

women and of relatives (father-son, husband-wife, sibling, in-law, whole-family, and three-generation militias). *Zhongguo gongchandang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian*, 1957–1992 [Selected documents on Chinese Communist Party propaganda work, 1957–1992] (Beijing: Study Press, 1996), 396–97.

173. *Shanghai minbing*, bk. 2, 15:39–41.

174. See John Bryan Starr, "Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune Through Chinese Eyes," *China Quarterly*, no. 49 (January–March 1972): 110–12. Numerous books and articles on the Paris Commune were published in China in 1961 as part of the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Commune. In 1964, Mao accused the Soviets of having betrayed the international proletarian revolution dating "from 1871 when the proletariat of the Paris Commune made the first heroic attempt at the seizure of political power"; *On Khrushchov's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World* (Beijing: Peking Foreign Languages Press, 1964), 90.

175. *Long Live Leninism* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1960), 1. On Mao's possible authorship, see Stuart R. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1966), 302 (emphasis added).

176. In the years preceding the start of the CR, there was renewed interest in the militant history of the Chinese labor movement. In 1960, for example, the SFTU was instructed by party leaders to look into the possibility of restoring Huzhou Guild Hall, the headquarters of the Shanghai General Labor Union after the May Thirtieth Movement and the Three Workers' Armed Uprisings, to stand as a concrete reminder of the milestones of the Shanghai labor movement. But the original buildings having been completely destroyed by Japanese bombing in 1932, and a three-story workers' dormitory now sitting squarely on the site, the SFTU was unable to come up with a feasible plan for renovation. SMA, C1-1-257.

177. *Shanghai minbing*, bk. 2, 14:115.

178. In the months leading up to the CR, the Shanghai Party Committee initiated a political investigation of the local militia—focusing especially on cadres and core members—that exposed numerous alleged counterrevolutionaries. SMA, A52-2-562.

179. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power*, 248.

180. SMA, C1-2-3900, C1-2-3898.

181. Zhang Qi, *Shanghai gongyun jishi* [Annals of the Shanghai labor movement] (Shanghai: Chinese Encyclopedia Press, 1991), 180.

182. Zhang Qi, *Shanghai gongyun jishi*.

THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION, 1966–1976

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (CR) presents a paradox in studies of the dynamics of state-society relations under Mao. On the one hand, proponents of totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian models of Chinese politics have pointed to this period as the apotheosis of the strong state.¹ On the other hand, those who highlight the role of social forces have seen the CR as an occasion when elements of society expressed their own interests and objectives with particular power and effect.² While such analytical differences can be attributed in part to contrasting tastes in scholarly approach and interpretation, they also reflect a defining feature of the event itself: as Chairman Mao's last hurrah, the CR exposed tensions between state-building and social mobilization that had been an integral feature of the Chinese Revolution for decades.

Among other things, the CR was a struggle over whether institutions that had developed during the long course of the Communist revolution and its aftermath still retained sufficient proletarian élan to prevent a revisionist retrogression akin to what Mao charged had befallen the Soviet Union. As the classic vehicle of proletarian revolution, urban militias figured prominently in this contest.³ Worker militias were touted as a means of upholding revolutionary orthodoxy in the face of revisionist challenges: "The Paris Commune made clear that we must arm the people, arm the working class, and thoroughly smash the bourgeois state machinery. This is the universal truth of Marxism . . . Whether or not to arm the people, arm the industrial workers, has historically been the major issue separating Marxists and revisionists."⁴

In Shanghai, new forms of worker militias were promoted during the CR as models for national emulation. A number of other cities eagerly imitated the Shanghai example. Opponents of these radical initiatives, especially within the military, cautioned that such experiments in social mobilization violated disciplinary norms and endangered national security.⁵ That the warnings were far from groundless became clear when the Shanghai Militia prepared for armed action after the death of Mao Zedong in the fall of 1976.

The CR saw the strident reassertion of a class-based conception of revolutionary citizenship as part of Mao's call to "Never forget class struggle." But the precise definition of *class* was by this time murkier than ever. With land reform and the socialization of industry having destroyed a property basis for socioeconomic distinctions, class was now in practice often determined either by *caste* (i.e., the label assigned to one's parents or grandparents at the time of land reform and then passed along to subsequent generations through the male line) or else by *creed* (the demonstration of zealous allegiance to Marxism-Leninism, as interpreted by Mao Zedong).⁶ When Premier Zhou Enlai outlined criteria for admission to the ranks of the Red Guards in the summer of 1966, he stressed the Two Goods (*lianghao*): good family class origins (*jiating chushen*), complemented by a good current demeanor (*muqian biaoxxian*). Zhou went on to emphasize that demeanor, or the proper understanding and expression of "Mao Zedong Thought," was critical: "Those of good family class origin must not be lax in thought reform; the working class must continue to be reformed . . . We are now engaged in a great cultural revolution; we must establish new thinking, new culture, and new habits—relying completely on Mao Zedong Thought."⁷

Ambiguity surrounding the meaning of class in a socialist society contributed to the virulence of the CR struggle. The regime's avowed commitment to a dictatorship of the proletariat meant that the special role of the industrial worker could not be denied. Yet the question of how to identify and organize the proletariat was anything but clear. With official unions under renewed attack as revisionist tools of economism and syndicalism, alternative means of representing the working class would have to be devised.⁸ The door was thus open to experimentation with worker militias.

By the time Mao launched the CR in 1966, there was already—as we have seen in previous chapters—a venerable tradition of arming the working class for partisan political advantage. In sponsoring what would become the Shanghai Militia, Shanghai radical propagandists Zhang Chungqiao and Yao Wenxuan (both of whom were later branded as members of the infamous Gang of Four)⁹ were following in the footsteps of Li Lisan, Zhou Enlai, Zhang Qi, and other previous organizers of the Shanghai proletariat. As had been true for earlier incarnations of proletarian patrols, the Shanghai Militia was justified by frequent reference to the Paris Commune, as interpreted by Marx and Lenin.¹⁰ The founders of the Shanghai Militia cited with special favor Lenin's statements in *State and Revolution*: "Marxists believe that after the proletariat seizes political power, it must thoroughly demolish the old state instruments and replace them with a new Commune-type of state instrument composed of armed workers' organizations"; and "revolution is the proletariat destroying the administrative agencies and the entire state apparatus, substituting for them a new structure of armed workers' organizations."¹¹

