused about their tasks. Was there turmoil or wasn't there? Should the "pro-democracy" movement be supported or opposed? These were now open questions.

The Western media, such as Voice of America, quickly picked up on the disunity and its inflammatory reports added fuel to the fire.

Chen's report indicates that the Zhao headquarters moved to silence the views of the leadership majority. "Different views were held up and not even allowed to appear in confidential materials," said Chen. While it is hard to document an assertion like this, it does have the ring of truth to it. Early in 1989, Mao's former secretary Hu Qiaomu, was quoted in the Hong Kong press as saying that Zhao was "suppressing comrades adhering to a Marxist-Leninist stand." The charge that Zhao's calls for "freedom to speak out" really meant more freedom for the right to attack the left, has come up repeatedly since 1987. Also Zhao supporters in the propaganda and Central Committee apparatus certainly had the organizational means to suppress views other than their own. Hu Qili, a close ally of Zhao on the politburo, was in charge of propaganda work. Hu, who had come under fire in the 1987 struggle against liberalization, has been relieved of his responsibilities in the aftermath of the turmoil.

All reports indicate that the internal divisions in the Party, coupled with the new political space that Zhao carved out for the "pro-democracy" movement threw the Party's grassroots work into chaos. "Cadre in the universities and colleges and student activists as a whole felt 'betrayed' and troubled from a laden heart, some even shed tears. Work at the universities and colleges fell into a completely passive position," said Mayor Chen.

Reportedly, Zhao answered the charge that comrades at the grassroots felt betrayed with the idiotic remark. "Who betrayed you? People were only betrayed during the Cultural Revolution." The answer of course was that Zhao had betrayed the comrades in the field. Left-wing activists who had stuck their necks out in the university settings had the rug pulled out from underneath them.

By the end of May, the student leader Zhao Zhiyong gave the following summation of Zhao to the Washington Post, "The students regard Zhao as being right. We now have evidence that he was on the side of the students from the beginning."

In the final analysis, Zhao's stand and activities were incompatible with membership in a communist organization. He trampled on the Party's organizational discipline. He gave free reign to liberalization forces, and, as will be shown, attempted to utilize these forces to advance the position of the CPC rightists. In undertaking this course of action, he brought about the worst split in the Party since the Cultural Revolution. Once this was done the fighting which rocked Beijing in early June became inevitable.

## The Party At War

In People's China, as in most socialist countries, the vast majority of institutions, be they economic, governmental, political, sectoral (workers, women, youth organizations) or educational, are under the leadership

of the Party. For example in a university, it would not be uncommon for there to be Party branches for administrative personnel, departments (which could include students), maintenance personnel, etc.

When Zhao violated discipline and broke away from the core leadership, he did not go alone. It has to be kept in mind that Zhao spoke for a section of the Party that might well have encompassed several million members. One consequence of this was that institutions (in whole and in part) joined the effort to build the turmoil, and in some instances gave leadership to it.

The most important institution to join the right-wing split was the press and propaganda organs. There were several reasons for this. First, the right moved in a fairly heavy-handed way to push consistent Marxist-Leninists out of press work and to restrict the activities of those who remained. (9)

The second reason for the defection of so much of the press is rooted in history that is a little more distant. During the Cultural Revolution the press was a stronghold for supporters of the Gang of Four. When the Gang took a dive, there were more than a few job openings on Chinese papers, and some people with extremely questionable backgrounds were brought in to fill them. Furthermore, many journalism grads suffer from the same problem that a substantial section of other Chinese students do: They are not Marxists. (10)

As the press plays an extremely important role in Chinese society, it is valuable to take a look at some of the milestones in the struggle that took place for control of it.

On April 23rd, the Washington Post reported that the Shanghai-based World Economic Herald issued a call for the CPC to drop its criticism of the deceased rightist Hu Yaobang. This event received a fair amount of international attention, as it is almost unheard of for a paper under the leadership of a Party member to so openly go against the line of the Party.

Shortly thereafter the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, led by Jiang Zemin, removed the editor Qin Benli, and stepped in to re-organize the paper. The response of a section of journalists and editors was to treat Qin as some sort of martyr. On May 4th, when journalists from a number of Party papers joined the student demonstrations; some carried banners in support of Qin and the World Economic Herald.

In Shanghai itself, the issue became particularly sharp, when “pro-democracy” forces demanded that the local Party leader Jiang Zemin be brought down for dismissing Qin. (Jiang has since been elected to the post of CPC General Secretary, the Party's top national post in the aftermath of the turmoil. He has been given the responsibility for organizing a new core of leadership for the next period.)

In the central leadership, the dismissal of Qin also cropped up as an issue. Zhao criticized the Shanghai committee for its handling of the case, and it's logical to assume that the left supported (or demanded) the move.

On May 6th, Zhao and propaganda head Hu Qili decided that it was cool for the press to give more coverage to the demonstrations. Not only did the amount of coverage increase, much of it was extremely favorable. By May 9th, more than a thousand journalists had submitted a petition calling for “press reform.”

Within a matter of weeks, much of the press was in open rebellion against the Party leadership, and a process developed whereby the more isolated Zhao became among the Party leadership, the more shrill the press became in its support for him. As the eve of the crackdown neared, a bizarre phenomena occurred. Party papers, such as the People's Daily began to wildly exaggerate the size of anti-Party demonstrations. In one particular

case, the numbers were so inflated, much of the Western press felt compelled to take note of the inaccuracy, correctly noting that the lies were being printed in order to boost Zhao's sagging fortunes.

Not only did a major section of China's internally oriented press defect to the turmoil, journals such as the Beijing Review, which is oriented towards an international audience did so as well. The Beijing Review was extremely supportive of the hunger strike. It ran articles denigrating the efforts to implement martial law. It hyped Zhao and cited his statements in order to justify its own actions. Staff members joined in the Tiananmen demonstrations. While this may not be surprising to longtime readers of the Beijing Review, many of who have been dismayed by the revisionist articles it carries (including some which openly praised western capitalism), the fact that China's "voice to the world" would openly go against the Party demonstrates the depth of the split.

Two final points should be made about the press's defection to Zhao and bourgeois liberalization. The first is that it really happened. While some papers stood firm, such as the Liberation Army Daily, most did not. Anyone who reviews the western press coverage will find all sorts of references to China's newfound "press freedom." For example, the May 24th edition of the New York Times commented, "In the last five weeks, news organizations witnessed a startling transformation to what was for a communist country a remarkably independent press."

The second point is that this splitting process should not be seen as a rebellion of rank-and-file journalists, or as a seizure of power like the ones that took place during the Cultural Revolution. There are no reports of media personnel rebelling against their editors, rather it seems that the editors and leading Party personnel of these media outlets played a major role in this process of breaking away from the central leadership and backing Zhao. This also tallies with post-turmoil criticism that rightists like Bao Tong had easy access to the press.

## More Splitters

In addition to the press, Zhao supporters in other institutions made the decision to side with and contribute to the turmoil. After May 4th, the western press identified sections of the following Party and governmental organizations as participating in demonstrations against the central leadership: the Ministry of Culture, sections of Beijing's Security Forces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CPC Central Committee Agricultural Policy Research Office, members of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League and the Central Committee Party School, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

For the purpose of this paper, it is not really necessary to analyze the specific struggles that went on in each of these institutions and leadership bodies to determine why they went with Zhao. Each had their own dynamic. For example, the Communist Youth League was deeply influenced by Hu Yaobang, who was in its leadership during the 1970s, and subsequently maintained a network of supporters there. Or the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and its misnamed Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, which has been the stomping ground for a number of theoreticians promoted by Zhao Ziyang.

It is irrational to assume that the abovementioned forces were hypnotized by the students in Tiananmen and it was a simple case of "people from all walks of life coming together for democracy." Rather, it was a bid for power by the right opportunists within the Party. During the hunger strike and martial law, they bent every effort to throw their forces into the streets. They established something akin to dual power in Beijing and pushed the country dangerously close to civil war.

Why then, if the government was unable to make the kind of concessions that the student leadership desired, did any talks take place at all? The answer is the Party leadership wished to "educate the masses and win over the

majority.” It was an attempt to apply the mass line, making use of the approach recommended by Mao in his article *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*.

But despite the sound decision to have Premier Li Peng engage in the May 18th meeting with the student leadership, one would have to sum up the results as being somewhat meager, as far as winning over large numbers of people goes. One reason for this lack of success was that Party disunity precluded putting a united summation of events to the masses of people through the media and threw a wet blanket on the grassroots work at the base. In addition, there were some contextual factors around the hunger strike which made it difficult to deal with, no matter how well discussions or talks were carried out.

The hunger strike was timed to coincide with the Sino-Soviet meeting which had long been in the works. The summit, which represented a crystallization of a number of important Chinese foreign policy objectives, limited the freedom of the CPC leadership in dealing with the mounting internal crisis. There are several reasons for this.

First, the presence of the Soviet leadership made it difficult to control the actions of Zhao. Politically, it would have been very difficult to remove him from the office of General Secretary (or to place him under house arrest) without conveying the impression of instability. In the past, Chinese-Soviet relations have been quite tense. Throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s the CPC leadership saw the Soviet Union as the main threat to China and devoted substantial resources to preparing for military hostilities. It is not surprising that the CPC would want to appear as strong and united as possible during the summit.

Second, with the arrival of the Soviet leadership came the international press. The forces grouped around the hunger strike correctly surmised that with the eyes of the world on Beijing, they could press further without a forceful response from the People's Government.

