

## 6. The Workers Seize Power and Refuse to Lay Down Their Arms

Could the Cultural Revolution have taken place without the industrial workers? The answer must be 'no', for it had to succeed in Shanghai. The Party machine had most of its strength in the cities, and it favoured urban over rural development, so that it had strong support in the cities. The great industrial metropolis of Shanghai was in particular a stronghold of the trade unions.

December was the month for financial settlements in all enterprises and communes. At this time of year several decisions affecting wage-earners were taken: the awarding of bonus payments, and the allocation of profits which could be either kept as reserves or distributed in part to the workers. The 'authorities' presided over these decisions, but criticisms were being levelled against the Party committees in general, and lively disputes were bound to develop almost everywhere in December 1966. Whether the 'authorities' opted for austerity or distributed public wealth in order to win appreciation, they were bound to be criticized. The result would probably have been the same in the end, in that more was distributed than usual. The revolutionary leadership could not allow them to win an advantage over the Cultural Revolution. They therefore had to try to control the Revolution in the factories and the countryside, and to do that they had to admit that the Revolution had spread there.

On December 9th the Central Committee passed a draft directive on the Cultural Revolution in factories and mines that was posted at the entrances to the enterprises. This directive, still 'under discussion' at the time, was to be carried out in a number of places as an experiment.<sup>1</sup> This came at a tense moment in the development of the conflict between the 'Workers' Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters,' already in existence, and the Shanghai municipal committee which, together with the unions, was supporting another powerful workers' organization. This second organization was using the same methods as the revolutionaries but with even greater boldness. Its determination to win was the cause of the big strikes in Shanghai around the New Year.

The response of the revolutionaries and the creation of proletarian political power was called the January Revolution. It bore some resemblances to a classic proletarian revolution. It was born during an extended crisis involving all ten million of its inhabitants, and on this scale it could almost be regarded as a national crisis. The crisis had been provoked by the Party leadership, which proved incapable of resolving it, either because it was already too weak to take power, or else because it was afraid of losing its privileges. The January Revolution was thus the result of an abortive bourgeois revolution, with the Party playing the role of the bourgeois power. In addition, the workers did not bring it about single-handed: a considerable proportion of the population joined in with them.

Despite their indisputable political achievement in establishing the Shanghai Commune, which though short-lived did not end in tragedy, the revolutionaries did not consolidate the power they had won by and for themselves. They handed over their conquests to the Cultural Revolution. The industrial worker Rebels, who held the key to the whole situation, turned their fire towards those who represented the old trade unions, which generally meant other organizations within their own class.

<sup>1</sup> *Nihon Keizai*, December 29, 1966.

Most of the workers' demands concerned their conditions: hours of work, protests against work-rates, bonus systems, regional differences, and the status of temporary workers. Only a part of their demands were approved by the Centre and written into the orthodox revolutionary line. The Centre only accepted what fitted in with the struggle against 'economism,' by which it meant the whole range of material stimuli that offered differing rewards among workers of the same category. The eagerness of some workers to abolish extra payments for enthusiasm or endurance fitted in with the Cultural Revolution policy of equality in austerity. But when other forms of social equality were brought into question the Centre was very reluctant to co-operate. A case in point was that of the wages of peasants working in factories on collective or individual contracts.

The Centre seemed more than once to be about to allow their wages to be brought up to the level of regular workers, but in the end they did not yield to the most pressing demands on this point, even when they were backed up by the most orthodox of the Revolutionary Rebels. Reducing the gap between urban and rural standards of living was on the programme, but the ways of achieving this needed to be looked into carefully by the leadership of the revolution. According to all the evidence, it was recognized that this should not be done by raising the wages of peasants working as contract labourers.

The ideal solution would have been to abolish the system of temporary workers—peasants working in factories under seasonal or annual contracts—and to establish them as regular workers. But pressure of population meant that there were not enough jobs available to keep some of the rural population permanently in the cities. Peasant-workers still had their homes in the countryside and had to go back there when they had fulfilled their contracts. On their return to the villages they took back useful technical know-how with them.

In the words of a Japanese specialist, 'the active population is growing by seven or eight million people a year,

and only 300,000 of these can be found jobs.'<sup>2</sup> Everybody wanted to become an industrial worker and get a job in a factory. The story was told of some Red Guards of fourteen and fifteen who went to join the workers in a Peking factory and hoped to spend the rest of their lives there.<sup>3</sup> T'an Chen-lin said:

Control of the population is now being proposed, but the population keeps on growing. It is increasing at about the same rate as production. Can this be called affluence? Given our methods of production, who would choose freely to go to the countryside? Everyone wants to go to the cities, where you can earn thirty or forty yuan a month just by sweeping the street, whereas you can't earn more than 200 or 300 yuan a year in the countryside. Will anyone here volunteer to be a peasant?<sup>4</sup>

This debate touched on basic policies, and they were taken to heart by some of the revolutionary workers to such an extent that they carried the dispute beyond an exchange of views between supporters and opponents of trade unions. They gave the working-class revolution a specifically working-class tendency. But the workers did not dare to take this kind of demand too far: the regular workers had too much to lose from a general social shake-up.

The regime, however, was not afraid of social shake-ups: indeed, it regarded them as counterparts of its economic policies. One has only to remember the circumstances in which the people's communes were created: the Party decided that a more communist form of society would be suitable in view of the rising production of consumer goods, an unexpected growth in the output of capi-

<sup>2</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, January 22, 1967: round-table discussion with Professors Ishikawa and Oka of Hitotsubashi University.

<sup>3</sup> Kaizuka, 'Chūgoku to wa nani ka' *Asahi Jyanaru*, February 26, 1967, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Peiching K'ochi Hungch'i* (Science and Technology Red Flag), March 6, 1967, quoting a speech made by T'an on September 7, 1966.

tal goods, and the backwardness of scientific and technical education.<sup>5</sup>

The regime reacted in a way that would have been unusual in the West: it changed the social structure. The workers did not want to take the risk of this kind of disruption. They were doubtless well aware that it would not be to their own advantage to destroy the balance between workers and peasants. This might lead to different kinds of work, such as long periods of service in underdeveloped regions or reregistration in new industrial centres. For their different reasons the workers and the Centre agreed on maintaining the *status quo*: the workers in order to keep what they had won, and the Centre in order to preserve the chances of reconstituting the Party at a time when it was very vulnerable.

The Shanghai Commune had an executive committee with twelve members, of whom only two were soldiers; and Shanghai often gave the impression of wanting to dispense with the army in making its revolution. The revolutionaries who founded the Commune established it on the basis of the workers' committees, that had already taken charge in factories and other areas of activity, and of the organizations that had joined these committees. The history of Shanghai after the general strike was the history of the workers who ran its essential services. The new power structure was built from the bottom upwards: economic control groups, 'committees to make revolution and hasten production,' the Commune, and later the Revolutionary Committee. The revolution's leadership would have liked the same procedure—taking over the organization of work, then taking charge of finances, politics and security—to have been followed in the power seizures throughout the country.

When the Commune handed over to the Revolutionary Committee, the organizations that had been supporting it lost some of their confidence in the workers' Cultural Revolution. They, like the other organizations that had

<sup>5</sup> See Peter Shran, 'On the rationality of the great leap forward and rural people's communes,' in *Ventures*, Yale Graduate School, vol. 5, no. 1, January 1965.

been against the Commune, objected to putting their political activities blindly under the orders of the Cultural Revolution Group in Peking. They all preferred to concentrate on the reorganization of industry. The Centre was worried by the revived corporate spirit shown by some of these organizations. Some organizations went beyond the structures established by the Party. This was when the Centre called a halt, announcing that if changes were necessary they would be held over until after the end of the movement (which also implied 'after the rebuilding of the Party'—for the time being its reorganization was not to be endangered). Thus organizations that went beyond existing structures and threatened to become pressure groups could not be tolerated. Some associations were dissolved. A limitation on the right of association was the first restriction of the freedoms that had been conceded.

Priority was given to the economic situation. The state's economic plan had already been postponed,<sup>6</sup> and throughout the country seizures of power brought about interruptions of work and strikes. Many cadres who were threatened did not return to their posts, as the directive that only a small number of them (those who were actually guilty of abuses) were to be attacked had been misinterpreted by the extremists.

The whole country had to take the consequences. The Centre also reminded workers of labour discipline: 'Let us stop putting forward demands that will be looked into fairly later on, and let us resume the eight-hour working day.'

The Centre felt that the workers would be able to sort out the questions that especially concerned them within the revolutionary committees, where they were represented among the mass organizations. But in many Units the power seizures had not been thoroughly carried out—revolutionary committees had been poorly established or not set up at all—and struggles against the top figures in the

<sup>6</sup> Chou En-lai said in a speech on February 2, 1968, 'We shall be able to take a decision during February on our 1968 plan. . . . Last year we postponed it, and we must not do so again this year.'

former administration were becoming weak and ineffectual. Sometimes the revolutionaries even found their opponents in the majority.

