

JOEL ANDREAS

Rise of the Red Engineers
*The Cultural Revolution and the
Origins of China's New Class*

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Preface

When I first visited Tsinghua University in Beijing in 1997, my aim was to learn about the battles that took place there three decades earlier during the Cultural Revolution. I had heard about the “hundred day war” between student factions at Tsinghua and knew that one side was led by Kuai Dafu, a student whose name had become synonymous with the rebellious spirit of the period. My curiosity about the Cultural Revolution was inspired by a larger interest in the transformation of China’s class structure since the 1949 Revolution, but it only gradually occurred to me, as I interviewed Tsinghua employees and alumni, that in addition to being an important site of Cultural Revolution battles, the university had for decades been at the epicenter of conflicts surrounding the emergence of a new class of technocratic officials.

Before the Cultural Revolution, Tsinghua—as China’s leading school of engineering and technology—had been charged with training “Red engineers.” Technocratic visions flourished at the university and students believed they would lead the country’s transformation into an industrialized socialist republic. These visions were always controversial. They were at odds with the Chinese Communist Party’s programmatic commitment to eliminate class distinctions, including those based on the differences between mental and manual labor, and they were foreign to most of the party’s cadres, who were peasant revolutionaries who celebrated traditions born of rural warfare and harbored a deep distrust of the educated elite. Simmering tensions came to a head during the Cultural Revolution. Tsinghua became a prominent target and after factional fighting was suppressed, Mao Zedong dispatched a team of workers and soldiers to the university and charged them with eliminating elitist educational practices and preventing the school from becoming an incubator of a “bureaucratic class.” For nearly a decade, the campus served as a celebrated site for

Introduction

China today is ruled by Red engineers. This term, which dates from the 1950s when China was embarking on Communist-style industrialization, was condemned during the Cultural Revolution and has not been revived since. In the 1980s, however, the Red engineers who received academic and political training at elite technical universities in the 1950s and early 1960s began moving into positions of power. They systematically replaced the first generation of Communist cadres, initially at the lower and middle levels, and then during the 1990s at the very highest levels of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Today, eight out of nine members of the Standing Committee of the party's Political Bureau were trained as engineers.

China's Red engineers, not by coincidence, resemble the officials who staffed the upper levels of the state machinery in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe prior to 1989. The Soviet Union provided a model for China and other countries where Communist parties came to power, and for decades it was led by men who had degrees in engineering or agronomy, including Leonid Brezhnev, Alexei Kosygin, Andrei Gromyko, Yuri Andropov, and Mikhail Gorbachev. Red engineers in the Soviet Union, China, and elsewhere ruled socialist societies that in many ways resembled the technocratic vision of Henri Saint-Simon. In the early nineteenth century, Saint-Simon's followers had envisioned an industrial order that would transcend the avarice of capitalism by converting the means of production into public property and

conducting economic planning based on scientific principles. Although they saw inheritance and private property as unjust and inimical to progress, theirs was a supremely elitist vision, in which a talented and enlightened group of industrial leaders, scientists, and engineers would govern society.¹

Of course, the Chinese Communist Party, like the Russian Bolsheviks, had originally championed a Marxist rather than a Saint-Simonian vision of socialism. Marx adopted the basic premises of Saint-Simonian socialism, but rejected its hierarchical character. While Saint-Simon endeavored to establish a society ruled by the talented, Marx sought to eliminate all class distinctions, including the distinction between mental and manual labor, and while Saint-Simon set out to organize a movement of the educated elite and recruited an enthusiastic following among graduates of Paris's prestigious *École Polytechnique*, Marx called on the proletariat to serve as the revolutionary vanguard because, he reasoned, they had little to lose by doing away with the existing class hierarchy.² It was Marx's ideas, with their egalitarian thrust, rather than those of Saint-Simon, which eventually galvanized the momentous socialist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, the Communist parties that took power in Russia, China, and other countries espoused a particularly radical interpretation of Marx's ideas that committed them to mobilizing the most downtrodden classes, seizing state power by force, crushing the resistance of the old elites, and ruthlessly eliminating all class distinctions. After they came to power, these parties did, indeed, radically change the class order, but in the end they did not do away with class distinctions. The class hierarchy based on private property was destroyed, but a new hierarchy based on political and cultural power emerged, with a class of party technocrats on top.

In this book, I seek to explain how and why the Chinese Communists ultimately replaced Marx's vision of a classless society with one worthy of Saint-Simon. One possible explanation is that victorious Communist parties, despite their class-leveling rhetoric, always intended to build a technocratic society. This view has been put forward most cogently by George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi in their seminal book, *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*. Konrad and Szelenyi argued that Communist parties, their claims to represent the proletariat notwithstanding, were actually the vanguard of the intelligentsia. The Communists' fundamental goal, they wrote, was to fulfill intellectuals' long-held ambition to displace aristocrats and capitalists and take the reins of society into their own hands by substituting public for private property and

planning for the market. Konrad and Szelenyi were among a wave of scholars in the 1960s and 1970s who emphasized the technocratic nature of Soviet and Eastern European elites, and they produced a brilliant insider's account of how power was distributed and wielded in Soviet-type societies.³ Although they were personally involved in the "New Class project" they described, they subjected it to an unsentimental analysis of interests, revealing the connections between class power and the celebration of knowledge and science. The tension in their narrative is provided by contention between the Communist vanguard, who stubbornly tried to maintain the prerogatives of political power, and the wider intellectual class, who sought to make knowledge the principal basis of class power. This struggle revolved around the competing claims of political capital (party membership and political connections) and cultural capital (knowledge and academic credentials). Konrad and Szelenyi predicted that the rational premises of socialist planning would ultimately lead to the triumph of cultural capital, fulfilling what they claimed was the true essence of the Communist mission.⁴ Their argument was provocative and compelling, and it profoundly influenced scholarly discussion about the class structure of socialist societies.