Third, the nature of the hunger strike itself was able to garner a considerable degree of sympathy and mass support. It conveyed a degree of seriousness that caused many who would ordinarily be indifferent to take notice. That the students advanced slogans which reflected mass sentiments, i.e. opposition to corruption and for greater accountability on the part of the state and Party, helped to mobilize people. Also, the degree of organization achieved by the liberalization forces was at its high point, and to an extent they were in a better position to control the type of messages that went out to the public. For example, among right-wing students there is a rap that identifies Mao as a fascist or feudalist. When the hunger strike began to gain support from other sections of the people, many of whom still admire Mao, it seems that spokespeople for the hunger strikes were careful to avoid characterizations of this type. (11)

Finally, the political space which came into being during the visit of the Soviet leadership, along with the hunger strike as a rallying point, gave the CPC rightists a tremendous amount of room to maneuver in.

For example, in his meeting with Gorbachev on May 16th, Zhao made the claim that all important decisions had to be cleared by Deng Xiaoping and that this was the first public disclosure of this bit of news. The purpose of this was clear to most observers; it was an attempt to disclaim responsibility for the Party's attempt to curb the turmoil and urge the people in the streets to overthrow Deng. There could be no other reason why one Party head would sit down with another and then say “I'm not the real leadership.” The result was that the demand for Deng to step down went up several decibels.

Some people have raised the point that Deng's role as described by Zhao represents a grave violation of democratic centralism. This is way off base. Deng was the Chair of the Central Military Commission, one of China's most important posts. It would be strange if important decisions were made and there was no process of



consultation. If the question is does Deng have veto power over all decisions made, the answer is no. Deng is a centrist figure in the CPC leadership core, whose role has frequently been to shield the right. It is a fact that he is on the winning side of most debates, and it is equally true that he has to adapt his positions to be so.

During the summit and immediately afterwards the crisis intensified. The Washington Post reported that on May 15th, several thousand demonstrators attempted to storm the Great Hall of the People, but were called back by student organizers. On May 16th, a reported half million people rallied in the Square. That day, while advising students to go back to class, Zhao stated that the Party would not try to “settle accounts” with anyone participating in the actions. The next day nearly 1,000,000 people were in the streets.

By this point demonstrators from all over China (including Tibet) had been mobilized to go to Beijing. According to the Washington Post: “Diplomats said the fact that protesting workers have been able to use state-enterprise trucks and easily obtain gasoline show that the forces for democracy have high level backing.”

Other reports have estimated that as many as 200,000 students from outside Beijing made their way to the capital.

Anyone who has ever pulled together a demonstration realizes that numbers like this do not simply materialize, without communication and organization. The Party rightists, the illegal student organizations and the broadcasts of Voice of America fulfilled these functions.

During his May 18th meeting with student leaders, the leftist Premier Li Peng made the following observation: “Some government functionaries, city residents, workers, even some personnel of the state council departments have taken to the streets to show their support for the hunger strikers. I hope you will not misunderstand them. They do so out of concern for you, hoping your health will not be harmed. But I do not totally approve of some of their practices...quite a number of them are encouraging you to keep on striking.”

## **Martial Law**

Even as the meeting was going on with the student leaders, the majority of the central leadership was coming to the conclusion that it would be necessary to proclaim martial law over parts of Beijing, including Tiananmen Square.

According to reports a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo was pulled together and two votes were taken on the question of martial law. In the first vote, Zhao was to cast the sole vote in opposition. During the second vote, he was joined by Hu Quili. Allegedly, Qiao Shi abstained. (12)

To understand why martial law was necessary, it is necessary to look at both the totality of the situation, and to grasp the fact that the Chinese leadership found some developments more alarming than others. Demonstrations took place in many cities, frequently with minimal police or military interference. This was not solely because rightists were in the leadership of these areas. We therefore have to examine the particularities of what was going on in Beijing.

As we stated, Zhao and his supporters had thrown the Party in Beijing into chaos. The merging of the rightists in the CPC with the advocates of liberalization had created a situation where there was a danger that the People's government would be overthrown. The official report on the turmoil gives the following summation:



“Against the backdrop of such schemes, slogans smearing Comrade Deng Xiaoping and attacking Comrade Li Peng were all around. Some demanded ‘Deng Xiaoping step down’ and ‘Li Peng step down in order to satisfy the people.’ Meanwhile slogans like ‘Support Zhao Ziyang,’ ‘Long Live Zhao Ziyang’ and that Zhao Ziyang be promoted to chairman of the Central Military Commission could be seen and heard in the demonstrations and at Tiananmen Square.”

“Plotters of the turmoil attempted to use the chaos as an opportunity to seize power. They distributed leaflets, proclaiming the founding of the Preparatory Committee to the People's Conference of All Circles in Beijing to replace the Municipal People's Congress. A call was made to establish “Beijing Regional Government” to replace the legal Beijing Municipal People's Government. They attacked the State Council, which was formed in accordance with the law, as “pseudo-government.” They also made rumors saying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a dozen other ministries already “declared independence” from the State Council and that about 30 countries in the world broke diplomatic relations with our country...”

The abovementioned material can be confirmed from sources other than the report. Some of it appeared in the western press and other points were widely discussed among groups of Chinese students abroad.

By the time martial law was proclaimed on May 20th, there is no way that any serious observer of the situation can say that the Party was up against a movement that wanted more accountability and less corruption. The forces favoring Western style capitalist “democracy,” operating in collusion with pro-Zhao elements, had gone further than they ever dreamed they would. That the movement they created could seriously discuss, call for, and begin to create organs of governance outside the existing state structure shows how serious the situation was.

While there are undoubtedly folks who think it would have been a fine thing if Zhao forces had gained the upper hand over the left, or that if the leadership of the “pro-democracy” movement would have been successful in radically altering the political situation, they should also be honest enough to answer the question, “In what direction would these forces have taken China?” Do they honestly believe that the East would still be Red? Can anyone imagine them still singing the International a couple years after their triumph?

## Setting the Stage for Counter-Revolution

The following account of events which led up to the fighting in Beijing is drawn from a number of sources, including official Chinese accounts, reports from the Western press, and discussions with people who are knowledgeable on Chinese affairs. Of course, it is possible there are errors or inaccuracies, as the events were extraordinarily complex.

On May 17th, Zhao's aid Bao Tong pulled together a meeting of people from the Political Structural Reform Research Center of the CPC Central Committee and released the information that martial law was on the agenda. On May 19th, Gao Shan, Deputy Bureau Director of the institution, made a trip to the Economic Structural Reform Institute (another pro-Zhao stronghold) where he related the information about martial law as well as instructions from “above” to a meeting which was already in progress there.

The upshot was that Chen Yizi, the head of the Economic Institute, put together a statement in the name of the Economic Structural Reform Institute. The statement provided what was essentially some of the main lines of agitation for the duration of the turmoil i.e., that a special Party Congress be convened and a special session of the National People's Congress should be opened.

On the morning of May 19th, Zhao and Li Peng went to Tiananmen Square. Li Peng conducted himself in accordance with the approach previously established by the Party, i.e., to show concern for the hunger strikes while attempting to bring the situation to an end. Zhao on the other hand openly voiced his support. In a tearful speech which was broadcast on TV, Zhao stated “We were too late coming. I’m sorry... Your criticism of us is justified.” After his speech in Tiananmen, Zhao became “ill” to avoid the leadership meeting that night which would do the final work on the martial law measures. Some time thereafter, the role of Zhao’s bodyguards underwent a 180 degree turn: Zhao was placed under what amounted to house arrest.

With martial law only hours away, members of the State Commission for Restructuring the Economy showed up in Tiananmen Square where they announced that Zhao had been relieved of his responsibilities. They called for a general strike and to “take immediate actions to fight a life and death struggle.” This call was reprinted in a People’s Daily Extra.

Literally, within less than an hour before the leadership meeting, the hunger strike was transformed into a sit-in, in a last ditch attempt to prevent martial law. It didn’t work, Li Peng appeared on TV late that night. In this speech Li stated that a handful of people were using the hunger strikers as “hostages” to force the government to yield to their political demands. As for the goals of this handful, Li said, “Their purpose is to overthrow the People’s Government elected by the National People’s Congress and totally negate the people’s democratic dictatorship. They stir up trouble everywhere, establish secret ties, set up illegal organizations and force the Party and government to recognize them. In doing so they attempted to lay a foundation for opposition factions and opposition parties in China. If they should succeed, the reform and opening to the outside world, democracy and legality and socialist modernization would all come to nothing.” While the speech was being given, troops were already in motion.

Despite the declaration of martial law, troops failed to arrive in Tiananmen on May 20th. There were several reasons for this. The first and most important is that civilians, apparently in the main organized by students, set up roadblocks on the outskirts of the cities. Because the troops had orders to avoid violent confrontations, it was difficult to enter the city as planned. Second, it seems clear that there was a current of dissent within the military itself. Allegedly a group of retired military commanders sent a letter to the People’s Daily saying that it would be wrong for the People’s Liberation Army to enter Beijing.

That contradictions within the Party would be reflected inside the PLA is understandable. Many Party leaders (especially the older ones) have extensive military experience, while virtually all ranking military personnel are members of the Party. For example, the head of the Beijing Military Region is also an alternate member to the Politburo. Zhao himself was a leading member of the Central Military Commission, which is the body with overall responsibility for the armed forces. However, from what is generally known about PLA politics, it seems unlikely that Zhao’s brand of rightism would have found much of a base. Unlike most Western military forces, life in the PLA has an extremely active political and ideological character to it. In the context of China, the PLA tends to be on the left end of the political spectrum.

But despite the generally good political orientation of the Liberation Army, there is no such thing as coup insurance, so while the initial military units were bogged down on the outskirts of Beijing, more kept arriving from outlying areas. The fact that they brought things with them like anti-aircraft guns (which were reportedly briefly set up in Tiananmen Square on June 5th), missiles and heavy artillery seems to be an indication that the central leadership was at least considering the possibility that sections of the army might go over to the counter-revolution. Furthermore, while it has yet to be established that there was any reservoir of good feeling towards Zhao in the PLA itself, there have been many rumors to the effect that the Ministry of Defense is another story.

