

PART TWO

Maoism and anarchism

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Maoism and anarchism: An analysis of Mao Zedong's response to the anarchist critique of Marxism

Introduction

This chapter examines the possible influence of the basic anarchist critique of the state on the political thought and ruling practice of Mao Zedong. First, we will try to construct the best case possible for the populist, anti-statist Mao, including the argument that his early flirtation with anarchism left a lasting influence on his supposed attempt in his late years to prevent the emergence of a "new class" of power holders in the socialist state. Next, after delineating the inadequacies of this new class argument, we will try to construct an opposite case, which attempts to show the roots of Mao's autocratic practice in the statist, authoritarian side of his ideology that led to his ultimate failure to answer the anarchist critique of Marxism.

With the extensive revelations of the horrors of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, few people today would any longer seriously consider Mao Zedong to be any kind of quasi-anarchist. Nevertheless, more than 35 years after Mao's death, views on the nature of the thought and rule of Mao Zedong are still diametrically opposed, both in China and the West.

The difficulty in evaluating Mao's rule lies in the now seemingly blatant contradiction between Mao's words and deeds from 1949 until 1976. Thus, many Western observers in the late 1960s and 1970s, and even including some into the 1990s, viewed Mao as a genuine social revolutionary or perhaps a kind of semi-populist democrat. Such observers insist that whatever the failures of the Cultural Revolution in practice, given the ineptitarian trend of the Deng Xiaoping years, the scholarly community should take seriously Mao's rhetoric about supporting mass rule, opposing the rise of a "new class" in the state, and favoring poor rural sectors over urban areas.¹

The defenders of Mao ask why, if Mao were the autocrat that his modern critics claim, he spent so much time fighting the bureaucrats and other officials of his own regime and why he used such populist and even, at times, anti-statist rhetoric. Mao's critics answer that the actual policies Mao tried to implement in fact led to widening gaps between elites and masses and to a highly repressive and murderous form of rule. In fact, one of the trends in China scholarship in the last 20 years is to view Mao—indeed, the whole Chinese Leninist regime itself—within the paradigm of neo-traditional or neo-feudal rule. Under such a view the PRC is often seen as little more than the continuation or restoration of imperial autocracy, and thus Mao himself as more like emperors of old than a true social revolutionary.² Mao's defenders might reply that the case for Mao as autocrat ignores many aspects of Mao's thought and ruling practice that point in the direction of Mao as being a radical revolutionary. Below then, we first summarize these points in the case for the anti-statist Mao before refuting them and constructing the Mao as autocrat case, in both instances focusing on the relationship between Mao and anarchism. In the end, we will find that Mao could not accept the basic anarchist premise that the state rules for itself and thus that it cannot be checked from within.

Purported Anti-Statist

Elements in the Maoist Critique

Influence of rural origins

The anti-statist case would begin with Mao's origins from a rich Hunan peasant family, origins that aided him in analyzing rural life in China and perhaps influenced his "heretical" ideas of the possibilities for peasant-based revolution from the late 1920s on, ideas that he argued against more Soviet-educated and urban-oriented Party cadres. Mao claimed the peasants were less corrupted by capitalism and were more susceptible to being reeducated with revolutionary ideas. He felt that an alliance of poor and middle peasants was capable of pushing for a genuine social revolution that

would overthrow the "four systems of authority" in the countryside, which besides "state, clan, and theocratic" authority, included the patriarchal authority of husbands over wives.³

Though it is true that after taking power Mao did rely on Soviet advice and "White area" and urban-oriented cadres in the early 1950s to support a Stalinist crash course of heavy industrialization through the establishment of a central planning apparatus, from the mid 1950s on, those seeing Mao as a genuine egalitarian socialist would claim that he returned to his roots in favoring rapid collectivization of agriculture and in rhetoric opposing a rural-urban gap. As early as the rural cooperativization movement of 1953, the rapid collectivization drive of 1955, and especially the People's Communes of the late 1950s, the anti-elitist case would point out that Mao tried to carry out a true social revolution in the countryside supposedly quite different from Stalin's violent, forced collectivization of the 1930s.

Mao's supposed opposition to harsh punishment

Though he revised his utopian faith in the peasants in the ensuing decades, the "mass line" policies of the Yanan era of the 1930s and 1940s still emphasized uniting with the majority against the minority. As part of this policy, the case for the egalitarian side of Mao might emphasize his constant injunction to minimize harsh punishment, if of course within his oft-noted injunction that revolution is not a dinner party but "an act of violence whereby one class overthrows another." Carrying over this officially lenient policy into the 1950s, especially during the "Hundred Flowers" movement of 1956, when it came to counterrevolution outside the Party, Mao argued,

... we must make fewer arrests and carry out fewer executions ... But we should not declare that we shall never execute anyone. We cannot abolish the death penalty.

Nevertheless, when it came to "suppressing counter-revolutionaries" within the Party-state, Mao emphasized,

We must keep up the policy which we started in Yenan: "no executions and few arrests." There are some whom we do not execute, not because they have done nothing to deserve death, but because killing them would bring no advantage, whereas sparing their lives would. What harm is there in not executing people? Those amenable to labor reform should go and do labor reform, so that rubbish can be transformed into something useful. Besides, people's heads are not like leeks. When you cut them off, they will not grow again. If you cut off a head wrongly, there is no way of rectifying the mistake even if you wanted to.⁴

Mao on "Continuing the Revolution" against corrupt officials

Perhaps the largest influence of his early anarchist roots on his later career, the anti-elitist case for Mao would emphasize, was his view of the need for a "continuing revolution" even after the establishment of socialism. In the late 1950s, Mao began to argue that class contradictions existed even after the socialist revolution and that class struggle would have to be emphasized for some time to come in the transition to communism. Mao's ideas went through a transition from belief in the essential dying out of class struggle, to a view of remaining basically non-antagonistic contradictions, and finally, to severe and clearly antagonistic contradictions surviving under socialism—the latter first clearly appearing in 1962.⁵

This location of class struggle as the "key link" or primary contradiction led to Mao's insistence that the "bourgeoisie" still existed as a major force after the socialist revolution, and furthermore, that it would try to find support and refuge in the Party-state apparatus itself. Eventually Mao termed this group the "forces inside the party pursuing the capitalist road." Mao claimed that these people derived their base of support from bourgeois remnants of the old society as well as "new bourgeois" elements that had sprung up within socialist society based on remaining inequalities, the inevitable side-effects of an epoch when distribution according to work was still practiced.⁶

As part of this critique, Mao had very harsh words to say about high officials, as in the following statement during the Cultural Revolution:

They are conceited, complacent, and they aimlessly discuss politics. They do not grasp their work; they are subjective and one-sided; they are careless; they do not listen to people; they are truculent and arbitrary; they force others, they do not care about reality; they maintain blind control. This is authoritarian bureaucracy.

Their bureaucratic attitude is immense; they cannot have any direction; they are egotistic; they beat their gongs to blaze the way; they cause people to become afraid just by looking at them; they repeatedly hurl all kinds of abuse at people; their work style is crude; they do not treat people equally. This is the bureaucracy of the overlords. . . .

They seek pleasure and fear hardships; they engage in back door deals; one person becomes an official and the entire family benefits; one person reaches nirvana and all his close associates rise up to heaven; there are parties and gifts and presents . . . This is the bureaucracy for the exceptional.⁷

In the mid-1960s, Mao called for continuing struggle against corrupt bureaucrats even after the triumph of the socialist revolution. The

"continuing revolution" against this surviving class contradiction (which, again, Mao defined more often as an antagonistic one during the 1960s) became the cornerstone of Mao's mature thought and the basis for launching the Cultural Revolution. Those who see this doctrine as inherently anti-elitist would link Mao's view of corrupt and bureaucratic "new bourgeois" urban elements not just to his early anarchism but to his roots in the rural-based revolution of the 1930s when Mao's line of surrounding the cities from the countryside and the "mass line" of learning from the peasants was first formulated.

Mao's proposed remedies for the dangerous situation created by these "bourgeois elements" who had come to power in the early 1960s included calls for workers and peasants to engage in mass criticism against people in authority,⁸ self-criticism of the offenders,⁹ sending down all Party and state cadres to the countryside to engage in manual labor and learn from the masses,¹⁰ and worker and peasant "participation" in running the economy.¹¹ Of course, actual peasant and worker involvement in workplace management and policy making was never stressed heavily by Mao.¹²

Above all, Mao and his followers called for an ideological reeducation of masses through inculcation of revolutionary ideas, most especially through intensive study of his own writings. These writings, along with his own unofficial remarks from the Great Leap Forward (1958–60) to the Cultural Revolution, seemed to stress the need for organs of mass action to fight the growth of inequality in the socialist revolution. Again, in these writings Mao seemed to hark back to the "mass line" of the Yanan days and to call for decentralization of authority away from the Party-state in Beijing and the provinces toward more direct control by workers and peasants. Though ultimately disappointed in the generation of "revolutionary successors" for the violent havoc they wreaked in the Cultural Revolution, he still expressed hopes for a continuing revolution every 10 years or so that would prevent the growth of bureaucratism.¹³

Possible positive influence of anarchism on Mao's "Anti-Statism"

Such an anti-elitist picture of Mao might stress his early influence from the anti-statist ideas of anarchism—until 1919 the leading socialist movement among the working class and avant garde intellectuals.¹⁴ Arif Dirlik suggests that anarchism had a much wider influence on the May 4th Movement than scholars had previously accepted, citing PRC scholarship to support his case.¹⁵ Peter Zarrow has drawn the most explicit comparison between Maoism and anarchism, especially related to Mao's thought in the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution.¹⁶ Other sources point out that anarchism retained much influence in study groups, cooperative ventures, and trade unions well

after 1920, as was certainly the case in Hunan, among circles with which the young Mao was associated.¹⁷ Clearly, Mao's knowledge of both Marxism and anarchism was not very sophisticated in his early years; nevertheless, he did stress the anarchist idea of the importance of founding small unions of mixed classes of ordinary people at the grass roots level and building larger confederations from the bottom up,¹⁸ an idea directly opposite to the Marxist (not to mention Mao's later Leninist) notion of conquest of central political power. Whether or not Kropotkin's idea of "mutual aid" (*buzhu*) as the cornerstone of a true social revolution was the direct linguistic source for the "mutual aid teams" of Yanan and the early 1950s,¹⁹ one could posit a continuing influence on Mao and other former anarchists among the Chinese Communists of anarchism's extreme populist doctrines of linking industry and agriculture, especially in the People's Communes of the Great Leap Forward.²⁰

Germaine Hoston sums up best the case for an anarchist influence on Mao and the CCP, as follows:

... the CCP sought to establish a state power that would engineer revolutionary change in Chinese society and to develop methods of leadership that would prevent that power from being institutionalized as the same sort of bureaucratic, intellectual, elite leadership remote from China's millions of common people that had characterized previous Chinese states.