To apply these abstract Marxist-Leninist injunctions to the concrete Chinese context demanded not only a definition of the *proletariat*; it also required a determination of the *state*. A guiding inspiration for those who sought to mobilize the Chinese proletariat—whether in the 1920s, the 1940s, or the 1960s—was Marx's insistence that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes."¹² The function of a revolutionary militia was precisely to empower the proletariat to eradicate the ancien régime and fashion a radically new political order. This mandate may have seemed fairly straightforward in the warlord era of the 1920s (when there existed no effective state), or even in the 1940s (when the corrupt Nationalist regime was poised for collapse), but the 1960s presented an entirely different scenario. Seventeen years after the founding of the PRC, a combination of political inheritance and purposeful engineering had constructed a powerful state apparatus indeed. In reaffirming the prerogative of the proletariat to demolish the extant instruments of state control, sponsors of the Shanghai Militia (all of whom occupied important official positions during the CR) were challenging the very sinews of Communist rule: public security and

the military. Dubbing their worker patrol an “unmarked police station” (*bugua paizi de paichusuo*) and a “nonuniformed liberation army” (*buchuan junzhuang de jiefangjun*), the founders of the Shanghai Militia—most of whom did not themselves issue from working-class backgrounds—made clear their intention of substituting for the coercive institutions of the PRC a new vehicle of proletarian power. This then was an audacious attempt at institutional inversion—but one in which the lines separating state and society were more than a little fuzzy. The contest that ensued was neither state-building nor social mobilization as conventionally conceived; it was, however, a battle for the future of the Chinese Revolution.

Shanghai's circumstances during the CR were not representative of conditions in the country as a whole. Unlike the situation elsewhere, in Shanghai rebel forces retained—and improved—their political standing well after the army had wrested control from other mass organizations across most of China.¹³ With Zhang Chunqiao serving concurrently as vice-chair of the Cultural Revolution Small Group, chair of the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee (SRC), and political commissar of both the Nanjing Military Region and the Shanghai Garrison Command, Shanghai was spared the military takeovers that occurred in other places where civilian authorities proved incapable of imposing order. Unusual though the Shanghai scene assuredly was, the fact that the powerful Gang of Four claimed the city as its social base rendered Shanghai's political experience during the CR of exceptional national significance.

CULTURAL REVOLUTION FACTIONALISM

The CR has often been portrayed as an elite conflict.¹⁴ But although its origins must be traced to the very apex of the political system—indeed to Chairman Mao himself, the CR opened the door to an extraordinary outpouring of popular activism that brought the country to the brink of civil war. Mao's injunction to “bombard the headquarters” on grounds that “to rebel is justified” encouraged violent participation. And his decision the following year to “arm the left” (*wuzhuang zuopai*)¹⁵ signaled that creed (i.e., leftism) would serve as

a key criterion for admission to the ranks of the militants. As various social groups jockeyed for inclusion and influence, the question of revolutionary citizenship—of who could rightfully don the mantle of Chairman Mao's anointed warriors—assumed major importance.¹⁶ Encouraged to attack authority, but divided over whom to target, social groups descended into armed factional strife that pitted rebels against conservatives. The most famous combatants in this struggle were the student Red Guards (*hongweibing*), whose activities have inspired numerous memoirs and scholarly analyses.¹⁷ But in cities where industry was well developed, workers more than students were often the mainstay of factional fighting.¹⁸

In Shanghai, so-called conservative elements (*baoshoupai*) among the workers—who defended union and party cadres at their factories—drew self-consciously upon the history of the militia movement in creating their organizations. The first conservative workers' group to emerge in the city during the CR called itself the February Seventh Warriors in commemoration of the famous Jinghan Railway Strike of 1923, in which hundreds of Communist-sponsored pickets had enlisted under union auspices (see chapter 1). Composed entirely of railroad employees, Shanghai's February Seventh Warriors selected a name that implied a direct link to the early history of the CCP labor movement. Soon another conservative outfit, representing workers at twenty-three factories in the eastern part of Shanghai, appeared under the name Red Guards (*chiweidui*),¹⁹ a choice of nomenclature that suggested a connection both to the Russian Revolution and to China's own soviet and base areas experience (see chapter 3). In contrast to their revolutionary namesake, however, these latter-day Red Guards operated under the protective wing of state authorities.²⁰ A deputy dispatched from the SFTU to the Red Guards later recalled,

The Shanghai Party Committee wanted the SFTU to contact the Red Guards, so the higher levels sent me as a liaison officer. When I asked how to handle the Red Guards' finances, Zhang Qi [the former leader of the underground Shanghai labor movement who was then the director of the SFTU] said meaningfully, “The union has so much money; now is the time to spend a little.” So within ten days we issued 125,000 armbands to the Red Guards.²¹

The day after the worker Red Guards were established, delegates from eighty-two factories in the western part of the city gathered in defense of their supervisors to form the Worker Pickets to Protect Mao Zedong Thought. In adopting the name *gongren jiuchadui* (worker pickets), this group embraced a historical lineage of union-sponsored militias that stretched from the Three Workers' Armed Uprisings of 1926–1927 to the early years of the PRC (see chapters 2 and 4). Before long, the Shanghai February Seventh Warriors, the Shanghai Red Guards, and the Worker Pickets to Protect Mao Zedong Thought agreed to join forces under the rubric of the Shanghai General Command of Red Guards to Protect Mao Zedong Thought.²²

At the same time that conservative elements were uniting in defense of their patrons within the union and party, opposition forces known as *zaofanpai* (rebels) advocated a wholesale attack on these authority figures. The rebel workers too combined forces, but the resultant umbrella organization—known as the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters (WGH)—claimed no connection to previous incarnations of union-organized militias.²³ Rather, the WGH presented itself as a fresh revolutionary substitute for the discredited official union. When this “newborn fruit of the CR” received the approval of Zhang Chunqiao (former director of the Shanghai Propaganda Department who was now vice-chair of the Central Cultural Revolution Group), its importance on the political stage was assured.

