

# *Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution*

## Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution

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The preceding contributions in this symposium equate the Chinese Revolution with the rise to power of the Chinese Communist movement. With that equation, the history of the revolution becomes essentially the history of the Chinese Communist movement from the founding of the Communist Party in 1921 to its final triumph in 1949. Although Selden and Esherick have placed their stories into larger contexts, their core concerns remain the hows and whys of the Communist victory. In that respect, their conception of the revolution is entirely consistent with the mainstream of past scholarship.

I propose here to think of the Chinese Revolution somewhat differently. To be sure, the triumph of a revolutionary movement is the sine qua non of the story of any revolution. But I find it difficult to think of the revolution as ending in 1949, before the enactment of the big revolutionary changes: the full-scale, nationwide "Land Revolution," which redistributed some 43% of the nation's cultivated land and put an end to landlords and rich peasants as social classes; the subsequent "Socialist Reconstruction" of 1953 to 1957, which nationalized almost all private property in the cities and collectivized almost all

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private property in the countryside; and then, after a brief recession of the revolutionary tide in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976, which attacked old traditions full force in an attempt to create a new revolutionary culture.

What finally distinguishes a revolution from a rebellion or from dynastic change, it seems to me, is not the change from one contending state apparatus to another but rather large-scale structural change. To define the Chinese Revolution as a process ending in 1949 comes perilously close to reducing the revolution to little more than just another dynastic change, especially when one proposes, as Esherick (this issue) does, to conceive of the Communist victory as "the replacement of one form of domination with another" (48). I suggest in this article an alternative conception of the revolution as centering around the big changes wrought during the period 1946 to 1976, from the start of large-scale land reform through Socialist Reconstruction to the end of the Cultural Revolution. It is a conception that shifts the focus of analysis from the Communist Party's rise to power to its enactment of structural change. That latter process, no less than the earlier formative period of the revolutionary movement, is critically important for our understanding of contemporary China.

One important development in recent historiography on the French Revolution, as Edward Berenson's essay in this symposium makes clear, is to rethink 1789 from the perspective of the Terror that came after. The year 1789 and the Terror were part and parcel of the same revolution. For the Chinese Revolution, the analog to the Terror is surely the Cultural Revolution.

I am proposing here to rethink 1949 in light of the Cultural Revolution (and vice versa). Much current writing on the revolution, including the Selden and Esherick contributions in the symposium, is informed above all by perspectives and concerns stemming from the events of June 4, 1989. Although important, June 4 seems to me entirely a postrevolutionary phenomenon, as much a product of the postrevolutionary reforms of the 1980s as a legacy of the revolution. The Cultural Revolution, on the other hand, was an integral part of that giant revolutionary tide that followed on the waves of Communist successes during the Sino-Japanese War. Instead of becoming cen-

trally concerned with the issues of democracy raised by June 4, we need much more to incorporate into our understanding of the revolution the gigantic Cultural Revolution that dwarfed June 4 in scale and import and that was in so many ways the climax of three decades of revolution making. In this article, I try to view the Land Revolution and the Cultural Revolution as one piece and see how the two help to illuminate each other.

I wish also to move away from the essentially objectivist perspective that has dominated past scholarship on the revolution. Despite their discussions of issues of morale and discourse, the Selden and Esherick essays, as well as most of the scholarship they review, are principally concerned with objective, not representational, realities: on the level of structure, with social-economic and institutional contexts, not symbolic or discursive formations; and on the level of agency, with actions and events, not ideas or attitudes. Recent studies of the French Revolution, as Berenson notes, have switched almost entirely from objective dimensions of society and economy to representational dimensions of discourse and culture.

I would like here to shift the focus of our attention to the interconnections between objective structures and representational structures and between objective actions and representational mentalities. The inclusion of the Cultural Revolution is intended to make the cultural/symbolic dimension integral to our conception of the revolution. And that conception, including both the social-economic upheaval of the Land Reform and the cultural-political upheaval of the Cultural Revolution, is intended to spotlight the interconnections between the objective and representational realms.

What I attempt here is a highly preliminary analysis of just one aspect of the big story spanning 1946 to 1976: the history of rural class struggle, both as representational and as objective reality, and both as structure and as agency. In choosing this topic, I mean to highlight the problems with the objectivist-structuralist view of history, or what has been termed "the social interpretation" in recent historiographic discussions (including Berenson's essay in this volume), as well as with the currently vogue representationist view of history, or what might in time come to be termed "the cultural interpretation."

## METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

To clarify the issues raised,[1] let me begin with a diagrammatic characterization of the multiple dimensions brought into focus by the questions of representation versus practice and structure versus agency. Four analytical dimensions are involved, with two structural dimensions aligned on the left side of the diagram as opposed to two voluntarist dimensions on the right side, and with two representational dimensions aligned on the upper half as opposed to two objective dimensions on the lower half:

| representational structure | representational agency |
|---|---|
| objective structure | objective agency |

The simple structuralist view assumes the determinative importance of structure, or the left side of the diagram, and sees the relationship between structure and agency as one of unidirectional influence from structure to agency. The simple voluntarist view maintains the opposite, that the determinative dimension is human agency, or the right side of the diagram. As for representationism versus objectivism, the simple representationist view sees representation, or the upper half of the diagram, as determinative, whereas the simple objectivist view maintains the opposite, that the determinative dimension is objective reality, or the lower half of the diagram.

A crudely deterministic Marxist view is an objectivist-structuralist view. It assumes the primacy of objective structure (i.e., production relations and productive forces) over representational superstructures. The latter are seen as mere "reflections" of the former. It also assumes the primacy of structure over agency. Once the objective structure of the mode of production is analyzed properly, human actions and events become predictable. The lower left dimension of objective structure, in other words, determines the other three dimensions.

An extreme representationist-voluntarist view, on the other hand, insists on the primacy of representational agency. The essence of a cultural tradition is the thoughts and values of individuals, especially of the great thinkers and creative geniuses. Actions and social-economic institutions are the manifestations of those values and ideas, not the reverse. It is the upper right dimension of representational agency, not the lower left dimension of objective structure, that is the determinative one.

Against these simple determinist formulations, Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991) has made the important contribution, first, of extending Marxist structural analysis from the objective into the representational (or "symbolic") realm, most especially through the notion of "symbolic capital." Capital may be not only material but also symbolic. Class becomes not only a matter of objective social structure but also a matter of representational structure, of distinctions and predilections of thought, style, and language. By extension, agency also becomes not only a matter of the choice of objective action but also a matter of the choice of representational ideas and attitudes. Bourdieu thus speaks against the objectivist-structuralist by showing how structure can be representational as well as objective; he speaks also against the representationalist-voluntarist by showing how representation is a matter of structural conditioning as well as of individual agency.

Bourdieu makes clear, in addition, the relative autonomy of both structure and agency. No simple structuralist view can suffice in either the symbolic or the objective realm. Structure can account for only predilections of behavior or thought ("habitus") but not actual individual choice of actions or ideas. At the same time, no simple voluntarist view can suffice because individual choices, whether of idea or of action, are conditioned by both representational (or symbolic) and objective structures. For Bourdieu, the left and right sides of the diagram are relatively autonomous from one another.

However, even Bourdieu takes for granted congruency between the representational and objective halves of our diagram. His symbolic predilections and distinctions of class are largely extensions of the objective conditions of class. Representational and objective realities are presumed to be congruent or at least are not seen to be incongruent.

Bourdieu has not "problematized" possible disjunctions between representational and objective realities.

Michel Foucault (1978 [1990]), on the other hand, has pointed out powerfully the disjunctions between the "discourse" and practice of sexuality in Victorian England. In that repressive environment, the orthodox discourse of sex was very different from its actual practice. And discourse, Foucault argues effectively, was the greater reality, more historically significant than objective practice. By focusing on a moment of great disjunction between representation and practice, he has made the case for the independent reality of representation more than has Bourdieu.

He has also shown another way to think about representational structures—as discursive structures that mold speech and thought, much in the manner that Bourdieu's symbolic distinctions and predilections condition individual mentalities. Our ideas and attitudes, obviously, are profoundly shaped by the structures and practices of language and discourse. Foucault, we might say, has made a powerful case for the autonomy and importance of representational structure. For him, the determinative dimension in the terms of the diagram is the upper left square of representational structure, not the upper right of representational agency or the lower left of objective structure.