... In practice, Mao's solution to the national question issued . . . in the triumph of statism, but it must be recognized that in both its theoretical formulation and in aspects of its actual practice it was highly anarchistic.²¹

Thus perhaps the case for an anarchist-influenced Mao would emphasize that it was precisely in his doctrine of the "continuing revolution" that Mao attempted to integrate criticism of a new elite in the socialist state into Marxist theory. The possibility of "vested interest groups" arising in the transition period, at least partially based on a "new bureaucratic class" in socialist society, would follow more from his anarchist intellectual roots than from his Marxism.²² The continuing of class struggle after the socialist revolution, possibly even into unknown future communist stages of development, and the need for periodic shake-ups of power holders by the masses would then represent Mao's answer to the anarchist question first posed by Bakunin to Marx of how to prevent the rise of a new and worse ruling class in the "workers' state."²³

Even though this latter point seems to make the case most directly for Mao as anti-elitist based on his influence from anarchist doctrines, we will return later in this chapter to the anarchist critique of Marxism to find an opposite meaning from this anti-statist interpretation of Mao's thought. But

to sum up the case for the anti-statist Mao, what Hoston, Dirlik, and others are suggesting is that given Mao's direct knowledge and influence from anarchism, perhaps he also could have inherited at this time the anarchist critique of the Marxist theory of the state. This could have occurred even as Mao began to turn away from anarchism in the early 1920s, since in that time he could not fail to hear the disputes between anarchists and communists that we examined in the previous chapter. While these debates probably firmed up Mao's increasingly negative view of anarchism, at the same time they could have forced him to deal with the serious anarchist criticisms of the inherent despotism embedded in Marxist-Leninist theory.

Before we turn to the opposite case for Mao as autocrat, we must examine one last point in favor of an anarchist-influenced Mao. Ironically, this point would utilize the criticism aimed at the radical Maoist leaders of the Cultural Revolution that occurred very shortly after Mao's death, criticism based on the 1920s anarchist-Marxist debates. As we will see in the next chapter, late in 1976 and into 1977, the Chinese Communist regime under Hua Guofeng criticized the coterie of Mao's personal followers, including Mao's wife Jiang Qing, who wanted to maintain the doctrine of the Continuing Revolution as the heart of Mao's late thought. In a double irony, this criticism of Mao's followers was carried out in a Maoist-style mass campaign orchestrated by the Party-controlled media. Using a supposed quote of Mao, the Cultural Revolution leaders were criticized as the "Gang of Four," who, among other evil deeds, supposedly pushed anarchist ideas in order to subvert the socialist revolution. In one example of this part of the campaign, Engels' famous anti-anarchist tract, "On Authority" was cited to equate the Gang of Four with Bakunin as people who waved the anti-authority banner in reality only to seize power for themselves:

Like Bakunin, the "Gang of Four," while desperately trumpeting anarchism, also went all out to establish their own counter-revolutionary "authority." Bakunin resorted to all intrigues and conspiracies to oppose Marxism and split the first International, but in the end he went down in disgraceful defeat. The "Gang of Four" picked up Bakunin's rotten stuff, stirred up anarchism over a long time, opposed the revolutionary authority of the proletariat, and split our Party.²⁴

Obviously, to those who want to see a genuine anti-authoritarian spirit in the Maoism of the Cultural Revolution, this criticism of radical Maoists as anarchists by a regime that at the same time was bringing back bureaucrats purged in the Cultural Revolution and that gradually moved away from Mao's Cultural Revolution policies of attacking the "new bourgeoisie in the Party" would only seem to prove the point that Mao had a genuine anti-statist or quasi-anarchist side. This is nowhere more true for such defenders of Mao than in his supposed argument criticizing a "new class" in authority

in the socialist state, one which had to be struggled against in a "continuing revolution" against authority. Thus, before turning to the case for Mao as autocrat, we must first examine and refute the argument that Mao adopted the anarchist critique in order to oppose a "new class" based on state power alone.

Mao and the "New Class"

Even if his policies failed to improve the lives of his subjects, and even if his proposed solution in the end failed to stem state despotism, some defenders of Mao would still contend that his theory of the socialist state, perhaps influenced by anarchism, was *intended* as a counterweight to the elitist tendencies in Marxism. Such analysts would point to his criticism of the increasing bureaucracy of state cadres, whom Mao's defenders claim he referred to as a "new class" and thus demonstrate his populist leanings in theory.²⁵

In fact, however, Mao himself stopped well short of a genuine "new class" argument, terming the corrupt "new bourgeoisie" a "privileged stratum" or a "vested interest group."²⁶ Thus, he always saw the enemy to be struggled against as either composed of the remnants of old bourgeois classes or as "new elements" based on the necessary evil of remaining income and other inequalities, not as a new elite based on unchecked state power. His attitude was similar not to anarcho-communist critiques of Marxism, but to the way the traditional Chinese autocrats such as the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang opposed corrupt bureaucrats not for building up an all-powerful state apparatus, but because their activities tended to restrict the emperor's personal control.²⁷

In sum, despite what some scholars claim, Mao never truly posited the existence of a "new class" in terms similar to Djilas, that is, a class based on political control, not private ownership, as other scholars have more recently concluded.²⁸ Indeed, the defenders of Mao, aside from citing each other to back up their comparison of Mao to Djilas, rely on very thin evidence from Mao himself. They often use parts of quotations of Mao on the "new class" in socialist society while downplaying or glossing over other phrases in the same work (or even the same sentence) that clearly call this a "new bourgeoisie."²⁹ One of the main works these scholars rely on for their comparison of Mao to Djilas is the September 13, 1963 *People's Daily* and *Red Flag* joint editorial "Is Yugoslavia a Socialist Country?"³⁰ This editorial, apart from the question of Mao's authorship, clearly criticizes the managers of factories in Tito's Yugoslavia as part of the "new bureaucrat comprador bourgeoisie" (emphasis added). The label of "bourgeoisie" could of course have a changed meaning; however, far from referring to a political class monopolizing privileges and power that would

demand democratic controls on the state in response, the editorial links this new class to "capitalist" reforms that "abandoned unified economic planning by the state" and departed from Leninist orthodoxy mandating the "socialist planned economy."³¹ Tito's policies were criticized not for increasing the autonomy of the state but for "abolishing" the "monopoly of foreign trade by the state," specifically insisted upon by Stalin himself.³² By looking back to the Stalinist era in Yugoslavia before 1948 as the period of true socialism and rule by the dictatorship of the proletariat and by clearly labeling Yugoslavia a "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" based on the "restoration of capitalism,"³³ the editorial clearly stops short of a critique of a "new class" based on new bureaucratic power alone. In other words, Mao (or leading Maoists in the propaganda apparatus) criticized Yugoslavia in 1963 for being insufficiently centralized on the Stalinist model, not for insufficient democratic checks on state authority or for an uncontrolled bureaucracy.

Another important text cited by scholars attempting to equate Mao and Djilas on the new class is the 1964 polemical article "On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World" also published under the names of the Editorial Departments of *People's Daily* and *Red Flag*, and especially the section "The Soviet Privileged Stratum and the Revisionist Khrushchev Clique."³⁴ Nearly identically with the article on Yugoslavia, however, this editorial's condemnation of the "privileged stratum" also clearly links "bureaucrats alienated from the masses"³⁵ with "bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies and force of habit" surviving from pre-revolutionary times and from outside capitalist circles. It also links this new class to "sabotage" of the "socialist planned economy"³⁶ represented by Khrushchev's (limited to nonexistent, we now know) market reforms. Again, this polemic does not amount to a Djilas-like critique of the rise of a new class due to lack of popular control over a bureaucratically managed economy.