The extremists in the Central Committee's Cultural Revolution Group, lacking Mao Tse-tung's patience, complained that the disorder might bring about the collapse of the Cultural Revolution. They put pressure on the revolutionaries to complete their seizures of power. A number of workers' organizations in Shanghai decided to treat the revolutionary committees as organs replacing the Party, making the dictatorship of the proletariat as absolute as the Centre would allow.

There was trouble during the summer. The new power seizures provoked another wave of strikes. Conservative groups of workers threatened the revolutionaries and beat them up in Wuhan, Shanghai and Shantung. In retaliation worker rebels in Shanghai set up revolutionary tribunals.

East China, the middle Yangtse, and the Canton region were particularly badly hit by clashes among workers. Mao Tse-tung himself made a journey of investigation through Eastern and Central China, and gave a new editorial line to the *Wenhui Pao*, which became once more the paper of the revolution. At the height of the crisis articles were published on the regulations for the work force. Mao Tse-tung felt that workers who were fighting among themselves had not made a class analysis of the situation. His ruling was widely published: there was nothing to divide the working class.

From that moment onwards there could be no possible privileges for workers who were more leftist or revolutionary than the others. The Centre told the army to act as catalyst between the different factions. Soldiers sent into the factories were given the job of bringing about alliances among the workers. The incidents that were still frequent and serious showed that there were more contradictions between the protesting workers and the state than there were between rival workers' groupings. The further wave of strikes that ensued were in protest against the reorgan-

ization of work in forms that had yet to be accepted by everyone.

The Centre's policy of 'alliances' (i.e. regrouping), threatened those of the workers' organizations that had always been the most revolutionary with the loss of their individual identities. They struggled to keep their independence and political power, demanding arms and making renewed critical assaults on the old trade unions. This revealed that what they were afraid of was a return to the old order, and they made it clear that in their view workers' rights would no longer be defended if the old trade unions, which had always been primarily concerned with production, were revived. But as the reconstruction of the Party took priority over everything else, the leadership of the revolution decided to neutralize step by step the forces of the liberated workers.

#### *The January Revolution*

There were similarities between the first few months of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai's factories and Peking's universities. First, the Party sent work teams into certain factories. Later on Red Guards who had been sent out as scouts by the organizations in the capital established 'liaison posts' in them. To Factory No. 31, for example, came members of the Institute of Aviation's Red Flag. They urged the workers to join in that movement.

A few of the workers sympathised with the revolutionary students. The secretary of the factory's Party committee made enquiries about them, probably because he was suspicious of students from Peking. The Party committee favoured another organization that was created on the model of students groupings and went on later to link up with other similar bodies under the name of *Ch'ih-wei-tui*, or 'Red Defence Teams.' These were often referred to as the 'Scarlet Guards.'

The workers whose sympathies lay with the revolutionary students formed their own confederation on November 9th; they decided to form 'Revolutionary Rebel' groups in the factories and a Shanghai Workers' Rebel

Revolutionary Headquarters. They were now about 4,000 strong.

The Revolutionary Rebels adopted a series of resolutions condemning the Scarlet Guard organizations, and sent a group of their members to Peking. This delegation had a quarrel with industrial workers of the other side as it set out, and the train crew that was taking them north refused to continue the journey. They were left at Anting, eighteen kilometres from Shanghai, without food or money. The Centre sent Chang Ch'un-ch'iao to find out the true situation in the revolution there when it heard of this.

Chang, the secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, had gone to Peking for the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Central Committee, and stayed on there as vice-chairman of the Cultural Revolution Group. On his return to Shanghai he recognized the Shanghai Workers' Rebel Revolutionary Headquarters. When the rebels held a new rally on November 13th, Chang Ch'un-ch'iao pressed the municipal committee of the Party to approve their demands. The top man in the committee, Ts'ao Ti-ch'iu, finally agreed to sign them after he had telephoned the Cultural Revolution Group in Peking.

When the municipal committee met again on November 24th it disavowed Ts'ao Ti-ch'iu's assent to the demands. The Scarlet Guards, they said, represented the majority, and Ts'ao Ti-ch'iu had been wrong to sign.<sup>7</sup> The Scarlet Guards had apparently been formed at the instigation of the top figures in the trade unions. Chang Ch'un-ch'iao left for Peking again the day after the municipal committee's meeting.

During his absence there was fighting at the offices of the *Liberation Daily*.<sup>8</sup> The Scarlet Guards wanted to pre-

<sup>7</sup> See the account of these incidents in *Chūgoku Kenkyū Geppō*, 230, April 1967, pp. 6-9.

<sup>8</sup> Publication of the *Liberation Daily* (*Chiehfang Jihpao*) was suspended and there were fights. The editors of the Rebel sheet, *Hungwei Chanpao*, barricaded themselves inside the premises. The municipal committee came under heavy pressure from the Scarlet Guards, but its desire to see this important paper published again moved the committee to allow the rebels to circulate their sheet as they wished.

vent a Rebel sheet being distributed with the newspaper, but after initial hesitations the municipal committee gave in to the Rebels. Its indecision put both sides against it.

The Scarlet Guards held their inauguration on December 6. Soon afterwards they brought discredit on themselves by a serious attack on the Rebels. There was an armed clash at Cotton Mill 24 at Sechi.<sup>9</sup>

It was just then that the Centre decided to extend the Cultural Revolution to the workers. The scene now shifted briefly to Peking. The directive that was adopted was quite moderate in character, but it was the result of a much more vigorous intervention by the Central Committee's Cultural Revolution Group. This had two objectives: the overthrow of the trade unions whose forces were using Red Guard methods to fight against the Red Guards, and a solution of the question of temporary labourers, a problem that most of the workers regarded as a very serious one.

The directive of December 9th<sup>10</sup> reflected the idea that workers should be allowed the right of criticism just when the Party committees in industrial enterprises were trying to buy popularity with generous hand-outs. The old 'authorities' still held the purse-strings everywhere, and December was the month in which accounts were drawn up and decisions on profit-sharing and bonuses were made, decisions that affected all the employees. According to Radio Peking, those in authority had been advocating 'the free discussion of financial problems and the raising of salaries; more recently they have even been distributing state funds.'<sup>11</sup>

Seventeen days later the Cultural Revolution Group took things one step further when Ch'en Po-ta and Chiang Ch'ing allowed the workers' rebel organizations to take

<sup>9</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, December 24, 1967.

<sup>10</sup> Adopted in draft form to be applied experimentally in a limited number of establishments only. See *Asahi Shimbun*, December 20, 1967 (Japanese morning edition).

<sup>11</sup> January 16, 1967.

over the trade union federation.<sup>12</sup> The next day, December 27th, it was the scene of one of the first major seizures of power.

As soon as it was installed, the new trade union federation announced that the system of temporary and contract workers was irrational.<sup>13</sup> The revolutionary leadership thus seemed to be approving one of the main social demands of the workers. The *People's Daily* also announced that revolutionary workers should be compensated for all lost pay. This was open to the interpretation that the Centre agreed to the readjustments being made at the end of that year.

It thus appears that when the workers became necessary to the revolution, the revolution's leaders were induced to promise them certain material benefits. This weakness may have caused embarrassment later on, when the distribution of benefits by the men in power was condemned as 'economism'<sup>14</sup>—the corruptor of the working class. The policy was soon changed: fifteen days later Chou En-lai overruled the condemnation of the system of temporary workers, declaring that the pay rises for contract and temporary workers were unacceptable as they might arouse resistance from the peasants.<sup>15</sup> The prime minister quoted a letter to Lin Piao from Mao Tse-tung himself.

To return to Shanghai, the Scarlet Guards were trying to get themselves recognized as the principal and most representative working class organization, despite the hesitation of the municipal Party committee, which was well aware that the Cultural Revolution Group of the Central Committee preferred the Revolutionary Rebels. At a big rally on December 23rd the Scarlet Guards adopted a list

<sup>12</sup> See P. Bridgham, 'Mao's Cultural Revolution in 1967,' *China Quarterly*, 34, 1968, p. 8. See also *Asahi Shimbun*, Japanese morning edition, January 10, 1967.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* *Wenhui Pao* reported on January 6, 1967, that 100,000 temporary and contract labourers held a rally in Shanghai to demand the replacement of the system by a new one that conformed to the Thought of Mao Tse-tung.

<sup>14</sup> An adaptation of the term used by Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?*

<sup>15</sup> According to Japanese press sources quoted in *Current Scene*, vol. 6, no. 5, March 15, 1968, p. 11.

of eight demands that they wanted the municipal committee to adopt, demands that if accepted would have made them the armed guards of the Party, the State and the Cultural Revolution. Ts'ao Ti-ch'iu refused to endorse them and they laid siege to his home. The Scarlet Guards started to send representatives to Peking to present their demands. Their factories and offices gave them their travelling expenses and their pay arrears.