While more and more troops were assembling outside Beijing, virtually every force in Beijing was active. Some of the key developments included:

An attempt to pull together an emergency meeting of the National People's Congress for the purpose of suspending martial law and bringing down Li Peng. Speaking at the July 5th meeting of the Standing Committee of the NPC, Song Rufen charged that fellow Standing Committee member Hu Jiwei “was responsible for the incident, which was part of the conspiratorial activities to stir up turmoil and an assault on the socialist legal system.” He also stated that Hu's activities were inseparable from his support for Zhao who endorsed the call on May 21st.

The press attempted to give Zhao a final shot in the arm and undermine martial law. The L.A. Times gave this summation: “The organs of propaganda – the state television network, the People's Daily, the New China News Agency – were registering opposition to martial law.” “All the encouraging signs – in the Chinese press, on television, in the streets, can now be seen, in retrospect, as final, desperate public moves by Zhao and his allies to galvanize support, particularly within the army...” The Washington Post in its coverage of a demonstration of 100,000 people who were calling for an emergency NPC meeting note that the New China News Agency had claimed almost 1,000,000 were present, “perhaps 10 times more than actually turned out.” Incredibly enough, despite martial law regulations the Chinese media allowed the western press to continue to make use of its transmission facilities.

The Party began to consolidate its membership and to mobilize some of the forces around it. On May 23rd and 24th, the Politburo met and reportedly formalized the decision that Zhao had to go. According to the South China Morning Post, at one of these meetings Deng referred to Zhao as a counter-revolutionary. Reportedly, documents were circulated in all Party branches reaffirming the assessment for the April 26th editorial, criticizing Zhao, and calling on Party members to fight the turmoil.

On May 25th, wall posters went up in Beijing stating the Institute for the Reform of the Political Structure, run by Bao Tang, was a “hothouse for counter-revolutionaries.” The official report states that “Urban and suburban districts organized workers, residents and government office workers, as many as 120,000 all together, to maintain social order.” By the end of May, the Party began holding anti-turmoil demonstrations outside Beijing, one of which featured Fang Lizhi being led around on a leash by a person dressed as Uncle Sam (Fang Lizhi is a running dog of the U.S.). A report in the western press stated that 10,000 people attended one of these actions, which is not bad for an outlying area. Also, by months end, the Party, with the help of military work teams, was able to liberate much of the press from pro-Zhao, pro-liberalization forces.

While the ability of the “pro-democracy” movement to mobilize people declined substantially during the last 10 days of May, the movement that remained became more extreme and more organized. By the end of the month it has been estimated that 2/3 of the students in the Square, which now numbered about 20,000, were from outside of Beijing. Organizations such as the Beijing Autonomous Workers Unions seemed to be more in a process of consolidation than rapid growth (at this time there is no evidence that this organization comprised more than a relatively small section of the capital's labor movement).

On May 27th, the Federation of College Students came up with a stunt that would give the movement a push -- the construction of a Statue of Liberty in Tiananmen Square. Unfortunately for those U.S. leftists who want to stick their heads in the sand, and give the “Goddess of Liberty and Democracy” a socialist nature, a former graduate student from the school where the statue was made, was present when it was put together. Tsao Hsingyuan then wrote the following for the LA Times: “The federation suggested that the sculpture be a replica of the Statue of Liberty, like the smaller one that had been carried in a procession by demonstrations in Shanghai two days earlier. But the sculpture students rejected that idea: It might be seen as too openly pro-

American and copying an existing work was contrary to their principles as creative artists.” And, “The place on the Square had been chosen carefully. It was on the great axis heavy with symbolism, that extended from the main entrance of the Forbidden City, with the huge portrait of Mao Zedong, through the monument of People's Heroes, which had become the students' headquarters. The statue was to be set up just across the broad avenue from Mao so that it would confront him.” Despite the attention it managed to attract internationally, it only managed to attract about 50,000 people. A movement always says something about itself in the symbols it creates and utilizes. By placing the hypocritical symbol of the worst oppressor of the world's peoples in Tiananmen Square, the “pro-democracy” movement was offering a sad commentary on itself.

In addition to erection of the statue, the movement's leadership also hit upon the scheme to throw some fuel on the fire -- a four-person hunger strike of intellectuals which included one Liu Xiaobo. Because Liu has been identified as “one of the handful” who manipulated the student movement, a few words about him are in order. In 1988, in a signed article, Liu wrote that he was in favor of the “four replacements” which were “The one-party autocracy can only be replaced by the democratic system of multi-party coexistence; the public ownership and planned economy by private ownership and the market economy; the monistic thinking by freedom of pluralistic speech and ideology; and traditional Chinese culture by modern world (western) culture.”

Liu was in New York when the student movement began, and did not arrive in Beijing until the beginning of May. Lui's responsibilities included collection and editing articles for the news sheet Voices of the Square and he was in charge of the preparatory work for establishing the Beijing Federation of All Circles -- the organization which some imagined would replace the local government. The official report on the turmoil states, “The Hong Kong-based Ming Pao Daily News published a ‘dialogue’ on June 2 between Liu Xiaobo, one of the organizers and planners, and a mainland democratic movement leader, in which Liu said, ‘We must organize an armed force among the people to materialize Zhao Ziyang's comeback.’”

## Fighting In Beijing

There was no massacre in Beijing, at least in any normal sense of the word's usage. There was in fact a rebellion, which was counter-revolutionary in nature, that was eventually put down by military force. The myth that tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square one evening and proceeded to shoot down peaceful students would be laughable, if people, including some who profess to be revolutionaries, did not happen to believe it.

The actual situation was very different. Between June 1st and June 4th there was a rising tide of violence in Beijing. Although the “democracy movement” had lost some of its steam, there was still a situation of dual power within the city. While the Party did everything possible to resolve the conflict peacefully, they had no intention of handing over the city to the forces of liberalization or Zhao. Nor did the Party intend to allow the crisis to drag on until the scheduled opening of the National People's Congress on June 20, which the students had voted to continue their occupation of the square until.

On June 1st, the Public Security Bureau detained some of the leaders of the Autonomous Workers Union. As a result, the offices of the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau and the Municipal Party Committee and government were surrounded, and some assaults were made on them.

On the night of June 2nd, a police jeep on loan to Chinese Central TV was involved in a traffic accident in which three people died. According to the New York Times “word quickly spread that the police had run down and killed four citizens,” and because many people believed the rumors that this traffic accident was a part of some kind of military maneuver the situation in Beijing became much more tense. The Toronto Globe and Mail reports that at the time of the accident “thousands of foot soldiers, mostly unarmed and in civilian clothes, were

jogging into the city. They were supposed to enter undetected, surround the square and peacefully persuade the students to leave. But the crowds engulfed the soldiers. Some chased them until the soldiers broke rank.” A column approaching from the opposite direction also ran into opposition. Military vehicles were overturned and soldiers were searched for weapons.

On the morning of June 3rd more attacks were made on military vehicles. Reporters for Time magazine stated, “By 7 a.m. though, students and young workers outside Zhongnanhai were smashing their way into two military buses filled with light machine guns and crates of ammunition...” “As for isolated pockets of troops hemmed in at intersections and overpasses around the city, the crowd was not in a mood to merely lecture them. In some places, the troops were stripped almost naked, chased or struck by angry citizens. Other injured troops had difficulty getting to hospitals as mobs deflated or slashed the tires of military ambulances.”

There is a point to going through these accounts from the press; that troops were being disarmed, military vehicles were being attacked, and soldiers were being beaten long before the PLA resorted to counter-violence. It should be understood that these weren't riot control police. They were not carrying nightsticks. Some carried guns and others didn't. When the bourgeois liberals incited people, they were inviting tragedy.

The charges made by some forces in the pro-“democracy” movement, that the government purposely allowed arms to fall into the hands of students, is by its very nature very difficult to determine the truth of. For example the student leaders claim that they tried to give 27 rifles taken from soldiers to a military commander but he refused to accept them. Another student leader claims that they returned 2 busloads of arms and they still have the receipt. As for the armored personnel carrier -- well it was put in their hands by a “suspicious” character.

Later in the day, several incidents would occur which would greatly exacerbate the situation. The first was when a crowd of people seized a vehicle loaded with arms and security forces waged an intense battle with them. Although no one was killed, there were some injuries sustained by the rioters. A short time later, the western press reports that a number of government buildings were attacked and their guards injured. About 1000 people entered a construction site and seized iron bars, tools, bricks and anything else which could be used as weapons. According to the official report it was at this juncture that broadcasts were made in the square urging the “overthrow of the government.” By now the situation in Beijing was completely out of control.

The decision was made to bring in the troops which remained outside Beijing. At 6:30 on the night of June 3, the announcement was made around Beijing that people should remain in their neighborhoods and stay away from Tiananmen Square. The Toronto Globe and Mail describes what happened: “The next night [June 3] the government decided to bring in tanks, which also meshed with its plans to dispose of Zhao. Still there was to be no shooting of civilians. Chinese sources said President Yang Shangkun issued a secret order saying soldiers could use any measures except firing their guns to clear the square.”

Sometime, late in the evening of June 3, the soldiers did begin to fire their weapons, and fought their way to Tiananmen Square. Both soldiers and civilians were killed. Of the civilians killed, some were rioters and others were hit by stray bullets. It is possible that some of the gunfire from the troops was indiscriminate. It is also possible that some civilians were killed by other civilians with firearms, for example after rioters snatched an armored personnel carrier, they decided to try out its machine gun.

Despite claims to the contrary there is no hard evidence that anyone died in the Square itself, although some were certainly killed in the fighting around Tiananmen. Despite the presence of many western media personnel with video cameras, not one has produced a photo of a casualty there. Likewise the claim that sleeping students were crushed in their tents by tanks, etc. seems farfetched. Heavy fighting had been going on for at least 4-5 hours before the troops arrived at the Square and it is difficult to imagine anyone sleeping through it.



One of the intellectuals who participated in the four-person hunger strike with Liu Xiaobo, a composer who had come over from Taiwan has given an interesting account of the events on the Square since he emerged from hiding in a “foreign institution.”