Although the technocratic characteristics of China's New Class fit Konrad and Szelenyi's theory to a tee, its history does not. One dramatically incongruous element in this history was the harsh attacks on intellectuals during the first decades of Communist power in China. For over a quarter century, the Chinese Communist Party worked tenaciously to eliminate the class distinctions that separated intellectuals from workers and peasants. In their most radical moments, the Chinese Communists systematically discriminated against members of the old educated classes, eliminated entrance examinations and filled university classrooms with villagers who had not attended high school, denigrated the value of abstract knowledge, sent intellectuals to live in villages to be reeducated by peasants, and strived to level educational differences by providing nine or ten years of education to everyone—children of intellectuals, workers, and peasants alike—and then sending them to work. These hardly seem like policies invented by champions of the intelligentsia. Moreover, China's program of cultural leveling was not unique. The Bolsheviks made Marx's goal of eliminating the distinction between mental and manual labor into a central tenet of their program, and in the early years of Soviet power—especially during the period of cultural radicalism that accompanied the First Five Year Plan (1928–32)—they pursued radical education policies

similar to those later implemented in China. Konrad and Szelenyi's brief explanation for early Communist policies hostile to the educated elite—that they were part of a “costly but indispensable detour” necessary to build the strong state technocracy required—do not seem adequate.⁵ It is even more difficult to fit into Konrad and Szelenyi's theory Mao Zedong's efforts to undermine the bureaucratic power of party officials. These efforts included harsh campaigns against cadres' privileges and abuse of power, which reached a crescendo during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, when Mao called on workers, peasants, and students to overthrow local party authorities in order to prevent Communist officials from becoming a “bureaucratic class.”

In this book, I tell the story of the rise of China's New Class. In order to explain the incongruities noted above, this account diverges from Konrad and Szelenyi's theory in two ways. First, I do not insist that Communist cadres, most of whom were peasant revolutionaries with relatively little education, play the role of vanguard of the intelligentsia. Instead, I develop an analytic framework that I believe more accurately describes much of the conflict that followed the 1949 Revolution: contention and cooperation between a new political elite and an old educated elite. The new political elite was largely composed of peasant revolutionaries and the old educated elite was mainly made up of members of the dispossessed propertied classes. Although there was overlap between the two groups, for the most part their social origins were distinct, they had discordant value systems, and they relied on different types of resources. Members of the first group controlled the reins of political power but had little education, while members of the second group faced severe political handicaps but possessed substantial cultural resources. The New Class in China, I argue, was the product of a violent and contentious process that ultimately culminated in the convergence of these old and new elites.

Second, I take seriously Communist efforts to eliminate class distinctions. While Konrad and Szelenyi treated the emergence of a technocratic class as the achievement of Communist class-building strategy, I treat it as the failure of Communist class-leveling efforts. If the New Class was simply the product of deliberate construction, the process need not have taken so many harrowing twists and turns. I will argue that Communist parties fundamentally changed course, abandoning the road of class leveling and taking instead a technocratic road. They were converted from enemies into champions of cultural capital, a transformation that Konrad and Szelenyi obscured in their endeavor to portray the Communist movement from its

inception as a technocratic project of the intelligentsia. Thus, I will argue that Konrad and Szelenyi's boldest claim—that victorious Communist revolutionaries *deliberately* built a technocratic order ruled by an educated elite—does not hold true. If we remove this supposition of intention, however, it becomes possible to ask a more interesting question: Why—despite forceful efforts to the contrary—did the Communist project result in the creation of a new dominant class of Red experts? Answering this question is the chief purpose of this book.

There are powerful reasons to conclude that this result was inevitable. Every Leninist state that survived for a significant length of time eventually gave rise to a technocratic class order, and the technical requirements of economic planning provide a ready functional explanation for the consistency of this outcome. Some, therefore, might be inclined to close the case without further investigation. It is always wise, however, to examine cautiously claims of historical inevitability and functional necessity, especially when one is investigating the origins of a system of social differentiation in which group interests are involved. Even though I am not convinced by Konrad and Szelenyi's account, I share with them an inclination to explain history as the product of conflicts between interested parties. Moreover, we can learn a great deal by studying the problems encountered by the Communist class-leveling projects of the twentieth century. Marxist revolutionaries vowed not only to eliminate private wealth, but also to redistribute political and cultural power to the masses, and their radical democratic and egalitarian rhetoric was converted into far-reaching social experiments. By carefully scrutinizing these experiments and identifying the reasons they failed, we can inform future redistribution efforts, which will undoubtedly run into some of the same problems.