The Revolutionary Rebels tried to resist the departure of the other workers for Peking. Brawls continued till December 30th, and the posters listed some dead and many wounded.

Thus it was that the strike began. The Scarlet Guards regarded it as their unanswerable weapon to bring the municipal committee to its knees. According to statements made by some other members after the event, the committee reckoned that even with the mills and postal services on strike, the city's life could continue, and that if the committee held firm only a transport strike would follow.<sup>16</sup> At 5 a.m. on December 30th the trains came to a halt on the two principal lines serving Shanghai.

The transport strike ended by depriving the city of fuel and power. The Rebels decided to take over the main papers and call upon the masses to go back to work. The *Wenhui Pao* was seized on January 3rd with the co-operation of the Red Guards of the Third Headquarters. The next day Chang Ch'un-ch'iao went back to Peking and the 'Appeal to the People of Shanghai'<sup>17</sup> was published, a document that had great repercussions.

The appeals published in the press denounced the crimes of 'the authorities who have tried to obstruct production' even more vehemently than they attacked the Scarlet Guards. Some of the people, whether from exhaustion or

<sup>16</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, December 24, 1967.

<sup>17</sup> The appeal was signed by eleven organizations, including four Shanghai Red Guard organizations, three 'liaison posts' of Red Guards from elsewhere, some workers' organizations, including the powerful Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters, and the Revolutionary Rebels of the newspapers. See the translation in *Peking Review*, 1967, no. 3, January 13, 1967.

anger, were ready to go back to work, but they had to be offered a change of management. This was the job of the 'Shanghai Front Line for Revolution and Production,' which started work at 6 p.m. on January 9th by taking over the traffic control room of the Shanghai Railway Bureau. 'People's Train No. 1' left on January 10th for Urumchi in Sinkiang.<sup>18</sup>

'Production committees' were established by the personnel of the Yangshup'u power station and the shipyards. The first of these committees appeared on December 27th at the Shanghai glass factory, and it was a favourite topic of revolutionary propaganda for some time. It had ten members elected by secret ballot and liable to recall at any time. Propaganda insisted less on this observance of the precedent of the Paris Commune than on the fact that the bureaucracy disappeared from the factory.

The confrontation between two big organizations, the Scarlet Guards, a league of bodies defending the interests of the workers that the rebels regarded as reactionary, and the Workers' Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters, followed the general pattern of the Shanghai crisis. These two workers' groupings were so strong in numbers that they eclipsed all the other protagonists. According to the *Asahi's* sources there were 800,000 Scarlet Guards and a little over 600,000 Revolutionary Rebels. The students' role was marginal but sometimes conspicuous. The T'ung-chi<sup>19</sup> students, who recaptured the main railway station, reported Chairman Mao as saying, 'Excellent: union between students and workers has been achieved at last.'<sup>20</sup>

The Shanghai Municipal Party Committee had been holding aloof for some time, although it had the responsibility for ending the strike. The *People's Daily* held it

<sup>18</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, January 12, 1967. The paper added: 'Traffic between Shanghai and Nanking, and Shanghai and Hangchow, returned to normal on January 11th with 135 passenger and goods trains, although the number was reduced to half of that during the crisis.'

<sup>19</sup> A college of architecture and engineering in Shanghai.

<sup>20</sup> A leaflet from the Peking Automobile Factory, no. 2, March 6, 1967.

responsible for the system of extra payments intended to corrupt the industrial workers. The Rebels accused them, not perhaps without justification, of having shown partiality towards the Scarlet Guards, who had their headquarters on the top storey of the municipal offices and were led by a 'work hero.'

Nevertheless, the municipal committee held on for a little longer, trying to use what power was left to it and hoping, perhaps, that the pendulum would swing back its way. It refused to dissolve itself because it had not been dismissed by the Party, because Ts'ao Ti-ch'iu had never openly flouted the Centre, and because Chang Ch'un-ch'iao, the leader of the rebels, wished to preserve the good name of the Party. The attitude of the Shanghai committee explains why the confrontation with the authorities lasted so long in most of the provinces. Unlike the masses, who confined themselves to facts, the cadres regarded themselves as obliged to obey the 'Party leadership,' which for them had not changed. To this the Rebels replied:

This is to confuse black with white. As far as proletarian revolutionaries are concerned, Party leadership means the leadership of the Central Committee headed by Chairman Mao, the leadership of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, and the leadership of the proletarian revolutionary line embodied in Chairman Mao.<sup>21</sup>

This quarrel over definitions would not have mattered had not some surviving members of the machine called on their rural cadres to mobilize the peasants of the district against the workers. They called meetings of delegates from Rebel organizations that had been set up among the peasants, and, according to the official press, told them, 'The workers want to rebel against you, so you had better take your turn to revolt against them.' At their instigation:

Commune members who were both peasants and industrial workers, and workers sent by their communes

<sup>21</sup> *People's Daily*, January 19, 1967.

on contract work, have spread contradictions and aggravated differences . . . hindered the normal distribution of revenue at the end of the year . . . We must oppose those who refuse to build up reserves, who do not want to keep their reserves, or who reduce the allocation for collective accumulation.<sup>22</sup>

Briefly, this was an explicit charge that the temporary workers had been incited to take at once all the benefits they were demanding in the year-end share-out in the communes. This was the second time that the revolutionary leadership had spoken against 'economism,' that is, attempts to corrupt the insurgent masses.

The Revolution and Production Front reacted vigorously, asking all organizations of workers, students and revolutionary cadres to try to persuade the peasants to look after their collective capital and not share out their reserves. It decreed that the responsible members of the municipal committee would be handed over to the masses for criticism in Shanghai's ten rural *hsien*.

The journal *Red Flag* lost no time in drawing up a balance sheet for these struggles. It praised the Shanghai revolutionaries and declared that 'their policy, their organizational forms and the means they have adopted in the contest'<sup>23</sup> should be taken as examples to others.

### *The Shanghai Commune*

There was a very considerable number of revolutionary organizations in Shanghai: Red Guards in the schools and universities; groups of Revolutionary Rebels or activists of varying persuasions in the units; and associations for people of the same origin or sharing a common background, such as the 'Red Defence Army' of army veterans and demobilized soldiers, or the 'Second Corps of Northerners Back in Shanghai,' a body of workers who had been sent off to other industrial centres but who were able to

<sup>22</sup> Message of January 16. *Wenhui Pao* and *Liberation*, January 20, 1967; *People's Daily*, January 21, 1967.

<sup>23</sup> *Red Flag*, no. 2, January 15, 1967.

return to the city thanks to the Cultural Revolution. A member of the Revolutionary Committee announced in November 1967 that there had been seven hundred organizations of every kind in the total number.<sup>24</sup>

To bring the January Revolution to its conclusion, a 'Preparatory Committee for the Shanghai People's Commune' was convened. It was led by Chang Ch'un-ch'iao and Yao Wen-yuan, who tried to draw in the greatest possible number of sympathetic organizations representing most of Shanghai's urban districts and suburban rural counties. The meeting of the Preparatory Committee was the result of three weeks' work. Considerable difficulties had arisen as a result of disagreements between the Workers' Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters and the various cells in the districts and *hsien*.<sup>25</sup> Behind the difficulties there evidently lay the antagonism that the revolutionary organizations felt for each other. 'After contradictions of every kind had been fundamentally resolved,' thirty-eight organizations joined the Preparatory Committee, which met at 1 a.m. on February 5th.

At two that afternoon a proclamation founding the Shanghai People's Commune was passed, and it was agreed that the Commune would be run by a Provisional Committee invested with 'supreme power.' Under the Committee there were commissions, each of which assigned a member to the Provisional Committee, which also included eleven permanent members.

The long period of work needed to set up the Commune consisted mainly in negotiations with the various organizations. Some of them insisted on being represented on the committee, while others coveted a commission. The Commune was set up as a result of democratic discussions, though it is unlikely that all the street organizations were satisfied with it.

<sup>24</sup> Joan Robinson, *The Cultural Revolution in China*, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> The story of the formation of the Shanghai Commune and the composition of the committee were explained by a poster put up in Peking by the 'Tungfanghung Commune of Chinese Scientific and Technical Universities' on the afternoon of February 5th.



Two student organizations were put in charge of the liaison and 'external relations' commissions. Control of the commission of investigation went to the revolutionary cadres employed by the municipal committee, and the organization commission was put in the hands of the Workers' Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters. There was also an operations commission entrusted to the Revolution and Production Front that had been formed to cope with the strike. The Provisional Committee thus consisted of seven workers, three students, two peasants, two cadres and two soldiers, giving the workers a strong relative majority.