Despite Foucault's tendency to argue for the determinative importance of discourse over practice, his important contribution seems to me to be the stark demonstration that the reality of representational structures can be very different from the reality of objective structures. Neither objectivist nor representationist determinism, therefore, will do. The relationship between the representational and objective planes in the diagram, like that between the structure and agency sides, is an interactive and not a unidirectional one.

Crudely objectivist and crudely representationist views, despite their obvious differences, in fact share one unspoken assumption. Each assumes the essential congruence between representational and objective reality. Only on such an assumption can each make its claim for the determinative importance of one over the other, because if representation and practice were in fact not congruent, each would have to concede the relative autonomy of the other: that representational reality can be different from objective reality, and vice versa. The two can have independent origins, import, and conse-

quences. That would invalidate any assumption of the determinative primacy of either one.

My suggestion here is that we must never take for granted congruency between representation and practice. Representational and objective realities are as likely to be disjointed as they are to be congruent. Congruency needs to be proven, never assumed. To make that point, my choice here is to spotlight the disjunctions between representation and practice with respect to one specific phenomenon of the revolution: rural class struggle. I intend to show how, between the Land Reform of 1946-1952 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976, representational constructs of rural class struggle diverged increasingly from objective reality, that those disjunctions powerfully shaped Party choices and actions, and that those choices and actions, in turn, forged discursive structures that were to powerfully shape the ideas and actions of individuals in the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution, I would argue, stands out in human history for the extreme disjunction between representational reality and objective reality. It was both driven and destroyed by the disjunctions between them. Its historical record underscores the point that representational and objective realities are relatively autonomous from one another.

To return to the diagram, my suggestion here is that the four dimensions are all interrelated and interactive. There are multiple avenues of influence and interaction among structure-agency and representation-practice. No simple leap from objective structure to objective agency, without considering the possible intermediations of representation as both structure and agency, can possibly suffice. Nor can any other simple leap based on assumptions of necessary congruence between representation and practice or structure and agency. This article is intended to be a preliminary exploration into the interconnecting areas among these multiple dimensions.

## *THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION OF THE LAND REVOLUTION*

On the social-structural background to the Land Revolution, the orthodox Chinese Communist view is perhaps best represented by Mao Zedong's (1933) "How to Analyze Classes in the Chinese Coun-

tryside." That document outlined two axes for thinking about rural class relations: rent and wage labor. Landlords lived off the rents paid by their poor peasant tenants, and rich peasants lived off the surplus above wages paid to their hired workers. The middle peasants, neither tenants nor wage workers, comprised the "intermediate" class in between landlords and rich peasants on the one hand and poor peasants and agricultural workers on the other hand (Mao, 1933; cf. Huang, 1985: chap. 4).

It was a class analysis that came with a macrohistorical formula. Surplus extraction through rent is seen as the defining characteristic of feudalism, whereas extraction through wage labor is seen as the defining characteristic of capitalism. The addition of wage labor relations to rent relations was the product of centuries of development of incipient capitalism in the Chinese countryside. Those ideas were perhaps stated most succinctly in Mao's (1939) essay on "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" and echo Lenin's (1907 [1956]) earlier *The Development of Capitalism in Russia.*

The strategy of rural revolution derived from these analyses was based on an objectivist-structuralist calculation of peasant behavior. Individuals were expected to act according to their class interests. The Chinese Communist Party, as the organized expression of the proletariat, would lead a class revolution of the poor peasants and agricultural workers against their landlords and rich peasant employers. Agricultural laborers and poor peasants would be the most active agents for the revolution because they would have the most to gain. A coalition would be formed with the crucial swing group: the intermediate middle peasants, who were expected to vacillate because they would neither gain much nor lose much from revolutionary social leveling. Winning over the middle peasants would give the revolutionary movement its popular majority (Mao, 1927, 1939; Lenin, 1907 [1956]).

Disputes have raged in past scholarship on the social-structural background to the revolution. At one extreme are those who argue that the entire revolutionary analysis of class tensions in the countryside was a fiction and that the revolution, far from being a class-based movement, was in fact chiefly the work of a Leninist conspiracy. At the other extreme are those who accept the official Chinese Communist analysis of the social-structural background to the revolution. I

have summarized these debates elsewhere (Huang, 1991) and will not repeat them here.

The point to be made here is that there are both congruences and disjunctions between the Communist Party's representational constructions and the objective realities of China's rural social structure. There is no reason to doubt the congruences: landlords owned about one-third of all land, and rich peasants owned perhaps another 15% to 20%. The Land Revolution, by taking most of the land away from landlords and rich peasants and giving it to poor peasants and agricultural laborers, redistributed as much as 43% of the total cultivated acreage (Perkins, 1969; Wong, 1973; Lippit, 1974).

There is also no reason to doubt that the Land Reform amounted to a monumental social-economic revolution with profound implications that affected almost every rural resident. Tenant peasants, who rented a total of one-third of the cultivated area, had had to pay 50% of their harvest to landlords. Land reform put an end to those rent payments. To be sure, state taxes during the early years after 1949 rose to several times pre-Sino-Japanese War[2] levels but, on balance, tenants still gained more than they lost. And equalization of landownership through the Land Reform unquestionably benefited those below the middle: agricultural workers, poor peasants, and lower middle peasants.

Land reform enabled the state to take the surplus that had been extracted by landlords and expended mostly for consumption, give some of it to the land poor and landless, and channel the rest through taxation and low-priced procurement into investments in urban industry. Land reform was in fact the major avenue of capital formation for the new revolutionary government (Lippit, 1974), which, faced with a hostile international world, had few other options for capital accumulation. It made possible the dramatic industrialization launched in the First Five Year plan, resulting in a growth rate in industrial output of no less than 11% per annum between 1952 and 1980 (Perkins and Yusuf, 1984).

Agriculture and the countryside, of course, remained mired until the late 1970s in what I termed "collectivist involution" (Huang, 1990: 16-7, chaps. 10-11; cf. Huang, 1991: 329-30). Whereas total crop output increased an impressive threefold, labor input increased three- to fourfold. Returns per unit labor, in other words, stagnated or

declined. That involution of the collective era was in large measure the consequence of high population pressure, rigid state policies against peasant enterprise, and state investment priorities that systematically favored industry at the expense of agriculture and favored the cities at the expense of the countryside.[3]

Where representation diverged sharply from social reality was in the way in which the Party chose to translate its macrostructural analysis into microsocietal action in individual villages. It insisted on the validity of the macrostrategic analysis for every single village community. Class enemies would be identified in every village and the Party would organize class struggle, or the rising of poor peasants and agricultural workers against landlords and rich peasants, individual village by individual village.

## *THE OBJECTIVE REALITIES OF VILLAGE CLASS STRUCTURE*

Our available evidence on the objective structures of individual villages is admittedly still rather meager. Detailed and accurate information does exist about the class configurations of every village in data gathered during the Land Reform and systematically rechecked during the "Four Cleans" movement, but it is not readily available. What we normally have to work with are published official data, generally of the aggregated sort and not about individual villages. The Party, in fact, has taken care to make available to the outside world detailed information on only a few selected villages, intended to support the official analysis of village social structure. Some information on individual villages has been gathered in recently published documentary collections on the Communist base areas, and Odoric Wou's (1994) book, drawn on later, is one study that has used on such materials. But, to date, our field still has solid information on just a few dozen villages, most of them from prerevolutionary ethnographic research. Nevertheless, I believe we already have sufficient grounds for some conclusions about obvious disjunctions between objective village realities and Party constructions.

On the North China plain, for example, the available information suggests that many villages contained no landlords at all. The majority of big landlords in North China were absentee landlords, living in the

towns or cities and not in the villages. Such resident landlords as existed were mainly relatively small owners, and many villages did not have even small landlords. Of the 33 well-documented villages drawn on for my own 1985 book, only 7 had resident landlords that met the official class definition (Huang, 1985: Appendix tables A.1-A.7).