Research Strategy

I chose to investigate China because it is an extreme case. China had much in common with other states that implemented the Soviet model; what makes the Chinese case stand out is the Cultural Revolution. As the following chapters will show, the Cultural Revolution was a determined effort to undermine the political and cultural foundations of an emergent stratum of Red experts. Scholars investigating other Leninist states have appropriately compared political campaigns and policies in these countries to aspects of the Chinese

Cultural Revolution, but no other state experienced such a protracted, tenacious, and disruptive effort to prevent the emergence of a technocratic class. If we want to know whether the rise of such a class was inevitable, it makes sense to study China.

This book is based on a case study of a single educational institution, Tsinghua University in Beijing. Tsinghua is China's consummate trainer of Red engineers. It is the country's premier engineering school, and the university's party organization is renowned for grooming political cadres. Today, Tsinghua graduates occupy key positions in the upper echelons of the party and state bureaucracies, and one-third of the members of the Political Bureau's Standing Committee, including Secretary General Hu Jintao, are alumni.⁶

China's Red engineers have been cultivated by two highly selective credentialing systems, one academic and the other political, both of which were modeled after Soviet institutions. The academic credentialing system consists of a pyramid of increasingly selective schools, starting with primary schools and culminating in a small number of elite universities. The political credentialing system is the party's recruitment apparatus, consisting of a parallel hierarchy of increasingly selective organizations. In primary school, young people compete to join the Young Pioneers, and in secondary and tertiary school they compete to join the Communist Youth League and then the Communist Party. Because of both technical requirements and ideological inclinations connected with industrialization, Tsinghua and other elite engineering schools are located at the pinnacle of both credentialing systems.

I chose to study a university because I wanted to be able to closely examine the struggles surrounding the academic and political credentialing systems, and I selected Tsinghua because it was a singularly important battlefield. Whether policy veered to the Left or the Right, the university served as a model for other schools to follow. During the decades after 1949, Tsinghua grew into a sprawling multifaceted institution that encompassed elite primary and secondary schools, numerous factories, onsite programs to train workers, peasants, and "worker-peasant cadres," and satellite schools in remote work sites and villages. All of these programs served as showcases for highly contentious social experiments. Conducting a detailed case study allowed me to analyze, from a ground-level perspective, how both the academic and political credentialing systems actually functioned, how they changed, and how the conflicts over them unfolded. I was able to observe how radically different education policies were implemented, and follow the construction of the party and Youth League

organizations at the university, as well as their collapse during the Cultural Revolution and their subsequent reorganization. By closely following changes in a particular institution, I was able to develop a much richer and more concrete story than if I had simply studied conflicts among top party leaders, the evolution of national policy, and countrywide statistical trends.

In this book, I am attempting—in the words of Michael Burawoy—to “extract the general from the unique.”⁷ Tsinghua is hardly a typical Chinese university; it is located at the apex of the education system, and other schools never had the resources—and often did not have the inclination—to fully implement the exemplary policies and programs developed at Tsinghua. In the following chapters, I will often point out ways in which Tsinghua was peculiar or unique. Nevertheless, the battles at the university were emblematic of wider conflicts, and we can learn much about these conflicts by examining how they played out at Tsinghua, which was always at the epicenter. China was also hardly typical of Leninist states. Countries that implemented versions of the Soviet model have so much in common, however, that it is worthwhile developing a common theoretical framework. Students of the early history of the Soviet Union and other countries in which Communist parties came to power by means of indigenous revolutions will surely recognize a family resemblance in many of the contradictions, conflicts, and policies described in the following pages. After carefully analyzing the Chinese case, with all of its irreducible peculiarities, it will be possible to compare cases, and draw more general conclusions.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

The territory covered in this book has already been partially charted by others. Four genres of scholarly literature, in particular, extensively overlap my efforts. Central elements of this book—two elite groups and two credentialing systems—each figure prominently in one of these four genres. The first two are concerned with Communist cadres and intellectuals, while the third and fourth examine China's education and political systems. Scholars writing in the first genre have recounted how a party of poorly educated peasant revolutionaries was transformed into a party of technocratic officials.⁸ Although most Communist cadres received at least a modicum of technical training after 1949, the basic story told in this genre of scholarship is of a generational change that takes place after an epochal decision in 1978 to emphasize technical over political

qualifications. Remnants of the old elite classes remain in the background and the class origins of the new technocratic elite receive little attention. Scholars writing in the second genre have recounted the troubled relationship between Chinese intellectuals and the Communist regime.⁹ During the Mao era, this is mainly a story of conflict, in which the Anti-Rightist movement and the Cultural Revolution loom large. Intellectuals are employed by the party/state, but are also persecuted by it; they are offered opportunities to serve, but only on Communist terms, and they must choose whether to collaborate and try to influence policy or resist. Some intellectuals join the party, and during the reform era conditions improve greatly, but the protagonists remain unchanged: intellectuals on one side and the party/state on the other. Although conflict is central to these accounts, group interests scarcely register; instead, the battles are typically about protecting space for scientific endeavor, intellectual autonomy, and humanistic ideals against the imposition of party/state dictates.

Scholarship on the Chinese education system has analyzed radical changes in education policy, while scholarship on the political system has investigated the evolution of the party system, including its breakdown during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰ Some scholars have explored the ways in which each of these systems has served as a mechanism of class differentiation, but the main analytical interest of most work on the education system has been the efficacy of policies in terms of conventional educational goals (quality and quantity of training), and the main analytical interest of most work on the political system has been the efficacy of policies in terms of conventional political goals (political and social control).