“During the whole withdrawal process, I didn't see a single student, other citizens, or soldiers killed in the Square. Nor did I see any armored troop carriers rolling over people.” What he did see was tear gas bombs being used in the southwest corner of the Square and soldiers firing into the air and at loudspeakers.

While it is difficult to estimate the total number of people killed in the sum total of the fighting, a couple of points should be made. Talk about “thousands” is way off base. The New York Times, which at least showed an interest at arriving at an accurate figure say the number was about 700. A figure from the Chinese Red Cross of 3600 has been floated out there from time to time, but the problem with it is that no such statement was made by them. Officially the Chinese hold that 6000 martial law soldiers, armed police and security forces were wounded and several dozens were killed. As for civilians, 3000 were wounded and over 200, including 36 students, were killed.

Sad as it might be that deadly combat would break out in a socialist country, there is a worse alternative; the overthrow of people's rule and the enslavement of China by the imperialist powers. While there were many contradictions at work, many good and decent people in motion with just demands and aspirations, and real shortcomings in the work of the CPC, in the final analysis the confrontation in Beijing was between capitalism and socialism.

There are Marxists in this country who desperately want to avoid this reality. They must either torture the facts and say the goal of the movement's leadership was to improve socialism or failing that, they must resort to silly statements, such as the students had internalized socialist values and therefore they should be supported. Or that most of them were subjectively patriotic and therefore we should not be too critical. We are dealing with real forces with real leadership. The issue was what class would hold political power and whether socialism or capitalism would rule in China.

## **No Retreat, No Surrender**

Though it is true that the future is unwritten, in the months following the crackdown it is possible to discern some general trends in Chinese politics, which will probably characterize the next period. And, with the benefit of hindsight it is possible to get a handle on why the support of workers and peasants for the pro-”democracy” movement was relatively limited. Chinese communists have undergone a severe test, and there will probably be more such tests ahead, although it is unlikely they will assume the intensity of the most recent one.

## **More Struggle in the CPC**

Generally speaking, the center of gravity in the CPC leadership has shifted to the left, although it is clear there is still more than a little conflict. One reflection of this is ongoing debate on the fate of former General Secretary Zhao. The pronouncement by the Central Committee that Zhao split the Party and sided with the turmoil would seem to indicate criminal proceedings sometime in the future. However at this time he has yet to be expelled from the Party and officially his case is still under investigation. The seeming inability of the core leadership to resolve an issue of this magnitude indicates that sharp line struggle still continues.

Also, there have been no wholesale expulsions of Zhao supporters in the Party apparatus, although some have been sharply criticized and organizational measures (removal from posts and expulsion) have been taken against a very few of the worst offenders.

The other side of the coin is that while conflict continues, in all likelihood there is now a higher degree of unity in the leadership than at any time from the early 1980s on. The best indicator of this is the large number of initiatives undertaken by the leadership since the crackdown, particularly in the sphere of Party/people relations. There are some “China watchers” who argue that this relative unity is only temporary and that it will break down when Deng Xiaoping dies. In a sense, of course they are correct, the CPC is a living party and class struggle is reflected within it. Since its inception, right (and ultra-left) opportunist forces have tried to take over its helm. When Deng passes away, some conflict will emerge. However, the most likely result of this conflict will be another setback for the right. This is because the balance of forces has shifted and the right has been weakened in this past period. Furthermore, because Deng's errors (support for Zhao and Hu) contributed to the conditions which led to the turmoil, his influence has waned in the past year. As a result, the conflict will not be as sharp as it might have been under other circumstances.

While it is easier to study (and speculate about) divisions in the leadership, it is more difficult to get a sense of where the rank and file or the middle level cadres are at. This of course is another important factor for determining the future of CPC policies. One thing to keep in mind for the long term is that approximately one third of the Party membership was recruited during the course of the Cultural Revolution and the arrival of many of these activists in leadership posts will have an effect on the policies of the Party. One interesting aside here is that with the reconstitution of the leading body of the Politburo, for the first time in more than 10 years, a majority was constituted that was not overthrown or persecuted during the Cultural Revolution.

There is also some statistical information available on what lower level Party members think, in the form of results from an extensive survey conducted by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. On one side, about 5.5% “hold a negative attitude towards upholding the four cardinal principles.” Also, about 20.5% see the reform as a “mode of capitalism, or something with an uncertain, impure character.” What these numbers mean in practice is hard to say, although it would be a safe bet to conclude that the 5.5% who are against the four cardinal principals would tend to support the right, and the 20% who have a negative view of the reforms would tend to go with the left, (or ultra-left if one arose).

The point of all this is that a major blowout in the leadership, which led to Zhao-type forces taking over the CPC is unlikely unless the rightists can put together some unholy alliance with dissident military forces, of which there are not many. This means that we can expect some continuity and that the bulk of leadership will remain committed to carrying the socialist project through to its completion.

## Relations Between the Party and the People

The entry of the People's Liberation Army into Beijing was by no means the only reason that socialism was not overthrown, or locked into a road towards disintegration. Realistically, unless the pro-liberalization forces or their rightist allies in the Party are successful in gaining mass support among China's two basic classes - the peasantry and the working class - it is extremely unlikely they will be able to topple the government.

Fundamentally, how well the Party fares is going to be determined by its basic policies. If these policies are basically wrong, the CPC is certain to lose the support of the classes.

The following two sections of this paper will review some basic policies of the CPC as they impact on the working class and the peasantry, with an eye towards understanding what is the majority view of both classes towards the pro-”democracy” movement.

## The Peasantry

China is primarily a rural country. Most people are engaged in farming. More than three-fourths of the population is involved in the production, distribution and processing of agricultural goods. Agriculture is not mechanized.

Historically, the peasantry has provided the backbone of support for the Chinese Communist movement. The revolutionary process was one where the countryside surrounded the cities -- a protracted people's war. This is very different than what took place in the Soviet Union, where the working class was not only the leading force in the insurrection, but the main force as well.

Since 1978, the countryside has undergone a dramatic transformation. At the core of this change has been the abolition of the People's Communes and their replacement by the household responsibility system. This is a change from a relatively high level of agricultural collectivization to a somewhat lower one.

As some people have argued that the changes in the countryside amount to an abandonment of the socialist road by the current CPC leadership (and that as a result it is fine if they are brought down) it is useful to take a more in-depth look at the changes in agricultural policy.

In the People's Communes (the main form of agricultural organization up through the late 1970s), workteams were the basic accounting unit. Practically speaking this meant a group of families undertook responsibility for cultivating a certain area of land or carrying out a construction project and when harvest time came the surplus generated (the percentage of food that did not go to the state) was divided up among the workteam members based on the amount of work points that individuals within the teams accumulated. The number of work points given for a project was decided by the workteams themselves. Except in places where people's political consciousness was high, the result of this policy was extreme equalitarianism, i.e., people tended to get paid the same amount for varying degrees of work. After a hard day in the fields most people didn't feel like debating who would get 3, 4, or 5 work points. As a result the amount of work done tended to sink to the lowest common denominator, causing production to suffer. Also, the communes tended to be cumbersome when it came down to economic decision-making, although they were good for big projects like irrigation works.

The household responsibility system meant that each farming family took responsibility for a given area of land, agreeing that a certain amount would be produced for the state and the surplus above that can be disposed of as the family sees fit. The land is still collectively owned, but it is understood that improvements an individual farmer makes will benefit the person or his/her family.

The reason why the household responsibility system is superior in the current context is relatively simple -- it led to a dramatic increase in agricultural production and has led to a better standard of living for most peasants. Signs of this abound in rural China, for example, the housing boom. One of the best indicators of the overall shift which has occurred is that today fewer people are engaged in agriculture and more is being produced. It should be noted that among China scholars there are only a tiny handful that disagree with the proposition that there has been an upsurge in agricultural production.

The point of new relations of production is they speed the development of the productive forces. If “advanced” relations of production, such as those that characterized the People's Communes, discourage production, they are worse than useless, they are harmful. If socialism is unable to improve people's lives, they will reject it. Blindly establishing relations of production that go beyond where people are at leads to more socialism (in the abstract) with fewer socialists. (13)

Despite some social costs, the increase in production in the countryside has been able to consolidate a large base of support for the CPC policies. One sign of this is that in interview after interview, in the western and Chinese press, working peasants express a single recurring fear: that the reforms are only temporary and that a “change of wind” is going to lead to a return of past policies.

Because the rural policies are popular, peasants did not join in the turmoil. In fact the Party was able to organize several well attended anti-chaos rallies on the outskirts of Beijing (well attended being a relative term - population density is much higher in cities). Western reporters who went to the countryside found three basic responses to the events in Beijing: fear that instability would lead to a change in policies, hostility towards the turmoil and indifference.

As some critics have put forward different explanations for the non-participation of the peasantry in the turmoil, they deserve some examination. In general, leaders of the student movement have dwelled on the idea that the farmers are too “ignorant to understand democracy.” In addition to the obvious elitism of this view, it ignores the long history of political mobilizations in the countryside. A view which is more common in the West is that the Chinese leadership has been somehow able to keep the rural people in the dark about the events in the cities. This ignores the fact that the countryside is not the place it once was. Most people have radios, many have access to TV's and newspapers are regularly delivered. Because much of the media was in the hands of pro-Zhao forces, people outside the cities heard positive things about the demos. Also, the Voice of America reaches the countryside, the same as it does the cities, so everyone in China benefited from its “objective” blow by blow account of events.

Finally, there are some people who believe that the discontent which does exist in the countryside will somehow merge with the pro-“democracy” movement in the event of a bad harvest or some other disaster. This is probably more the product of wishful (and reactionary) thinking than anything else. One only needs to listen to the speeches of the student leaders, or to read their leaflets, to know that their heads are light years away from the concerns of China's rural population. If there is a bad harvest, or if the state has inadequate funds to pay for agricultural products, the most likely results will be the rise of equalitarianism in the less developed areas, coupled with resistance to making grain deliveries in the better off areas.