That picture is confirmed by the other villages for which we have reliable ethnographic information. In David and Isabel Crook's *Ten Mile Inn*, near Wu'an in southern Hebei, there was not one resident landlord; the largest owner of village land (100+ mu) was the absentee landlord Fu Xin (Fu Hsin) in the town of Yangyi (Crook and Crook, 1959: 19; cf. discussion that follows). In William Hinton's "Longbow" village, near Changzhi in Shanxi, there was also not one person who met the definition of landlord in the Land Reform Law, and the entire village had just one tenant household (Hinton, 1966: 592; cf. discussion that follows).

In Houjiao village in Lin County, northern Henan, discussed by Odoric Wou, the Party records show that whereas the Communists classified four of the village's 286 households as landlords, they admitted that those were really "landlords in name only." Most were in fact widows and unmarried people who had to rent out their land simply because they lacked sufficient manpower to cultivate it themselves (Wou, 1994: 291-2). The largest landlord household, in any case, owned just 26 mu, in this village where the per capita landholding was 3.8 mu. The same pattern obtained in the other two villages (Ren village and Xifeng village, also in Lin County) for which Wou has concrete data. According to his sources, landlords in this area were mainly "widowers, widows, orphans, and singles" (*guan-gua-gu-du*), hardly the image of the ruling-class exploiters of the official Party construction (Wou, 1994: 302-3).

Wealthy resident village households, where they existed, were in fact not landlords but more commonly people whom I have termed "managerial farmers"—those who hired three to eight agricultural workers to work farms of 100 to 200 mu (to be distinguished from rich peasants, who employed just one or two laborers). In my own 33-village sample, 17 contained one or more such households (Huang, 1985: Appendix 1). In *Ten Mile Inn*, the wealthiest household was labor-hiring Wang Banyan (Wang Pan-yen) (Crook and Crook, 1959:

25-6). In Longbow village, similarly, the wealthiest household was Sheng Jinghe (Sheng Ching-ho), who owned 138 mu of land that he cultivated with hired labor.[4]

The Party did attempt to adjust its analysis to take account of managerial farmers. At first, in 1942, it took the position that this "class" should be treated as capitalistic rather than feudal and, therefore, ought to be grouped with rich peasants. Because capitalism was seen as more progressive than feudalism, they, like rich peasants, were presumably to be treated less harshly in the Land Revolution than were landlords. Later, however, in a definitive action with the promulgation of the Land Reform Law of 1950, the Party Central decided simply to lump managerial landlords (*jingying dizhu*) with landlords, on the grounds that they did not engage in "principal" production themselves (Beijing zhengfa xueyuan, 1957: 39, 381).

The problem with such a construction of rural class structure was, first, that it blurred the distinction between two sets of production relations—rent versus wage labor—that the Party had so carefully drawn. More important, even by lumping managerial farmers with landlords, there was still a gaping disjunction between Party representation and village reality: if we are to trust in our sample of villages for which there is reliable information, perhaps one-half of North China plain villages contained no resident landlords, even by the adjusted definition that equated labor-hiring managerial farmers with rent-collecting landlords.

In the Yangzi delta, there was a similar disjunction between political construction and social reality. In the eight villages solidly documented by ethnographic research, only two contained resident landlords.[5] Most landlords had long since become absentee owners living in town. That meant that fissures between landlords and tenants, where they existed, occurred generally not within a village community but rather between village tenants and outside landlords.

Here also the Party attempted to take account of social realities in its actions. Mass struggle meetings against landlords in the Yangzi delta area were organized on the supra-village level of the township—which generally did contain a few landlords. In the case of the Huayangqiao villages of Songjiang County, mass class struggle against landlords took place at a single staged meeting for all of Xinglong township, encompassing a number of administrative vil-

lages.[6] In that way, the Party hoped to bridge the gap between the official ideal of antifeudal class revolution in every village and the social reality that most Yangzi delta villages contained no resident landlords. Land redistribution, however, was still done with the administrative village as the unit and, as is seen later, every effort was made to identify "class enemies" in each village.

The weight of the available evidence, then, suggests that many villages of the North China plain and the Yangzi delta—perhaps even a majority of them—were different in social structure from the formulaic constructions of the Party. As I have shown in my earlier studies (Huang, 1985, 1990), rent and wage labor relations often occurred not between landlords and tenants and between rich peasants and wage workers but rather among middle and poor peasants. A middle peasant might rent a few mu from another and hire day labor from the households of poor peasants, often relatives or neighbors. The great majority of the residents of an individual village in any case were usually roughly equivalent cultivators.

Many of the villages, moreover, were rather insular and inward-looking communities. Peasants had a strong sense of insiders versus outsiders. "Old households" were those who had lived in the village for generations, who owned houses and worked in the village, and who were often members of patrilineal common descent groups. They were sharply distinguished from outsiders and sojourners. The majority of villagers interacted socially only with fellow villagers and marital kin. Centuries-long commercialization had brought only economic and social involution, not transformative change from segmented communities to integrated class society (Huang, 1985: esp. 220-2; Huang, 1990: 144-61). In most cases, Chinese Communist Party organizers had to approach the villages as outsiders.

## *THE PARTY'S CHOICE*

The Party could have chosen to acknowledge such objective realities and dissociate land reform from mass political action within individual villages. In the abstract, at least, it seems perfectly feasible for the Party to have simply outlawed rent and wage labor and decreed the redistribution of land without insisting on generating class struggle

in each and every village. It could have accomplished the goal of altering the structure of production relations nationwide, as analyzed in revolutionary theory, without insisting on staging mass actions against landlords and rich peasants in every single village.

But that was not what the Party elected to do. For a variety of reasons, some to be detailed later, the Party decided to drive the wedge of class conflict into all villages. Land reform was to be made up of class struggles in every village community. In addition, class struggle was to be conducted as a great moral drama pitting the revolutionary forces of good against the class enemies' forces of evil, almost in the manner of village operas.

This choice was what gave rise to a book such as Hinton's (1966) *Fanshen*, which purported to be a documentary of supposed class revolution in one village in which tenants rose up against their fellow villager landlords and agricultural workers against their fellow villager rich peasant employers. Landlords and rich peasants were by definition evil and exploitative, not only by virtue of production relations but by intent and choice, and poor peasants and agricultural workers by definition were full of class feeling and revolutionary zeal.

According to the book's own evidence, however, this Longbow village actually contained just one tenant and not one resident landlord. On close examination, the real fissures within the village were clearly not so much between classes as they were between Catholics and non-Catholics and between Japanese collaborators and anti-Japanese patriots. The village was distinctive for being among the small minority of villages in China that had a Catholic church and for being within the fiercely contested area between Japanese occupation and Communist liberation. The result was unusually deep and violent conflicts within the village—all represented in Hinton's book as "class struggle" (Hinton, 1966).

Within China itself, the theme of class struggle within individual villages was retold in other similar accounts. In one of the best known, Ding Ling's (1949) *The Sun Shines on the Sanggan River*, the story revolves around supposed landlord and "evil tyrant" Qian Wengui of Nuanshuitun village (in Zhuolu County, Hebei). But Qian, who farmed just over 10 mu,[7] turns out actually to have been only a well-to-do middle peasant by the standards of the Land Reform Law. It was in fact not his *class* position per se but his unprincipled

wheelings and dealings that earned him the wrath of his fellow villagers. But revolutionary construction dictated that those actions be equated with his class position. Like Hinton's *Fanshen*, the story shows how the categories of *landlord* and *class enemies* took on in the Land Reform meanings that were more symbolic and moral than material (Ding, 1949: 8, 451-3).

The political decision of the Party to make land reform a moral drama of class struggle for every village and every peasant was to turn into a powerful imperative to manufacture class enemies even where none objectively existed according to the Party's own criteria. As precise class analysis gave way to simplified formulas and generalized quotas, there would be tremendous pressures to exaggerate and escalate, to label rich peasants as landlords and middle peasants as rich peasants. And there would be great pressures to insist on a simple one-to-one relationship between class interest and individual behavior.

## *THE PATTERNS OF THE LAND REVOLUTION*

The actual process of land reform can be divided into three broad patterns occurring in three "stages": the first in the "old liberated areas" during the Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945, the second in the contested areas during the Civil War from 1946 to 1949, and the third in the "newly liberated areas" after the Chinese Communist Party's military victory, from late 1949 to 1952. Each pattern saw a different relationship between representational and objective reality.