Perhaps the most extensive analysis of Mao's supposed Djilas-like new class argument is that of Richard Kraus, who claims that "Mao refashioned the concept of class into a tool with which to contest the accretion of privilege by a new class of dominant bureaucrats."³⁷ Nevertheless, Kraus' analysis is the exception that proves the rule. At one point he claims to cite a quotation where Mao "toyed fleetingly" with the idea that "bureaucrats themselves form a class, with interests 'sharply antagonistic' to those of workers and peasants,"³⁸ yet in the very next footnote, where Kraus cites Mao's statement more fully, it is clear Mao refers to "bourgeois elements" who are "taking the capitalist road," and that Mao is not making a general anti-statist critique nor calling for democratization but instead is only asking for a greater reliance "on those cadres who are not hostile to the workers and are imbued with revolutionary spirit" [i.e. who do what Mao and his followers want].³⁹

Elsewhere in his work, besides citing his colleagues such as Joseph Esherick and the same sources they cite from Mao's writings and speeches from 1958 to 1975, Kraus bases his argument for the radical nature of the Maoist critique mostly on the 1975-6 writings of the radical Maoist leaders in the Party, Yao Wenyan and Zhang Chunqiao, sources which in the end severely undermine his case. For example, Kraus does recognize that Mao and these high Party followers "had never so explicitly identified high-level bureaucrats as an antagonistic class [compared to extra-Party Maoists such as the group Shengwulian],"⁴⁰ but he claims, charitably, that this was due to "Mao's political needs," that is, his fear of arousing the resistance of an entrenched bureaucracy. Thus, given such tactical considerations, Kraus admits that Mao limited his class critique to one based on "individual political behavior rather than as a system of collective political structural relationships . . ."⁴¹ Furthermore, while still trying to maintain his belief in the "radical" nature of Maoism and the "deradicalization" of the post-Mao period, Kraus at various points does recognize other limits of Mao and his personal followers, including stopping short of a full critique of inequality, aiding repression of genuine radical Maoists outside the Party, failing to construct a genuine program of political restructuring, and tendencies "to protect local cadres, directing class struggle [instead] against the higher salaried officials," all of which led Maoists "often [to behave] in ways similar to the conservative power-holders they replaced."⁴² This author would concur then, with Stuart Schram's assessment that Kraus, ultimately "errs . . . as does Esherick, in arguing that in his later years Mao defined class primarily in terms of the privileges, and the control of the means of production, derived by cadres from their relationship to the state."⁴³

Maurice Meisner, for his best proof of Mao's "new class argument," cites the late extra-Party Maoist group at Beijing University who wrote under the collective pseudonym "Ma Yanwen."⁴⁴ This group did indeed go much further toward arguing for a bureaucratic class than Mao himself, but not clearly with his approval and, more importantly, still firmly within the bounds of a critique of the restoration of capitalism.⁴⁵ Furthermore, following Edward Friedman's more extended analysis of Ma Yanwen's arguments, one can only conclude that this group is yet another exception that proves the rule that Maoism lacks a true new-class argument. Opposing the nascent political reformers of the Deng coalition who were to call for more democracy in the name of opposing feudalism, the Mao group made clear the limits to their own anti-bureaucratic critique:

... the class enemies [i.e., pro-market forces] absurdly claim that bureaucrats and bureaucracy are products of the proletarian state system itself. This is a slander of red political power, reckless, reactionary logic

... Bureaucracy's poisonous roots are [actually in the old, capitalist soil of an earlier] exploitative system.⁴⁶

Indeed, the Maoist critique of capitalist restoration really has very little in common with Djilas' critique of a new class based on Party monopoly of control over the state-managed economy. Instead it is the anti-feudal critique of later Party democrats in China opposed to Mao's autocratic policies of the Cultural Revolution that really recalls Djilas, as Edward Friedman also pointed out, quoting the following analogy by Djilas:

[In Yugoslavia] top leaders of the oligarchy distribute state functions, and sometimes economic functions among party officials, just like the fiefs which the kings and barons used to grant to their faithful and deserving vassals . . . In the same way that the royal prerogative, the privileges of the feudal lords, and the feudal estates, became a stumbling block to free trade and industry, which were developing under feudalism, so the despotism of the oligarchy, and the party bureaucracy's privilege in the government and the economy, together with the static, absolutized property patterns provided a basis for all this, have put the brakes on modern transport, modern management, and modern technology, and even on the socially owned property that has developed under Communism.⁴⁷

In sum, by equating state ownership managed by the vanguard party with socialism and Party control over the state with proletarian democracy, Mao and his "radical" followers remained loyal to Stalinist concepts of Party management of industry and agriculture and failed to oppose the growth of state autonomy and despotism.⁴⁸ We will examine this argument in more detail in later chapters, especially in Chapter 8 as part of our analysis of the debates between Democracy Wall extra-Party dissidents who revived a more genuine neo-anarchist critique, but in this chapter we need to examine further whether Chairman Mao himself really launched such a critique.

His defenders might argue that Mao, whatever his limitations, desired that this "new class," whether or not a "new bureaucratic class," be controlled and eliminated not only with the rectification processes described above, but by the restriction of "bourgeois right," that is, through narrowing of wage differentials and other material incentives. In practice, one could answer, Mao seldom attacked the system of *non-wage* privileges of Party officials such as greater access to information, luxury goods, and publicly owned wealth in the form of automobiles, villas, etc, privileges which some of his self-professed radical followers enjoyed the fullest. Of Mao's self-professed anti-elitist followers, we know the most about the excesses of his wife Jiang Qing.⁴⁹

Even in Maoist theory, the vanguard, though needing periodic rectification, would be better able to absorb such privileges without corruption and

would even require some such privileges in order to advance its leadership capability. It was not elite privilege itself that Mao and his followers sought to overcome, nor the principle of elite rule, but only their own lack of complete control over the levers of state power.⁵⁰ Mao's theory of the "Continuing Revolution" then, including his attack on the "bourgeoisie in the party" and the measures to be taken against it, would not contradict his essentially autocratic and despotic rule under this view since an autocrat such as Mao Zedong or the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang could feel that his arbitrary power is threatened as much from other central elites as well as from mass action from below. Thus, this chapter argues, Mao departed from the key component of the anarchist critique by failing to see that state autonomy is not just based on surviving or renewed "bourgeois" ideas and remaining economic inequality and thus by failing to really challenge the real basis for autocracy, the interests of state power holders in gaining autonomy from their subjects.

Autocratic Elements in Mao's Theory and Practice

Given the limits of Mao's "new class" argument as outlined above, it is clear that Mao was no mass democrat, much less a quasi-anarchist. This should lead us to examine the arguments of those who view his rule from 1949 to 1976 as similar to that of Chinese imperial autocrats. The very man many in the West considered to be an anti-bureaucratic revolutionary seeking a third way to socialism many now view as nothing more than a corrupt emperor. Again, by using the lens of anarchism, perhaps we can see the limits to anti-statism in Mao's thought and ruling practice, and the authoritarian and even autocratic tendencies that lie deeper in his thought.

Mao's "Anarchism" reexamined

Ironically, it is with a reexamination of Mao's relation to anarchism that the case for Mao as despot should begin. Unlike many young anarchists, Mao found in the doctrine neither an ultimate basis for human community nor a lifelong personal creed. Perhaps similar to the utility traditional Chinese rebels turned emperors found in (religious) Daoist, Manichaean, or Buddhist millenarian doctrines, for Mao anarchism, or indeed any other set of theories explaining China's predicament, was only useful as it also helped arouse people against oppressors and, perhaps more importantly, in so far as it called for heroic new leaders capable of enlisting and organizing popular support.

Before Mao was exposed to anarchist, liberal, or Marxist ideas, he was largely self-educated in the tradition of the Chinese peasant rebels in novels such as the *Shuihu zhuan* (The Water Margin).⁵¹ Though briefly exposed to the repression of a military government against unarmed civilians, Mao's anti-militarism fell far short of that of Kropotkin or Tolstoy, who from personal experience came to view the highly regimented and authoritarian military and prison life as the hidden basis of the state and of all political organization. In contrast, Mao often imagined himself a general or dreamed of a career as a military adventurer in his early adulthood. Friends stressed his qualities of military leadership, especially in his defense of the students at the Hunan Teachers' Training School against an attack by the forces of the provincial warlord government.⁵²

Under this thesis of Mao as romantic rebel, in seeing the heroic nature of military life he would seem ill-suited to embrace anarchistic doctrines for more than a temporary opposition to one form of state oppression, and then only in a brief and inadequate flirtation that failed to satisfy his romantic nature and desire to be a military/rebel hero.⁵³

Ultimately, of course, just as traditional Chinese rebels turned away from early anti-Confucian millenarian doctrines the closer they got to power, Mao eventually rejected anarchism on tactical grounds. Following the early Chinese Marxist intellectual and CCP cofounder Chen Duxiu, Mao ultimately saw anarchism as incapable of waging revolution and holding power against a well-organized opposition. Anarchism, Chen asserted, was simply too optimistic for the contemporary epoch in China, an epoch which demanded instead a much more centralized and tightly organized party capable of leading the downtrodden masses out of their backward condition.⁵⁴ As indicated in letters to Cai Hosen in late 1920 and early 1921, Mao had embraced Marxism in rudimentary form and had rejected anarchism as impractical, and as incapable of forming strong organization to oppose the united landlord-bourgeoisie government.⁵⁵ In these letters Mao viewed anarchism as more akin to liberalism, as in its supposedly optimistic view of the possibility of a peaceful transformation of society given the monopoly of the state over the organs of education, communication, and money, a monopoly indispensable to social transformation.⁵⁶

Here perhaps the "natural Leninism" in Mao's thought and personality first appeared, as noted by many scholars.⁵⁷ This "natural Leninism" came well before Mao's mature Marxist-Leninist outlook led him to denounce anarchism in more orthodox terms as "petty-bourgeoisie ultra-leftist opportunism."⁵⁸ Even when the supposedly democratic "mass line" of the Yanan period of the 1930s and 1940s was most dominant in practice in a time when the crisis of the Japanese occupation led to a more easily recognizable convergence of interests between rural peasants and their Communist Party leaders, there were still great limits to Yanan democracy and a growing

internal reach of the state, as revealed in purges of critical intellectuals and the growth of the secret police apparatus under Kang Sheng.⁵⁹

In the Cultural Revolution, this lack of genuine anti-statist elements in his personality and thought led Mao to reject any proposals of his would-be followers that might result in real institutions of direct democracy. Though at first praising the spontaneous rebellion of some urban elements who followed his initial praise for Paris Commune-type models of direct democracy, Mao quickly reversed himself when he saw such movements as threatening:

... in reality there always have to be chiefs... Anarchy is detrimental to the interests of the people and against their wishes.⁶⁰

He called for absorbing such Commune-style movements into the "Revolutionary Committees" which supposedly combined the Red Guard leaders, military officers, and returned bureaucrats into joint leadership bodies. These committees, however, were viewed by some of his Red Guard followers at the time, and recognized by most scholars soon afterwards, as the beginning of the reinstitution of Party and state authority. Far from endorsing calls for "extensive democracy" on the model of the Paris Commune, Mao opposed the idea that elections could replace the Party or more importantly himself as the arbiter of proletarian interests.⁶¹ Even for those who find the requirement of elections as far from guaranteeing genuine rule by the people, Maoism in the end fell far short. As Andrew Walder puts it,

To emphasize the ubiquity of class forces, and to demand thereby *more intense* loyalty to a "correct" doctrine, effectively precluded any serious attempt to undermine the privilege or arbitrary power of bureaucrats. To implement "mass democracy" under these conditions generated heightened ritual and deference and provided surviving bureaucrats with even more arbitrary power over the people under them.⁶²

In the final analysis, Mao reined in or destroyed any groups such as Shengwulian⁶³ or the theorists around his former secretary and Cultural Revolution leader Chen Boda who refused to accept his limits to mass criticism or who continued to call for egalitarian democratic institutions based on the Paris Commune model and criticized a new "red bourgeoisie" in the Party. As Walder notes, these "dissident radicals" "bore the brunt of military repression, imprisonment, and execution and were choice targets in the military-directed campaigns in the years 1968 to 1970,"⁶⁴ that is, the years when Mao and the "orthodox radicals" beholden to him were dominant in the Party leadership.