While the present account has benefited greatly from insights derived from scholars writing in all four genres, my research agenda is different, and it has led me to tell a story that has not been told by the works in any of these genres. Although the first two genres illuminate much about the trajectories of one or the other of the two elite groups at the center of this book, neither captures the contentious process of inter-elite convergence described in the following pages. The third and fourth genres tell us a great deal about each of the two credentialing systems at the center of this book, but they largely miss the interaction between them. Works on the education system mention the political system in passing, and works on the political system mention the education system in passing, but their analytical interests are typically confined to one realm or the other. This book is about both systems, and its analytical interest in each is the same: how the system reproduced class differentiation. More-

over, I am particularly concerned with the links between the two systems, and the political struggles chronicled in this book almost always involved both systems and both elite groups.

A fifth genre, with a narrower scope, has analyzed the social bases of contending local factions during the Cultural Revolution.¹¹ These accounts highlight conflict between intellectuals and party officials, and between children of the two groups. Moreover, they identify educational and political admissions policies—some of which benefited children of intellectuals, while others benefited children of party officials—as key objects of contention and determinants of factional alignment. Thus, a central theme of the present account—inter-elite conflict over academic and political credentialing policies—fits well into this genre, and my analysis of student factional struggles at Tsinghua during the Cultural Revolution (see Chapters 4 and 5) will engage these accounts in detail. While they stressed inter-elite conflict, however, I highlight strong manifestations of inter-elite unity even at the height of the battles of the Cultural Revolution, and I present these battles as part of a longer process of inter-elite convergence.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I use the conceptual framework Pierre Bourdieu developed to analyze class distinctions based on different types of capital.¹² Although Bourdieu mainly employed his tripartite framework—economic, cultural, and social capital—to analyze the class structure of a stable capitalist society, others have found it just as useful for analyzing radical changes in class structure. Szelenyi and others have been able to cogently describe the transitions to and from socialism in terms of changes in the relative importance of these three types of capital.¹³ Communist regimes eliminated economic capital by abolishing private property in the means of production, and although control over these means of production still mattered, access to control was no longer provided by private ownership, but rather by cultural and social capital. Because Eastern European societies were dominated by Communist parties, the key form of social capital was political. As a result, class position was largely determined by an individual's stock of cultural and political capital.¹⁴

When Bourdieu spoke of cultural capital, the assets he had in mind—educational credentials and knowledge that provide access to advantageous class positions—are largely the same as those that many economists and sociologists

discuss under the rubric of human capital.¹⁵ The two terms, however, signal different analytic interests. While theorists of human capital investigate how returns on investment facilitate individual and social progress, Bourdieu investigated how individuals and groups use the institutions that underpin cultural capital to reproduce class privilege and power. Political capital, in Bourdieu's framework, is also about privilege and power. He conceived of political capital as a form of social capital, which he defined as "the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of a collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit."¹⁶ In the countries of the Soviet bloc, Bourdieu agreed, the most important form of social capital was political, based on party membership.¹⁷

Because I have chosen to focus on conflicts surrounding academic and political credentialing systems, I am mainly concerned with what Bourdieu called *institutionalized* forms of capital. The credentials distributed by these systems—including academic certificates and party membership—are critical resources used to gain access to advantageous class positions. These institutionalized forms of political and cultural capital, however, are closely connected to less tangible *embodied* forms. In the cultural field, embodied capital consists of the actual knowledge possessed by an individual, including knowledge imparted as part of the school curricula as well as a broader range of cultural competences—such as manners and tastes—that distinguish the educated from the uneducated classes. Embodied political capital consists of the social networks an individual cultivates around a party organization. In this book, unfortunately, I have been compelled to give embodied forms of capital less attention than they deserve in order to focus on the institutionalized forms.

This book is essentially an analysis of struggles over the redistribution of different types of capital. Like Szelenyi, I am particularly interested in the ability of elites to maintain their social positions across revolutionary social transformations that undermined the value of one type of capital, while enhancing the value of others. In addition to the fate of elite groups, however, I am interested in the results of Communist redistribution schemes intended to eliminate class distinctions by dispersing the possession of capital. Bourdieu's tripartite framework provides a useful conceptual template to gauge the results of Communist class-leveling efforts. The extent of class differentiation

can be appraised in terms of the concentration of capital in the economic, cultural, and political fields. Any resource—whether physical property, knowledge, or political power—can only serve as a means of class differentiation to the extent that it is distributed unequally. Class power is based on the concentration of these resources in the hands of a minority and it is perpetuated by institutions that reproduce this unequal distribution. Redistribution can transfer capital from one elite group to another, further concentrate capital in the hands of an elite group, or disperse capital more widely through the population. Policies that further concentrate capital increase the gap between classes, while policies that disperse capital diminish this gap.

Tumultuous Rise of China's New Class

Stripped to its most basic elements, the story of the rise of China's New Class, as told in this book, can be summarized as follows: In the first years after the 1949 Chinese Revolution, economic and cultural capital were concentrated in the hands of the old elite classes, while political capital was concentrated in the hands of the new Communist elite, made up largely of peasant revolutionaries. The new regime first redistributed economic capital, dispossessing the old elites and converting the means of production into state and collective property. Although ownership was nominally public, control was concentrated in state and collective offices, and access to these offices was determined largely by possession of political and cultural capital. Having virtually eliminated economic capital, the CCP turned its attention to redistributing cultural capital, with the intention of further undermining the advantages of the old elite, an endeavor that reached its most radical point during the Cultural Revolution. The principal target of the Cultural Revolution, however, was the concentration of political capital in the hands of the new Communist elite. At Mao's instigation, grassroots insurgents challenged the power of local party officials, precipitating two years of factional violence. The upheaval initially exacerbated tensions between the old and new elites, but Mao's simultaneous attacks on both groups ultimately forged inter-elite unity. After Mao's death in 1976, the new CCP leadership renounced class leveling and reconciled with the old elite. This facilitated the consolidation of a technocratic class order and the emergence of a New Class, which had roots in both the old and new elites and combined their political and cultural assets.