## Urban Workers

Like the rural areas, China's industry has also undergone some major changes since 1978, although the results have been much more mixed. In the cities, the reform process tends to much more complex, and one result of this is it is much more difficult to say what policies have expanded the Party's working class base, and which have narrowed it. For purposes of this paper two aspects of the reforms will be examined in depth - “smashing the iron rice bowl” and the decision to allow small businesses to develop.

First, there is one thing people should be clear on, the vast majority of workers support the Party and socialism. In 1986 the All-China Federation of Trade Unions undertook one of the most ambitious surveys in China's history, polling almost 750,000 workers. The results revealed that 80% of the workers were in support of the Four Cardinal Principles while about 20% believed them to be outdated, in contradiction to reform, or didn't

know what they were. It is safe to conclude from these figures that Chinese workers do not favor a restoration of capitalism.

It is a pet theory of some western leftists that Chinese workers are furious because the iron rice bowl (guaranteed job, wages, benefits regardless of work done) is being smashed while the leadership preserves a golden rice bowl for themselves. There are no doubt some people in China who believe that, and who are fearful of the overall program of wage reform, but there is good reason to believe that most Chinese workers do not see things that way. For one thing, it cannot really be said that the iron rice bowl has been smashed, and for another, there is data available about how Chinese workers view wage reform.

The essence of wage reform is an attempt to implement Marx's dictum "from each according to their ability, to each according to their work." During the period of socialism, those who work harder, and develop their skills should be paid more. Another way of putting it is that material incentives should be used to spur production. (14)

While there have been some success stories in more closely linking input with pay in the post 1978 period, there are some indications that in fact aspects of the iron rice bowl are being strengthened. For example, earlier this year the new General Secretary of the CPC, Jiang Zemin wrote: "The stubborn malpractice of equalitarianism has not been eliminated but has even increased and expanded in certain departments and spheres. The problem is particularly evident in the distribution of wages in state enterprises and institutions. First and foremost wage disparities for various members are narrowing day by day."

Jiang then goes on to cite a mix of occupations where wage gaps are narrowing. While some people might think that this equalitarianism is healthy, in fact it is not. What it means is that people who perform skilled or complex labor receive wages, benefits, etc., similar to those with much less training or expertise. One result is that there is very little motivation for people to develop new skills, and those who have them tend to burn out.

But the rights and wrongs of equalitarianism aside, the reality of declining wage gaps, coupled with the fact that there has been no real change in the degree of job security (dismissals and layoffs are still almost unheard of) would lead one to question the "iron rice bowl" point of view.

The survey conducted by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions indicated that the vast majority of workers had a positive impression of the wage reform program, although the reasons for the support varied. About 67% approved, provided that the wage gap between the ranks was not "too great." Another 22% were supportive because they believed that it would lead to wage increases that would compensate for inflation. About 7% were flat-out opposed, believing that "it would not be conducive to unity and would instead lead to comparisons and competition."

However, if workers welcomed the wage reforms, what then are the main sources of dissatisfaction among urban working people? Once again, the survey provides some clues. Like workers here, the bulk were unhappy with wages, benefits and working conditions. Another 15% identified bad style of work on the part of work unit and enterprise cadre as their main grievance. There is no evidence whatsoever that the majority of Chinese workers favored an end to socialism, the introduction of pluralism, or bringing down the leadership of the CPC.

Most observers would agree that before May 4th, workers were by and large absent from the demonstrations. After the Party split, and the Zhao forces began their breakaway, there was a steady increase in labor participation. By mid-May workers in enterprise trucks with work unit banners flying were arriving in Tiananmen Square. Even then, it would be necessary to torture the facts to contend that the counter-revolutionary motion ever encompassed anything approaching the majority of the working class. When the



Zhao forces came under heavy fire following the proclamation of martial law, anything resembling broad organized labor support for the student movement collapsed. It was then the small “Beijing Autonomous Workers' Federation” that played a leading role in mobilizing workers for the actions.

Despite calls for a general strike and labor stoppages, the student leadership, the Zhao forces, and the “independent” union were unable to mount any major sustained industrial actions before or after the events at Tiananmen. To explain this away, some observers have asserted the workers were intimidated. If this was the case why wasn't there huge outpourings of working people after work hours when it would have been very difficult to determine who was doing what? Furthermore, while it is true that some factory leaderships discouraged labor participation, it is also true that others encouraged it. (15)

A more likely explanation for the lack of labor participation is that in the early period, workers basically thought that the events in Tiananmen were irrelevant to their lives. When the student movement changed its tactics, and pushed anti-corruption and accountability slogans, coupled with the wholesale entry of the Zhao forces, some workers were mobilized. Later when the nature of the movement became more clear, labor support tended to fall away, although the supporters that stuck with the “pro-democracy” movement were more hardcore. After the events of June 3-4, the situation in the vast majority of workplaces normalized quickly.

## Changing for the Better

There is a story in China about an emperor who devotes his entire life to the study of dragons. He reads books about them. Has statues made of them, and covers his wall with pictures of them. One day he finally meets a dragon, and as a result he is nearly frightened to death. In the U.S., there are “revolutionaries” who are just like this. For years they have been whining about China taking the capitalist road. They have catalogued in their minds every rightist error that the Chinese leadership has made since the death of Mao and have built up little arsenals of anecdotes concerning China's social problems. One would think that they would be rejoicing at some of the changes that have taken place in China since June. Many of the mistakes that they have talked so long about are finally being addressed. But for them, the Chinese leadership cannot do a thing right.

For example in the field of education, serious mistakes have been made in the past. Starting in the late 1970s China launched a crash drive to produce more scientists, technicians, etc., to assist the program for socialist modernization. In part this was necessitated by the shortage of experts that resulted from the Cultural Revolution period. The result was to produce a lot of people who knew their specialties, but were ignorant about politics and society. Hopefully the post-June educational policy will deal with this problem.

When the new President of Beijing University spoke to students at the beginning of this school year, he stressed that it was the task of universities to train students to be both “red and expert.” This orientation, i.e., developing students who know their fields and at the same time are Marxist-Leninists, is critical to any socialist education policy. Also, it has been announced that there will be a return to the correct policy of having students do manual labor in the factories and fields as a prerequisite for completing their higher education.

While it is understandable that the Western press would denounce a policy that turns “physicists into pig farmers,” it is strange that revolutionaries here would not welcome these changes. There is absolutely no reason why intellectuals should not be familiar with the day-to-day life of workers and peasants and the practical problems that the country is facing at the grassroots. Socialist China has no use for a bunch of ivory tower intellectuals and revolutionary universities should not be in the position of producing such people. A policy of combining learning with labor is necessary if the institutions of higher education are going to be something other than the breeding ground for a new elite.

Another educational reform which seems to have caused some dismay in the West is the decision to provide students with military training. For purposes of background a couple of points should be made. First, this is by no means something new. Military training as a component of higher education has been the rule rather than the exception throughout most of New China's history. For example, during the Cultural Revolution there was a policy called the “three stresses, two militaries.” The first military was military control over certain areas, and the other was military training for students. And second, this reform has been extensively discussed in the Chinese press at least since 1987. Because of a major cut in the size of the armed forces (a cut of one million soldiers) and the dislocation that it caused, it was impossible to begin the training in a big way at the time.

Beyond noting precedent and plans, it should be said that in and of itself, it is a good thing for students to train with the People's Liberation Army. This is because army life puts students in contact with people who are likely to be from different class backgrounds and the PLA has retained its character as “a great university for the study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought.”

Changes are afoot in other fields as well. In the realm of culture there is a major left offensive going on. Right-wingers in the Ministry of Culture have been turned out. Some of the more obnoxious stuff that crept into cinema and onto TV has been subjected to intense criticism. Porn is being liberally crushed - with steamrollers.

On the economic front, it is difficult to assess what kind of changes are in the making. That China will persist in the reforms and the open door policy, while adhering to the four cardinal principles is a given. What is less clear is how the drive against bourgeois liberalization will affect the scope and direction of the economic transformation.

On the balance there have been some encouraging signs. In all likelihood, private businesses will be facing some thoroughgoing scrutiny which will culminate in new restrictions. Speeches by the leadership have devoted far more attention to the “corrupt practices” of a “sizable percentage” of business people, while de-emphasizing the positive role that they have the potential to play in building the planned commodity economy. If this new line is transformed into correct policy, it will reflect China's commitment to keep to the socialist road.

By allowing the existence of private businesses for the purpose of invigorating the economy, two serious problems developed. The first was the creation of a group of people whose class interests were hostile to the continued existence of socialism, as socialism placed limits on what they could do. It also created a degree of inequality that is unhealthy.

In an important theoretical article, written early this year, the new general secretary of the CPC addressed the issue in fairly blunt terms. In a country where the average take home pay is generally less than 2000 yuan, General Secretary Jiang reports, “In some small commodity markets about 80% of the individuals have a yearly income exceeding 10,000 yuan. What is more households making 100,000 yuan a year have come to light.” He also notes that 70% of the private businesses in Shanghai are functioning outside the law. The conclusion he draws is, “This is not only a serious affront to workers, farmers, intellectuals and also the various salaried social strata who work for a living, but also a blight on the general mood of society leading directly to social instability...”

Things to watch for in the future would include a mass re-registration of private businesses, new accounting regulations, calls for popular supervision (“turn in price gougers to the nearest public security office”), and trials for the worst tax evaders.

Also, there are signs that there might well be wholesale restrictions on spheres in which private business could operate. In allowing the existence of individually owned businesses, it was never the intention of the CPC

leadership to create a “parallel economy” which competed with the socialist sector. The expectation was that these merchants and corporations would center their activities in handicraft production and the service sector. As private businesses have managed to considerably extend their field of operations, it is the feeling of at least some of the CPC leadership that the time has come to push back the front with new regulations.