In contrast to the conservatives, whose leaders were generally labor models (honored by the union as exemplary producers) and other workers with unusually close party connections, rebel leaders reflected much more diverse backgrounds. In some instances, “impure” family histories had denied them entry into the ranks of the conservatives. Rebel leader Pan Guoping, second in command of the WGH, was such a case. Although born and raised in an ordinary Shanghai worker's family, Pan's mother had engaged in an extramarital affair that drove his father to suicide. This compromised family background initially blocked Pan's full participation in the CR. He later recalled bitterly of the conservatives, “They directed the spearhead at me, ferreting out my mother's problems to attack me. Natu-

rally I was very upset. At that time the factory established a Red Guard outfit, but they wouldn't let me join because of my bad family circumstances.”²⁴

Diverse as their social origins were, the rebel leaders shared a common penchant for speaking their minds. Even years after the CR had ended, many of them retained their feisty demeanor. When rebel leader Ma Zhenlong was interrogated by public security officials in 1982, for example, he refused to heed his inquisitors' request that he cut short his discussion of injustices at his factory:

I have to talk about this! If I don't discuss it, how can I answer you about how I came to rebel? Without that, there would have been no rebellion to discuss. Why did Chairman Mao later speak of “striking down the King of Hell, liberating the little demons?” It was in order to ferret out the capitalist roaders, right? That was how it got started. One should speak truthfully and respect history. I have to tell it like I see it.²⁵

For the first few months of their existence, the headstrong rebels remained a distinct minority within the factories of Shanghai. But once Chairman Mao endorsed the January Revolution of 1967, in which worker rebels challenged the authority of the Shanghai Party Committee (SPC) and its subsidiary branches across the city, the tables quickly turned in favor of the rebels. Under the command of a former factory militia security cadre, Wang Hongwen, the WGH became the decisive workers' organization in Shanghai for the duration of the CR.²⁶ In sharp contrast to their conservative opponents, whose claim to legitimacy stemmed from longstanding connections to the CCP labor movement,²⁷ the rebels questioned the revolutionary credentials of authority figures—from the Municipal Party Committee down to factory party secretaries and union directors.

In the early months of the CR, conservative and rebel factions battled for control of the Shanghai work force, drawing upon competing sources of patronage and power. Conservative Red Guards operated under the protective wing of party networks that reached back to the pre-1949 Communist labor movement—as their preference for names borrowed from the revolutionary struggles of the past suggested. Claiming a following of more than 800,000 workers by

November 1966, the Red Guards boasted a substantial number of party and Youth League members, labor models, and older workers with close union connections.²⁸ At the start of the CR, the Shanghai Trade Union was still dominated by cadres who had been active in the underground labor movement during the 1930s and 1940s. Both the director of the SFTU, Zhang Qi (who authorized the provision of aid to the Red Guards), and the vice-director of the SFTU, Shi Huizhen (who headed a work team that condemned the rebellious activities of WGH commander Wang Hongwen at the Number Seventeen Cotton Mill), were former leaders of the underground Shanghai labor movement whose actions at the beginning of the CR offered obvious encouragement to conservative forces.²⁹

Had Chairman Mao not intervened—via Zhang Chunqiao—to indicate his personal endorsement of the rebel assault on established party networks in Shanghai,³⁰ the Red Guards would surely have emerged victorious. The rapid development of this conservative group into the majority faction had demonstrated the overweening influence of the party's patronage system among the urban workforce.³¹ Once the rebels gained the upper hand, however, thousands of former members of the party underground were viciously attacked as "capitalist roaders" by worker rebels. Of the ninety-nine former underground activists who held top party and government posts in Shanghai at the beginning of the CR, sixty-five were subsequently arrested on orders of the rebel leadership.³²

Origins of the Rebel Militia

After the January 1967 power seizure, the principal rebel leaders in Shanghai—Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan—realized that they needed reliable institutional means of consolidating their newly won political position. Their first thought was to replace the toppled SPC with a Shanghai People's Commune that would operate in close coordination with the WGH. On February 6, the WGH issued a handbill to publicize the inauguration of the Shanghai Commune (which had been proclaimed the day before). Entitled "The country is ours; political power is ours," the manifesto was written in the exaggerated rhetoric of the day. After offering obsequious obeisance to

Chairman Mao, the statement makes clear that rebels in Shanghai—like their predecessors during the Three Workers' Armed Uprisings forty years earlier—saw their "new Paris Commune" as an expression of proletarian power that would first smash and then replace the machinery of state:

Under the close concern and support of the reddest, reddest, red sun in our hearts, the most beloved and respected glorious leader Chairman Mao, in the raging flames of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the new Paris Commune of the 1960s, the Shanghai People's Commune, is established!

This is a joyous occasion for the proletarian revolutionaries, a joyous occasion for the working class, a joyous occasion for all the people of the country. We acclaim most fervently: Long live the Shanghai People's Commune! Long Live Chairman Mao! Long, long life! . . .

We have smashed the old Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and People's Congress. We have destroyed the black *yamen* of the revisionist lords. Now we are establishing a bright red Shanghai People's Commune. We ourselves will occupy the realm and hold great power! Let us stiffen our backs, lift up our heads, and fully take command. We gravely proclaim to the entire world: the country is ours, political power is ours, the world is ours!³³

Despite the exuberant claims to universality and immortality, accompanied by festive celebrations in People's Square (site of the former race course), the effort to establish a Shanghai People's Commune was soon squelched by Mao Zedong himself. This was not quite the mode of institutional inversion the Chairman had in mind. As Mao explained, "Communes are too weak when it comes to suppressing counter-revolutionaries."³⁴ Mao further observed, "If every province, city and autonomous region were called a people's commune, we'd have to change the name of our country from People's Republic of China to People's Commune of China . . . That would involve a complicated issue of changing our national structure."³⁵ Familiar perhaps with the debates over municipal versus national sovereignty that surrounded the history of the Paris Commune, Mao clearly rejected the idea of local autonomy in favor of centralized state control. Thus rebuffed, the Shanghai rebels were nonetheless

emboldened to press ahead with one of the key elements of the Paris Commune: an armed worker militia.³⁶ Aware that they could not count on backing from the PLA in setting up a maverick military force, the radicals cast about for an armed alternative that would prove loyal to their own designs. In accordance with Mao's stated concerns, this second armed force would have to be fully capable of suppressing counterrevolutionaries.