Tsinghua University is a narrow frame through which to tell this story, one that misses the top echelons of power and the economic infrastructure of the country. The university, however, provides an excellent vantage point to closely observe the evolution of the academic and political credentialing systems, which became the key institutional foundations of the technocratic order. Tsinghua and other elite universities were at the center of the contentious convergence of old and new elites. They were an important site where the two groups met, initially in the persons of incumbent faculty and Communist cadres dispatched to take charge of the schools. Members of the first group were virtually all from well-to-do families and they had been educated in the best schools in China, the United States, Japan, and Europe, while members of the second group were battle-hardened revolutionaries who had been trained through years of rural warfare. More important, these universities were selecting and training students who would become the Red and expert elite. Children from both elite groups, along with a small but growing number of children from working-class and peasant families, filled the classrooms of top-ranked universities, where they competed not only academically, but also to join the Youth League and the party, striving to become both Red and expert.

Tsinghua became *the* focal point of conflict over both the academic and political credentialing systems. During the first seventeen years of Communist power, the university cultivated a reputation as the “cradle of Red engineers,” and for this reason Tsinghua and its leaders became prominent targets during the Cultural Revolution. The university served as the base of the most influential of the contending student factions, and after the suppression of a freewheeling factional struggle it was taken over by radical leaders determined to eliminate educational elitism and undermine the bureaucratic power of the party officialdom. Then, after the Cultural Revolution was repudiated following Mao’s death, the university cemented its position as the premier training ground for the type of technocratic cadres preferred by the party’s new leadership. Tsinghua, therefore, provided an ideal site to analyze in detail the contentious process through which old and new elites coalesced into a New Class and Mao’s failed efforts to block the way.

This book is composed of four chronological parts, each of which is divided into thematic chapters. The first part, covering the period between the Communist seizure of power in 1949 and the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, is composed of three chapters. The first two chapters examine the controversies and conflicts that surrounded the construction of the political

and academic credentialing systems at Tsinghua. Chapter 3 recounts how the CCP’s determination to combine Redness and expertise, originally driven by class-war logic, ultimately promoted the coalescence of the new and old elites. The chapter closes by identifying powerful political and structural obstacles that effectively blocked the rise of a technocratic class.

The second part recounts the early years of the Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1968, when Mao called on students, workers, and peasants to attack both the political and educated elites. Through a detailed examination of how the ensuing factional struggle unfolded at Tsinghua University and its attached middle school, Chapters 4 and 5 show that while the movement initially greatly aggravated conflict between the old and new elites, giving rise to an explosion of factional fighting between children of Communist cadres and children of intellectuals, ultimately it also forged inter-elite unity.

The third part covers the late years of the Cultural Revolution, from 1968 to 1976, when Mao attempted to institutionalize the radical class-leveling program that had led him to launch the movement, with the explicit aim of preventing the development of a new privileged class. Chapter 6 examines the experimental system of governance created during this period, which was based on a volatile arrangement of institutionalized factional contention. Chapter 7 scrutinizes radical education policies designed to eliminate occupational distinctions between mental and manual labor, and Chapter 8 looks into the system of “mass recommendation” created to replace college entrance examinations, which was designed to increase the number of students from working-class and peasant families. These chapters examine how these policies were carried out in practice and assess their potential to actually diminish class distinctions.

The fourth part examines the establishment of a technocratic order after Mao’s death in 1976 and its subsequent evolution. Chapter 9 recounts how the academic and political credentialing systems were rebuilt, enhancing their capacity to select and groom a stream of Red and expert cadres to staff the upper levels of the state bureaucracy. Chapter 10 traces the convergence of old and new elites and the consolidation of a new technocratic class. Chapter 11 considers the consequences of the sweeping economic reforms that began in the 1990s, which have left China’s Red engineers presiding over a peculiar variety of capitalism. The main concern of the chapter is to ascertain how China’s technocratic class order, which had been based mainly on political and cultural capital, is being transformed by the reemergence of economic capital.

The concluding chapter compares the two most important twentieth-century Communist experiments, in the Soviet Union and China, and proposes revisions to New Class theory. I show that in their early years the Communist regimes in both countries forcefully pursued class leveling, but that they later decisively abandoned this goal in order to implement technocratic policies, leading to very similar results. I suggest reasons why the Chinese made this fundamental switch, and then consider whether or not it was inevitable.