Another positive development is the assault on “privatization” which has received a great deal of attention in the Chinese press. The strengths of the publicly owned industry is now being stressed, while privatization is being categorized as “restoring capitalism.”

Corrupt cadre, big and small, are also getting their due. One of the first moves by the CPC leadership after the crackdown was to ban the participation of the daughters and sons of the national leadership from any business endeavors. The corporation which Deng Xiaoping's son is a part of was dissolved and will have to bear the legal consequences for its activities (currency violations). A call for the masses of people to turn in the corrupt, combined with a call for those who have engaged in criminal activities to turn themselves in, has netted tens of thousands of officials that abused their offices. Several provincial leaders are among those facing charges.

Corruption, of course was one of the big contributing factors in the turmoil. For example, in North China, autoworkers who had contributed to the fund that Deng Xiaoping's son runs for the handicapped marched behind a banner which read “Give us back our money.” If the CPC leadership is successful in identifying and punishing the cadre which have fallen to “sugar coated bullets,” it will go a long way to improving the relationship between the Party and the people.

To sum up the changes that we can expect on the economic front, what can be expected is a shift in emphasis rather than a general repudiation of the reform program. For example, the slogan “some must get rich first, so that we can all become well of together” will now have its second part stressed. While economic experiments will continue for the time being (until there is a comprehensive summation of them) it is unlikely that they will be employed in new areas or factories. Attempts are being made to draw more workers into the democratic management of the factories, which will have the effect of subjecting some of the new economic mechanisms to a closer look. Furthermore, CPC propaganda is laying a renewed stress on the purpose of the reforms, i.e., to strengthen socialism. If this is pushed with vigor, it cannot help but to have a healthy effect on summing up the past period and moving into the next one.

## Some Points of Theory

One of the relatively popular summations on the U.S. left is that the recent events in China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe show that the day of the single-party state has passed and that the Chinese leadership, by sticking with the four cardinal principles, have become dinosaurs ripe for extinction. In maintaining this, these leftists are setting themselves against Leninism, the existing socialist countries and the long term interests of the Chinese people.

To examine this issue more closely, it should be noted that China, as well as a number of other socialist countries, do have more than one legal political party. China has about eight, several of which managed to gain some notoriety by vacillating during the turmoil. These political parties are not opposition parties and do function within a context where the leading role of the CPC is guaranteed in the constitution.

This state of affairs correctly reflects the needs and tasks of Chinese socialism. The CPC is the party of the Chinese working class. The survey taken by the Trade Union Federation indicates that a substantial section of Chinese workers who are currently outside the Party are working to become qualified to join. The CPC's 40

some million members are mainly drawn from the working class and peasantry. The CPC's ranks include the advanced of the working people. China defines itself as a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. If the CPC should not play a leading role within this particular form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, who should?

The Communist Party is the key political and organizational vehicle for the Chinese people to advance socialist construction. When people say more parties should be allowed to organize and grow, the question has to be asked to what ends? If the goal is to perfect the socialist system and develop China, there really is no reason why someone should not join with or support the CPC. If the goal is to leave the socialist road, there is really no reason why the CPC and the People's government should not assess the nature of the threat and take action.

Mao once made the point that every idea is stamped with the brand of a class. In the Chinese context, it is fundamentally anti-socialist elements who would benefit from the introduction of pluralism. This is best indicated by the trends which place themselves in the vanguard of the turmoil. In China today, negating the leading role of the Party under the banner of pluralism means freedom for counter-revolution to organize.

Some leftists say, while “parties represent classes, the working class can and should be represented by more than one political party during the period of socialism.” As this appears reasonable on the surface of things it needs closer examination.

In the bourgeois democracies, the ruling class is represented by many parties. This is because different groups of exploiters have different immediate interests. The same thing cannot be said about the working class, while there are certainly differences, in the final analysis there is a unity of fundamental interests and goals. Can anyone name one situation where in a pre-revolutionary situation the long-term interests of the working class were represented by more than one party? Realistically, experience has demonstrated once Marxism is fused with the workers' movement, the revolutionary organizations tend to merge into a single party, those that stay outside that process generally do so because they are representatives of the other hostile classes within the people's movement. In Nicaragua, the left parties that have remained outside the orbit of the FSLN have ended up collaborating with U.S. imperialism. In Russia, the best elements of the Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionary Party, etc., joined the Bolsheviks while the rest fought for counter-revolution. In Vietnam, those “Leftists” (Trots) who opposed the Vietnamese Workers Party sabotaged the struggle for national liberation and had to be eradicated.

Under socialism, there is still class struggle and there are still external enemies; enemies that work with indigenous reactionaries and try to “roll back communism.” This fact alone should lead one to conclude that the working class should retain its political and organizational unity. Look anywhere in the world today and you will find that the more “parties of the working class” that exist in any particular country, the less political power that working class will have (the point here being that differences so basic that they result in the formation of different parties are generally indicative of a reflection of class struggle within the people's movement, and that unity of the revolutionary forces is a basic pre-condition for a successful revolution or the building of socialist society).

## **The crisis of Socialism**

There is a new grouping of socialist countries coming into being. Whether it defines itself as a camp, block, trend, or simply as a group of fraternal parties really does not matter. The important thing here is that a number of parties have decided to stick with Marxism-Leninism and have maintained the perspective that the socialist road should not be abandoned. Generally speaking, these countries continue to insist that the Communist Party

maintains its leading role in society, and have shown a limited degree of enthusiasm for the changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (there are reports that the leadership of the CPC has put together a confidential document which is highly critical of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the situation in Eastern Europe).

There has been a noticeable improvement in the relationship between Cuba and the People's Republic of China over the course of the past year. The Cuba press has reported on the turmoil from the perspective of the CPC leadership. A high level Chinese delegation recently traveled to Cuba for the purpose of improving trade relations and exchanging views. Fidel Castro has been invited to Beijing, and while this invitation has yet to be accepted, the hype that it has received in the Cuban press indicates that it will be. In addition the leadership of the Cuban party has displayed a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for the turn of events in the Soviet Union. When Castro raised the slogan "Marxism-Leninism or death" earlier this year, it is extremely unlikely he was trying to send a message to the U.S. Cuba has moved to cut some Soviet publications and an aspect of the Cuban "rectification movement" is to prepare the country for being more self-reliant.

Nicaragua's FSLN recently sent a delegation to Beijing, where it expressed support for the CPC leadership. Relations between the two countries have warmed steadily over the past several years, but it is arguable that this last visit represented a qualitative leap forward. The leadership of socialist Korea have also been extremely supportive of the CPC leadership -- they congratulated the Chinese Party and state for stopping counter-revolution. Though Vietnam sent mixed signals on the crackdown in China, the military's radio station reportedly broadcast a message of support. If there is a breakthrough on the issue of Kampuchea, relations between the two countries will certainly improve. It should be noted that the Vietnamese Workers' Party is waging its own campaign against "counter-revolutionary pluralism."

While Albania seems to have taken the attitude the "CPC revisionists got what they deserved" the possibility exists that this view might change with time. Recently, Cuba sent a delegation to Albania where they found "many areas of agreement."

Stating that the above countries represent a sort of "rejectionist front" towards glasnost and perestroika would have some implications for how one views the USSR. In retrospect it seems that the theory that an "all around restoration of capitalism" had taken place in the USSR is obviously wrong. So is the categorization of the Soviet Union as a "social-imperialist" power. Can it be said that Soviet industry seriously aimed for the highest rate of profit, which is a basic law of modern capitalism? The answer is no. For all the talk about profitability on the part of the CPSU leadership, the economic crisis which now looms in the Soviet Union is a pretty good indicator of a relatively low rate of capital accumulation. Also it is extremely difficult to explain why the USSR did not develop more light industry (which is easier to make quick profits from) if it was true that "profits were in command" of the economy. Because the USSR is not capitalist, it cannot be imperialist either -- at least in the way which Lenin used the term. In fact it lacks some of the key features of modern imperialism, such as the export of capital assuming primacy over the export of commodities, etc.

But to move beyond definitions, there is a more basic problem in the restorationist framework, i.e., the changes that are taking place in the USSR, Eastern Europe, the turmoil in China and the sharpening debate between Cuba and the Soviet Union, become inexplicable. If the Soviet Union had restored capitalism in 1956, or 1953, or whenever, what possible explanation exists for the current actions of the CPSU leadership? What block of Soviet capital does the Gorbachev section of the Party represent? If the Soviet capitalist class was embodied by the industrial (and agricultural) ministries, how can it be that the head of state is now undermining their power? It seems clear enough that under the leadership of "Gorby" the Soviet Union is undergoing a process of disintegration which will continue unless there is a dramatic turn in events.



One further and more serious problem with the view that the USSR, Eastern Europe and China (after the fall of Lin Biao or the Gang) have long ago established capitalist systems, is that it has a certain “chicken little” quality to it. Leftists have been talking about the restoration of capitalism for so long, that when real, western-style, capitalism is being restored (Eastern Europe) or movements aiming at the destruction of socialism come into being (China), some have managed to see the motion as “socialist renewal.” They are in effect calling good, evil; and evil, good.

But if the problem is not that “bourgeoisies within the party seized power and proceeded to rig up capitalist systems” what possible explanation exists for the changes in the socialist world? While every country has its own specific contradictions, it is possible to discern a certain pattern. In the majority of socialist countries, left errors initially played the role of alienating a certain section of the people. Stalin and the majority trend in the CPSU overextended the scope of class struggle in the USSR. While on balance the work of the CPSU was positive -- tens of millions were mobilized for socialist construction, German fascism was defeated, etc; real damage was done to the relation between the Party and the people. The Soviet experience, good and bad, was then mechanically applied to Eastern Europe.