Mao's collectivization and self-reliance policies reexamined

Quite apart from the authoritarianism shown in his subjective opinion of anarchism in his mature years, Mao's actions from 1955 onward demonstrated an increasingly autocratic nature. These actions included Mao's support for speed-ups in agricultural collectivization whose economic lunacy met increasingly with peasant resistance.⁶⁵ Thus collectivization, including the People's Communes of the Great Leap Forward, could have had more to do with heightened state penetration of society that would increase Mao's personal power than with benefits to peasant life,⁶⁶ perhaps similar to the *lijia* system introduced by Zhu Yuanzhang—another peasant rebel who became supreme ruler of China as the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty in the 1380s. Reigning as Ming Taizu, Zhu used his work *The Placard of People's Instructions* to directly intervene in the village affairs in the 1390s.⁶⁷

Franz Schurmann was perhaps the first Western scholar to note the similarity of the Maoist rural collectivization policies with the *tuntian*, or military farms policy, as well as with the Ming dynasty *lijia* and the Song and Qing dynasty *baojia* rural mutual surveillance networks. Though Schurmann saw the Maoist policies as an extension of the social revolution begun with land reform, in comparing them with traditional imperial forms he emphasized the collectives and communes as an attempt to extend state penetration and control down to the village level and as attempt to militarize the peasantry. Indeed, as Schurmann noted, the Great Leap Forward began with public works projects that had a similar, if more permanent, effect toward militarization of the peasantry than that accomplished by *corvée* labor projects in imperial Chinese history.⁶⁸

Mao's collectivization policies reached a zenith of course in the People's Communes of the Great Leap Forward, in which local administration and local Party control would be fused in the *xiang* or township level units. In the Great Leap Forward, agricultural and industrial pursuits were to be combined, with the expectation that as they were educated by cadres and by themselves in the works of Mao the naturally progressive poor peasants and other "good class elements" would create a revolutionary enthusiasm that would result in increased productivity in the fields and voluntary contributions to public works and other projects. There were similar types of expectations in the Ming dynasty about what a "good citizen" would be, revealed both in Zhu Yuanzhang's pronouncements in the *Great Warnings* and in the *Placard*, where he identified the "good people" (*liangmin*) as the commoners of the village community and expected them to have a knowledge of his works and to take the lead in spreading his ideas.⁶⁹

In the Great Leap Forward (and also later in the Cultural Revolution, if with a less rural focus) Mao called for policies of "self-reliance," policies

that to some Western observers seemed to demonstrate Mao's sincere desire to avoid the pitfalls of development tied to Soviet or Western domination. These policies, however, were in fact also more similar to Zhu Yuanzhang's isolationist trade policies of the early Ming, including extreme restrictions on foreign investment and trade. Similar to Zhu Yuanzhang's failed trade policies, it has now been revealed that the model communes of the Maoist era often had to be propped up with heavy state subsidies in order to keep their status as successful experiments.⁷⁰ Furthermore, recent studies since 1979 have revealed that such policies of self-reliance and decentralization of authority to communes, whatever local empowerment and criticism of officials may have resulted, actually increased the arbitrary power of rural cadres.⁷¹

Mao's purges of civilian officials

In a remarkable similarity to the violent reaction of Zhu Yuanzhang against his subordinates late in his career, so too as both Mao's policies of the mid 1950s and the growth of a new state elite led to dissatisfaction and as the Great Leap Forward policies led to mass famine and serious economic difficulty did Mao look for scapegoats.

Directly contradicting his "Hundred Flowers" policies of lenient punishment for counter-revolutionaries, Mao launched an "anti-rightist" purge in 1957 against those intellectuals who had dared to challenge the Party's authority, a campaign that led to imprisonment and death for hundreds of thousands. In 1959 Mao extended this harsh treatment to intellectual and Party elites who had dared to criticize his policies. This included Marshall Peng Dehuai, who had politely suggested retrenchment of the Great Leap Forward in inner Party councils. Mao accused Peng of expressing personal opposition to him and adamantly refused to rehabilitate him even in the retrenchment years that did follow.⁷²

Regarding the discrepancy between Mao's conciliatory words and harsh deeds, one must especially note the growth of secret police terror and the increased authority of Mao's personal clique of followers in the whole period from 1955 to 1976 when such forces built up their arbitrary power at the expense of inner Party collective leadership, not to mention at the expense of mass democracy.⁷³ After the reversals of the Great Leap Forward policies forced Mao into the "second rank" and led to policies of limited market incentives under Chairman of State Liu Shaoyi and Party General Secretary Deng Xiaoping in the early 1960s, Mao launched the counterattack of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s. Mass campaigns of young Red Guards were launched to "bombard the headquarters" and "drag out" those in power "taking the capitalist road." Eventually, Liu and Deng and many of their followers in the Party-state apparatus were removed, with deaths and executions of many of those like Peng Dehuai who had first been purged

in 1957 and 1959. The post of Chairman of State was abolished and many bureaucrats were sent down to the countryside to "learn from the masses." When this purge was accomplished, Mao called in the army to rein in the Red Guards and restore order, eventually proclaiming Lin Biao, the Defense Minister he had installed after the purge of Peng, his chosen successor.⁷⁴

Mao's attitude toward punishment of intellectuals

Though at first Mao seemed to be using intellectuals to help carry out his policies in the Yanan and land reform periods to the Hundred Flowers, from the Anti-Rightist Campaign on, if not earlier, Mao turned on intellectuals. Even if part of a sincere desire to mold a more egalitarian society (a premise we examine below in the context of his education policies), some speculate that his actions against intellectuals were also due perhaps to repressed feelings of jealousy from his humble birth and/or feelings of being slighted by intellectuals from his days as a lowly clerk at Beijing University library. In any event, Mao from 1957 on revived his "strongly held feelings carried over from the past that intellectuals were not to be trusted and could under some circumstances prove to be enormously dangerous."⁷⁵

Perhaps due more immediately to fears of a Hungarian-style uprising, Mao in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 turned on intellectuals with a vengeance, similar to traditional emperors' purges of scholar/officials, especially the violent purges of the founding Ming emperor late in his career. Mao went beyond his personal purge of the intellectual critic Hu Feng in 1955 to a more open and widespread movement in 1957 against anyone who had dared to challenge his authority.⁷⁶ This attitude culminated in the Cultural Revolution, when intellectuals became known as the "stinking Ninth category" of elements opposed to the revolution and when Mao purged his more intellectual rivals in the Party.

It is hard to find honest accounts in Mao's speeches and written works of this change toward harsh treatment of intellectuals. Nevertheless, following Benjamin Schwartz, one can detect in Mao's statements of 1957 a more negative appraisal about intellectuals' inherent "bourgeois" nature and lack of sincere commitment to socialism.⁷⁷ Although the original text of his speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (February 27, 1957) primarily emphasizes the conciliatory and relatively tolerant line of the Hundred Flowers, which drew upon the traditional Yanan emphasis on the desire for unity, tolerance of "non-antagonistic contradictions among the people," and "curing the illness to save the patient," Mao in this speech also noted the beginning of "antagonistic contradictions among the people." These contradictions included the "poisonous weeds" that had cropped up among the Hundred Flowers intellectual critics of 1956.

Perhaps foreshadowing the violent purges that would soon begin, and reflecting earlier harsh treatment from the Yanan rectification movement to the purge of Hu Feng in 1955, in this speech Mao did also suggest a danger from intellectuals:

... the intellectuals and student youth, as well, have made great progress, but [they] also have incorrect thought, evil winds, too; [there] have been some disturbances . . . Among our youth, among the intellectuals, self-remoulding needs to be furthered.⁷⁸

In spite of conciliatory language toward intellectuals, he made clear that he sympathized with Party cadres being criticized by intellectuals and noted:

Sometimes in comparison with those of a low educational level, the intellectuals make the more severe mistakes.⁷⁹

Even while calling for expression of all points of view, as Merle Goldman has pointed out, in this speech Mao also clearly "would not tolerate the articulation of basic disagreement with the policy itself . . . All views were possible, except those who disagreed with Mao's."⁸⁰ Moreover, while opposing "crude methods" of coercion against "bourgeois ideology" and while noting that even people like Hu Feng who was arrested for supposedly running a secret organization would be released some day, Mao sounded an ominous warning: "... Hu Feng's ideas have not perished yet; they still exist in many people's minds."⁸¹ Furthermore, as Goldman notes, in trying to reassure intellectuals that the Hundred Flowers would follow the "moderate" methods of the Yanan Rectification of the 1940s, which supposedly allowed intellectual criticism of bureaucracy, Mao in fact only managed to scare knowledgeable intellectuals who were aware of what really happened at Yanan. That is, they would remember those of their colleagues who were in fact arrested and even executed for their criticisms in 1944.⁸²

Indeed, though continuing some of the official conciliatory rhetoric into the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, including the idea of not depriving bourgeois rightists of their civil rights "unless they act as secret agents or carry on sabotage," in a speech at the height of the movement Mao announced that,

... the contradiction between the people and the bourgeois Rightists, who oppose the Communist Party, the people, and socialism, is one between ourselves and the enemy, that is, an antagonistic, irreconcilable, life-and-death contradiction.⁸³

By retaining for himself in the name of the Party the power to define who the enemies were and what actions constituted "launching wild attacks"

and forming "secret organizations," the following statement of Mao on punishment takes on fearful overtones despite statements elsewhere in the same speech on the need to maintain unity and limit punishment:

Counter-revolutionaries must be eliminated wherever found. Kill few, but on no account repeal the death penalty or grant any special pardon. Arrest and punish those persons who commit fresh crimes after having served prison terms. Punish the gangsters, hooligans, thieves, murderers, rapists, embezzlers, and other felons in our society who undermine public order and grossly violate the law; also punish those whom the public identifies as bad elements. At present, certain functionaries in the judicial and public security departments are neglecting their duties and allowing persons who should be arrested and punished to remain at large; this is wrong. Just as over-punishment is wrong, so is under-punishment, and these days the danger lies in the latter.⁸⁴

In sum, based on his purges of intellectual and civilian officials in 1957 and 1959 as well as in the Cultural Revolution, Mao did not show leniency in practice and in fact demonstrated a strong bias toward anti-intellectualism and harsh punishments.