On the day of its creation the Commune published a manifesto and the Provisional Committee issued its 'Order No. 1.' The manifesto proclaimed that a 'new type of local organization of the proletarian dictatorship, born on the Yangtse Delta, has arisen in the East.' It announced that the members of the Commune had been elected according to the principles of the Paris Commune, and urged a general closing of ranks and a seizure of power everywhere. Order No. 1 proclaimed the dissolution of the Shanghai Municipal People's Committee and Party Committee, and declared that all their decisions after May 16, 1966, were invalid. The Public Security Forces were mobilized against the opponents of the Central Committee's Cultural Revolution Group, and declared unconditional war against 'the authorities following the capitalist way' towards whom an attitude of 'beating the dog in the water' was recommended.<sup>26</sup>

Realizing that it would have to extend its base, the Provisional Committee announced that affiliation was open to all revolutionary organizations that wanted to join. But when it came to arranging for newcomers to join, the

<sup>26</sup> A reference to Lu Hsun's essay, 'When to stop playing fair.' In answer to Lin Yutang's deprecation of the habit of 'beating the dog in the water' Lu Hsun said that there was no reason why dogs which one had oneself thrown into the water should be treated differently from any other kind. 'It is a mistake to place on the same footing all those who have lost their power, without distinguishing between the good and the bad' (*Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, vol. 2, p. 213).

committee ran up against strong prejudices. Problems arose within the committee, while outside its militancy was not enough to overcome scepticism everywhere. Its opponents questioned the ability of the Cultural Revolution Group's officers to cope with a city the size of Shanghai.<sup>27</sup> The Centre was afraid that the Commune lacked competent members, and reckoned that they had not made enough use of former cadres. The workers, however, were full of self-confidence. 'The world is ours,' was their reply.

The Commune was short-lived. The name disappeared, and it underwent obscure transformations to re-emerge discreetly as the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, based on a 'triple alliance' which included representatives of the army. 'The army is necessary in order to consolidate the new power and prevent reaction from killing the new leaders,' explained Chang Ch'un-ch'iao at the mass rally called on February 24th to involve the people in the changes. Chang also said that it was up to the people of Shanghai to decide if they preferred keeping the name 'Commune' to creating a revolutionary committee.

Do we still need the Party, now that the Commune has been created? I believe that we do, as we need a hard core,<sup>28</sup> whether we call it a communist or a social-democratic party. . . . In short, we do need a Party.<sup>29</sup>

The reference to another party beside the Communist one is astonishing, and it brings home to us the range of democratic currents finding expression among the workers of Shanghai. Chang Ch'un-ch'iao was casting doubt on whether the Commune was entitled to seize power from the Municipal Party Committee, although the Party commit-

<sup>27</sup> A remark by Ch'en P'i-hsien, secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, on January 12, 1967, according to *Wenhui Pao*, March 21, 1968.

<sup>28</sup> An allusion to the first quotation in *The Little Red Book*: 'The force at the core leading our cause forward is the Chinese Communist Party.'

<sup>29</sup> Extracts from the speech of Chang Ch'un-ch'iao at an oath-taking rally on February 24th on the 'Cultural Revolution Square,' Shanghai.

tee had ceased to function long before the foundation of the Commune, which had filled the gap. It must be significant that at this level a power seizure had to be confirmed by the establishment of a revolutionary committee, guaranteeing the continuity of the Party. We shall also see below how the Centre protected some of the Party's positions against the Shanghai workers: the Secretariat of the Party's East China Bureau was not to be seized as it was an organ of the Central Committee. 'To take over the buildings alone would be meaningless.'

Thus Shanghai had to abandon her Commune, and all that was left of the power the workers had once held were the revolution and production committees that had appeared during the strike.

#### *The power seizures*

Throughout the country students and revolutionary cadres heard the leaders they recognized give the order to seize power. There was no time to be lost, the leaders proclaimed, 'as the time is now ripe. If you do not seize power now you may be swept away by the conservatives. . . . We do not have time to create new systems; all we can do is act in accordance with circumstances and draw from them what advantage we can.' As Chou En-lai reminded them:

Generally speaking, seizing power means in the first place seizing the control of the Cultural Revolution and then taking economic control.<sup>30</sup>

This distinction indicated that first of all the Work Teams which had been assigned the job of applying the Cultural Revolution in the units were to be supplanted, and then the management of production was to be taken over. This was what the workers had done in Shanghai.

The leaders gave tactical advice on how the second aim was to be achieved. There was a distinction between win-

<sup>30</sup> Yutien Fenglei, February 10, 1967, 'Centre Leaders discuss the question of power seizures.'

ning control and being effectively in charge of the running of a unit. The new men in charge should start with an examination of the production units.

If productivity increases under Revolutionary Rebel control, they may take over management of the work . . . If for the time being one cannot be sure of winning control, one should economize one's efforts. One may allow the Work Teams to go on operating for a while, providing they are not too bad, until the masses mobilize themselves and take control.<sup>31</sup>

Depending on how the people in power had behaved and were then behaving, they would be treated in different ways:

1. The dismissal of corrupt leaders . . .
2. Dismissal while being kept on the books: facing an inquiry after a set period of time; being given the opportunity to redeem their faults; discharge after examination (re-engagement after six months, or a further extension of discharge notice).
3. Suspension from duty while being kept on the books: here again, facing an inquiry after a set interval; discharge after examination (for a period of, say, six months. Another job may be given while the case is being examined.)
4. Kept in employment while under surveillance.
5. No change in duties.<sup>32</sup>

Even if power seizures were regulated to some extent, they were not orderly. The main cause was the rivalry between different organizations all wanting to cover themselves with glory.

Chou En-lai also spoke about successive power seizures:

In some cases the seizure of power is incomplete; in others it is false. One takeover may then be followed by another. When a second one occurs, the first cannot be regarded as complete; nor can one be considered com-

<sup>31</sup> Yutien Fenglei, February 10, 1967.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* Speech by Chou En-lai.

plete when it starts over again and struggles continue . . . The problems that arise within the left can be resolved through discussion. One makes progress by assimilating imperfect alliances. False takeovers must be carried out again.

He concluded by reprimanding the Rebels:

It is wrong for people on the left to say to each other 'You are the February Revolution and we are the October Revolution,' or 'We are Yenan, you are Sian.'<sup>33</sup>

Ch'en Po-ta quoted some actual cases in order to convince the little revolutionary groups that they had to form alliances:

There are many national offices in Peking. If a small group that was not even able to represent a majority in a single school took over a national office, who would recognize it?<sup>34</sup>

In some places the leaders allowed power to be taken by the organizations they favoured rather than by others they did not. What happened in the Ministry of Agriculture has been discussed above. Elsewhere, when a power seizure had been superficial a stronger group carried out a new one. Power was seized four times<sup>35</sup> in the offices of the Shanghai Municipal Committee before the Commune was established; and there were four successive seizures in some of the colliery offices. Each seizure involved fights in which people were injured. Sometimes it was felt necessary to postpone the installation of proletarian power and ask for an army take-over instead of the seizure of power by the masses.

Revolutionaries who had just imposed their own control resented army intervention. An example of this may be seen in the offices of the Civil Aviation Bureau, which controlled the Chinese airlines. Although the Military Com-

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* Speech by Ch'en Po-ta.

<sup>35</sup> On January 14, 22, and 24, and February 5, 1967.

mission and the State Council decided on January 26th that it was to be put under military control, the Revolutionary Rebels within the Civil Aviation Bureau protested and increased their attacks on the records of leaders who were being kept in power under army control. Ignoring the protests, the army posted sentries and dispersed the crowd.<sup>36</sup>

Military control was seen by the revolutionaries as a temporary setback, and it was not a formula that the revolution's theoreticians could accept for long. The only people it suited were the administrators and, presumably, the Military Commission, which tended to opt for it too often.

The compromise solution was the 'triple alliance,' in which the army did not take the revolutionaries' place. This was how Chang Ch'un-ch'iao justified it to the workers of Shanghai. But in incomplete seizures of power the army had another role beside throwing its weight onto the scales. As mediator between revolutionary organizations that were implacably opposed to each other, it encouraged the forces of the left to form alliances, and helped them to keep in control despite their weakness. In this mission it was guided by only a minority of the Party leaders. As in the heroic days of the revolutionary wars, the army was needed for 'unity of control.'

By participating in the provisional institutions that were set up after power seizures, the army prevented what could be kept of the Party structure from being swept away. It set the example of submission to the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, the essential feature of which was the maintenance of the principle of Party leadership and respect for its image. The army had to bring about alliances between isolated revolutionary organizations in order to ensure that there would not be more than a single left-wing 'clan' to be incorporated into a renovated Communist Party. In his instructions to the Rebels Chou En-lai said:

There are three principles: Hold high the banner of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung and acknowledge the leader-

<sup>36</sup> Konno, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

ship of the Party; follow the socialist road; and obey the Sixteen Points and the two Ten-Point Directives.<sup>37</sup> These are the principles of the struggle, the first pre-conditions. Anyone who breaks them is guilty of the 'three Antis'.<sup>38</sup> A 'grand alliance' should be an agreement on fundamentals; there may be differences on lesser points. Above all, it is a grand alliance of the left. If some tiny organizations do not wish to conform to it they will be utterly isolated.<sup>39</sup>

In the face of these great principles the leftists had erred in appealing to other motivations among the revolutionaries. After Chou En-lai and Ch'en Po-ta had spoken, it was Wang Li's turn:

If we, the best of the proletarian revolutionaries, do not hold power the others may find us guilty in future . . . But when we are in power it will be for us to deal out all the black and the white papers.<sup>40</sup> If we do not grasp this power or if we hold it too weakly, there may be another reversal, in their favour this time, and it will be they who will be in a position to deal out black material to us. It must therefore be tit for tat, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.<sup>41</sup>

This language was stirring up the spirit of revenge, which had often found expression during the power seizures, and which led to excesses. The leaders of the federation of trade unions, for example, were put on public display on January 23rd, and on January 26th the Railways Ministers and a deputy foreign minister were exhibited at T'ien-anmen on the back of a lorry.<sup>42</sup> The Minister of Coal

<sup>37</sup> Probably the December Directives on the extension of the Cultural Revolution to factories, mines, and the countryside.