The initial organization to which the rebels turned in their quest for an iron fist was a unit known as the Shanghai Physical Education Battlefront Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters (*Shangtisi*). This was an assemblage of worker athletes—drawn from former members of soccer and gymnastics teams—who scoured the city in search of people whose appearance they considered overly bourgeois.³⁷ In a manner reminiscent of the Big Swords' rampages twenty years earlier (see chapter 2), ordinary citizens were terrorized by arbitrary seizures and sentences. Victims of *Shangtisi* assaults might be subjected to a head shave, have their clothing ripped to shreds, or find themselves dragged off to the headquarters of the Physical Education Committee for a roughing up (sometimes complete with vicious attack dogs). The organization was led by Hu Yongnian, who had been a star player on the Shanghai Workers' Soccer Team. At the urging of Zhang Chunqiao, Hu established a security group (*zhi'an zu*) that forged links with rebels in the Public Security Bureau (PSB). Members of the bureau served as advisers to the rebel athletes, issuing passes for *Shangtisi* leaders to enter the PSB freely, and authorizing joint investigations and arrests.³⁸ Raids conducted by *Shangtisi* were also based on intelligence garnered by informers from the WGH who had infiltrated rival factions. Hu Yongnian recalled,

Wang Hongwen told me, "This evening at 7:30 pm you should seize some members of the Support United General Headquarters [a rival faction]. They'll be meeting at such and such a number on Taishan Road. The information is absolutely reliable. Some time ago I sent people to infiltrate their ranks and they have reported back to me. I have instructed the infiltrators to remove from the meeting place any implements that could be used as weapons of resistance. You should send fifty people, with every five people responsible for seizing one person. I'll send another

one hundred people to augment your forces . . . After the seizures, they'll be transferred to the Yangpu Detention Center."³⁹

As a result of such offensives, the number of *Shangtisi* victims mounted rapidly. In reviewing the unsavory activities of this group, a post-Cultural Revolution investigation team concluded that "During just the first nine months of its existence, the security group of *Shangtisi* was responsible for the illegal seizure of more than eight hundred people, three of whom died and twenty-four of whom were crippled from torture inflicted during their detention."⁴⁰

Attack with Words—Defend with Weapons

The outpouring of complaints from relatives of those who had been mistreated by the *Shangtisi* helped convince Zhang Chunqiao to disband the organization in the fall of 1968.⁴¹ Zhang's decision was facilitated by the fact that by this time another workers' paramilitary outfit had emerged under rebel sponsorship in the city, a group known as Attack with Words—Defend with Weapons (*wengong wuwei*). The name of the new force (which in later years would be renamed the Shanghai Militia) was taken from an adage that Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, coined in the summer of 1967 when asked by a delegation of mass associations about the proper place of violence in the CR.⁴²

On July 31, 1967, Zhang Chunqiao, writing in the name of the workers of Shanghai, petitioned Chairman Mao for permission to replace the extant factory militia with a new rebel armed force. Coming only days after the Wuhan Incident of July 20 in which the local Garrison Command had sided with conservative workers in a brutal assault on their radical rivals, Zhang Chunqiao's request reflected his loss of confidence in the regular military.⁴³ In the spirit of the Paris Commune, Zhang promoted the Attack with Words—Defend with Weapons as a means of replacing outmoded state institutions with a revolutionary form of proletarian power. He argued that the new organization—under the aegis of the worker rebels—would offer a promising alternative to the old military-controlled militias:

This force, composed of worker rebels, can currently quell armed struggles. More important, from it may emerge a means of reforming the militia. Shanghai's existing militia is partial to the

conservatives, its weapons and ammunition have already been reclaimed by the Garrison Command, and its organization is paralyzed. The conditions aren't yet ripe to reorganize the militia and many problems would arise. It is better to form a workers' Defense with Weapons organization, expanding from small to large, from unarmed to armed, gradually developing a people's armed force based on the rebel faction. Having often heard the Chairman raise the issue of militia reform, saying that the rebels shouldn't be in a hurry to return the guns they have seized, this seemed connected to the request of the Shanghai worker rebels and gave rise to the above thoughts. I don't know if they are appropriate or not. If the general direction is correct, then Shanghai can serve as a testing ground. Please advise.⁴⁴

This was not the first time that Zhang had advocated arming the masses of Shanghai. Thirty years earlier, reacting to the Japanese attack on the city, Zhang Chunqiao had also called for a popular response that drew explicitly upon Shanghai's revolutionary tradition of armed insurrection. In July 1937, Zhang wrote: "Anyone familiar with Chinese history will remember the Great Revolution of 1925 to 1927. At that time . . . under the leadership of the revolutionary government, although the material conditions of the warlords were superior they were soundly defeated. We must imitate the Great Revolution, resolutely carrying out the work of arming the masses."⁴⁵

There is no indication that Zhang Chunqiao's earlier proposal bore fruit, but now he had good reason to believe that Chairman Mao would look favorably upon his request to establish an armed rebel force in Shanghai. As it happened, on the eve of the Wuhan Incident Mao himself (then visiting Wuhan) had suggested issuing weapons to workers and students as part of his plan to arm the left. Mao's objective was to build up a second armed force (*dier wuzhuang*) to compensate for the unreliability of the military and to promote "mass dictatorship."⁴⁶ Having left for Shanghai during the height of the turmoil in Wuhan, Mao was on hand to offer direct encouragement to Zhang Chunqiao in his search for an iron fist.⁴⁷

A few days after Zhang Chunqiao had submitted his request for a worker militia, tens of thousands of worker rebels, wearing wicker hard hats and carrying wooden staves and other makeshift weapons, attacked a rival faction at the Shanghai Diesel Engine Factory in a

confrontation that turned into one of the bloodiest battles of the CR in Shanghai.⁴⁸ Impressed by the rebels' assault, Yao Wenyuan phoned Wang Hongwen to say that he and Zhang Chunqiao approved the establishment of an Attack with Words–Defend with Weapons force. Under the direction of Xu Jingxian, a radical intellectual who headed the rebel Writers' Group in Shanghai, a plan was thereupon drafted to arm 50,000 to 150,000 rebel workers and to organize them under a unified command post into a quasi-military structure that included squadrons, battalions, and divisions.⁴⁹

On August 26, the Municipal Revolutionary Committee ratified Xu's proposal and authorized the formation, under its direct leadership, of "an armed self-defense force of the Shanghai proletarian revolutionary faction." The new organization was to serve simultaneously as a production unit, a propaganda unit, and a combat unit that would "maintain revolutionary order" and "strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat." A dozen test points, including the Shanghai Number Seventeen Cotton Mill (where Wang Hongwen had worked first as a machine operator and then as a militia security cadre), were established. The rebels decreed that "at any work unit which has established an Attack–Defend force, all ongoing militia activities will be assumed by the Attack–Defend."⁵⁰ On September 1, an Attack–Defend Unified Command Post was formally inaugurated.⁵¹

Membership in the Attack with Words–Defend with Weapons required proper revolutionary credentials. Participants were restricted to young, strong members of mass revolutionary organizations with good class background (as designated by the caste-like labels assigned at land reform) and good political thinking (or allegiance to Mao Zedong Thought). Excluded were "counterrevolutionary revisionists, landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements, rightists or other cow ghosts and snake gods."⁵² Revolutionary citizenship, in other words, was defined as a peculiar amalgam of class, caste, and creed.