PART ONE

Building Socialism (1949–1966)

Chapter One

Political Foundations of Class Power

On December 15, 1948, Communist troops advancing on Beijing arrived at the vicinity of Tsinghua University in the northeastern outskirts of the city. The day before, the university's president, Mei Yiqi, had hastily left the campus and headed south to Nanjing, which for the moment remained in the hands of the retreating Nationalist government. Almost everyone else at the university, however, decided to stay. Most members of the Tsinghua faculty were from families of more than modest wealth and social standing, and many were certainly apprehensive about the Communists' declared aim of radically redistributing wealth and alarmed by their brutal reputation. After years of war, however, many were also hopeful that a new regime would bring order and more honest government, and some were even sympathetic with the Communists' promises of creating a more egalitarian society. To whatever extent they sympathized with the Communist Party, they knew they would have to accommodate themselves to the new order it would establish. The Communists were headed toward a decisive victory in the civil war, they had broad popular support, and they brooked no opposition.

On December 17, a delegation of Communist soldiers came to the Tsinghua campus to meet with representatives of the faculty, staff, and students; the purpose of the meeting was to make arrangements to safeguard university facilities. On one side of the meeting were erudite, well-groomed intellectuals; on the other side were battle-hardened peasant revolutionaries. The Communist

delegation was headed by Liu Daosheng, a peasant from Hunan Province who had joined the Communist movement in 1928 and had served as a revolutionary soldier through the grim days of the Long March and the epic guerrilla war against the Japanese. Liu was now a political commissar in a massive army that had just crushed the Nationalist forces assigned to defend Beijing. The Tsinghua delegation was headed by Zhou Peiyuan, scion of a wealthy landowning family in Jiangsu Province whose father had been a scholar-official under the Qing dynasty. Zhou had graduated from Tsinghua in 1924 and had studied physics at the University of Chicago and under Albert Einstein at Princeton, before returning to teach at his alma mater.¹ The delegations and their leaders were in many ways typical of the two very distinct groups who would face each other in the top echelons of Chinese society during the first decades of Communist power.

Red-over-Expert Power Structure

The CCP was founded by intellectuals, but during two decades of armed insurrection in the countryside it became a party of peasants. Its ranks were filled by poor villagers who took up arms in the anti-Japanese and civil wars, and even most of its leaders were of rural origin and had relatively little education. Robert North and Ithiel Pool, who analyzed changes in the party's top leadership during the decades it was fighting for power, documented how it was transformed by rural warfare. "Specifically, what was taking place was a rise in peasant leadership," they wrote. "The rise of Mao to power and the emergence of Soviet areas in the hinterland were accompanied by the replacement of intellectuals of middle-class and upper-class backgrounds by sons of peasants."² When the CCP took over China's cities, it was able to deploy a formidable corps of battle-tested cadres to take control of government offices, factories, and schools. These cadres were young, but many of them already had years of administrative experience in rural Communist base areas populated by millions of people. Almost all of them were from the countryside and few had much formal education. In 1949, 80 percent of the party's membership was of peasant origin and the great majority were illiterate or had only a grade-school education.³ Those who had risen in the party's ranks were usually not from the poorest rural families, but rather from households that were moderately well-off by village standards and could afford to send at least one

child to school; even the best educated among them, however, had rarely gone beyond middle school.⁴ Although many of the top Communist leaders were born into elite families and had joined the party while studying at universities, even at the highest levels of the party a far greater number had come from more humble village origins and had risen to leadership positions by demonstrating their organizing abilities and military prowess.

During its first decade in power, the CCP eliminated the main foundation supporting the power and social standing of the old elite classes by systematically confiscating their productive property. This was accomplished through a series of mass political movements, which began in the countryside with Land Reform, a violent campaign in which Communist cadres mobilized poor peasants to humiliate, beat, and often kill landlords, and then redistribute their land. Landlords and rich peasants were not only dispossessed of their land and often their homes, but they were also reduced to social pariahs. The subsequent collectivization drive was less violent, but the result was more profound, eliminating private ownership of land altogether.⁵ In urban areas, the state took over large enterprises, and small enterprises were combined into cooperatives. The process was largely peaceful, but fundamentally coercive. Communist cadres mobilized workers against their employers in a series of campaigns to combat tax evasion, corruption, waste, and counterrevolutionary activities, establishing Communist control within each enterprise and paving the way for state appropriation.⁶ The fate of the urban elite, however, was not as dire as that of the rural elite because the CCP could not dispense with their expertise. The new government offered nominal compensation and management positions to entrepreneurs who cooperated, and the great majority of the managerial, professional, and technical staff in government offices, economic enterprises, schools, and other institutions remained in their posts. Members of the old urban elite nevertheless emerged from the early Communist campaigns greatly debilitated. They had been deprived of much of their property and were in a weak position politically. They retained other assets, however, that were highly valuable in a country that was largely illiterate—their education and expertise.

As the CCP took control of urban institutions, newly arrived Communist cadres were charged with supervising incumbent managers and specialists. In the parlance of the party, Reds were supervising experts. Bo Yibo, one of the CCP's senior leaders, described the encounter in his memoir. "It was natural that after we entered the cities, our core leadership in various fields was made

up of cadres of worker and peasant origins who had just left the battlefields," Bo wrote. "These cadres mostly had a low educational level. They did not have much contact with the intelligentsia in the past, and did not know or understand the latter's professional expertise, mentality and working style."⁷ The Communist victory had created a situation in which two very different groups coexisted uncomfortably at the top of the postrevolutionary social order: a new political elite, largely made up of peasant revolutionaries, and an old educated elite, largely composed of members of the dispossessed propertied classes.⁸ Although there was overlap between the two groups, on the whole, they were of very different origins and had very distinct cultures and values. They also relied on different types of class resources—the former on political and the latter on cultural capital. Although practical considerations dictated cooperation, the first decades of Communist rule were marked by sharp conflict between the two groups.