Mao's purges of military officials

Beginning in 1970, under circumstances that are still unclear, the defense minister Lin Biao himself was either murdered in Beijing or died in a fiery plane crash in Outer Mongolia supposedly after attempting to escape from a foiled coup against Mao. After Lin's fall, the army commanders were reshuffled and purged, more of the Party and state cadres were brought back, and Mao started to rely more heavily around new Party members related to the clique of personal supporters around his wife Jiang Qing.⁸⁵

This clique of people personally dependent on Mao for legitimacy desperately tried to build up its authority in the 1970s, including attempting to augment its strength within the "People's Militia" in the years leading up to Mao's death. In the violent purges related to the fall of Lin Biao, the secret police apparatus led by Kang Sheng until his death in 1975, along with leaders of Mao's personal bodyguard, also gained authority. Mao was firmly in charge of a decimated central Party-state bureaucracy, but was forced to rely on a small network of personal followers to maintain his direct rule.⁸⁶

Such a picture of Mao's autocratic rule does not in itself demonstrate the limits in theory to his supposed anti-bureaucratic if not anti-statist strains of thought. After all, populism and despotism need not be considered polar opposites, just as others have noted the claim of certain leaders in the imperial period to "rule for the people." Nevertheless, to the extent that sympathetic observers in and outside of China, based on Mao's own words,

considered his "populism" to contain at least partially anti-elitist or quasi-democratic elements, we can now see how mistaken this impression was. First in the methods of "rectification" to be used and, second, in the limits even in theory to the autonomy of the state controlled by the "new class," we can complete the picture of the autocratic nature of Mao's political thought, a picture contrary to the views of some of Mao's self-professed followers inside China during the Cultural Revolution.

Mass participation reexamined

First, one must examine the meaning of mass participation in Mao's understanding. Too often in the recent past, and still today, some scholars have admired Mao's "mass line" policies for supposedly attempting to overcome the over-centralization and bureaucratic tendencies of orthodox Marxist-Leninist thought and practice without also fully examining how in that "mass line" approach the wishes of the masses were to be determined and how their participation was to be implemented.⁸⁷

One of the few articles of Western scholarship in the 1970s to deal specifically with this question, even while partially justifying Mao's actions, was that of Phyllis Frakt.⁸⁸ She found that Mao's "mass line," as in Lenin's vanguard theory, assumes that leaders have identical interests with the masses in the long run of history, and thus could carry out "virtual" representation if they developed the proper attitudes in dealing with the people.⁸⁹ Those among "the People" (the particular progressive forces under any one epoch's primary antagonistic contradiction) who had incorrect beliefs and attitudes should be educated through criticism and self-criticism, but if they fell outside that category outright coercion was permissible.⁹⁰ Mao did recognize and accept the necessity of contradictions between leaders and the led before full communism was achieved, but believed such differences could remain non-antagonistic as long as the quality of leadership was preserved.⁹¹ Similarly, Donald Munro made another rare recognition in the 1970s that the "weaknesses" of Maoism even in theory might pose a danger to its otherwise egalitarian "strengths." The Maoist distinction between moral persuasion and (Stalinist) compulsion could break down due to fallacious Maoist assumptions of the identity of long-term private and public interests, the malleability and short-term inferiority of individual interests to those of society and the state, and, most importantly, due to the Maoist belief in the ability of a few leaders to decide "not only what the people's true interests are but also what values they should adopt."⁹² The last weakness in Maoist theory, Munro notes, could especially undermine the egalitarian ideal:

The ability to formulate the constituents of a value consensus and then to serve as supreme teachers gives to those leaders a special social position.

And this special position is inconsistent with the spirit of the very status egalitarianism that the leaders chose to foster.⁹³

Frakt claims that Mao's idea of mass participation followed an essentially Burkean pattern (to Frakt, minus the "natural" governing elite in Burke, though with greater hindsight one could deny even this difference). As with Burke, Mao would allow popular representation only in the perception stage—discovering the needs and grievances of the people—not in the later stages of policy formation, and only partially in the implementation or execution stage. In other words, differing with the liberal conception of public opinion as an essential aid in determining the national interest, Mao shared the "conservative" (following Munro, one could add, Confucian) view of an objective national interest immediately knowable only by properly educated leaders, and knowable by the masses only at a future stage of history.⁹⁴

It is in the preservation of the prerogatives of leaders to know what masses want that Frakt considers the real nature of Mao's "mass line" (though she recognizes the possibility that a "ritualization" of the rectification process might eventually occur).⁹⁵ First, in rectification campaigns and movements, erring leaders would have their attitudes corrected by mass criticism, self-criticism, and being sent down to participate in rural and urban labor. Second, though quality of leadership is determined mostly by purifying attitudes, not change in government form, nevertheless, through the Revolutionary Committees at the workplace level, individual workers could aid in the purification process (though Frakt recognizes that in practice party members often dominated the proceedings).⁹⁶

Similarly to Frakt's comparison of Mao and Burke on leadership by "virtual representation," Germaine Hoston, writing after a fuller knowledge of the horrors of the Cultural Revolution could be attained, compares Mao's concept of mass democracy to that of Rousseau:

... Like Rousseau's *Social Contract* [the mass line] has both democratic and nondemocratic elements. On the one hand, the mass line conception prescribed a revolutionary process relying on a certain faith in the simple wisdom of the common person engaged in the concrete practice of production and revolution, in opposition to the abstract theory of intellectual knowledge... At the same time, Mao's concept of leadership was highly elitist in its own way. The ideas of the masses were inherently "scattered" and "unsystematic," just as the citizens in Rousseau's polity could discern only partial interests and articulate "particular wills." Ordinary women and men required the leadership of a party of persons with true revolutionary consciousness that could discern the true interests of all Chinese, or at least, of Chinese with a proper class perspective.

Hoston further notes that since Maoists believed even the Party itself could become corrupted,

... the ultimate implication... was that the party required a visionary leader specially gifted to discern the Way. In arguing thus, Mao... was not prepared to relinquish for himself the traditional mantle of leadership worn by China's emperors even while he himself was suspicious of and threatened by his Soviet-educated rivals as he sought to consolidate his leadership of the party.⁹⁷

Thus, despite her belief in the "anarchist" side of Mao, through her insightful comparison of Mao's thought to that of Rousseau, Hoston leads herself to a contradictory conclusion:

... given the corruptive nature of political power and the need for the "particular wills" (to use Rousseau's term) of the people to be "reinterpreted" so that they accorded with what was best for all China, who was to determine when a new rectification campaign was necessary? Mao's solution seemed to require a sort of equivalent to Rousseau's [Great] legislator, yet more powerful, someone who was superhuman, whose wisdom transcended the normal bounds of class-based perspectives...⁹⁸

That Mao acted like a traditional emperor and allowed himself to be set up as a "superman" would lead some leaders of the Democracy Wall Movement in China to deny that Mao had any mass democratic tendencies at all, and indeed that in the end he was not a quasi-anarchist but a "feudal-fascist" dictator.⁹⁹

Even without the advantage either of the hindsight of later Western scholars or of having actually lived through the Cultural Revolution, which would have helped them realize more fully the real tendencies in practice toward "ritualization" and Party dominance of mass participation, Frakt's and Munro's earlier analyses show clearly the theoretical limits to Mao's mass line and what others would see as his anti-democratic tendencies. Participants were not to be involved in determining the national interest itself, for example, through genuine elections with real popular nomination procedures; rather, the vanguard essentially cooped peasant, worker, and student figures and anointed them as leaders of officially recognized groups.¹⁰⁰ The definition of "the People" still lay within the control of the vanguard—those with sufficient proletarian consciousness—and thus the whole range of popular attitudes that would be allowed expression in individual and mass form lay within the discretion of the Party (i.e. in the Cultural Revolution, Mao and his cronies).¹⁰¹

Certainly no body of law or other set of institutional checks was to be set up over the vanguard. In other words, to use Edward Friedman's phrase

in a slightly different context, Mao's theory could be likened to favoring an "internal policing" of leaders instead of a "civilian review process using outsiders."¹⁰² Likewise, as Hoston notes, "in the absence of such institutions, authority is most easily exercised by none or by the arbitrary will of one, acting in the name of the state." As she elaborates further,

... In Mao as in Rousseau the priority of substantive virtue over institutional and procedural arrangements attached little importance to particular interests and the right of individuals to express and act on them politically. Unless a democratic culture could be created that would prize rights as much as obligations, the tension between the option for chaos versus the perils of institutionalized power, on the one hand, and the need for a strong and visionary leader, on the other, could well resolve itself (and would) in a larger measure of stateness and statism than China enjoyed in the prerevolutionary era.¹⁰³

In other words, Mao's entire Party rectification process depended for its continuation on calls for mass participation from the Maoist vanguard itself (or from one person above the vanguard). Or, as Stuart Schram puts it, "although the people were consulted, the ultimate aim was to make them believe they wanted what the leader and the Party has decided was best for them."¹⁰⁴ Thus, given these limits, in the end Mao's mass line meant greater and not lesser autocracy, and more despotism and not more democracy.¹⁰⁵