In a speech to the WGH one week after the official establishment of the Attack–Defend force, Zhang Chunqiao explained what he saw as the purpose and prospects of the new proletarian patrol:

In July I suggested to the Center that arming the left should begin in Shanghai. The Center agreed but cautioned to move slowly, worrying about what would happen in other places as

soon as Shanghai issues arms. I think Shanghai should begin with the workers. This can be divided into stages, beginning with organizing the ranks of workers into squads, platoons, and companies. Then train for a period of time. If there aren't guns, clubs can be used for training. Many of the demobilized soldiers can be useful. You should consider whether to organize our ranks into regiments or divisions . . .

Right now the army has no way to suppress armed struggles. They can't take action; they can only speak, but cannot open fire . . . If we have weapons, we can open fire—but we must maintain discipline and cannot fire at will . . . I fervently hope that Shanghai will arm 100,000 to 200,000 workers. Then I can rest easy. If the KMT comes, it won't matter; we won't need to fear any counterrevolutionary rebellion . . . Proceed by steps: First organize detachments, then train, then issue a small number of weapons. We can supply ten thousand guns, then antiaircraft artillery. Actually arming the Shanghai working class, not only ideologically but also by placing guns in their hands, will put into practice "attacking with words, defending with weapons." To "attack with words" is to stage an ideological assault; to "defend with weapons" requires guns. That way, when capitalism tries to stage a comeback, when Chen and Cao [former leaders of the SPC] try to return to power, it will be impossible. This will guarantee even greater results in waging the Cultural Revolution, ensuring that this city of Shanghai is a fortress of the proletariat, capable of prevailing over any kind of enemy.⁵³

Zhang, despite his own military connections, was proposing the new proletarian patrols as an explicit alternative to the hamstrung PLA. The process would take some time, he suggested, but the eventual goal of establishing a large and well-armed worker militia that would supplement—and perhaps eventually supplant—the army was already clear.⁵⁴

Although Zhang presented the program of arming the left as radiating gradually outward from Shanghai, Mao Zedong was in fact simultaneously encouraging a parallel process in other parts of the country: first in Jilin Province, where Mao's nephew was backing a rebel faction, and then all across the land.⁵⁵ As local military arsenals issued rifles to vengeful leftists, large-scale massacres erupted in one location after another. By the end of August, Mao was sufficiently

appalled by the virtual civil war gripping much of the country to hastily rescind his strategy of arming the left. Henceforth, the military was "strictly forbidden from distributing weapons, ammunition, equipment, vehicles, materiel, or supplies to *any* organization or persons without express permission from the Centre."⁵⁶

Thanks to the special position of Zhang Chunqiao, Shanghai was permitted to retain an armed rebel militia even after the policy of arming the left was officially repudiated in September 1967.⁵⁷ The Attack-Defend remained in place, growing in both size and strength, as a visible symbol of Shanghai's proletarian prowess.

Like previous political leaders from Chiang Kai-shek to Chen Yi (see chapters 3 and 4), the Shanghai radicals were anxious to preside over a public exhibition of their worker militia. During the National Day celebrations of October 1, 1967, more than five thousand Attack-Defend members from across the city—sporting wicker hard hats, overalls, and numbered badges—marched with rifles, assault weapons, and antiaircraft artillery past an official reviewing stand (holding Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, and other rebel officials) at People's Square.⁵⁸

Initially the Attack with Words-Defend with Weapons Command Post supervised only three administrative departments: liaison, organization, and political propaganda. After a few years, however, a more elaborate structure evolved with separate departments to handle combat, training, political work, organization, special forces, logistics, and administration. Despite the rebels' criticism of the previous PLA-led militia as conservative and organizationally paralyzed, their new force borrowed the same quasi-military structure that had characterized militia organization since the 1950s (see chapter 4). The Municipal Command Post was in charge of several divisions (*shi*) and regiments (*tuan*). Each district within the city established a command post that reported to the Municipal Command Post. As the first district to announce a command post, Yangpu's was known as Branch Number One (*yi fenbu*), with the other nine districts named in sequence. But when a member of the rebel leadership pointed out that the KMT also had established district branches (*qu fenbu*), the names were changed to "district command posts." It would not do for their new revolutionary institution to be saddled with reactionary nomenclature!

Like the Municipal Command Post, the district posts headed subordinate departments that oversaw the operations of regiments (*tuán*), battalions (*yíng*), companies (*lián*), and platoons (*pái*).⁵⁹

SOCIAL COMPOSITION

The Municipal Command Post leadership underwent significant change over the course of the CR. At the time of its establishment, the Attack-Defend was led by ten people, all male and all but one—Zhang Baolin, the lone worker among them—party members. Aside from Zhang, who was a close associate of Wang Hongwen from the WGH, the other leaders had served previously as cadres—mostly in the SPC or the Garrison Command. A year later, in August 1968, Zhang Baolin had risen to head the still all-male group of ten Command Post leaders, who now included three nonparty members. The changing composition of the Command Post was indicative of broader leadership patterns within the organization: a survey of Attack-Defend cadres in September 1969 revealed that 30 percent of the 3,484 cadres serving as company commanders and above were nonparty members.⁶⁰ By September 1972, however, the renamed and enlarged Shanghai Militia Command Post included thirty-six leaders, of whom a full twenty were not members of the Communist Party. At the time of its demise in the fall of 1976, the Command Post had also admitted three women—all workers—to its top leadership ranks.⁶¹ In other words, the composition of the militia leadership expanded and diversified during the CR decade so as to more closely resemble its rank and file followers.