### *THE OLD LIBERATED AREAS, 1937-1945*

In the old liberated areas, theory and action appear to have been the most congruent. Given the reformist United Front policies of "double reduction" (of rent to 37.5% and interest to 1.5% per month) and progressive taxation rather than outright class revolution, there was not the imperative for manufacturing class enemies within the village to accord with revolutionary theory. Some social leveling actually took place, not by intravillage class struggle but by the double pressures of low rents and high taxes on landlords and the opportunities Party reforms gave to poor peasants to buy land and become middle

peasants. In the Crooks' *Ten Mile Inn*, for example, the absentee landlord Fu Xin (Hsin) sold off 30 of his 100+ mu whereas many poor peasants turned into "new middle peasants" (Crook and Crook, 1959: 49, 74ff).

Similarly, in Wugong village in Raoyang County, Hebei, studied by Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, the fortunes of the two resident landlord households of the village declined from a combined total ownership of 203 mu in 1936 to 76 mu by 1946, whereas the three rich peasant households' holdings went down from a combined total of 262 mu to 180 mu. Poor peasant landholdings, on the other hand, rose from an average of 0.9 mu to 2.2 mu per person. Substantial social leveling, in other words, had occurred through reform (Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden, 1991: 84, 86).

### *THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD, 1946-1949*

It was the Civil War period that saw the greatest distortions of rural social reality in favor of revolutionary ideology. Extreme actions were fueled by military exigency as villages were drawn into the fierce and sometimes seesaw battles between the Communist and Guomindang forces. From the point of view of military strategy, a village polarized by class struggle was a more fertile source for army, party, and guerrilla recruitment. Class classifications, therefore, became weapons in the Civil War, guided not by the finer points stipulated in the Land Reform Law but rather by crude quotas issued from above.

In Wugong, we witness the escalating disjunction between representational and objective reality as the war wore on. In the 1946 "Land to the Tiller" movement, village class classification still bore some congruence with objective reality. The two households identified as landlords had at least been landlords ten years earlier in 1936, although by the time of the classification in 1946 they were in fact both operating as rich peasants, each with one hired worker. The biggest distortions were to come a year later during the height of land reform radicalism when quota guidelines were issued from above. The result was the fantastic labeling of some 70 middle peasant households in this 387-household village as rich peasants and targets for class struggle (Friedman et al., 1991: 92-8). Those actions would be criticized as "leftist excesses" in the following year. Nevertheless, the

fundamental decision to inject class struggle into every village was never questioned. As the final act of the Land Reform for Wugong, a mass antilandlord struggle meeting was staged during the spring of 1948. Because no landlords were available as targets by that time, rich peasants were turned to instead, and because the notorious rich peasant "evil tyrant" Li Yingzhou was already dying from imprisonment and torture, his son Dalin was made an example instead. Dalin's back was broken by the beatings.

In such actions, the fine distinctions drawn so carefully in revolutionary theory between feudal landlords and capitalist rich peasants were lost entirely. They were simply lumped together as one and the same "class enemy." More important, the material basis of class, also carefully delineated in theory, gave way to quotas and labels that were applied arbitrarily. The arbitrariness, however, did not diminish the intensity and violence of class struggle (Friedman et al., 1991: 105-6).

Similar excesses of intravillage class struggle are documented by the Crooks for *Ten Mile Inn*. In the campaign to "cut off feudal tails," militant activists imposed the fantastic standard whereby anyone whose father or grandfather had been a landlord or rich peasant would by definition possess "tails" that had to be "cut off." By that standard, 78 middle peasant households in the village were added to the targets of struggle, expanding the number from 24 to more than 100 in this village of about 400 households (Crook and Crook, 1959: 130ff).

Essentially the same kind of process occurred in Hinton's Longbow village. Sheng Jinghe (Sheng Ching-ho) and Guo Chongwang (Kuo Ch'ung-wang), the two individuals identified as landlords in the first wave of class struggle in the village, turn out on close examination to have been labor-hiring managerial farmers/rich peasants.[8] When Guo ran away, his brother Fuwang was struggled in his stead and beaten to death (Hinton, 1966: 29-32, 34, 131-8). Then, as the Land Reform movement radicalized, the disjunction between representational and objective reality widened. Although Hinton provides no precise data on the numbers of households falsely attacked as rich peasants at the height of radicalism, he does recount in some detail the corrective measures undertaken in 1948 to differentiate properly rich peasants from middle peasants. To qualify as rich peasants, a household must have derived more than one-half of its income from the "exploitation of others' labor." The correct application of that rule of thumb, by

Hinton's account, would rectify earlier excesses that had alienated middle peasants by falsely identifying them as class enemies (Hinton, 1966: 400-10). The fine calculus that Hinton details, of course, meant for many individuals the difference between being accepted as allies of the revolutionary classes and being beaten or killed as class enemies.

*AFTER VICTORY, 1949-1952*

The Land Reform conducted after military victory in 1949 was on the whole more orderly and less radical. Nevertheless, the tendency remained to include among landlord and rich peasant class enemies all undesirable elements, even those whose class positions were, strictly speaking, some distance from landlords and rich peasants. In Michang village in northeastern Hebei,[9] out of 216 heads of households whose class histories were investigated in detail during the Four Cleans movement in 1965, a total of eleven had been classified as landlords during the Land Reform and another six had been classified as rich peasants. In actual fact, not one of the so-called landlords had lived off rents received from leasing out land, the legal definition of a landlord by the Land Reform Law. Eight of these eleven should have qualified instead as rich peasants in that they employed more labor than they themselves put in. The remaining three were simply middle peasants who employed less labor than they themselves put in.

For seven of the eleven, the landlord classification stemmed more from their political activities and connections than it did from their economic position: one was a Guomindang party member; two were women whose husbands had been Guomindang special agents (*tewu*); two were young people (one girl and one boy) whose fathers were Guomindang agents; one was the brother of a Guomindang agent, gambled, and was known to be hostile to the Communists; and one had served as a village head under the Japanese and was also known to be against the Communists. For these seven, it was clear that *landlord* was being used as a political term rather than an economic one.

For the remaining four, however, excessive revolutionary zeal was at work more than were political considerations. Two were widows who, like other North China peasant women, did not work in the fields. As widows, both had to depend on a hired laborer to farm their land; one of the two supplemented her income by weaving cloth. But both

were classified as landlords because of the rigid application of the rule that those heads of households who did not engage in principal farm labor themselves were exploiters. The other two were actually just rich peasants who hired more labor than they put in themselves, one of them 1.5 laborers to help work 33 mu of land and the other an unspecified amount of hired labor to help work 40 mu.

As for the six individuals classified as rich peasants, five were really well-to-do middle peasants. Three of them were brothers in a family of thirteen members who hired one year-laborer and five months of day labor to help work 70 mu of land, and the other two were brothers in a family of four who hired one laborer to help work 79 mu. Because both families put in more labor than they hired, they should, strictly speaking, have been classified as middle peasants. But the first family was classified as rich peasant because it derived income from the commercial activities of two of the three brothers and was therefore wealthier than mere middle peasant cultivators and because the eldest brother had belonged to the Guomindang. The other family was classified as rich peasant because one of the brothers was a Guomindang party member, having been forcibly drafted into a support organization. The remaining sixth rich peasant was also a well-to-do middle peasant who farmed 50 mu with one hired worker but who was a member of the Guomindang.

Ritualistic mass struggle meetings were staged in Michang during its land reform, although the class struggle there was not nearly so indiscriminate or violent as that during the Civil War. Five of the eleven landlords were driven out of their houses (recorded as *saodi chumen*, or "swept out the door") and had their land and houses confiscated completely, and three of those five were struggled in mass meetings (recorded simply as *beidou*, or "struggled"). None was killed, however, and all five were given some land (2 mu per person) for subsistence and some straw housing for shelter. The remaining six landlords, including the two widows and the two young people, were allowed to retain some of their own land and the poorer portions of their own houses, as were the six rich peasants.