It is easy to see how these limits in theory could be directly related to the horrors in practice of the Cultural Revolution, with or without the subjective desire of Mao himself. Criticism and self-criticism within the bounds of correct theory was ultimately controlled by ideological authorities themselves, leading exactly to the "ritualization," if to an even greater extent, that Frakt feared. Learning correct ideas became rote memorization and shouting of slogans in mass unison. Individuals could be categorized virtually at will as "class enemies" outside the safe category of "non-antagonistic differences among the people," according to who was in power among the vanguard. Making more explicit Hoston's recognition of the "statism" of the late Mao era, most genuine mass participation was quickly silenced by verbal and physical acts of denunciation on the part of secret police and loyal Maoists in authority. More properly speaking, permissible mass participation was often limited to participation in terror, while real participants who tried to expose the despotism of the times were subject to repression and death. As Walder notes, the "radical" Maoism of the Cultural Revolution was not just violent and murderous in practice, but in its essence:

... If we place this radicalism in its proper perspective, we see it as a form of reactive extremism whose defining premises were descended directly

from the rationale for Stalin's mass murders . . . what actually happened in China during the Cultural Revolution—the inquisitions, witch hunts, cruel and vindictive persecution of individuals, unprincipled and often incoherent factionalism—were inherent in the doctrine and mentality that inspired it.¹⁰⁶

Maoist "Egalitarianism" in education policies

But even if the political theory and methods of Maoism were in the end highly undemocratic, were not its goals at least highly egalitarian and populist? For example, what of Maoist attempts from the 1950s on to expand worker and peasant education? This would include most famously the part-work, part-study schools and the recommendation system added to the supposedly elitist examination system in order to insure that "good class elements" could gain entrance into universities.¹⁰⁷ One would first have to point out more recent studies that demonstrate that China by the end of the Maoist era in fact did far worse on reducing the gap in literacy between urban and rural areas (and between men and women) than did other less developed countries.¹⁰⁸ Second, regarding the expansion of the education system to include more individuals from worker and peasant backgrounds, one would have to point out the severe low quality of the education received during the Maoist era and, more importantly, the tendency to give good class labels not based on economic background but by a combination of birth and political attitude, defined at the height of Maoist periods as loyalty to Mao's thought as assessed by Maoist leaders. Furthermore, as in ancient China in periods when the recommendation system flourished over the examination system as a method of recruitment into the imperial bureaucracy, this often permitted the *restriction* of social mobility rather than its expansion since the top state leaders who controlled the definition of moral criteria could also use the system to keep out potential rivals.

At the height of the Cultural Revolution of course, not just quality, but even educational quantity was affected as schools were closed down to allow youth to "bombard the headquarters" and "share revolutionary experiences." One could make the harsh assessment that faced with the choice of an educated peasantry and proletariat who might drift away from his policies or uneducated masses who would blindly follow the supreme leader, Mao, in the end, contradicted his claim to reverse the imperial policy and instead followed exactly what he had condemned:

It is to the advantage of despots to keep people ignorant; it is to our advantage to make them intelligent.¹⁰⁹

Although rural areas are still unable to fully join the rush toward economic development, one has to conclude that, as their material standards have also improved dramatically from the Mao era, despite Mao's pro-peasant rhetoric, so too rural peasants and urban workers have fared much better in terms of access to education in the reform era despite the growing inequalities and other severe problems. Ignorance in China, by both statistical measures and personal accounts of survivors of the Cultural Revolution, is much reduced from Mao's time, if still a great aid to a continuation of despotic rule.

While many who had previously admired the "anarchist" aspects to Mao's thought and/or the "democratic" component of the mass line have come to agree with much of the case for Mao as autocrat, other observers want to maintain a belief in the anti-elitist side of Mao. Such people would say one simple question remains: why would Mao attack his enemies in the Party-state apparatus in a simple drive for power when he could have had all the power and influence he wanted simply by going along with the policies of his rivals?¹¹⁰ Given other ruling elites' need to rely on him for legitimacy, they would have been more than willing to preserve his prestige, as evidenced by the willingness in the early 1960s of most of the Party elite to keep Mao's personal critics in jail or in internal exile when they otherwise forced him to retreat on the Great Leap Forward policies. Even given Mao's lack of expertise in fields such as economics that would have been given more emphasis in a regime following a development-oriented policy line, he still could have retained much influence and power. This can be demonstrated by the brief 1956 consensus in which Mao kept personal power while going along with the Chen Yun-Deng Xiaoping limited market reforms, and also by Deng Xiaoping's continued powerful influence within the Party even as he admitted his lack of economic expertise during the era of economic reform. Clearly one has to give Mao credit for following his subjective ideological desires to an extreme limit in practice, since he could have kept his position of authority in the Party by a total shift toward a reform coalition. Once this new coalition had allowed enough improved economic well-being in society at large, Mao would also have added to his popular base of legitimacy. But such a stance would have forced him to rely more on intervening bureaucratic elites and lessened direct social control of the population at large, weakening his actual authority that would open up room for future challenges and limits. Certainly if he had accepted a more indirect leadership role mediated by the bureaucracy, Mao Zedong felt that he would then not be able to play the role of activist leader or "moral entrepreneur," a role forged in his early career as a rebel leader. Whatever his intentions, one has to admit the extremely irrational and destructive ends to which Mao's actions directly led from 1955 to 1976, ends that were far from anarchistic but instead only served to build up China's modern autocratic system.

Notes

- 1 For example, see Kalpana Misra, *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism: The Erosion of Official Ideology in Deng's China*, *passim*.
- 2 For the most prominent and recent versions of this view, see Harrison E. Salisbury, *The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng*, and most spectacularly, Mao's personal physician, Li Zhisui, in his *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*. Another scholar who combines a view of Mao as similar to imperial rulers with the view of him as a genuine social revolutionary is Stuart Schram, who uses the metaphor of "modernizing despot." See Schram, "Mao Zedong a Hundred Years on: The Legacy of a Ruler," 125-43. Finally, see Andrew and Rapp, *Autocracy and China's Rebel Founding Emperors*, *passim*, which compares Mao with Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming dynasty.
- 3 Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works of Chairman Mao* I: 21-59, especially 45-9.
- 4 Mao, "On the Ten Great Relationships" (April 25, 1956), Translated in Stuart Schram, *Chairman Mao Talks to the People: Talks and Letters 1956-1971*, 61-83.
- 5 Mao, "Comment at the Working Conference of the Central Committee at Beidaihe" (August 6, 1962), 28, and "Speech at the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP" (September 24, 1962), in Mao, *Mao Zedong sixiang wunsui!* (Long Live the Thought of Chairman Mao!), (1969): 430-6, translated in *Chinese Law and Government*, 1(4) (Winter 1968-9): 85-93.
- 6 Mao, "Some Problems Currently Arising in the Course of the Rural Socialist Education Movement" ("The Twenty-three Articles"), translated in Richard Baum and Frederick Teiwes, *Ssu-ch'ing: The Socialist Education Movement 1962-66*, 118-26.
- 7 Mao, "Chairman Mao Discusses Twenty Manifestations of Bureaucracy," 40-3, cited in Richard Kraus, *Classes and Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism*, 74; also translated in Andrew and Rapp, 231-4.
- 8 Mao, "Draft Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on Some Problems in the Current Rural Work" ("The First Ten Points") (May 20, 1963), in Mao, *Mao Zedong zhuzuo wandu* (Selected Readings from the Writings of Mao Zedong), translated in Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-ch'ing*, 65.
- 9 Mao, "Comment on Criticism and Self-criticism," *People's Daily* (December 22, 1967), cited in Jerome Chen, *Mao Papers*, 150.
- 10 Mao, "Draft Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP," translated in Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-ch'ing*, 65.
- 11 Mao, "Constitution of the Anshan Iron and Steel Company" (January 22, 1960), reprinted in *Beijing Review*, 13(16) (April 17, 1960): 3.
- 12 As noted, for example, by John Bryan Starr, *Continuing the Revolution: The Political Thought of Mao*, 161-2; and Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy*, xii.
- 13 For example, see Mao, "Letter to Jiang Qing," partially translated in *China News Analysis* (Hong Kong): 907 (1966): 7.
- 14 In his famous Yenan interview of 1935, Mao admitted to Edgar Snow that he had read many anarchist pamphlets in late 1918 and "favored many of its [anarchism's] proposals." See Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 152. Other sources claim that Mao was in fact an anarchist or worked in anarchist organizations in late 1919 and early 1920 when he even considered founding an anarchist society and called himself an anarchist to his friends. See Robert Payne, *Mao Tse-tung, Ruler of Red China*, 55 and Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait*, 14-16. Jerome Chen, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, 53, states that at this time Mao read books by Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy, while by Angus McDonald's count nearly half the books in Mao's Changsha bookstore were anarchist tracts. See McDonald, *The Urban Origins of the Rural Revolution: Elites and Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1911-1927*, 129.
- 15 Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, 30-2, 148-96, 294-304. In his discussion of the relation of anarchism and Maoism in this work, perhaps influenced by anarchism, Dirlik emphasizes more the authoritarian reality of Maoism as opposed to its anti-statist rhetoric (e.g. 299-300) than he does in his other works on Chinese Marxism, which to this author tend to overrate Mao's supposed egalitarianism and underplay the despotic aspects of his rule. Also see n. 66. Likewise, Maurice Meisner in his later works, including *Mao Zedong*, though still praising Mao for laying the groundwork for later socioeconomic progress, does conclude that beginning with the Great Leap Forward, Mao's later years amounted to political tyranny. See Meisner, *Mao Zedong*, Epilogue, 193-7. For this author's critiques of Dirlik and Meisner for downplaying Mao's tyranny in their earlier studies, including Dirlik and Maurice Meisner (eds), *Marxism and the Chinese Experience*, see Rapp, Review of four books on Chinese Marxism, *Theory and Society*, 21(4) (August 1992): 599-609 and Rapp, Review of Cheng (ed.), *Marxism and Capitalism in the People's Republic of China*, 821-2.
- 16 Zarrow, 232-7.
- 17 McDonald, 134-5.
- 18 Mao, "The Great Union of the Popular Masses" (1919) in Mao, *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949 I: The Pre-Marxist Period, 1912-1920*, 378-89.
- 19 Schram, in his *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, 20-1, notes that the original edition of Li Rui's biography of Mao, *Mao Zedong tongzhi di chu qi geming huodong* (Comrade Mao Zedong's Early Revolutionary Activities), edited out the striking paragraph of Mao's 1919 article cited in the previous note, which praised Kropotkin's ideal of mutual aid (*huizhu*) as more progressive than Marx's doctrines of violent revolution. Also see Brantly Womack, *The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought 1917-1935*, 17-21, and McDonald, 104-5.
- 20 Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, 296.
- 21 Hoston, *The State, Identity, and the National Question in China and Japan*, 363, 364. As we will see below, Hoston recognizes not just the supposedly anti-statist side of Mao but also the flaws in his anarchist tendencies. As she puts it, "... Mao's solution to the problem of limiting party and state power was at once anarchistic and potentially authoritarian" (395). Even this recognition overstates Mao's anarchism, as we will argue below, and underestimates the degree to which Mao's authoritarian side was dominant.