<sup>38</sup> 'Anti-socialist, anti-Party, anti the Thought of Mao Tse-tung.' This was a most serious condemnation, amounting to excommunication.

<sup>39</sup> *Yutien Fenglai*, February 10, 1967.

<sup>40</sup> Referring to documents used in drawing up charges, and dismissal notices.

<sup>41</sup> *Yutien Fenglei*, February 10, 1967.

<sup>42</sup> Konno, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

probably died as a result of mistreatment. The Railways Minister disappeared completely when the railway network was in utter chaos and Chou En-lai was looking for him. Rebels had taken him to a locomotive repair factory outside Peking where he was 'criticized' for four or five days.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time the revolutionaries were interrupting the work of the universities, wasting resources, and destroying the records needed for administration. A reminder was needed that not even seizures of power should endanger revolutionary order:

All unnecessary expenditure must be halted and means of transport must be used economically. . . . Vehicles used for transport or production may not be turned into propaganda trucks. . . . Capital saved for agricultural production may not be put to other uses . . . nor may agricultural machinery be wrecked . . . The protection and conservation of books and all written documents must be emphasized. They may not be disposed of arbitrarily or destroyed.<sup>44</sup>

The Central Committee, the State Council and the Military Commission were trying to bring those who had seized power to see a little sense. Since the middle of January they had become intoxicated with their own emancipation.

#### *Emancipation*

After the first power seizures the industrial workers in the big cities gradually got the impression that the Revolution was ending all kinds of constraints. The feeling that all sorts of new things were possible because everyone was expressing his ideas plunged the people into a kind of intoxication.

Politics came before everything. According to this prin-

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>44</sup> Notice from the Centre of March 16, 1967, quoted by the Japanese press on March 18th.

ciple everyone had to concern himself with public affairs in his neighbourhood and in his factory, and this took priority over all everyday matters. The people had the right to criticize and then to help build a new order in conformity with the Thought of Mao Tse-tung, which brought the principle of open democracy to the people. It spread confidence in the future and encouraged the humblest to believe that their qualities of spirit opened up greater opportunities for heroism than higher talents would have done. It gave everyone a desire to have ideas. From now on, it was necessary to know what was going on, to find out and understand what had gone wrong and what needed to be changed once power had been seized. It was necessary to find out what others were thinking, what changes were being proposed, and what revolutionary events were taking place. For the present all this was more important than work.

People went hunting for news, and the crowds never ebbed in the city festooned with posters. Those who sold the 'little newspapers' did good business. Everyone wanted to know what was happening in Shanghai, Chungking, or Sinkiang. With all the critical materials they were carrying, the papers were teaching much more about the history of the previous years than people had known about before. Even those who took no interest in political developments wanted to read everything now.

Most of the workers took an interest in politics. Those who did not know much about what went on in the provincial committees were familiar enough with how their own factories were run. The people were invited to express themselves, and they wrote down what they knew. Many posters dealt only with a single workshop or Party cell. In ordinary times many of the workers would never have dared to write in public. It took courage for someone with little schooling to put his penmanship on view, particularly in China, where writing is so skillful, notices dissolve rapidly, and written work is so highly respected.

Rebel organizations had skilled copyists whose work bore comparison with the calligraphy of the students, but small groups and even individuals also expressed their

grievances, conveying some injustice they had suffered or faults they had found with an organization. Veteran workers who had lived under several regimes and who may themselves have struggled for workers' rights in the old days would place their paper and ink on the ground, and the crowd would make room for them. After contemplating the blank sheet with much gravity, as if they had long been waiting for this moment, they would begin to write a clumsy script.

The circulation of news of all kinds and the freedom to say new things put people in a relaxed mood. With the bosses suspended and under investigation, all their informers had disappeared. There were no more concealed struggles and secret denunciations. A new period was beginning, one of destruction rather than construction no doubt, but at least the struggles were now in the open. No sooner had almost any poster been put up than it was torn down by a rival organization. Small groups of workers, which other organizations tried to get suppressed, distributed on bicycles barely legible duplicated appeals for help. Movements that had no paper painted their appeals on the roadway in the small hours.

These conflicts contained an element of optimism, and a breath of liberty was in the air during the 'Peking winter.' The press reflected this: 'Try reading the revolutionary papers *Liberation Daily* and *Wenhui Pao*,' wrote the *People's Daily*. 'Now that they are freed from the control of the bourgeois line they have become dynamic and their stifling and dead atmosphere has completely disappeared.'<sup>45</sup>

'There is no reason to believe that we will be unable to get by and make a living without these bourgeois "lords" . . .'<sup>46</sup> 'We, the revolutionary workers, are the masters of the country and of our own concerns.'<sup>47</sup>

Thus, all the hopes for changes in the way of life were expressed as demands. Young workers wanted the period

<sup>45</sup> *People's Daily*, January 19, 1967.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Workers' Daily*, January 14, 1967, editorial.

of apprenticeship reduced;<sup>48</sup> workers in commerce wanted their working hours to be the same as in factories, and they also wanted a guaranteed day off each week;<sup>49</sup> printing workers wanted the rhythm of work eased;<sup>50</sup> and the employees of medium-sized and small enterprises wanted no discrimination between their pay and that of larger enterprises.<sup>51</sup> The Peking bus and trolleybus workers bluntly demanded pay rises too.<sup>52</sup>

The question of bonuses and piece-rates or a fixed hourly wage divided the working class. Maoism was utterly opposed to the first two, but many workers were aware of how they improved their living standards. The eight-hour working day was not openly opposed, though it is significant that it was thought necessary to defend it;<sup>53</sup> and a year later such demands were still being made.<sup>54</sup> With too many workers taking time off for meetings, labour discipline suffered: politics was in command.

The peasants who were working seasonally in factories, and others who had been engaged for several years with the prospect of going back to their villages at the end of the period,<sup>55</sup> demanded the same rights as regular workers. They wanted to be registered in the cities by the

<sup>48</sup> *Current Scene*, vol. 6, no. 5, March 15, 1968, pp. 12 and 21.

<sup>49</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 23, 1967.

<sup>50</sup> This demand was made by the personnel in charge of the paper supply at the Hsinhua Printing Works. See the Red Guard *Chen-pao* of February 15, 1967. See also, on the application of the 'Seventy Points' at the Shihchingshan Steel Works, K. Samejima 'Peking plans basic reform of industrial administration,' *Japan Economic Journal*, April 30, 1968.

<sup>51</sup> Konno, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> See especially the letters of January 12, 1967, from the workers of No. 1 Machine-tool Factory, Peking, in the *People's Daily* of January 16th.

<sup>54</sup> See the Peking papers of February 28, 1968.

<sup>55</sup> These were often peasants who came in groups from the same rural communes under contracts made directly between communes and companies. Radio Moscow discussed this system in a broadcast on China and the Cultural Revolution on December 11, 1966.

government instead of merely living there on sufferance, and to be paid the same as the regular workers. Maoists sympathised with their demands. Hofei, speaking for the province of Anhwei, said that temporary workers now had the same political rights as regulars, but was silent on economic rights.<sup>56</sup>

The revolutionary leadership could go no further than to grant them the right of urban residence. Despite the advice of the new trade union federation that 'the system of contract workers, temporary workers and seconded workers is not entirely reasonable,' the State Council judged it 'moderately reasonable.'<sup>57</sup> The Maoist programme of eliminating the differences between town and countryside did not rule out compromise solutions, to the disappointment of the worker-peasants.

It appears on reflexion that the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable demands from the workers was decided on the criteria of the arguments against 'economism.' Of the demands mentioned above, only the shortening of apprenticeships<sup>58</sup> and the regularization of shop-workers' hours were accepted immediately. Bonuses were gradually abolished in some concerns despite the attachment to them of some of the personnel.<sup>59</sup> Demands for a shorter working day and pay rises were quickly rejected by the very people who had confirmed workers' power.