In "Lu's Home" village of Zengbu brigade in Guangdong, studied by Jack and Sulamith Potter (1990), land reform was more violent than it was in Michang. Five heads of households were classified as landlord-despots. Two of them, both with Guomindang connections,

were shot, and the remaining three were imprisoned. In nearby "Pondside" village, a widow who owned 10+ mu of land and 1 mu of fishponds was classified as a landlord because she did not do any farm labor herself, relying on the labor of her son and one laborer. Ordered to deliver an exorbitant amount of grain well beyond her means, she committed suicide. Village cadres would later speak of the event with much regret, but it demonstrated the violence of land reform even after military victory in 1949 (Potter and Potter, 1990: 49-51).

In the Huayangqiao villages that I investigated, there was not one person who met the definition of landlord or rich peasant in the Land Reform Law; the fifty-seven households at the time were in fact all middle and poor peasants. But land reform was not so peaceful as the official representation (*heping tugai*) might suggest. Ideological pressures pushed the village cadres to identify class enemies, with the result that middle peasant Lu Guantong, who had allegedly concealed a small amount of land, was classified as a rich peasant and made a class enemy. For that, Lu was to be made the target of struggle again and again in the subsequent twenty-some years until the misclassification was officially overturned in 1979. The other target of struggle identified in the villages was Gao Yongnian, who could not be classified as a landlord or rich peasant by any stretch of the imagination but rather was turned against by other villagers because he was an outsider and was given to violent outbursts of temper (Huang, 1990: 167, 276-7).

Disjunctions between official constructions of rural class struggle and social reality, then, occurred on multiple levels. The focal point of class struggle during the Land Reform was the villages, but the biggest landlords were in fact usually absentee, not resident, and many of those escaped class struggle entirely. Within the villages, only some of those struggled against as landlords and as rich peasants were real landlords and real rich peasants by the definition of the Land Reform Law. Millions of others who were neither were nonetheless made into targets, most especially during the radical Civil War period of the Land Reform. Even in the more orderly postvictory Land Reform, many more were falsely classified and struggled. Some were made class enemies because of transgressions other than those of class: working in or sympathizing with the Guomindang, conversion to a foreign religion, collaboration with the Japanese, or bad behavior; others, it

would seem, suffered merely because they were ostracized outsiders or enemies of activist leaders or were just unlucky enough, like the widows in Michang, to have fallen on the wrong side of a technicality of class classification. The literal application of the Party's macrostructural analysis to each and every microsocietal village created wide disjunctions between representational and objective reality.

In addition, our evidence shows, of course, that the relationship between class position and political choice was by no means as simple as Party constructions and actions made it out to be. Those who sided with the Guomindang were not necessarily landlords and rich peasants but often middle or other types of peasants. And landlords and rich peasants, conversely, did not necessarily side with the Guomindang. That was true, for example, of the harmless widows of Michang and Pondside village, not to speak of many of the Communist leaders themselves—rich peasant Mao Zedong (Snow, 1938: 123-4) and landlord Deng Xiaoping (Maomao, 1993: 30) the most prominent among them. But quotas and class labels applied in the Land Revolution had no room for such ambiguities. Class position and political choice were represented as corresponding exactly in an extreme objectivist-structuralist view of human agency.

## *FROM IDEOLOGY TO DISCOURSE*

A generation of intellectuals was schooled in such class struggle during the Land Revolution by their nationwide mobilization into service on the work teams that went into every village. Party and non-Party intellectuals alike became active participants in the systematic effort to apply revolutionary theory to social engineering and to mold social reality to fit ideological construction. By the end of the Land Reform, millions of intellectuals had participated in actions and thoughts that turned *class* from its material meaning in Marxist-Leninist theory into a symbolic-moral meaning in the dramatic struggle of good against evil within every village.

It was in the Land Revolution that the practice of manufacturing class struggle where there was no material basis for such became widespread. It was in that revolution that class took over not only the material but also the symbolic realm, and actions came to be taken

despite disjunctions between representational and objective reality. For many of the urban intellectuals, such violations of objective reality could be overlooked because of the evident successes of the Party and, perhaps, also because they themselves were outsiders to the villages. The majority of the generation, it would seem, willingly participated in the rural social revolution and accepted its official Party representation. Through plays, novels, films, textbooks, political study sessions, and the omnipresent official press, the language and outlook of that generation was passed on to the next.

That was how ideology became much more than the constructions and propaganda of the ruling party. Active engagement in the processes and fictions of the Land Revolution made official constructions a part of the voluntarily adopted mental universe of the intellectuals involved. Theoretical concepts of class analysis and revolutionary depictions of landlords were crystallized into the active language used by an entire generation. Official ideology became hegemonic discourse.

The officially sanctioned discourse on rural class struggle not only was hegemonic among discourses of class in particular but was predominant among all discourses in political/cultural life as a whole. Until the close of the Cultural Revolution era (excepting the brief recession of the revolutionary tide in the immediate aftermath of the Great Leap), politics was very much "in command" in all spheres of life and, among political discourses, class struggle was of preeminent importance. It was the guiding force behind most of the mass movements of the period: from the Land Reform to the Five-Anti movement, from Socialist Reconstruction to the Anti-Rightist movement, and finally, the Socialist Education Movement that was the immediate prelude to the Cultural Revolution. In the last, the leading slogan was Mao's "Never forget class struggle."[10]

Class (*jieji*), class background (*jieji chengfen*), class struggle (*jieji douzheng*), class enemies (*jieji diren*), struggle targets (*douzheng duixiang*), and the like in fact permeated the standard vocabulary of daily use. In that discursive world, the fine points of distinction in production relations analyses were lost. All enemies of the revolution were lumped together into the single category of class enemies, standing for all that was evil in the old society. From that discursive practice, it was but a short step to the formulation of the "four types"

(*silei fenzi*) of class enemies, which lumped together landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and bad (i.e., criminal) elements (*di, fu, fan, huai*), and then the formulation of the "black five kinds" (*hei wulei*), which added rightists (*you*) to these four.[11] In such formulations, class enemies topped even criminals as enemies of the people. Those were formulations that would become major battle cries of the Cultural Revolution.

Whether the targets were the old class enemies outside the Party or the new class enemies among the "capitalist roaders" within the Party, the language, mentality, and even rituals of action of the Cultural Revolution would be borrowed from the class struggle of the Land Revolution. Thus it was that Cultural Revolution activists thought and spoke in terms of class enemies (the four types or the black five kinds), identified struggle targets, put dunce caps on their heads and hung placards over their chests for mass struggle meetings, humiliated them publicly, beat them, and so on, all in the manner of the Land Reform.[12]

For those actions, the legacy of the rural Land Revolution was in fact more directly relevant than was that of the urban Five-Anti and Socialist Reconstruction movements. The capitalist national bourgeoisie (*minzu zichan jieji*) had been treated differently from landlord and rich peasant class enemies. In theory a partly progressive force, they were among the classes of the "new democratic" alliance and, as such, were not to be the objects of violent class struggle (Mao, 1940). In the 1952 Five-Anti movement targeting China's industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, the guideline was to separate those who obeyed the law (*shoufa*) from those who did not. The latter were expected to be no more than 5% of the total. In actuality, the summary data for the cities in six major regions of China (north, northeast, northwest, east, central-south, and southwest) show a total of 999,707 enterprises and their owners investigated, of which just 1,509 were punished by law (Bo, 1993, vol. 1: 173, 178). Many of the others received dividend payments of 5% a year for ten years on their stocks and bonds. To label someone a capitalist, in other words, did not justify the same kind of treatment meted out to landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and criminals, all official enemies of the people.

The equation of capitalist roaders with class enemies and the notion of a proletarian class struggle against them were Mao's inventions for the Cultural Revolution, officially called the "Great Proletarian Cul-

tural Revolution" (*wuchanjieji wenhua da geming*). The equation constituted a conceptual leap from the earlier view of the national bourgeoisie as a partly progressive force. That leap, as is seen later, was made possible by the linking of the Cultural Revolution's targets with those of the Land Reform or, in other words, of cadres in power following the capitalist road with old feudal class enemies. It was a linkage that would give formal sanction to the widespread resort to violence in the Cultural Revolution.