- 22 Zarrow, 234-7; Womack, 27, 211, n. 81.
- 23 Bakunin, quoted in Dolgoff, 325-38.
- 24 Hsu K'o-ch'eng (Xu Kocheng), "On Authority"—A Classical Document Criticizing Anarchism, *Tianjin Shiyuan Xuebao* (Tianjin Normal College Journal) 2, translated in American Consulate General, Hong Kong, *Selections from People's Republic of China Magazines*, 77(926) (May 23, 1977): 6. As we will see in the next chapter, the best study of PRC denunciations of anarchism up to the late 1970s is that of William Joseph, *The Critique of Ultra-Leftism in China*. See especially pages 128-44, 159-61, and 189-90 for his summary of attacks on anarchism in China during the later phases of the Cultural Revolution, especially in 1971-2 and 1976.
- 25 For the clearest statement of Mao's supposed "new class" argument, see Maurice Meisner, "Marx, Mao, and Deng on the Division of Labor in History," in Dirlík and Meisner (eds), *Marxism and the Chinese Experience*, 79-116, especially 101-2. In his later work, Mao Zedong, Meisner does moderate his earlier argument, recognizing that Mao "conflated the terms 'bureaucratic class' and 'bourgeoisie'" (173), and, "as the Cultural Revolution approached . . . realizing the political implications of the notion, drew back from publicly characterizing China's bureaucrats as a new class" (174).
- 26 Mao, "Reading Notes on the Soviet Text, *Political Economy*," original text 1961-2, reprinted in Mao, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui*, translated in Moss Roberts (trans.), *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, 63, 71.
- 27 See Andrew and Rapp, Part I, *passim*.
- 28 For examples of other scholars who make this crucial point, see Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy*, 73-4; Jonathan Unger, "Whither China?: Yang Xigang, Red Capitalists, and the Social Turmoil of the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China*, 17(1) (January 1991): 25; Andrew Walder, "Cultural Revolution Radicalism: Variations on a Stalinist Theme," Chapter 3 of William A. Joseph, Christine Wong, and David Zweig (eds), *New Perspectives on the Cultural Revolution*, 52, 54; Svetozar Stojanovic, "Marxism and Democracy: The Ruling Class or the Dominant Class?" *Praxis International*, 1(2) (July 1981), 160-70; and Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, 182-4.
- 29 See Stephen Andors, "Mao and Marx: A Comment," in "Symposium on Mao and Marxism," *Modern China*, 3(4) (1977): 432-3; Joseph Escherick, "On the 'Restoration of Capitalism': Mao and Marxist Theory," in "Symposium on Mao and Marxism," 64-5; and Young "Mao Zedong and the Class Struggle in Socialist Society," 56-61; 77, n. 120 and 121.
- 30 *People's Daily* (26 September, 1963), reprinted in *Peking Review*, 6(39) (September 26, 1963): 14-27; also translated in *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement*, and in Mao (uncertain authorship), *The Great Debate*, 110-44.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 124-5.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 128-9.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 135-8.
- 34 July 14, 1964, translated in Mao (uncertain authorship), *The Great Debate*, 323-74.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 339.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 341.

- 37 Kraus, 17.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 76.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 76, 208, nn. 40, 41, citing Mao as quoted by Hung, "Inner-Party Struggle and Party Development," 11.
- 40 Kraus, 149.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 147-9, 153-6, 160.
- 43 Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, 183, n. 245.
- 44 Meisner, "The Ritualization of Utopia: Chinese Marxism in the Post-Mao Era," in Dirlík and Meisner (eds), 231.
- 45 Ma Yanwen (pseudonym), "The Bureaucratic Class and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," 259-74.
- 46 Ma Yanwen, cited in Friedman, "The Social Obstacle to China's Socialist Transition," in Victor Nee and David Mozingo (eds), *State and Society in Contemporary China*, 159; see also Andrew and Rapp, 2000, 259-74.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 169, citing Milovan Djilas, *The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class*, 191-2.
- 48 Indeed, in light of the headline reaction to the Tiananmen democracy movement from 1989 to the early 1990s, and perhaps revived in 1999 after the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Serbia, the Maoist opposition to Khrushchev's idea of a "peaceful transition" to socialism expressed in "Is Yugoslavia a Socialist Country" and other 1960s editorials can now be seen to justify increased state repression, not anti-elitism. That is true to the extent that opposition to a "peaceful transition" was the inspiration for opposition to "peaceful evolution" to capitalism, a code phrase revived by hardliners in China from 1989 to the early 1990s, perhaps revived recently, in an attempt both to discredit the young democracy activists as tools of Western imperialism and to return China to its Stalinist "golden age" of the early 1960s. For the earlier invective against the "peaceful transition," see *People's Daily*, 1964, translated in Mao (authorship uncertain), 1986, 282-322. Also see Editorial Departments of *People's Daily* and *Red Flag*, 1964, 323 and *passim*.
- 49 Ross Terrill, *The White-Boned Demon: A Biography of Madame Mao Zedong*, especially 213-329 for her contradictory actions during the Cultural Revolution.
- 50 A point that even Kraus recognized when he concluded that "not only were Maoists concerned with mobilizing maximum support for dislodging their conservative opponents from power, but they were also eager to wield their own power effectively. The castigating of all high-level bureaucrats as an enemy class would embrace Maoists as well, a possibility which the Chairman found unacceptable . . ." which led him to make the statement cited above opposing "extreme anarchism." See Kraus, 150. Of course Kraus still believed that Maoists wanted to dislodge their opponents for the noble reason of saving socialism. Why Kraus and others should be so charitable to that faction of state leaders while conceding so little to factions who would increase individual economic (and for a purged minority within the reform faction) even political autonomy, blaming the latter for "deradicalizing" the revolution, is a question perhaps resolved only by facing up to ideological bias

of the analysts in question, even if it is a more noble and less selfish bias than that of their ideological opponents. This is especially a question for analysts such as Kalpana Misra who argued for the "deradicalizing" thesis long after the horrors of the Cultural Revolution were well-known in her *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism: The Erosion of Official Ideology in Deng's China, passim*.

51 Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, 54; Bauer, 408–10; Hoston, 387.

52 Chen, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, 43; Li Rui, 52; Xiao San, *Mao Zedong tongzhi de qing shao nian shidai* (Comrade Mao's Boyhood and Youth), 79–80; and Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, 16.

53 Womack, 6, 10–13; Schram, 16.

54 Chen, "Xuwu de geren zhuyi ji ren ziran zhuyi" (Nihilistic Individualism and Nature-worship), 107–9, cited in Zarrow, 226–7; also see Hoston, 201–2.

55 Schram, "From the Great Union of the Popular Masses to the 'Great Alliance,'" *China Quarterly*, 49 (January 1972): 95–6.

56 Mao, *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912–1949* II: 7–11; 35–6; also see Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, 296–8.

57 For example, see Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao*, 104; "From the Great Union of the Popular Masses to the 'Great Alliance,'" 95–6; Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism, & Utopianism: Eight Essays*, 76–117; and Zarrow, 235–6.

58 The same terms often used by Soviet authors to denounce Mao and the "military-bureaucratic dictatorship" of the Cultural Revolution. See for example, Vladimirov and Ryazantsev, *Mao Tse-tung: A Political Portrait*, 22–40 and *passim*.

59 See for example, John Byron and Robert Pack, *The Claus of the Dragon: Kang Sheng, the Evil Genius Behind Mao—and His Legacy of Terror in People's China*.

60 As quoted in Ch'en, *Mao Papers*, 152; also see Hoston, 395; Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *History and Will: Philosophical Perspectives of Mao Tse-tung's Thought*, 313–4; Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao*, 173; Zarrow, 236.

61 Even analysts such as Graham Young who would like to see democratic possibilities in Mao's thought recognize Mao's opposition to elections and thus his ultimate failure to "provide a viable substitute for the organizational role formerly provided by the Party." Young also recognizes that Mao ultimately rejected his radical followers who called for "extensive democracy," and in the end allowed his allies in the Party to call instead for relying on Mao Thought as the "sole locus of authority." See Young, "Mao Zedong and the Class Struggle in Socialist Society," 68. Nevertheless, Young, 60, does find that a critique of a new bureaucratic class within the Party was at least partially contained in Mao's thought, a contention this author will continue to dispute below.

62 Walder, "Cultural Revolution Radicalism: Variations on a Stalinist Theme," 61.

63 See Unger, "Whither China?: Yang Xiguang, Red Capitalists, and the Social Turmoil of The Cultural Revolution," for an updated study of the most famous dissident Cultural Revolution group who took Mao's anti-elitist rhetoric seriously and developed a more consistent new class line than Mao.