ESTABLISHING COMMUNIST POWER AT TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY

In the education sector, the contrast between old and new elites was less pronounced because the party usually sent cadres with more education to take charge of schools. Nevertheless, at Tsinghua University the differences—in terms of social origin and level of education—between the newly arrived Communist cadres and the university faculty were quite obvious. Tsinghua's professors were a highly sophisticated and cultured group that included some of China's leading scholars. According to a survey conducted in 1946, over half the 134 professors and associate professors at the university had doctoral degrees, impressive in any country at that time and especially so in China. Almost all of them had studied abroad, mostly in the United States, and nearly half had degrees from Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cornell, University of Chicago, or Columbia.⁹ The exceptionally strong foreign educational credentials of the Tsinghua faculty were a product of the university's history. Founded in 1911 by the United States using funds extracted from the Chinese government as part of the Boxer indemnity, Tsinghua was originally built as a preparatory school to train students to study at American universities.¹⁰ The school was later taken over by the Chinese government and reorganized as a university, and during the 1930s and 1940s it ranked as one of China's leading institutions of higher education with a particular strength in science and technology. It continued to enjoy close relations with American

universities, sending graduates to the United States for postgraduate training and then hiring them upon their return.

At that time, education was highly correlated with wealth, a fact amply demonstrated by the family origins of the Tsinghua faculty. When Communist officials conducted a survey of the class backgrounds of the university's professors, over 60 percent were classified as having originated from landlord or capitalist families, 27 percent were from professional or other middling categories, and less than 2 percent were from working-class or poor and lower-middle peasant families (a category that comprised over 80 percent of the population).¹¹ The group's impressive academic credentials and elite family origins were combined with political credentials that—in the post-1949 environment—did not help their standing. Not one was a member of the Communist Party, and many of them had ties to the defeated Nationalist Party. These connections, which had been assets under the old regime, were now severe political liabilities; those who had been members of the Nationalist Party—or even its youth organization—would now regret the association.

The team of Communist cadres that arrived to take over Tsinghua in 1952 was led by Jiang Nanxiang, a former Tsinghua student who shared the elite social origin of the university faculty (his family had owned a substantial amount of land in Jiangsu Province). Jiang had led student protests at the university against Japanese aggression in 1935, was expelled from the university for his protest activities, and then became a full-time cadre in the underground Communist movement. Before he returned to Tsinghua in 1952, at age thirty-nine, he had become a national deputy secretary of the Communist Youth League and he had many years of experience in the Communist underground. The party cadres Jiang brought to Tsinghua were in general younger, less well educated, and of humbler family origin. Many demobilized soldiers were assigned to administrative positions at the university. These worker-peasant cadres were typically of poor rural origin and the best educated among them had attended special accelerated middle schools established to train Communist cadres.

Jiang, who became university president and was later named secretary of the school party committee, was the dominant figure at Tsinghua for the next fourteen years. He eventually assembled a stable group of party committee leaders, all of whom had stellar revolutionary credentials. Two of Jiang's deputy party secretaries, He Dongchang and Ai Zhisheng, were former Tsinghua students who had been leaders of the underground party organization at the university.

The other four deputy secretaries were Communist veterans Jiang had brought in from outside. Of the veteran cadres, only Li Shouci, who had also been active in the anti-Japanese protests at Tsinghua in the mid-1930s, was highly educated. Moreover, at Tsinghua even Jiang and Li's educational credentials carried less authority because they did not have graduate degrees and they had been trained in the humanities instead of science and engineering.¹² The other three deputy secretaries, Liu Bing, Gao Yi, and Hu Jian, were of peasant origin and had only been to primary or middle school before joining the Communist movement (although they had received further training in party schools).¹³

On the whole, the Tsinghua faculty, who had run the university before 1949, did their best to accommodate themselves to the new regime. All were required to participate in political study meetings, in which they were urged to reform their thinking by breaking with "bourgeois ideology" and tendencies to "worship America." The Jiang administration appointed several sympathetic faculty members to leadership positions; a number of prominent professors, including Qian Weichang, Liu Xianzhou, Zhang Wei, and Chen Shihua, were made deputy university presidents and given positions on Tsinghua's administrative committee, formally the university's top governing body. Senior professors were also appointed as department directors, positions that traditionally had been vested with great power. As the CCP built branches in every university department, however, the real locus of power at all levels shifted to the school party organization.

The Institutional Foundations of Political Capital

With the conversion of the means of production into public property, access to advantageous class positions was no longer provided by economic capital (private property), but rather by political and cultural capital. Advantageous positions—whether in rural communes, state-owned and collective factories, schools, hospitals, or government offices—were now defined as cadre posts, and access to them required academic or political credentials. The former were more important for obtaining positions as technical cadres and the latter were more important for obtaining positions as political or administrative cadres. Academic credentials were distributed by the education system (discussed in Chapter 2), while political credentials were distributed by the party's recruitment apparatus.

THE PARTY ORGANIZATION

The value of political capital was underpinned by the extraordinary power of the Communist Party's organization, which commanded a bureaucratic apparatus extending from the top to the base of Chinese society. The party not only precluded political competition, but it also organized the entire populace around its political infrastructure. Rural villages were reorganized as collective production brigades and urban society was reorganized into Communist-style work units, all of which were led by a party committee or branch. Tsinghua was restructured in this fashion, and an examination of the university's structure will shed light on the nature of the party's power.