## *THE FOUR CLEANS PRELUDE*

From this point of view, it makes good sense that the Cultural Revolution, although itself principally an urban phenomenon, should have had its immediate prelude in the Four Cleans[13] (*siqing*, or clean in politics, ideology, organization, and economy) movement, dubbed the "Second Land Reform," which sought to reenact the class struggle of the Land Revolution of more than a decade earlier.[14] In Huayang commune in 1965, thirty urban students came "down" to organize the revival of class struggle against class enemies. In the Huayangqiao villages themselves, the renewed struggle meant that Lu Guantong and Gao Yongnian, falsely labeled class enemies in the first place, were scapegoated once more. Lu was forced to "confess" to his "crimes" in the mass meeting (while Gao refused to knuckle under the pressures) (Huang, 1990: 276-7).

In Michang village, the same kind of reenactment of the Land Revolution took place. To lend concrete substance to the movement, college students from Beijing systematically reinvestigated every household in the village, reconstructing with remarkable precision their class histories for three generations before land reform and detailing the offenses and bases for classification of all class enemies so identified in land reform.

Elsewhere, the reenactment of land reform class struggle was merged with struggles against the village cadres. In "Chen village" in Guangdong, studied by Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger (1984), the 13-member work team explained Mao's battle cry, "Never forget class struggle," to the peasants, pointing out that the four types of class enemies were still around and that they could

influence the behavior of cadres in insidious ways. During the months following, the team members directed the "spearhead" (*maotou*) both downward at those old class enemies and upward at the village cadres. To fire up the villagers and to educate themselves in class struggle, they systematically reinvestigated the class backgrounds of every household in the village, subjected the cadres to protracted interrogations back to back (*bei kao bei*) with the information gathered against them from the poor peasants, and then staged face-to-face (*mian dui mian*) struggle meetings in the manner of the Land Reform, complete with prearranged "speak bitterness" (*suku*) denunciations led by the activist young (Chan et al., 1984: 47, 71-3, passim).

In "Little Red Gate" (Xiaohongmen) village on the outskirts of Beijing, similarly, the work team from outside set to struggle both old and new class enemies. The degree to which the ideology and discourse of class struggle dominated the thinking of intellectuals is well shown by the experience of Yue Daiyun. Herself a victim of the Anti-Rightist movement just a few years earlier, she participated willingly in the work team and clearly believed in the justice of what the team did. In her perception, village cadres had indeed been corrupted and needed the purifying of the Four Cleans movement; the influence of old class enemies remained insidious. Yue herself played an important role in gathering evidence against the widow of a leader of the secret society Yiguandao by working alongside her to gain her trust. On the information Yue supplied, the widow was forced to confess and repent (Yue and Wakeman, 1985: 133-44). All that was perhaps easier for Yue to do and accept because of her own remoteness from real life in the village. The irony and tragedy was that Yue herself would be victimized by the very same mentality and methods just a few months later.

According to Bo Yibo, in his remarkable reminiscences about major Party decisions (in most of which he himself participated), the Four Cleans movement mobilized in each county some 10,000 cadres, teachers, and students to eat, live, and work together (*santong*) with the peasants to carry out the massive class struggle (Bo, 1993, vol. 2: 1119-20, 1135-6). At the top, there was a basic disagreement between Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi: whereas Mao insisted on class struggle against capitalist elements and old class enemies, Liu maintained that the movement's target should be to ferret out the "four unclean" (*si*

*buqing*) cadres from the four clean ones and not confuse "contradictions among the people" (*renmin neibu maodun*, or a "nonantagonistic contradiction" open to peaceable resolution) with "contradictions between the people and (class) enemies" (*diwo maodun*, or an "antagonistic contradiction" requiring violent resolution) (Bo, 1993, vol. 2: 1128-9). The excesses of the movement, Bo recalls, led to a situation in which "many basic-level cadres and some of the masses were attacked and treated erroneously" (Bo, 1993, vol. 2: 1136).

It was Mao himself who made the explicit linkage between new "class enemies above" (i.e., the rural cadres) and old "class enemies below." To lend concrete substance to the old enemies below, he called for uncovering those whom the Land Reform had overlooked; the Four Cleans movement would identify by systematic investigation those who had been "omitted in the classifications" (*louhua*) of the Land Reform movement (Bo, 1993, vol. 2: 1131). Those instructions gave full license to activities such as those in Huayangqiao, Michang, Chen village, and Little Red Gate village. In that way, a second generation of the urban educated was made to experience class struggle and land reform directly.

It did not matter that, by then, the four types had long been reduced to powerless and pathetic figures. Their renewed scapegoating, however artificially staged, gave real faces to a discourse based partly on reality and partly on fiction. Rebellion against the currently powerful could not easily be equated with class struggle. Joining it with attacks on old class enemies, however, allowed Mao to formulate the political battle against his opponents as a class struggle. That was how scapegoating of the powerless came to be joined with rebellious actions against the powerful in a linkage that would typify the Cultural Revolution.

## *THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE*

In comparison to what happened in the cities and towns, the Cultural Revolution in the villages was but a sideshow. In Huayangqiao, Lu Guantong was raked over yet one more time, this time by "Red Guards" organized from the youth in nearby villages. His

house was ransacked, the good furniture was taken away, his pigs were sold, and his front door was removed. He himself, stripped to the waist and wearing a placard over his chest and a dunce cap on his head, was paraded around for three hours in the cold. He was then subjected to days of interrogation to get him to confess once more to his crimes. Finally, he was imprisoned for four years. Even on his release, he was placed under "supervised labor" with his fellow class enemy Gao Yongnian, which meant that he had to be the first to work and the last to quit, had to work even on days others were off, and received only nine work points instead of the normal ten. He could not leave the village without permission of the team leaders. This punishment lasted until 1979, when the faulty verdict on his class label was finally overturned (Huang, 1990: 276-8).

Other than this scapegoating once more of Lu and Gao, the Huayangqiao villages saw little else of the Cultural Revolution. Violent struggles took place mainly at the supra-village level, first the commune in town and finally escalating to the county seat of Songjiang. The production team leaders, who were the cadres of most immediate concern to the peasants, were not really touched by the movement, thus buffering most peasants (other than the old class enemies) from the storm that raged at higher levels of the administrative hierarchy and in the towns and cities. The peasants themselves were relatively unaffected, the main actions of the Cultural Revolution having passed to the cities after the Four Cleans movement.

In Chen village also, the old class enemies got it once more. The Red Guards ransacked the landlords' and rich peasants' homes in search of feudal materials and evidence of possible subversive activities. They took away their furniture, jewelry, clothes, and cash (Chan et al., 1984: 118). Two years later, in the "Cleansing of the Class Ranks," mass struggle meetings were staged yet one more time against these old class enemies, now joined by six other unpopular villagers who were their relatives (Chan et al., 1984: 162-7).

The politics of Chen village were made more complex by the presence of sent-down educated urban youths. They were the ones who led the attack on the brigade's party secretary, "Chen Qingfa,"[15] triggering protracted and complicated power struggles between him and the brigade head, "Chen Longyong." Yet even here, the production

teams and their peasant members remained buffered from the happenings of the Cultural Revolution; the most intense struggles occurred at the brigade level and above (Chan et al., 1984).

In large Zengbu brigade—later to be made into a township—the violent struggles also seem to have taken place mainly at the supra-village level of brigade leadership. The production teams and most individual peasants were largely left to themselves. The Cultural Revolution does not seem to have produced in the countryside anything like the thoroughgoing disruption and convulsions that occurred in the cities (Potter and Potter, 1990: 83-94, 279-80).

## *THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION*

In the cities, the Cultural Revolution decade saw the climax of the power and influence of the discourse of class struggle. The theme of class struggle took control of all of cultural life, from the literary and performing arts to historical and other scholarship, from the official press to daily conversation, from state law to individual selection of mates and friends, and much, much more. Old traditions and attitudes were systematically attacked for the sake of creating a new revolutionary culture.

But that hegemonic culture of class struggle was built on the widening gap between representational and objective reality. The old class enemies in the countryside who supposedly threatened the revolution were in fact pathetic and powerless figures who had been scapegoated over and over again. There was simply no identifiable material basis for feudal landlords or rich peasants in any Marxist sense of those words. As for capitalist class enemies, because the properties of capitalists had been nationalized a decade earlier, there was also no material basis for their existence. Even capitalistic rightists had already been removed from positions of influence and power in the Anti-Rightist movement in 1957. The only conceivable objective basis for the new capitalist class enemies was the position and perquisites enjoyed by the powerful. But the Cultural Revolution did not target all of the powerful, only those supposedly opposed to Mao and following the capitalist road. That made class almost exclusively

a matter of political attitude, unconnected to any objective basis. That was what made possible the preposterous construct of a Cultural Revolution driven by supposedly proletarian class struggle against feudal and capitalist class enemies.