Who were the rank and file of the Shanghai Militia? In 1973, the 856,000 members of the Shanghai Militia constituted a little over one-quarter of the city's labor force; by 1976, the Shanghai Militia carried more than three million members on its rolls—comprising more than 77 percent of the entire labor force.⁶² By the end of the CR, as the militia grew to enlist the majority of able-bodied workers in the city, its membership naturally mirrored the characteristics of the labor force as a whole. **Workers at state-owned enterprises**

were by all accounts the principal component of militia membership, with especially high participation from the industrial and transport sectors where the rebels enjoyed a position of strength.⁶³

If photographic and pictorial representations of the day are to be believed, the Shanghai Militia had a prominent—and possibly even predominant—female membership (see photos 5.1 and 5.2). The cover of a volume of photos about the Shanghai Militia, published in 1975, features a contingent of women motorcyclists wearing chest badges marking them as members of the municipal militia.⁶⁴ Other photographs in the book depict armed women militia members marching in parades, engaging in target practice, conducting criticism sessions, carrying out neighborhood investigations, patrolling the local waterways and coastline, handling hotel registration procedures, and fighting fires. A book of sketches illustrating the heroism of the Shanghai Militia suggests a similarly large role for women participants.⁶⁵ A water color painting attributed to the Number One Department Store Militia, for example, shows a sizeable contingent of women militia members, mounted on motorcycles two-by-two, exiting the gates of the Municipal Militia Command Post to begin their patrols. The caption reads, “The workers’ armed force reaches maturity.” Several

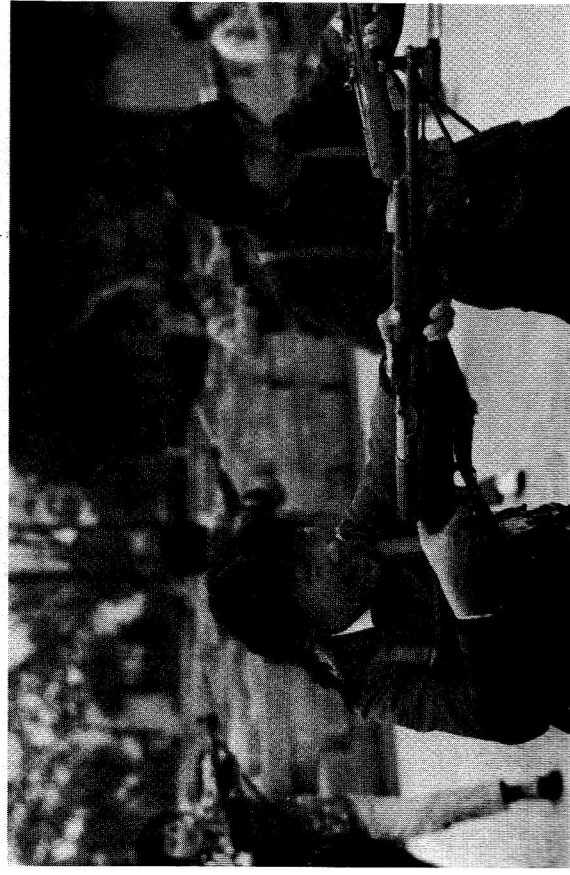


Photo 5.1. Women sharpshooters practice with the Shanghai Militia in 1973. Corbis

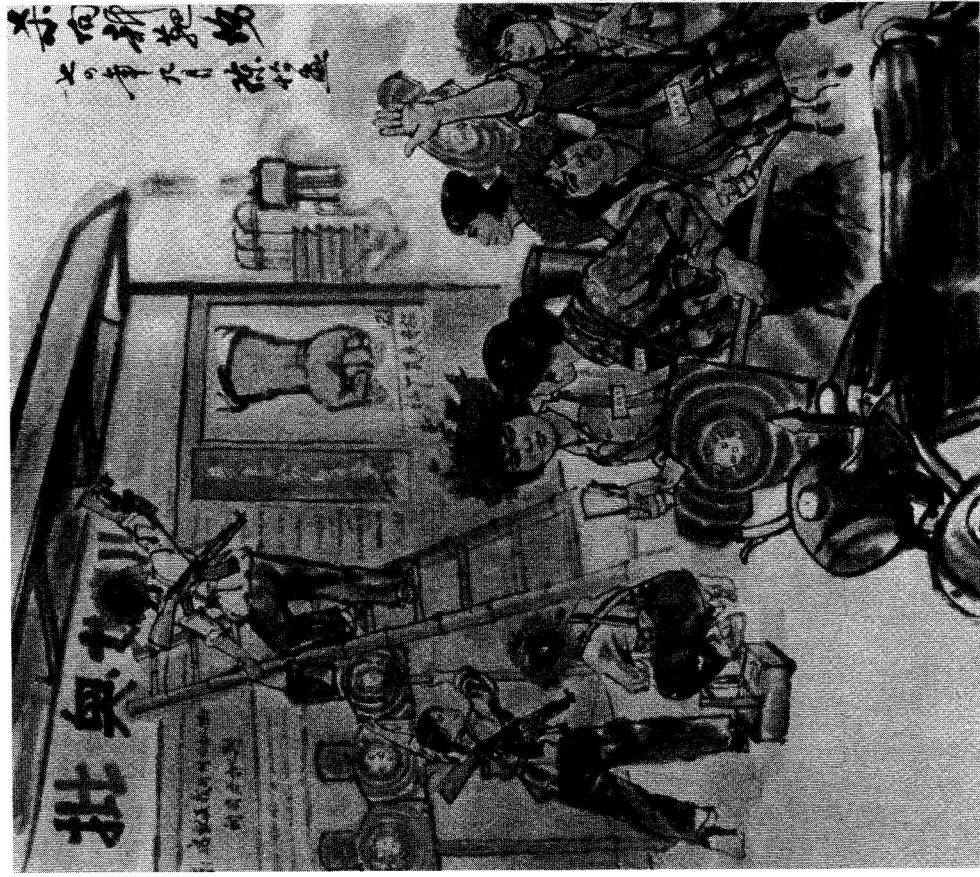


Photo 5.2. Women's motorcycle brigade of the Shanghai Militia joins a criticism of Confucian patriarchy in 1975. Painting is by a militiaman from a Shanghai chemical factory. Taken from Shanghai minbing meishe zuopinxuan.

sketches feature antiaircraft artillery units composed entirely of women. Others depict armed women's militia groups denouncing the ethical text, *nüer jing* (Classic for Girls).