After the defeat of the left in the USSR (Molotov, Kaganovich, etc.) in the mid to late 1950s, revisionism and right opportunism got the upper hand in the CPSU and in the majority of Eastern European parties (although in some places left errors still continued -- for example Bulgaria attempted to emulate China's Great Leap Forward). The critique of “Stalinism” that was spread throughout much of the international communist movement was in the main, a critique of Marxism-Leninism.

In China, the process was somewhat different. Mao and a substantial section of the CPC leadership critically analyzed the Soviet experience (while taking over and defending what was best of the Stalin legacy) and attempted to address the question of developing “revolutionary successors” and preventing the rise of revisionism in China. While the intentions were the best, the ultra-left errors of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1975) slowed the development of socialism in China. Right errors in the post Mao/Hua period then created the material conditions and allowed the political space to open for bourgeois liberalization.

Whether or not some agree with the above analysis, there is still a bottom line question involved for leftists here: Are you for socialism or against it? The socialist countries are the products of incredible sacrifice and struggle on the part of tens of millions of working people. They constitute an extremely important force in the fight against U.S. imperialism. This does not mean that China, Cuba, etc., need be taken as “models” for the future of socialism here, but rather that socialism constitutes an actually existing force in the world, and that people must take a stand in relationship to.

## **Implications for Revolutionaries in the U.S.**

There is little room to doubt that the crisis which is now sweeping the socialist world will change the terrain we fight on while simultaneously altering the views of many revolutionaries in this country.

As for the material conditions, U.S. imperialism has been greatly strengthened in the past period. El Salvador's FMLN was correct in noting that in the past, the USSR played a role in “containing” U.S. imperialism. Today that is not the case. One result of this will be increased intervention by Washington in the Third World. In this sense, Panama represents the shape of things to come. Thus one practical effect of the changes in the socialist countries will be to heighten the need for anti-intervention and solidarity work. (It should also be noted that in the Third World, revolutionaries tend to be much more critical of the recent events in the USSR/Eastern Europe and this outlook will impact on the new societies that are created in the Philippines, El Salvador, Peru, etc.)

Economically, it is more difficult to say what the changes will mean. While the contradictions which have matured since the early 1970s will continue to make themselves felt, the opening of the new areas of investment for capital markets for commodities will certainly have an effect. (Although the U.S. will face tough competition in these markets from western Europe and Japan).

Also, the recent events in China and the other socialist countries will take a certain toll on revolutionaries here. Some of the other parties are more equipped to deal with the crisis (the Communist Party of the Philippines for example). Because Marxism-Leninism lacks a mass base in the U.S., it is extremely unstable and crisis prone, even if there are not major changes in the world.

Already, two incorrect trends are asserting themselves in response to the crisis. The first is a sort of “left” Marxism which glorifies the “independent” actions of some people in China, Eastern Europe, etc., while advancing an ultra-left critique of Leninism. The second and far more dangerous is social-democracy and its variants.

It seems likely this social-democratic tendency will make itself known by interjecting an additional dose of reformism into the day-to-day work of the people's movement while advancing an attack on Marxism-Leninism in the political realm. Two key areas where we can expect to see the anti-Marxist stuff come out is on the issue of the need for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. (16)

As for revolution there is no country where Mao's statement “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun” is as true as this one. The U.S. empire is murdering people every day in El Salvador, the Philippines, Palestine, Angola, etc. It killed at least 2,000,000 people in its losing battle to keep southeast Asia. It is idealism to believe that these “people” will gracefully exit the stage of history when their day comes. Stick them with a pin the way the Panamanians did and they cry and cry, just imagine their response if they were going to lose everything.

U.S. history is also instructive in this regard. Facing threats far less substantial than those faced by the leadership of the CPC, the U.S. has not hesitated to pull the trigger or toss people in jail. A long list of crimes against the oppressed nationality movements, the labor movement, the socialist and communist movements could be cited to back this point up, and no amount of talk about the “specific nature of political power in the U.S.,” “democratic traditions,” or the “fluidity of the class structure,” can alter this reality.

Some people have forwarded the idea that because relatively peaceful changes are taking place in Eastern Europe, that this should modify the view that force is a necessary component in social transformation. While this is an interesting point of theory, it in no way challenges the above points on the U.S., and it manages to miss some of the particularities of the revolutionary process in Eastern Europe. None of the Eastern European countries underwent revolutions that were based principally on contradictions internal to those countries, with the exception of Yugoslavia (there was also a powerful red led resistance movement in Albania, and in Czechoslovakia communists had at least a plurality of support). It is no secret that the Red Army placed the respective Eastern European CP's in power. This is something that those Parties themselves more or less acknowledged at the time. Unable to build a mass base, the social system that these Parties lead the construction of is collapsing because the USSR has withdrawn its military support. It was as if a major part of the state apparatus suddenly disappeared. Since it is unlikely that the state apparatus here, or any substantial part of it, is likely to do a comparable disappearing act, it is difficult to see why the changes that have taken place in Eastern Europe should greatly alter our assessment of our tasks.

As far as the dictatorship of the proletariat goes, it seems that many of the points mentioned around China as well as some of the points above are relevant. The working class and its party need a weapon to deal with anti-socialist forces, internal and external. That weapon is its state -- the dictatorship of the working class. Every

successful revolution has found such a state necessary if the broad masses of people are to hold onto political power.

Closely related to the issues of revolution and state power is what kind of organization do we need to build. If one holds that it is a strong possibility that we can achieve socialism through elections (or through elections and “mass pressure”) then it is illogical to work to build a Leninist type party based on the organizational principle of democratic centralism.

For those of us who are serious about change in the U.S., it is the growth of social-democracy which perhaps will prove to be the most dangerous aspect of the crisis in socialism. The ranks of communism are thin enough here already without this cancer felling more revolutionaries. That the problems of socialism should be studied, and assessments made of the experience of communists in China, Cuba, etc., is not what is under dispute. If the leadership of the CPC, CPSU, had made only “minor mistakes” the turmoil which engulfed Beijing, Bucharest or Berlin would have never happened.

However, if the sword of Marxism-Leninism is thrown away (to paraphrase Mao) all the summation in the world will not do us a bit of good. There is a reason why M-L forces have and are spearheading so many revolutions, and why other “left” forces were stuck on the sidelines criticizing, or went over to the camp of the enemy. The simple fact is that Marxism-Leninism has already shown itself to be the only body of thought capable of guiding the struggle to destroy the old order and establishing socialism. Those who think otherwise, may believe that they have found this or that way out of the crisis, but they will emerge only to find that they have no future. Mao makes the point, “No political party can possibly lead a great revolutionary movement to victory unless it possesses revolutionary theory and a knowledge of history and a profound grasp of the practical movement.” The adherents of social-democracy do not have any of these things, they never had, and never will.

## NOTES

1) While the statement to come out of the Third Plenary Session ended by saying “rally around the Party Central Committee” headed by Hua Guofeng, in retrospect it is clear that anything but this was happening.

Hua, was Mao's “handpicked successor.” He had risen quickly through the ranks during the Cultural Revolution and never developed a particularly large personal following within the Party. One of the reasons Mao backed him was because he had been relatively uninvolved in the factions that had developed in the leadership, and as a result he could be counted on to “unite with the overwhelming majority.” It is to Hua's credit that he played a major role in having the Gang of Four arrested, thwarting their planned coup attempt. While he tried hard to get the economy back on its feet, mainly by a massive infusion of funds in to capital construction, this quickly went sour because his economic plan was unrealistic.

The decision to reverse historical verdicts tended to further undermine Hua and the leaders grouped around him. During the 1976 Tiananmen incident, Hua was deeply involved in public security work and there is no doubt that he supported the decision at the time to characterize it as counter-revolutionary.

While it is not mentioned in the public documents from the Session, a debate took place on the issue of “practice being the criterion of truth” which was extremely important for clearing away the ideological obstacles to reform. And it was in this debate that the Hua forces were to meet with a decisive defeat.

The Hua group is sometimes referred to in Party history as adherents to the “two whatevers.” The source of this somewhat unusual name is a joint editorial which appeared in Red Flag, Liberation Army Daily, and People's Daily shortly after the fall of the Gang of Four. It read in part: “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave.” Supporters of this point of view included Wang Dongxing - the head of Mao's security force, Wu De - the mayor of Beijing throughout most of the Cultural Revolution and Chen Xilian - the head of Beijing Military Region and a major player in the suppression of the Tiananmen Incident. (All three were ultra-leftists who were later forced to resign from their positions on the Central Committee. They were among the first Party leaders to be “pushed” into the Central Advisor Commission, a body which has grown increasingly influential with the passage of time. If in the aftermath of the turmoil, any of them appear in the leadership of the Commission, it would be an indicator of the overall direction of the Party.

2) There are three reasons which explain why Hua, a person who had made serious mistakes, got to remain in the lower levels of leadership. The first was that there was a feeling in the Party that the Cultural Revolution's practice of completely demolishing people who made mistakes should be abandoned. Second, Hua had made some outstanding contributions to socialism, particularly in the struggle against the Gang of Four. And finally Hua does have some support within the Party and society; for example it is generally believed that the leadership of Hunan province, is closely tied to him.

The question comes up, where did Hua and his supporters stand on the issue of the recent turmoil? Despite the fact that solid information on who voted how in some of the key meetings has yet to come out, it is a safe bet that they support the crackdown. The following account of some events earlier in the decade will illustrate this.

In 1980, Hua's supporter in Hunan, Provincial Secretary Mao Zhiyong, was confronted by a student movement at the Hunan Teachers Training College, which focused on students “rights” issues. Fuel was added to the fire

when the college leadership attempted to stop the election of non Marxist-Leninist students to the schools governance body. The result was a series of demonstrations and a hunger strike. The students then telegraphed an appeal to Party rightists Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang to intervene on their behalf. When the student leadership decided to send a delegation to Beijing, Secretary Mao Zhiyong said they would be arrested. This is not what happened. Rightists within the Central Committee backed the student movement and as a result the college leadership ended up doing a self-criticism.