We will examine official PRC denunciations of this group in Chapter 7 and the thought of this group itself in Chapter 8.

64 Walder, 59.

65 Selden, "Cooperation and Conflict: Cooperative and Collective Formation in China's Countryside," *passim*.

66 Dirlik, in *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, 299 also seems to have come to the conclusion that the agricultural and other communes in Mao's China were not part of a quasi-anarchist, mass democratic experiment. Instead they served as "a means to social control, faster economic development, and the efficient exploitation of labor." Dirlik includes in this assessment not just the People's Communes of the Great Leap Forward but the early Paris Commune models of the Cultural Revolution as well. The latter especially, "under the guise of popular revolutionary control, perpetuated and enhanced the political penetration of society." Nevertheless, Dirlik still seems to be enamored of Mao's supposed egalitarian intent, as in his recent praise of Nick Knight's book *Rethinking Mao* for its overall highly positive assessment of "the historical and theoretical significance of Mao's thought" versus "anti-socialist" critics and for giving "a reevaluation of Mao's policies" that might provide "inspiration in confronting the problems created by three decades of reform that turned its back on his revolutionary legacy," thus returning to the downplaying of Mao's despotic legacy and forgetting the key anarchist denial that one has to choose between revolution, freedom, and equality. See Knight, *Rethinking Mao*, back cover. For a much harsher assessment of Knight as downplaying or minimizing Mao's autocratic and brutal rule, see Rapp, review of Nick Knight, 392–6.

67 The "Placard of People's Instructions" is found in Zhang Lu (compiler), *Huang Ming zhishi* (Regulations on the imperial Ming) (1579), 1579, 1607–2205, 1896–7. For a more extensive comparison of Zhu Yuanzhang and Mao that elaborates on this point and others noted below and which includes translations of PRC articles on the Ming founder in the 1980s and 1990s that can be viewed as allegorical criticisms of the Chairman, see Andrew and Rapp, *Autocracy and China's Rebel Founding Emperors*.

68 Schurmann, 404–500. For the public works origins of the Great Leap Forward, see especially Schurmann, Chapter VII, "Villages," 479–80; for comparisons to the *lijia*, *baojia*, and *tuntian* see especially 409–12 and 494–5, and the Supplement, Chapter II: "Organization", 532–75, 559. The great student of the Great Leap Forward, Roderick MacFarquhar, has also compared aspects of the movement to corvée labor projects in imperial China. See MacFarquhar, "The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao," 15. Franz Schurmann concluded that the phases of rural cooperativization, collectivization, and communization beyond the original "land to the tiller" land reform amounted ultimately to a failed social revolution, a judgment with which this author disagrees; instead with many contemporary scholars, this author considers the social revolution to have ended with land reform.

69 Andrew and Rapp, 65–8.

70 See Friedman et al. (eds), *Chinese Village, Socialist State, passim*.

- 71 Thomas P. Bernstein, "The Limits of Rural Political Reform," in Victor Falkenheim (ed.), *Chinese Politics from Mao to Deng*, 303.
- 72 For the most famous account of the Great Leap and its purges, see Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Great Leap Forward 1958-1960*.
- 73 Friedman, "Maoism, Titoism, Stalinism: Some Origins and Consequences of the Maoist Theory of the Socialist Transition," in Selden and Lippitt (eds), *The Transition to Socialism in China*, 159-214; Schram, "Foundations and Significance of Mao Zedong's Personal Power," in Schram (ed.), *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China*, 211-24.
- 74 Of the many books on the Cultural Revolution, two stand out for their details on the "politics of the court" and purges of high officials. See Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, and Frederick Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics during the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972-1976*.
- 75 Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Thoughts on the Late Mao—Between Total Redemption and Utter Frustration," in MacFarquhar et al. (eds), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 27.
- 76 See MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution: The Great Leap Forward 1958-1960*.
- 77 Ibid., 28-9.
- 78 Mao, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People (Speaking Notes)" (27 February 1957), in MacFarquhar et al. (eds), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 156.
- 79 Ibid., 177.
- 80 Goldman, "Mao's Obsession with The Political Role of Literature and the Intellectuals," in MacFarquhar et al. (eds), 53.
- 81 Mao, "Talk at a Conference of Party Member Cadres in Tianjin Municipality" (17 March 1957), in MacFarquhar et al. (eds), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 289.
- 82 Goldman, 53-4.
- 83 Mao, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" (Speaking Notes), 473.
- 84 Mao, "The Situation in the Summer of 1957" (July 1957), in Mao, *Selected Works*, V, 476.
- 85 See MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 324-36.
- 86 See Teiwes and Sun, 25-109.
- 87 Starr, 206-13, 220-2, 304-5, recognizes that "limitations" and "narrowness" in Mao's view of mass participation exist, but otherwise idealizes Mao's real desire to fight "misguided authority" and to implement the mass line, much as other scholars did in the pre-Deng era.
- 88 Frakt, "Mao's Concept of Representation," *American Journal of Political Science*, 23 (November 1979), 684-704.
- 89 Ibid., 690-3.
- 90 Ibid., 693-4.
- 91 Ibid., 697-8.
- 92 Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China*, 181-4.
- 93 Ibid., 183-4.

- 94 Frakt, 698-9.
- 95 Ibid., 693, 699.
- 96 Ibid., 693-4.
- 97 Hoston, 392.
- 98 Ibid., 394.
- 99 For example, see Wang Xizhe, "Mao Zedong yu wenhua dageming," *passim*, abridged selections in Andrew and Rapp, 275-95.
- 100 Brantly Womack, "Where Mao Went Wrong: Epistemology and Ideology in Mao's Leftist Politics," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 16 (July 1986), 30, notes the "lack of any institutional guarantees of mass voice or citizen rights" in Mao's "mass line" going back to the Yanan base area period, and also notes that Mao's late view of the masses as "malleable" tended to "denigrate mass creativity."
- 101 That the Party ultimately maintained control of the definition of the People is an obvious but important point made by many scholars. For example, see MacFarquhar, "The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao," 7. The Party's elitist definition of the people was also partially recognized by Starr, 220. Also see Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy*, xii. As Maurice Meisner suggests, there is furthermore an ambiguity in Maoist thought as to where the vanguard resides, at least in the Cultural Revolution when the Party was under attack. See Meisner, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Chinese Marxist Thought," in Nee and Mozingo (eds), *State and Society in Contemporary China*, 123-31.
- 102 Friedman, "The Societal Obstacle to China's Socialist Transition," 166.
- 103 Frakt, 401.
- 104 Schram, "Mao Zedong a Hundred Years On," 129.
- 105 Schram, *The Thought of Mao, passim*, especially 97-109, essentially makes the same argument, that is, that Mao's "mass line" and calls for decentralization and democracy were in the end limited by other aspects of his thought, including the "primacy of centralism over democracy," the stress on dictatorship and slighting of direct elections, the emphasis on control and channeling of participation in proper directions by the Party, and above all by Mao's "attachment to the ideal of a 'strong socialist state'" which included a high degree of autocracy. In his later essay, Schram extends this argument, stating that "Mao's ideal was *yiyuanhua*, or monolithic unity," which though ostensibly based on the mass line, "did not mean, and was never intended to mean, simply doing what the masses wanted." See Schram, "Mao Zedong a Hundred Years On," 129.
- 106 Walder, "Cultural Revolution Radicalism," 61.
- 107 See Munro, "Egalitarian Ideal and Educational Fact in Communist China," in John M. H. Lindbeck (ed.), *China: Management of a Revolutionary Society*, 279-83, 293-4; and Munro, *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China*, 107-34.
- 108 See for example the section on literacy rates in China in Nick Eberstadt, *The Poverty of Communism*, 155-65.
- 109 Mao, *Hong Qi* (Red Flag), 2 (1966), 18, quoted in Ch'en, *Mao Papers*, 103; cited in Munro, *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China*, 104.

- 110 This question has been asked in different ways, for example, by "Comrade Jin Jun" to his fellow Democracy Wall activist Wang Xizhe, which as we will see in Chapter 8, prompted Wang to write his long essay "Mao Zedong yu wenhua dageming" (Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution) (February 1981), translated in Anita Chan et al. (eds), *On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System: The Li Yizhe Debates*, 177-260, 285-97; reprinted in abridged form in Andrew and Rapp, *Autocracy and China's Rebel Founding Emperors*, 275-95. This question was also posed by Maurice Meisner in a lecture on the Chinese Revolution at McAlester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, March 1985, and in his subsequent writings.

7

Denunciations of anarchism in the PRC

Introduction

This chapter continues to examine the limits to genuine critiques of state autonomy in the PRC by analyzing denunciations of anarchism published in the official Chinese press from the early years of the regime to the contemporary era, utilizing a three line model of Leninist regimes, especially as presented by Edward Friedman. It should be noted at the outset that the PRC denunciations of anarchism are not in themselves very interesting and mostly blindly follow the critique of Marx and Engels of Proudhon and Stirner as representing the interests of the petite bourgeoisie, or small producers, mixed in with Lenin's denunciations of anarchism as an "infantile disorder" of "ultraleftism," as typified by Mikhail Bakunin, whom Lenin claimed was an opportunist perhaps only posing as a revolutionary.¹ Such denunciations almost always ignored, as did most Soviet critics, the claims of people like Bakunin to be socialist anarchists, and the claims of most anarchists after that date, most notably Peter Kropotkin, to be anarcho-communists equally interested as Marxist-Leninists, if not more so, in ending private property. It should also be noted that almost none of the people being denounced were really anarchists and that in numerous cases people condemning others as anarchists were themselves later denounced for the same reason.

However unoriginal and inaccurate these denunciations of anarchism were in practice, they are nevertheless worth examining for the confirmation they provide, both about the lack of any true quasi-democratic elements in Maoist thought or practice and the essential truth behind the charge of Party democrats that despite the major policy shifts and huge changes in society over time from the Mao to Deng and post-Deng eras, there is an essential continuity in the nature of China's Leninist Party-state. This