These graphic representations, produced during the Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius Campaign in which women's equality emerged as a key issue, may have exaggerated the influence of women in the Shanghai Militia. At this time women comprised over 42 percent of the

general Shanghai labor force, and about 55 percent of the city's textile workers (the industrial sector that contributed the largest proportion of militiamen);⁶⁶ but lacking statistics on the gender composition of the militia we can only speculate on the rate of female participation. Assuming that the pictorial representations were not entirely divorced from reality, however, it is worth pondering the reasons behind the importance of women militiamen. The political influence of certain women leaders during the CR may well have been a contributing factor. The prominence of Mao's wife, Jiang Qing—first in initiating the Attack–Defend forces that prefigured the Shanghai Militia and later in pushing the Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius Campaign, during which urban militias were promoted nationally—was probably not irrelevant to the gender composition of the militia. In Shanghai in particular, the leadership of Wang Xiuzhen—a woman who was also Wang Hongwen's most trusted associate among the municipal cadres—may have further encouraged female activism in the municipal militia.⁶⁷

Composed overwhelmingly of factory workers, many of whom had been active in the pre-CR factory militia,⁶⁸ the rebel militia was nonetheless promoted specifically for extrafactory activities. Organized territorially (by district governments, street offices, and residential committees), these armed groups of workers patrolled their neighborhoods in search of enemies of the revolution.

OUTSIDE THE FACTORY GATES

Zhang Chunqiao's principal rationale for establishing the Attack–Defend force—to quell armed struggles—pointed to a significant public security role for the worker militia. In its first two years of operations, the force claimed to have put down more than 150 large-scale armed struggles.⁶⁹ Zhang later remarked that during the January Revolution of 1967, crowd control was managed entirely by the militia so that the army and the people would not be pitted against each other. As he warned ominously, “If the military handles these problems, there’ll come a day when the masses will be unhappy.”⁷⁰ Twenty years later, during the student movement of 1989, the very different outcomes in Beijing—where PLA tanks brutally suppressed the demonstrations,

and Shanghai—where worker militias quieted the protests, bore out the prescience of Zhang Chunqiao's admonition.

Targets

Operating in a context where industrial workers were the acknowledged “masters of the country,” the proletarian identity of the Attack–Defend force bestowed a considerable degree of authority in dealing with other social groups. This leverage, wielded in the name of the working class, also betrayed a certain parochial protectionism on the part of Shanghai’s favored revolutionary citizens.

One of the first actions of the new proletarian patrols was directed against rural dwellers from the surrounding countryside. Soon after the battle at the Shanghai Diesel Engine Factory, a group of peasants from Nanhui County streamed in protest to a branch office of the SRC—apparently to demand a relaxation of residency restrictions that prevented rural inhabitants from relocating to the city. As the newspaper of the worker rebels in Shanghai described the situation, “Had the protest not been immediately suppressed, it would have led to a wave of peasants entering the city, ruining the excellent conditions in Shanghai.”⁷¹ When the Garrison Command was unable to disperse the protesters by persuasion, Attack–Defend patrols were dispatched to the scene. Armed workers proved more effective than pleading soldiers. The peasants quickly retreated, and “the dangerous trend of peasants entering the city was halted.”⁷² Not for forty years had revolutionary citizenship been so closely identified with the armed urban proletariat.

Peasants were not the only outsiders to experience the antipathy of Shanghai’s Attack–Defend forces. Emissaries from other parts of China, including representatives of central government agencies, were treated with similar hostility. An early initiative of the Attack–Defend, dubbed the December Seventh Revolutionary Action, was to seal up the Shanghai liaison offices of ministries under the State Council, along with those of various provinces, municipalities, counties, and enterprises. In this campaign, which took place from December 7, 1967, until February 19, 1968, more than six hundred government liaison offices, said to be “capitalist nests,” were closed down. Following house arrest and interrogation, the staffs of these offices were given a deadline by which to leave Shanghai. Stock certificates, insurance receipts, account books, land deeds, and genealo-

gies that had been confiscated by the liaison offices at the time of the socialist transformation of commerce and industry were now seized by the rebel militia as evidence of “restoration records” (*biantianzhang*), that is, documents retained by members of overthrown classes who were allegedly plotting a capitalist comeback.⁷³

This campaign, ostensibly directed against class enemies, was also seen as a means of purifying Shanghai of the baneful influence of other less progressive regions of the country. As the rebels justified their actions:

During the Cultural Revolution we discovered that the Shanghai offices of the various central ministries, provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions were dead spaces under the control neither of their home governments nor of Shanghai. These units had large administrative structures, mixed personnel, and impure class ranks. Some had become political exchange centers for unrepentant capitalist roaders from various ministries and provinces. Some Shanghai offices harbored many such people, who ate very well and did very little. Moreover, they imported the factional struggles of their home areas, trying to recruit local followers in Shanghai.⁷⁴

A proclamation of the Attack–Defend Command Post accused “capitalist roaders within the liaison offices” of having “avoided repeated campaigns, using their position in Shanghai to harbor bad elements, hide black materials, and carry out speculation and smuggling.”⁷⁵

Many of the liaison offices, connected as they were to high-level officials in Beijing and elsewhere around the country, reacted angrily to the rebel affront. Accustomed to the comforts of life in Shanghai, liaison personnel were reluctant to bow to the demands of brash young workers insisting that they return home. Resistance from the Ministry of Coal was so strident that the Attack–Defend agreed to hold a special forum at the ministry’s liaison office to hear the concerns. Among those who spoke at the proceedings, most were incensed at the prospect of sealing up their Shanghai office, claiming that its activities had been misrepresented by the rebels:

We aren’t harboring capitalist roaders, smugglers, and the like. As for the matter of “underground factories,” our factories were approved and licensed by the Ministry of Coal and the Shanghai

City Government. Admittedly, we erred in hiring laborers from the mines who have resided comfortably for a long time in hotels. But even this shortcoming doesn't qualify them as "underground factories."

It is said, "If this campaign against ministerial and provincial liaison offices isn't thoroughly carried out, it will generate hideouts for evil-doers." But carrying out the campaign thoroughly shouldn't be an excuse for forcing us to return home. If the liaison office is unnecessary, why did it survive for more than a decade?