After the ferment in which workers expressed their personal feelings, criticisms of the running of enterprises began to follow a set political formula, which became a key part of the Cultural Revolution's programme. The revolutionary leadership held up the Anshan Steelworks Constitution—a group of recommendations to which Mao Tse-tung had given some attention in 1960 but were then ignored by the Party—in opposition to the 'Seventy Points'

<sup>56</sup> *Current Scene*, vol. 6, no. 5, March 15, 1968, pp. 23–24.

<sup>57</sup> *Ajia Keizai Jumbo*, no. 683, May 1967.

<sup>58</sup> Urgent instructions of Chou En-lai and Liu Ning-yi on wages and the organization of work—see *Current Scene*, vol. 6, no. 5, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> The Shihchingshan Steel Works abolished bonuses in the autumn of 1967. See *Japan Economic Journal*, April 30, 1968.

for industry,<sup>60</sup> that Liu Shao-ch'i had recommended to industrial managements and were, according to the revolutionaries, based on the Magnitogorsk Steelworks Constitution.

The Seventy Points, the revolutionaries charged, had been put together by the Party machine in contravention of the spirit of the Ashan Constitution; they centralized managerial control, played down the authority of the Party in the factory, and forced Communist cells and groups in the company to be inactive.<sup>61</sup> In other words, they involved the same error as the one committed by the army leadership when it allowed Party committees in the units to atrophy. In material terms, the Seventy Points gave the management considerable discretion in finance and accounting, with the aim of maximizing returns.

The State Council had other worries besides sorting out the demands of revolutionaries, not least the restoration of normal working in factories. To this end it issued instructions on February 17th that were backed up by the Central Committee's 'Letter to Revolutionary Workers and Cadres' later published in the press:

You should in accordance with the regulations laid down by the Party's Central Committee, firmly adhere to the eight-hour working day and carry on the Cultural Revolution during the time outside the eight hours of work. During working hours it is impermissible to absent oneself without good cause from one's production or work post. We must fight against any unhealthy tendency towards absenteeism. . . .<sup>62</sup>

The workers were apparently divided into two schools: one supported the politicization of their movement along the approved line of the 'Grand Alliance,' the single 'clan' of the Maoists, with the sacrifice of workers' demands that

<sup>60</sup> The 'Draft regulations on the work of industrial enterprises' of September 1960.

<sup>61</sup> *Yutien Ch'angpao*, published by the Tungfanghung group of the Postal Ministry, Peking, June 28, 1967.

<sup>62</sup> 'Letter from the Central Committee' in *Peking Review*, no. 13, March 24, 1967.

this involved; and the other reverted to corporate activities, withdrawing their organizations from political involvement. In March 1967 workers spontaneously formed 'friendly societies,' such as those of mechanics, drivers, and 1965 graduates of universities and colleges. The Shanghai papers published an article condemning these associations that was reprinted in the *People's Daily*.<sup>63</sup>

The Centre had acknowledged, however, that such associations were natural, by allowing the revolution and production committees that had helped end the Shanghai strikes to continue for a long time; and it even supported the 'economic control groups' that helped the revolutionary committees. But it was alarmed by the indiscriminate violence indulged in by the rebels and agitators. The leaders of the revolution decided that it would be necessary to restrict freedom of association by suppressing some organizations.

#### *Was there division within the working class?*

The revolution in the big cities was complicated by some special problems, one of which was the large number of workers moving back from the countryside.

The Party's policy had been to use the surplus population of the cities to develop underpopulated and climatically inhospitable regions. Workers from Shanghai or Tientsin, who were technically more proficient than peasants, had been sent to work on state farms, in oil search, or in forestry. They had been sent off for long spells. Many of them wanted to return home, and regarded their jobs as temporary missions to distant parts, though it was intended that most of them should stay on to populate the empty spaces. They were not generally willing pioneers. Many went out unwillingly, bitter at the cadres who had picked them out from among their fellows.

Workers from the Shanghai region were generally sent to reinforce the production and construction corps in Sin-

<sup>63</sup> *People's Daily*, March 15, 1967. See *China News Analysis*, no. 654, April 7, 1967, p. 6.

kiang or to the forests of Anhwei. From Tientsin and Peking they went to Inner Mongolia and the northern wastes of Manchuria; some went to the oilwells of Tach'ing, which became an industrial centre. Youngsters in Canton were recruited by the local Party Committees to develop regions in South China, generally in Kwangsi or Kweichow.

When the Cultural Revolution was extended to workers of all categories in late 1966 and early 1967, the most discontented of the pioneers became virulent in their criticisms of the Party. As they were not wanted in the places where they were working, and they demanded in the name of Chairman Mao to be allowed to carry out the Cultural Revolution at home, the local authorities let them go.

Some of them wanted to come back to Shanghai. If they did not succeed they fought against the local cadres and the development cadres. . . . In Sinkiang production was badly hit by the departure of many youngsters going back home.

This was Chang Ch'un-ch'iao's explanation of the situation to the Revolutionary Rebels. The aggrieved colonists had boarded trains like the students and the city workers, and came back to rejoin the population of the cities, where they formed their own organizations.

These organizations generally took as their targets the cadres of the neighbourhood. This was contrary to the Cultural Revolution line, as these cadres were not really responsible for the errors of the past. Instead of seeking out the 'small handful,' these revolutionaries, whose grievances were personal, attacked the main bulk of the cadres, terrorizing them, and thus paralyzing the basic-level administration and bringing insecurity to the alleys.

There were thus three problems to be solved: the loss of personnel by production units in the development areas;<sup>64</sup> the alienation of the cadres; and insecurity in the cities.

<sup>64</sup> Speaking to railwaymen on January 10th, Chou En-lai said that over 10,000 youngsters had left Tach'ing (according to posters).

The mistake of striking at all the cadres, instead of searching out those who had really been responsible for abuses, was not confined to the returnees among the Shanghai workers. In Canton the secretaries of the lowest-level Party committees were 'driven out' and 'put on public display,' to be blamed for having sent hundreds of people to labour camps.<sup>65</sup> In some power seizures in Peking all the cadres, good and bad, were attacked indiscriminately on the principle that bosses were bad and would not be needed in future.

The Centre must have regarded this as a serious deviation, for the Party press reprinted a text Mao Tse-tung had written in 1929 in criticism of extreme egalitarianism. On January 28th the *People's Daily* carried Mao's 'On correcting mistaken ideas in the Party,'<sup>66</sup> which maintained that absolute equality was impossible, and said that leaders who worked for others should be allowed to set themselves somewhat apart.

To reestablish order in the cities the Centre relied on the Public Security, now under army control, in order to eliminate pressure groups organized as revolutionary bodies. In the middle of February the Central Committee passed a resolution insisting that the Rebels should allow the police to function.<sup>67</sup> Various facts quoted in the Red Guard press indicate that the local military control committees were entrusted with neutralizing organizations without reference to the Centre. The Public Security in the provinces seems to have taken considerable initiative in late February and early March.

After a period of comparative calm in Peking and Shanghai, where mass criticism was directed against the works of Liu Shao-ch'i, there was a new wave of power seizures in early June. This was when some of the extremists in the Central Committee's Cultural Revolution Group decided to accelerate the Revolution. The slogan 'Beat the

<sup>65</sup> According to posters in Canton around March 1st.

<sup>66</sup> See Kaizuka, 'Bunka Kakumei no shōkon,' *Asahi Jyanaru*, March 19, 1967, pp. 102-3.

<sup>67</sup> 'Rules on the help that must be given to the Public Security in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.'



dog in the water,' was raised again with greater ferocity.

Some revolutionary organizations in Shanghai published a resolution demanding that the Revolution should move forward again and that the Public Security forces should be used to strengthen the proletarian dictatorship. The policy was to involve the revolutionary committees in the application of full powers for the Revolution. All opposition and even contradiction was to be ruthlessly punished.<sup>68</sup>

The fresh assault by the Rebels provoked a new series of work stoppages. Management and cadres in the Anshan steelworks and in most mines, where they had continued to function despite agitation by the workers, were finally overthrown. Workers' committees then led the workers to achieve record output, enthusiasm for which only lasted for a while. As some key technicians, particularly in the mines, had absented themselves, maintenance of the mines and breakdown of machinery was causing difficulties. Workers began to quarrel over who was to blame, and the moderates criticized the rebels.

It was at about this time that the reactionary workers' organizations in Wuhan moved over to the offensive. We shall deal later with the bloody violence of July and August in the cities. Under provocation from the Lien Ssu, a reactionary organization, the Rebels in Shanghai called for revenge, but a fresh outbreak of strikes cut off the city's electricity supplies on August 11th. Every day seemed to bring news of workers rioting somewhere in China. At this critical moment different initiatives began to develop in the two main urban centres.

In Peking, the reaction of the workers took the form of silent protest. On August 19th the Workers' Congress<sup>69</sup> led a procession through the streets of all who were against the 'great leap forward in violence.' The solemnity of the demonstration, which consisted simply of a column of

<sup>68</sup> Compare with the contemporary article by Lin Chieh: see above, Chapter 5.