The result was what might be called the politics of representation. Because there was no such thing as an objective class position other than old labels left over from earlier days of the revolution, all that mattered was one's political attitude and behavior. And because in the context of the mass struggle of the Cultural Revolution one's politics was mostly a matter of how others perceived it, what really counted in the end was how one's politics was represented. That made the distinction between capitalist class enemies and socialist class friends a matter of representation alone.

In the Land Reform, despite the disjunctions between representational constructions and social realities, there was still an objective check on representation: class categories were grounded in material property relations that could be and were defined objectively in the Land Reform Law. Misapplied class labels could be corrected according to objective standards. Representational reality remained connected to and checked by objective reality.

Not so in the Cultural Revolution. The connections between representational and objective realities were severed. The consequences of being labeled a class enemy, however, were as severe as they were in the Land Revolution and more severe than they were in the Socialist Reconstruction or Anti-Rightist movements. The truly tragic thing about the Cultural Revolution was the combining of the nebulous politics of representation with the violent methods of the Land Reform.

As the Cultural Revolution wore on and the disjunctions between representational and objective realities became more and more glaring, skepticism and resistance followed. Among intellectuals, there was the habit of endless ruminations and speculations about the jockeying for power at the center, almost in the manner of Western Pekingologists. The subject itself, to be sure, carried all the attractions of tales of palace intrigue. But the talk contained its own criticism and skepticism about high-sounding official representations of the socialist government because it in effect reduced socialist politics to the power maneuverings of a few dozen individuals.

Among peasants, one manifestation of resistance was the continued gap between local dialects and mandarin, still the official language (*guanhua*) to many peasants despite its euphemistic representation as "the common language" (*putonghua*). To judge by the Huayangqiao villages that I investigated, peasant dialect remained to a great extent impervious to the officialese of class politics. Landlords, rich peasants, and class struggle, not to speak of the more theoretical notions of "production relations" (*shengchan guanxi*) and "struggle of the two roads" (*liangtiao luxian de douzheng*), were things to be mouthed when one spoke in mandarin but carried little meaning in conversations in Songjiang dialect at home and among fellow villagers. There the abstract categories gave way to concrete faces of individuals, of a Lu Guantong or a Gao Yongnian. On the latter, the villagers admitted to a grudging admiration: a "hard bone" (*ying gutou*) who would not bend with the pressures of mass struggle. That in itself countered official representations (Huang, 1990: 276-7).

Some urbanites adopted different personae to cope with the disjointed realities. Even in the pre-Cultural Revolution days, bureaucratic control over access to information had led to graduated distinctions between what was to be represented to the outside world, to the domestic population at large, to those privy to internal information and documents, and, finally, to those privy to state secrets. Under that system, many people came habitually to operate and think in multiple layers of discursive realities. Some would adopt different personae appropriate to each level of reality, which blended readily with the longstanding cultural distinction between "face" and the inner person. One might don one face for official study sessions and meetings and another for real life. In the Cultural Revolution, such multiple personae became for some a method of physical and emotional survival in the raging political storms.

Such divisions worked well enough so long as the different layers were not in direct conflict with one another. For urban intellectuals, congruence—or at least separateness—between the multiple levels of reality of rural class struggle was in some ways easier to maintain than it was for peasants, at least for a time, precisely because they were further removed from the real stuff of rural life. But the Cultural Revolution produced unprecedentedly gross disjunctions between orthodox constructions and perceived realities. It was a movement,

moreover, that demanded the invasion of one's personal life by one's political life and of carefully maintained inner realities by politically manufactured ones; its target, after all, was not so much one's material existence as it was the representation of one's mental being. Tremendous emotional stresses resulted when the different levels of realities and different personae that people had so carefully maintained came into direct conflict with one another. The most extreme example of such, perhaps, was when someone was pressured by the politics of class struggle to turn against a loved one.

Could it be that what powered the Cultural Revolution, even more than ideological fervor about class struggle, was the mounting tensions among the multiple levels of realities outlined here? The fervor and frenzy born of the innocent gullibility of youth were often matched quickly by an equally extreme cynicism. Official discourse easily gave way to nihilistic skepticism. The conflicts between official constructions and actually perceived reality, and among the different personae adopted by individuals, were what gave rise to some of the most emotional and tragic consequences of the Cultural Revolution. From this point of view, it was the Cultural Revolution that saw the final playing out of the tensions between the representational and objective realities of rural class struggle that first had emerged with the Land Revolution.

It was no accident that the Cultural Revolution's discourse of class struggle would be replaced by the call for *shishi qiushi*, commonly rendered as "seek truth from facts." The Chinese expression in fact conveys a good deal more than the narrow empiricism suggested by that translation. *Shishi* suggests immediately the connotation of "real facts" as opposed to phony facts. And *qiushi* conveys not so much the connotation of the amoral "truth" that the discursive context of English lends the term as a more moral "what is right and true," as opposed to "what is wrong and untrue" (as in *mingbian shifei*, or "distinguish clearly between right and wrong"). The fact that this expression has become the reigning slogan of the post-Cultural Revolution era demonstrates the depth of the reaction against the rupture between representational and perceived reality in the Cultural Revolution. *Shishi qiushi*, or "seek what is right and true from real facts," is a call to realign representational reality with objective reality.

## PAST SCHOLARSHIP ON THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Past scholarship has shed much light on the Cultural Revolution from the analytical vantage points of interest groups and political factions (e.g., Lee, 1978). Those categories have the advantage of being readily comprehensible as conventional categories of political action to a Western audience.

But for a phenomenon as distinctive as the Cultural Revolution, we need perhaps to be skeptical of relying too much on readily understandable Western social science categories. The politics of interest, as it is used in Western social science, generally presupposes an opposition between society and the state. As I have written elsewhere (Huang, 1993), such a juxtaposition has in fact found little room in Chinese political thinking. Mass actions in the Cultural Revolution were very different from interest group political activity. Interest groups in the Cultural Revolution, to the extent they can be identified as such, acted in response to the call of a supreme ruler and not in opposition to or separately from the state. The mass actions of the Cultural Revolution were distinguished also by horrendous violence and terrible abuses of individuals, phenomena that cannot be easily explained by interest politics and political factionalism. Those explanations, in fact, can carry the unwitting consequence of whitewashing a phenomenon that exacted such a horrible toll in human suffering. The Cultural Revolution seems to me to highlight the limits of conventional social-economic and social-political analyses to an extent that few other historical events can.

A useful alternative perspective has been an emphasis on the charismatic role of Mao and the almost religious fervor of the youth who followed him. Chang Jung's (1991) narrative of her personal experiences, for instance, documents well the incredible influence that "the cult of Mao" wielded over impressionable and rebellious adolescents. And the study by Jack and Sulamith Potter (1990: esp. chaps. 4, 14), although concerned mainly with the countryside, suggestively likens the Cultural Revolution to a religious revitalization movement. Such analyses capture something of the idealism of the Cultural Revolution. But they cannot explain the willing complicity, at least for a time, of urbane intellectuals such as Yue Daiyun or the mean-spiritedness of the movement in scapegoating the powerless. Most of

all, they cannot begin to capture the depth of revulsion and cynicism that it also engendered.

My emphasis on the hegemonic discourse of class struggle is intended to explain the willing participation of even sophisticated intellectuals in the Cultural Revolution as well as the violent disposition of that movement. The disjunction between discourse and practice, on the other hand, highlights the nebulousness of the politics of representation, the abuses that followed, and the growing disillusionment with the movement. The Cultural Revolution was in the end distinguished not just by its idealism but also by the depth of its cynicism.

## *CONCLUSION*

Past scholarship has by and large studied separately, and argued separately, about representation and practice, structure and agency, and pre- and post-1949 China. We have looked to each of those dimensions individually without asking about the connections between them. In so doing, we may have overlooked some crucial developments that occurred in the interconnecting areas among those dimensions.