We demand a meeting of all liaison office personnel with Zhang Chunqiao. If we can be persuaded of the merit of the case, we'll leave. Otherwise you may insist, "Definitely, definitely, definitely depart!" And we'll reply, "Not necessarily, not necessarily, not necessarily will we depart!" Our office concerns ten provinces and eighty coal mines as well as 200,000 miners. If our agency is eliminated, will people go directly to the factories for everything? That's like asking a child to buy his toys at the toy factory rather than at the department store. How can this possibly work?⁷⁶

Despite such protests, the rebel militia persisted in its revolutionary action, placing liaison personnel under house arrest until they left Shanghai.⁷⁷

Having rid the city of unwelcome peasants and government personnel from other parts of the country, the Attack-Defend proceeded to seal up more than fifty religious sites around the city.⁷⁸ It then turned its attention to the so-called chronically problematic units (*lao danan danwei*). These were the factories, schools, research institutes, and other enterprises where rebels had failed to gain the upper hand in the initial months of CR strife. At first, thirty-three units in the city received the "problematic" designation; later the list was expanded to more than four hundred. The Attack-Defend Command Post organized hundreds of Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams to occupy such units and carry out struggle sessions against leaders of rival factions.⁷⁹

Among those who attracted special scrutiny from the Attack-Defend force were people who had been active in KMT-sponsored militias. Although many of these individuals had already served lengthy prison sentences for their misdeeds, the CR was an oppor-

tunity to revisit their counterrevolutionary crimes.⁸⁰ Guomindang connections were seen not simply as a past crime, but as a present danger. In a single offensive during the 1969 Lunar New Year Festival, the Attack-Defend claimed to have ferreted out more than 2,500 class enemies, including four secret agents on assignment from Taiwan and thirty-one individuals who had served as high-ranking military officers and government officials under the Nationalists. In all, the rebel patrol took credit for cracking 229 major political cases and active counterrevolutionary plots during its first two years of operations. In the process hundreds of weapons—including automatic rifles, cannons, grenades, and more than fifty thousand rounds of ammunition—were said to have been recovered from enemy hands.⁸¹

The challenge of distinguishing between revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries proved more daunting than ever, however. A key target of the Attack-Defend were labor activists from the Communist underground of the 1940s. Having been directed at that time by their superiors in the CCP to infiltrate the enemy KMT (see chapter 3), these veteran revolutionaries found themselves tainted by the collaborationist brush. In late December 1967, the Attack-Defend seized Zhang Qi, the former leader of the underground labor movement who was now director of the SFTU. Zhang was subjected to repeated humiliation in public struggle sessions. His hands were forced behind his back in the painful "jet plane" position, a dunce cap was placed upon his head, and a placard across his chest denounced him as a running dog who had committed revisionist crimes. For a time Zhang was imprisoned in the basement of the building of the union he had worked so hard to create. Then he was transferred to a detention center, where for the next six years he suffered repeated bouts of physical and emotional abuse. Although Zhang Qi survived the CR, a number of his comrades were less fortunate. Several former underground labor organizers—including PPPC captains active in the Communist liberation of Shanghai—lost their lives either from torture at the hands of rebel militia assaults or to suicide.⁸²

According to statistics compiled by the Shanghai Militia Command Post shortly after the demise of the Gang of Four, the

Attack–Defend and its successor, the Shanghai Militia, were together responsible for detaining more than 104,000 people over the course of the CR decade.⁸³ Many of the victims were severely tortured; a number died as a result of injuries sustained during their incarceration. At the height of its power, the Shanghai Militia was rounding up thousands of people a day for detention at the eleven jails that it operated at district and municipal levels. When the jails could no longer hold the huge influx of inmates, dozens of factory detention centers (using converted basements, warehouses, and air raid shelters) were opened for this purpose. Detainees were required to undertake hard labor during the day; at night they were locked up en masse under the watchful eyes of armed militiamen.⁸⁴

Terrorist Tactics

Despite the restraint implied by its name, the Attack with Words–Defend with Weapons from the beginning assumed an aggressive posture. On December 25, 1967, Wang Hongwen launched a frightening offensive in the form of a terrorist assault. Known as stirring up a red typhoon (*qia hongse taifeng*), the initiative involved joint participation by the PSB, *Shangtisi*, and the Attack–Defend force.⁸⁵ Armed workers were the main perpetrators in this and the more than thirty subsequent red typhoons that blew through the city over the course of the CR. The targets were said to be thugs, thieves, criminals, and dandies (*afei fenzi*), but they included a number of otherwise blameless rebel enemies as well. In language reminiscent of the 1920s, the rebels' use of "red terror" was justified as a necessary countermeasure to what they called the "white terror" instigated by conservative factions.⁸⁶

At times the terrorist operations of the rebel militia bordered on the absurd. In the summer of 1969, claiming a need to strengthen social order by preventing incidents of surrounding and gawking at foreign visitors to Shanghai, Wang Hongwen ordered the Attack–Defend to mount ambushes outside the International Seamen's Club and the Friendship Store. After setting off firecrackers to attract maximum public attention, hidden Attack–Defend

forces swooped in from behind bushes and buildings to capture hundreds of curious bystanders who were then hauled off to Jiaotong University for interrogation and, in some cases, severe physical punishment.⁸⁷

Occupying the Neighborhoods

Perhaps the clearest expression of the Shanghai Militia's foray into society came in 1970 with its campaign to occupy the neighborhoods and grasp class struggle (*jinzhu linong gua jieji douzheng*). That year the Attack–Defend Command Post published in its bulletin a story describing how, in the course of grasping class struggle, militia members at the Shanghai Coking Factory had been dispatched to neighborhoods surrounding the factory. When Wang Hongwen read the article, he saw this as an excellent means of further expanding the power of the Shanghai Militia beyond the factory walls. Declaring the Coking Factory's experiment a "fresh experience," he called upon other militia units in the city to emulate it. The following year, which marked the centennial of the Paris Commune,⁸⁸ Shanghai's *Liberation Daily* newspaper published a story about the fresh experience of militia squads organized by the Shanghai Elevator Factory in taking charge of street offices and residential committees in the Yangpu District. Soon every factory and work unit in the city had dispatched special squads from among its militia members to local neighborhoods.

Wang Hongwen's top lieutenant in Shanghai, Wang Xiuzhen, summed up these initiatives at a party conference designed to publicize the Shanghai model. As she framed it, "Sending militia squads to occupy neighborhoods has great significance for consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat. Were it not for the militia, there would be chaos."⁸⁹ The squads operated as local vigilantes, mounting nighttime raids to ferret out "class enemies" residing within their districts (see photo 5.3). By 1976, all 1,124 residential committees in Shanghai had been assigned militia squads. The functions of local police stations, with the single exception of maintaining household registration records, were entirely taken over by these detachments. Hence the militia's boast of serving as an "unmarked police station."⁹⁰