<sup>69</sup> An organization belonging to the Workers' Alliance, which represented them on the Peking Revolutionary Committee.

people holding placards, without slogans or chanting, was in sharp contrast with the usual exuberance of revolutionary demonstrations.

In Shanghai, however, the workers invoked their right to 'use violence in self-defence'<sup>70</sup> thus demonstrating their fear of the reactionaries and their individualistic concept of proletarian dictatorship. Some organizations had long been trying to get arms for their own defence. The papers mentioned the creation of the 'Red Guards of the Military Region of Huangp'u'<sup>71</sup> and praised organized and militant bodies of fighting men.<sup>72</sup> Chang Ch'un-ch'iao nevertheless persuaded the Workers Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters to put its weight behind a solemn appeal to renounce the use of force. He put seven demands to the rebels, among which were these:

Mass organizations are not authorized, even on the pretext of force in self-defence, to make, transport or use without permission any lethal weapon. The use of chemical poisons is strictly forbidden.<sup>73</sup>

These efforts were in vain, for extremist elements were leading the revolutionaries to adopt methods that should only have been used in exceptional circumstances. Revolutionary tribunals appeared in Shanghai at the end of August, dealing at first with ordinary criminal cases: the owner of a clandestine factory or workshop, an illicit deal in a hundred thousand pounds of grain and ration tickets. A little later it was learned that a people's court had condemned two people to be shot and six others to prison sentences for counter-revolutionary conspiracy. It seemed as if a regime of 'committees of public safety' was about

<sup>70</sup> After the Wuhan incidents Chiang Ch'ing, probably speaking on behalf of the Cultural Revolution Group, said that henceforward revolutionaries would no longer be obliged to respond with argument alone but could now defend themselves with arms. Speech of July 20th, in wall posters of July 22, 1967, in Peking.

<sup>71</sup> A district of Shanghai and the name of its river.

<sup>72</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, August 23, 1967.

<sup>73</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, August 11, 1967.

to be installed in the manner of the French Revolution.

At this point Mao Tse-tung made a tour of inspection in north, central-south and east China.<sup>74</sup> This was guessed at when the Shanghai papers began to speak with unaccustomed authority on fundamental questions.<sup>75</sup> On August 25th they wrote that reform of working conditions was 'the task of the Party.'<sup>76</sup>

All the signs are that when the Chairman analyzed the struggles taking place within the working class he decided that it was more urgent to discuss its problems than to inflame its passions. The quarrels that were disturbing the Centre could have been avoided had the revolution been considered solely from the point of view of class. Verbal violence, which tended to push the proletarian dictatorship to extremes 'for ulterior motives,' made internal disputes too heated.

At the end of his journey<sup>77</sup> Mao Tse-tung issued these brief instructions:

There is no fundamental clash of interests within the working class. In the conditions of a proletarian dictatorship, there is no reason for the working class to be divided into two irreconcilable organizations.

In the days that followed, peaceful seizures of power took place under the eyes of the army. The small groups of soldiers who had been sent to factories since the summer<sup>78</sup> to 'aid the left' and teach the Thought of Mao Tse-tung were heavily outnumbered: there were five or ten soldiers to several thousand workers. They could bring no

<sup>74</sup> It was not announced by the New China News Agency until September 24th.

<sup>75</sup> The Peking press was inflamed at the time by the anti-British campaign and the polemics against Liu Shao-ch'i.

<sup>76</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, *Liberation Daily*, and *Cell Life* published jointly a series of important editorials.

<sup>77</sup> Probably around September 12. See *Peking Review*, no. 40, September 29, 1967. According to the *Ajia Keizai Jumbo*, no. 741, p. 16, it was September 14th.

<sup>78</sup> In some places since May. In July 1967 there were about 200 military missions in Shanghai factories and nearly as many in Peking.

pressure to bear through force. The Chairman's oracular words, repeated in the stern tones of the soldiers, came just when most people were longing for an end to the tension, and acted as a precipitant.

At the Peking Hosiery Factory opposing groups joined forces when they learned of Mao Tse-tung's latest instructions, and six days later they quietly took over the financial administration of the factory. In the Sixth Ministry of the mechanical industry, where there were twelve different rival organizations, a small group of soldiers brought the revolutionaries together by making them go together by departments to study classes in the Thought of Mao Tse-tung.

In the city of Ch'angsha two organizations were fighting each other: the 'Ch'angsha Workers' Alliance' and the 'storm on the River Hsiang.' In the eyes of the Centre they were both acceptable. Through the good offices of the army they united after an exchange of self-criticism.<sup>79</sup> These conclusions appear banal in comparison with the excitement of the preceding period, but a change of policy went some way towards explaining them.

The excessive violence of August led the Centre to condemn the extreme left and issue some authoritarian decrees, notably a decision that threatened the suspension of pay for anyone guilty of violence.<sup>80</sup> This was perhaps the first time that such a sanction had been introduced in the course of the Cultural Revolution. Doubtless some of the workers appreciated this appeal to wisdom.

Another way of explaining why an easy solution should so suddenly have been found for such deep-rooted

<sup>79</sup> With the help of the 'preparatory group for the revolutionary committee' and the responsible comrades of PLA Unit 6900, a discussion was held between the two groups, who recognized their errors and admitted that the split between them was unreasonable. This took place in November 1967, according to Ch'angsha Radio. See also *China News Analysis*, no. 694, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Decision of September 1, 1967, by the Peking Revolutionary Committee, which had met in an enlarged session with several national leaders taking part. This decision, although only a local one, was publicized throughout the whole country.

conflicts was that the alliances within the revolutionary committees and the preparatory groups designated by the Centre to form revolutionary committees had been strengthened. The committees, for cities or administrative departments, realized that once the extreme left was disowned they could win themselves a little stability by ending the unwanted fighting. Their most committed members then had no choice between taking exception or keeping their factions quiet.

Many conflicts continued, but for some time less was seen of the extremist rebels. They closed in on themselves and restrained, not without bitterness, their demands for an armed proletariat, waiting for the day when new social demands from the industrial workers would divide society again.

#### *Wages and ideology*

The Centre had to make the workers understand that, in the interests of the nationwide revolutionary movement, they should give up the advantages the revolution was bringing them. Many workers, encouraged by the ferment of ideas in Shanghai, felt that the revolution could not end without leaving behind it a minimum of workers' democracy—later they were to demand simply unsupervised trade-unionism.

As the long-term intention of the revolution's creators was to reconstitute the Party, the themes and objectives proposed for the workers' movement had to take account both of the leading role of the workers among the people, and of the Party among the workers' organizations. The worker revolutionaries would have preferred to see an acknowledged leading role for working-class organizations in the Party. There was thus a certain ambiguity in the slogans they jointly adopted. The most useful were those repudiating the old trade unions, for people of varying beliefs could all subscribe to them while keeping their own interpretation.

'We don't want the old trade unions,' proclaimed the posters in Shanghai in December 1967. In fact this could

mean several things. The leaders of the Workers Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters, who had previously declared that the organizations affiliated to the Headquarters were the class organizations of the working class,<sup>81</sup> were counting on the new unions being run by Rebel workers.

On their side, the workers who were not Rebels rejected the old unions because they detested their political control. They felt that the revolution should give them the right to defend their social interests in society without having to act through the Party. As for the Centre, it could strictly speaking claim that all the workers who were combining under this same slogan agreed on repudiating the policies of the old Party machine and the revisionist methods of the old unions.

In December 1967 the revolution's leaders avoided making too clear what they meant by their joint slogans. They kept things vague, saying that no workers' group had the right to speak on behalf of the people or of the Party. Some regrouping of organizations, such as the one that had just taken place in Shanghai, was the result of long and arduous political work, and it was not to be compromised.

The Shanghai Congress of Revolutionary Rebel Workers was inaugurated on December 3rd.<sup>82</sup> Among the speeches made was one in which Wang Hung-wen, one of the leaders of the Congress, dealt with working-class activity and its possibilities:

Comrades, we are all ordinary workers, the flood-tide of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a rampart protecting those responsible for leading us. . . . Our political and ideological standards are still fairly low, and we are still inexperienced in this work. . . . We must have the courage to turn towards the old and the young cadres in order to learn from them.

<sup>81</sup> Speech by Wang Hung-wen at the inaugural ceremony for the Shanghai Congress of Revolutionary Rebel Workers, December 3, 1967. (*Liberation Daily*, no. 6739, December 4, 1967.)

<sup>82</sup> The formation of the Workers' Congress followed shortly after one for the Shanghai students.

But in other passages he echoed those who were demanding a toughening of the dictatorship of the proletariat:

The bourgeoisie laughs at our low standard. Don't worry! We can learn to fight in the fight itself, and learn the job on the job. . . . We must actively create the preconditions and all necessary preparations for arming the workers.<sup>83</sup>

Was he referring literally to the arming of the workers, or to arming them with the Thought of Mao Tse-tung? In this otherwise moderate speech there were elements such as this in which the most extreme workers' groups could find justification for their fight.