The practice of the Land Revolution did not follow simply from the objective structure of those villages. The linkage between objective structure and objective action was mediated by representation, both as agency and as structure. The Party maintained the fiction that class divides ran through each and every village. Its choice of policy was to generate class struggle in every village as a moral drama of good versus evil, intending thereby to mobilize all peasants and urban intellectuals in support of the Party. In so doing, it built an ideological structure that shaped subsequent thinking and actions.

That same decision, not given much attention in past scholarship, was crucially important in propelling the ascent of class struggle as hegemonic discourse. By engaging urban intellectuals in the process of rural class struggle, the Party turned the official ideology of class struggle into the active discourse of an entire generation. Then, by mobilizing a second generation of intellectuals to reenact the Land Reform in the Four Cleans movement, the Maoists in the Party

reinvigorated the discourse of class struggle to make it hegemonic for the Cultural Revolution. Those developments are traceable to the original choice to involve urban intellectuals in intravillage class struggle.

The same choice also marked the beginning of a growing divergence between representation and practice. Many villages in fact contained no objectively identifiable class enemies. The Party's insistence on staging nonetheless a class revolution in each and every village promoted the misuse of class categories: the application of class labels to all those who opposed the revolution, the simplistic equation of individual political choice with class position, the employment of arbitrary quotas and classifications, the manufacturing of class enemies even where there were none, and the resort to violence in ritualized mass struggle meetings. Those practices became part and parcel of the new revolutionary culture and were to find extreme expression in the Cultural Revolution.

For the urban intellectuals mobilized to participate in the Land Revolution, the disjunctions between Party representations and perceived objective reality could be overlooked perhaps because of the Party's substantial successes at the macrosocietal level or because the disjunctions were not so glaring as those that would emerge in the Cultural Revolution or, finally, because most of them lived at some remove from village life. In any event, the majority of intellectuals emerged from the Land Revolution active and willing participants in the revolutionary discourse of class struggle.

In the Second Land Reform of the Four Cleans movement more than a decade later, the gap between representation and reality grew wider because almost all class enemies had long since been reduced to powerless scapegoats. But the new generation was encouraged to link in their minds old class enemies with supposed new class enemies among the currently powerful. The linkage made it possible, on the one hand, to think of rebellion against the currently powerful as class struggle and, on the other hand, to think of the scapegoating of pathetic old class enemies as acts of political significance and courage. Such was the hegemonic power of "class struggle" that most of that second generation of intellectuals also became willing participants in a discourse that was already yet another step removed from objective reality.

It was in the Cultural Revolution that the disjunctions between representational and objective reality grew so wide and so glaring as to bring the collapse of the entire discourse of class struggle. The indiscriminate attacks on the innocent and the pervasive resort to cruel scapegoating could not but engender cynicism in the end. As class and class struggle increasingly ceased to bear any resemblance to perceived reality, they became more and more just empty slogans manufactured by the official press and mouthed by a skeptical populace. The eventual removal of the authorities behind that press, with the death of Mao and the fall of the "Gang of Four," brought a collapse that seemed sudden and total for a discourse that had so recently seemed so completely dominant in Chinese life.

I think few would disagree with the first levels of my argument here: the nature of the Land Revolution and its disjunctions from objective village realities and the rise to hegemony of the ideology and discourse of class struggle. Many would perhaps also agree with the connections I have drawn between the Land Reform and the Cultural Revolution: in language, rituals, and mental habits and through two gigantic rural social movements that each engaged a generation of urban intellectuals.

I have also tried to spotlight the story of the growing divergence between representational and objective reality. That divergence set the frame for the politics of the Cultural Revolution in which representation, increasingly divorced from objective reality, became the sole criterion for class and class struggle. The nebulousness of the criteria for class labeling, however, did not diminish the violence deemed appropriate in class struggle. The result was arbitrary beatings and killings of many innocent people. Even more than a religiouslike revitalization of class struggle fervor, the Cultural Revolution tells about the mounting tensions engendered by the widening gap between representational and objective reality. We need to understand not only the blind adherence to a hegemonic discourse and a charismatic figure but also the ambivalence, soul searching, and, in the end, profound revulsion provoked by that movement. That was why the Cultural Revolution decade was to mark not only the height of class struggle as hegemonic discourse but also the coming of its cataclysmic demise. That was why "Never forget class struggle" was to be replaced by "Seek what is right and true from real facts."

# NOTES

1. The following methodological observations come mainly from my forthcoming book, *Civil Justice in Qing China: Peasants and the Law.*

2. As the Sino-Japanese War wore on, all sides—the Guomindang, the Communists, and the Japanese—raised taxes to several times prewar levels.

3. In my 1985 book, I pointed out that "population increase ate up [so] much of the expanded productivity" in Shajing village during the first three decades after 1949 (Huang, 1985: 183). That point, developed into the collectivist involution theme in my 1990 book, is of course not the same as the argument that some readers have attributed to me: that only "new socialist policies within the context of a collectivist state" broke the process of agricultural involution (Myers, 1991: 612; cf. p. 71 of the Esherick article in this symposium).

4. Two long-term workers plus short-term day labor, according to Hinton (1966: 29-32).

5. Five contained no resident landlords. In the eighth village, Kaixiangong, studied by Fei Xiaotong, we do not have systematic data (Huang, 1990: 338-9).

6. Adult Huayangqiao villagers more than 16 years old were all expected to attend that mass struggle meeting but, according to my peasant informants, many in fact stayed home. The three landlords made examples of at that meeting of about 1,000 people were in any case not known personally to the Huayangqiao villagers (Huang, 1990: 168).

7. Having divided the rest of the family's 60 mu among two sons.

8. Guo Chongwang and his brother Fuwang together owned 132 mu, which they worked with hired labor (Hinton, 1966: 34).

9. These data come from detailed household-by-household class histories compiled systematically at the time of the Four Cleans (*siqing*) movement.

10. Called for by Mao in the fall of 1962 at the tenth plenary session of the Eighth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. See, for example, the account by Bo Yibo (1993, vol. 2: 1070-1104).

11. See, for example, *Renmin ribao* (June 3, 1958: 4).

12. See, for example, the accounts in Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao (1986: 72-82); Chang Jung (1991: 282-96); Yue and Wakeman (1985: 157ff). Chang Jung's book documents well the centrality of the slogan and discourse of class struggle in the mental universe of the adolescent Red Guards.

13. Usually the "Four Cleanups" rather than the Four Cleans in the literature in the field. See Baum (1975). The Chinese word *qing*, of course, can be read either as adjective/noun (as in Four Cleans) or as verb/noun (as in Four Cleanups), and the term *siqing* carried both meanings. I am opting for Four Cleans here because of its symmetry with the Four Uncleans (*si buqing*), discussed later, in which *buqing* can be read only as an adjective and not as a verb.

14. This dimension of the movement has not received much attention in past scholarship, which has emphasized mainly the dimension of struggle against the cadres in power. See, for example, Baum (1975: chaps. 3, 5).

15. The authors of the book changed the real names of the individuals involved into fictitious names.

## Appendix: List of Chinese Terms

beidou 被鬥

bei kao bei 背靠背

di, fu, fan, huai 地、富、反、壞

diwo maodun 敵我矛盾

douzheng duixiang 鬥爭對象

guan-gua-gu-du 鰥、寡、孤、獨

guanhua 官話

hei wulei 黑五類

heping tugai 和平土改

jieji 階級

jieji chengfen 階級成分

jieji diren 階級敵人

jieji douzheng 階級鬥爭

jingying dizhu 經營地主

liangtiao luxian de douzheng 兩條路線的鬥爭

louhua 漏劃

maotou 矛頭

mian dui mian 面對面

mingbian shifei 明辨是非

minzu zichan jieji 民族資產階級

putonghua 普通話

renmin neibu maodun 人民內部矛盾

santong 三同

saodi chumen 掃地出門

shengchan guanxi 生產關係

shishi qiushi 實事求是

shoufa 守法

si buqing 四不清

silei fenzi 四類分子

siqing 四清

suku 訴苦

wuchanjieji wenhua da geming 無產階級文化大革命

ying gutou 硬骨頭

you 右

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