Also, it is known that the Hunan CPC, lead by Mao Zhiyong, gave strong backing to the 1987 campaign against capitalist liberalization, proposing measures that the right wing of the Central Committee would later obtain restrictions on. This is another sign that Hua supporters would tend to favor the crackdown.

3) The process of dealing with the events at Xidan Wall was an interesting one, as it ended up being debated in the highest levels of the Party and the state. For example, it was discussed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 1979. At the meeting Li Ruihan, a member of the Standing Committee said “Under the guise of democracy some people had put up posters on the Xidan Wall to attack the Communist Party and the socialist legal system and to pass on intelligence to foreigners. Some gathered there to create disturbances and disrupt the social order. This can not be tolerated...”

The matter was then turned over to the Beijing city government which put an end to the practice of putting up these big character posters.

Recently, Li Ruihan became a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee, replacing one of those “who made mistakes during the counter-revolutionary rebellion.”

4) That political work is the lifeblood of all economic work was a slogan first raised by Mao during the effort for agricultural cooperation. While it was misapplied for a time during the Cultural Revolution, substituting political work for economic work, the slogan should still be upheld.

5) Another Hong Kong paper carried several accounts of anti-liberalization meetings, which were interesting as a number of leading Party people played a role. According to these reports, Deng Liqun and the head of the CPC Propaganda Department, Wan Renshi, pulled together a preparatory meeting, which became the planning committee for a major conference on bourgeois liberalization. The goal of the planned conference was to chart the way forward for the anti-liberalization struggle. Also present at the planning meetings were the leftist theoretician Hu Qaiomu and Xu Weicheng, the head of the Beijing CPC. Xu Weicheng is a Leftist. In early 1987 students burned copies of a newspaper he wrote for.

It was the intention of this planning committee to invite two veteran communists, Bo Yibo and Peng Zhen, to be the keynote conference speakers. But, unfortunately not everything went according to plan. Zhao Ziyang got wind of the conference and crashed it. After complaining about the fact he was not invited, he proceeded to give a major speech demanding that the struggle against capitalist liberalization be reigned in. Leftists Deng Liqun and Wang Regshi then attempted to do everything possible to prevent the publication of the speech. In the end however, two rightists in the Central Committee, Hu Quli and Wan Li, were able to get approval for publication in one of the Party's leading bodies. On July 2, 1987, the speech appeared in People's Daily.

At a meeting of the CPC leadership in that summer, Deng Liqun was relieved of some of his responsibilities on the propaganda front. Later that year the right was able to prevent his re-election to the Central Committee, which was amazing in light of the fact there had been some talk of his becoming the next General Secretary of the Party. According to an article in the Hong Kong press, propaganda chief Wang Renshi was pushed to do a self-criticism. The journal Wide Angle reported that Wang admitted to “eight years of resistance and five major



battles” -- the eight years being the time which had elapsed since the Third Plenary Session, where the road to reform was embarked upon; the five major battles being the criticisms of the film *Unrequited Love*, the 1981 criticism of humanism -- this was a debate over whether there was any such thing as humanism without a class content, criticism of the “modernist school” -- a debate on the cultural front, the anti-spiritual pollution campaign and the overthrow of Hu Yaobang. Wang ended up with a greatly diminished role in overseeing the Chinese press.

By August of 1987, the Chinese media was aiming its main blow against the left. For example, the newspaper *Jinji Riibao* ran a typical piece for the period when it treated the struggle against liberalization like something from the distant past, and then went on to talk about the “present efforts to eliminate the ossified ideas of “leftism.”

6) As things developed, it was mainly leftists who ended up in the Central Advisory Commission. One of the more prominent to end up there was Deng Liqun, one of the chief leaders of the anti-spiritual pollution campaign and a one-time potential candidate for the position of CPC General Secretary. Red Flag editor Xiong Fu also ended up there. Hua Kuofeng's associate, Chen Xilian (former head of the Beijing Military Region), is a member of the Standing Committee of the Commission.

7) Having no basis in fact, these rumors were simply refurbished versions of older rumors which had been spreading in previous years such as “Hu has fled abroad to avoid persecution” and “Hu suffered a nervous breakdown when he was removed as General Secretary.”

8) While it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the mistakes that the left made in waging the inner-Party struggle, areas that some who are interested in pursuing the matter further might take a look at are: the seeming acquiescence in the early 1980s to the decision to abolish mass political campaigns; a failure to demand a more dialectical approach to the problem of rural reform; a tendency to separate politics from economics and to negate the dependence of the superstructure on the base; and carrying the struggle against ex-Chairman Hua too far.

9) The shutting down of Red Flag, the theoretical journal of the Central Committee, is one example of this. Red Flag frequently carried the view of the Party left and as a result it was replaced by the journal *Seeking Truth* which was under the leadership of the Central Committee's Party School. The Party School has a nest of rightists within it. Contingents from the School marched in Tiananmen Square. Writers from the School have produced a fair amount of revisionist trash, such as articles on why revolution is unnecessary in the advanced capitalist countries. Fortunately, one result of the crackdown has been to take the journal *Seeking Truth* out of the hands of the School.

The right was also successful in placing its tools, such as Hu Qili and Bao Tong, in a leadership role over press work, thus gaining the ability to influence the content of radio, TV, newspapers and publishing on a nationwide basis.

10) One of these questionable elements is the well-known dissident Lui Binjan. Lui, in a recent speech, said he was unhappy with the Party from the time he joined in 1944, complaining that it stifled his individuality. In 1957, the Party gave him the boot during the anti-rightist campaign. In 1979, he was re-admitted to the CPC and entrusted with an important post at *People's Daily*. In 1987, he was expelled again, this time for promoting liberalization. He is now running around the U.S. crying about “Stalinism.”

What is troubling about Lui's case is that someone who was basically a social-democrat, and for sure not a communist, was placed in charge of making important decisions for what is arguably China's most important paper.

11) Some people have pointed to the wearing of Mao buttons, or the fact that some working people carried portraits of Mao in Tiananmen Square, as evidence that the “pro-democracy” movement was an effort for socialist renewal. Unless further evidence is unearthed, it appears extremely unlikely that anyone is going to be able to make the case that “Maoism” in any form represented a substantial organized trend among the dissident forces. From reading interviews with student activists, statements like “China has always had an emperor” come up a lot more frequently than “During Mao's time, people still had ideals.” Furthermore, it would be wrong to make much of the use of Mao quotes on some banners to take jabs at the current leadership - “whoever opposes student movements will come to no good end,” as quotes from Deng Xiaoping were used in much the same way. On the balance, it seems that the organized pro-“democracy” forces made relatively little or no effort to borrow from Mao's legacy, even in an opportunist way.

12) Because of the democratic centralist principle that everyone on a leadership body is compelled to carry out the decisions of the majority, the longstanding practice of the CPC was not to publicize who and how many vote one way or another, is sound. If votes tallies were published, it could only undermine CPC's attempts to establish unity of action. As such information is secret, is it really possible to know who voted how? Yes and no? On one hand both transcripts of these meetings are not available. On the other hand because of the highly factionalized situation which existed, sensitive information on the inner workings of the Party leadership was to be leaked in a big way. The pro-“democracy” movement frequently had access to speeches and decisions before they were transmitted to the relevant Party bodies.

13) That the household responsibility system has brought a turn for the better in the countryside and the city (where the diet is now more varied) is not to say that the rural reforms are perfect. The estimate has been thrown out that 1/3 of the People's Communes worked well, 1/3 had mixed results, and 1/3 worked poorly or not at all. If this is true, it would have made sense to preserve at least a substantial section of those that were doing well, with the understanding they would not be pushed as models for the rest of agriculture in the current period. But having said this, it is not hard to understand why the wholesale abolition took place.

Because the communes were large, elaborate structures, each with a political, economic, cultural, and military functions, rural Party leaders, many of them who were employed by the communes, tended to have a vested interest in keeping things the way they were. Even so, an extended process of onsite check-ups by the provincial leadership, accompanied by mass self-assessment could have overcome this difficulty.

Relatively little has been published in this country about the debate in the Party concerning the fate of the People's Communes. A few things we do know are: the vast majority of the Central Committee recognized that some changes in rural policies were needed in the post Gang of Four period. Bear in mind that even today millions of people depend on grain relief from the state to get by. The main resistance to the changes came from some forces grouped around Chairman Hua. The way that the dismantling of the Communes took place, i.e., the political functions were turned over to the village administrations, has a certain similarity to the changes in current industrial policy where there is an attempt being made to separate economic management from direct Party leadership.

14) Even during the Cultural Revolution, when material incentives as such were under attack, and moral incentives (work for the good of the country and socialism) were one-sidedly promoted, the need for material incentives was still acknowledged in the form of the eight-grade wage system.

15) It is arguable that it was mainly working people who blocked the entry of People's Liberation Army into Beijing, but this is very difficult to prove. Beijing has a huge floating population (estimates of its size range of over 100,000) composed of small merchants, people engaged in illegal professions, former peasants without residency permits, etc.) One of the reasons that it was easier to curb the turmoil in Shanghai, was because in late May, city officials began removing tens of thousands of such elements from that city. A substantial section of the “flying tigers corps” in Beijing was drawn from small merchants and business people.

16) As this critique goes further it will also find that it is necessary to attack dialectical materialism and replace it with some sort of system of philosophical dualism, where historical change must be described in some way other than a conflict between forces and relations of production, where the economic base plays the central role in shaping the political and cultural superstructure (this is because historical materialism demonstrates that only the working class will be the consistent base for revolutionary change in the entire period of socialism and it is the task of the working class and its party to remold all other sectors. Because the social-democrats see no need for proletarian rule, and replace it with some sort of people's government where the working class does not play the leading role, by necessity they must ascribe strategic progressive characteristics to multi-class formations in society when describing how socialism will develop. As a result, the social-democrats will find it necessary to throw the core philosophy of Marxism, along with the communist goal, out the window.