As far as the Centre was concerned, the creation of the Workers' Congress was above all a stage in the reconstruction of the Party. This was the line taken by the Shanghai press at the time.<sup>84</sup> The revolutionary leaders had thus succeeded in incorporating one part of the worker rebels, a process through which the workers' organizations that had always been loyal to Chang Ch'un-ch'iao saw their chance of participating in the restored Communist Party.

In some sectors a part of the profits was distributed at the end of that year, and the temporary workers were promised equality of status with the regular ones. This was an attempt to calm them down by letting them know what had, then at least, been guaranteed. Twenty days later another decision<sup>85</sup> ruled that reforms in the status of temporary workers could be considered after investigation and

<sup>83</sup> *Liberation Daily*, December 4, 1967. The old cadres were former cadres who had come over to the revolution; the young cadres were revolutionaries carrying out the functions of the cadres.

<sup>84</sup> See *Liberation Daily*, December 2, 1967, 'The cadres and the people join in angry criticism of the revisionist line on reconstruction of the Party.' On December 5th *Wenhui Pao* published four pages of quotations from Cultural Revolution texts on the reconstruction of the Party.

<sup>85</sup> Central Committee resolutions of December 28, 1967, and January 18, 1968, quoted in the organ of the Rebels in the Canton railways. *Kuang'ieh Tsungssu*, no. 28, February 1968.

detailed inquiries into the local situation. But then the Centre condemned concessions made in contempt of the Cultural Revolution; it revoked pay advances already made, disowned the cadres who had allowed them, and ordered them to make their self-criticisms.

The Centre was then putting the finishing touches to the national economic plan for 1968, and it found itself faced with realities that allowed it no room for compromise. The hardening of its policies provoked a new wave of strikes that were nothing to do with power seizures.

While other sections of the economy were doubtless affected by the strikes, it is mainly through Chinese news reports on the mines that we know of their extent and gravity.<sup>86</sup> Since the power seizures in June, industrial management had taken a very weak line with the masses in all the units that had yet to achieve their 'alliances.' The cadres were ignored, technicians did not co-operate with the new managements with any enthusiasm, and the managements themselves, representing some faction or other rather than the workers as a class, resorted to demagoguery in order to survive.

Some revolutionaries were saying that the eight-hour day had been imposed by the detested old regime, and that the aim of their rebellion had been to overthrow the old system. The official press insisted that these arguments should be answered, and printed the following conversation on the front page of the *People's Daily* (February 29, 1968) in the guise of a fable.<sup>87</sup> An old miner is talking with a young one:

Old miner: 'The eight-hour working day is a victory won by the working class at the cost of long struggles. You

<sup>86</sup> In May the New China News Agency reports from the provinces referred more than once to production delays in previous months, and noted the 'record' production increases of that month.

<sup>87</sup> The New China News Agency reported (from Hofei on February 6th) another conversation in which old miners said to young workmates: 'You never knew the Kuomintang. You don't know how lucky you are. Even being able to form your groups is something you owe to Mao Tse-tung.'

claim that leaving the pit early is rebelling against the old system: but why don't you leave the pit late instead? The more hours you put in, the more coal you mine for the country. I can see that your mind has been warped by anarchist ideas. . . .'

Young miner: 'Yes, I'm in the wrong. I haven't been working the eight-hour day that Chairman Mao established for us. . . .'

Something had to be done to deal with the threat that faced the economy. There were important talks in Peking during February among the top leaders of the Party, the State Council, and the army.<sup>88</sup> It is probable that in their meetings they agreed that the Party spirit, 'which was the collective spirit,' would have to prevail, and that old cadres and new would have to work together, drawing their inspiration primarily through correct ideas, no matter where they came from.<sup>89</sup>

One propaganda theme was the duty of the leaders of revolutionary committees to go among the people. If setbacks had occurred, they were to be attributed to the managers' lack of interest in their employees' work. The New China News Agency gave as an example a mine in the North-East,<sup>90</sup> apparently in order to show what managers could do to get the dismissed cadres back in their jobs. The cadres in question were those involved in production, foremen, and gangers, who could not or would not return to work for fear of being beaten up.

Mining output had been poor in February, with a deficit

<sup>88</sup> Li Fu-ch'un, a leading planning executive but not one of the Cultural Revolution's ideological leaders, played a part in receptions of delegates after this that was disproportionate to his importance in the Cultural Revolution (e.g. The reception by Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao, and six national leaders for army units seconded to 'support the left, support industry and support agriculture' on February 19th. See New China News Agency report of that date.

<sup>89</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, February 19, 1968, 'What road should a revolutionary committee take?'

<sup>90</sup> New China News Agency report from Harbin, April 4, 1968 (in Chinese), 'Ssufang'ai Mine.'

of nearly 2,000 tons on February 20th. But people were saying that it did not matter as they could make it up the next month. 'The revolutionary committee of the mining district sent two members of its leading group, who brought with them over thirty cadres belonging to the mine's management.' Thus the cadres, who were eventually reinstated by the district's 'provisional administration,' and the revolutionary committee which had not wanted them back, both began to study together the Thought of Mao Tse-tung. Revolutionaries and cadres were reconciled at a seminar on the Chairman's works: neither side could refuse to attend. This was the formula for reconciliation recommended by the revolution's leaders.

The rehabilitation of the cadres was complemented by the punishment of those who had been keeping them out for so long. The Shanghai Revolutionary Committee was purged at the end of February.<sup>91</sup> It met in an enlarged session on the 26th, and on the 27th there was a rally of revolutionary workers to call for 'thrift and economy in the revolution,' a theme aimed at the longest established revolutionaries, the Red Guards, some of whom were almost making a career of the Cultural Revolution. Writing about those days, a Shanghai paper noted, 'some elements sought to abuse their power in a spirit of self-aggrandisement.'<sup>92</sup>

Soon afterwards there were some revelations about the armed organizations of the proletariat. The *Wenhui Pao*<sup>93</sup> spoke of a unit formed in Shanghai under the name of 'Attack with words and defend with weapons,' a 'mailed fist of the proletarian dictatorship' to 'educate and win over the oppressed masses.' This unit, according to its commander writing in that paper, 'struck' (rather than

<sup>91</sup> Some militant workers who had made a name for themselves in Peking were also removed from political life. On April 14, 1968, Wang Ching-jui, a member of the standing committee of the Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee, and also a leader of the dissident Peking Workers' Congress, was arrested.

<sup>92</sup> *Wenhui Pao*, February 19, 1968.

<sup>93</sup> March 28, 1967, and April 7, 1968.

'dragged out') the 'small handful' wherever it was to be found. As the unit was operational at the time, the press coverage it was given was not without significance. Was it still competing with the army for power in the revolutionary committees? Whatever the facts were, the *Wenhui Pao* was purged<sup>94</sup> soon after opening its columns to the commander of this unit and shortly before the usual May Day truce.

The advocates of social revolution were finally incorporated within the revolutionary committees of the second period, with the help of the army, which played a dominant role. Meanwhile the demands of production were making themselves inexorably felt. The industrial workers understood that their work followed a cycle as inflexible as that which nature imposed on the peasants. They had to see themselves as being like peasants, being superior only in the technical know-how that they put at the service of the people. The norms of the new 1968 plan were applied in March and April. On the eve of May Day the reformed *Wenhui Pao* told the workers:

Production must be taken in hand; whatever is inappropriate to the superstructure of a socialist economy must be reformed; a movement for progressive management must be launched; and there must be a revolutionary transformation of the leading groups.

The leaders now being required to reform themselves and be 'progressive' were not the old cadres. They were already those who had seized power the previous year.

<sup>94</sup> *Wenhui Pao* was purged at mass staff meetings on April 28th, 29th, and 30th. This paper provided a very varied news service and published many readers' letters, including some which said that a second revolution and a new power takeover were needed, as the first had failed and had not led to democracy.

## 7. The First Revolutionary Committees

When the mission assigned to the revolutionary students had been extended to overthrowing some of the members of Party committees, it had been impossible to confine them to a critical role. Once committed to the struggle, in roles that were modified first by the bold counter-measures of the Party committees and then by the crisis brought about by the strikes, they followed a course that ended with their taking a part in the revolutionary command. The reasons for not dispersing the industrial workers were even stronger. Once they had joined in the revolution and many of them had become Revolutionary Rebels, it would have been impossible to deny their political abilities in the organs whose cadres they had replaced in order to run local affairs.

Nevertheless, the recognition of the political role of students and workers in some institutions created problems concerning the aim of the Cultural Revolution. The latter was to bring about a change of policy with the participation of the people and the transformation of the Party, both to be done without affecting the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was necessary that the Party should be rectified through general criticism, but not that everyone should take part in the institutions of government. The Centre, however, decided that revolutionary committees should be set up everywhere, and this decision was presumably taken on tactical rather than ideological grounds.