Communist leaders built a party organization at Tsinghua that paralleled the university's administrative hierarchy, and party committees and branches became the centers of decision making at all levels. Students, teachers, and other employees were all organized into small groups, and each group had a nucleus of party or Youth League members at the center. Teachers were assigned to "teaching and research groups" defined by academic specializations, students joined permanent classes, and university workers were organized into small teams. In addition to collectively organizing teaching, study, and work, these groups provided a site for political activities. Each group conducted its own affairs, but under party supervision, allowing for both active participation and effective social control. Both characteristics can be seen in the organization of student classes. A class of twenty-five to thirty students remained together during their years of study at the university; they took all of their courses together and lived in common dormitories. A teacher, typically a young party member, served as class director, and each class had a branch of the Youth League, which grew in size as new members were recruited. Youth League members elected a leadership committee, made up of a secretary and officers in charge of propaganda and organization, who organized political study and activities for all members of the class. In addition, the entire class elected a leadership committee, composed of a class president and officers in charge of study, recreation, labor, and cultural activities (such as theater and musical groups).

This type of small group organization was the key to the CCP's remarkable system of political control.¹⁴ The party had a clear chain of command, in which individual members carried out the decisions of the party unit to which they belonged, and subordinate units implemented decisions passed down from above. The party was able to mobilize its members—and through them the

entire population—because of the extraordinary commitment of those who joined the organization. Through this kind of thick infrastructural power, to use Michael Mann's term, the party was able not only to administer the university in a conventional sense, but also to mobilize the school population to carry out the Communist program of social transformation.¹⁵

THE POLITICAL CREDENTIALING SYSTEM

The CCP built a recruitment apparatus composed of an increasingly selective hierarchy of organizations that included, in ascending order, the Young Pioneers, the Communist Youth League, and the Communist Party. Young people were eligible to join the Young Pioneers at age nine, the Youth League at age fifteen, and the party at age eighteen. At each level, they faced more stringent requirements and more intense competition. By the early 1960s, almost all school children were invited to join the Young Pioneers, about 20 percent of the eligible age group were members of the Youth League, and about 5 percent of adults were party members.¹⁶ These figures somewhat understate the proportion of young people who succeeded in joining the league and the party: some of those aged fifteen to twenty-five had not yet joined the league or had already left it to join the party, and young adults, who were the main target of party recruitment, were more likely to be party members than those who came of age before 1949. Nevertheless, both organizations made membership an accomplishment that required considerable effort.

Youth League recruitment was concentrated in senior middle schools, universities, and the military, all of which served as elite training centers. The young people selected to enter these exclusive institutions were very likely to join the league, where they would be initiated into the world of Communist activism. Young people who did not test into senior middle school or make it into the military, in contrast, could still apply to join the league in their villages or workplaces, but only a small minority did. Moreover, participation in league organizations in the mundane world of villages and workplaces was a much less intense experience than it was in the military and elite schools, which were both preparing future cadres. In rural areas, where few young people were able to attend middle school, military service (which was also very selective and conferred high status) became an important route for acquiring league and party membership. The heart of the recruiting effort, however, was in the school system.

The party's recruitment machinery became the organization's political nucleus at Tsinghua and other schools. While most of the university party organization was involved with supervising academic and administrative affairs, its recruitment apparatus was responsible for selecting and grooming young people to fill leadership positions, and it carried out much of the party's grassroots ideological and political education. A large corps of specially selected cadres was charged with carrying out these tasks, which were known as "student political thinking work," or "student work," for short. The student work apparatus took charge of the party's most political activities—publishing the university newspaper, managing the public broadcasting system, organizing political study campaigns, overseeing political courses, mobilizing volunteer labor, and recruiting new members.

The Youth League was at the center of student work, and senior league officers, who were party members employed by the university, were among the most powerful figures on campus. Among the cadres responsible for student work were politics instructors, who taught the required courses on party history and Marxist-Leninist philosophy, and teachers selected to serve as class directors, who worked closely with the student leaders of the league branches in their classes. President Jiang also initiated a system in which politically promising students were selected to become political counselors. Each counselor was responsible for supervising the political activities and recruitment of students in several classes.¹⁷ Students selected to serve in responsible positions in the university league and party organizations, especially those appointed as political counselors, were being groomed for political leadership. Upon graduation, many were hired as political or administrative cadres at the university and elsewhere, and after the technocratic turn in the late 1970s some were promoted to top leadership posts. Among those who served as political counselors at Tsinghua during the Jiang Nanxiang era were Hu Jintao, who is now the CCP's secretary general, and Wu Bangguo, who is chairman of the National People's Congress.

Joining the Youth League was an arduous process that required proving oneself through years of political activity and volunteer work. Youth League branches in each class voted to accept or reject membership applications. The class director was responsible for writing summaries evaluating each student's political performance, and he or she consulted with leaders of the class league branch in preparing these summaries.¹⁸ At elite schools like Tsinghua, a much larger proportion of the student body was recruited into

the league than at nonelite schools; by the early 1960s most Tsinghua University students had already joined the league in middle school, and the great majority would join before they graduated from the university. In 1963, for instance, 84 percent of Tsinghua graduates had joined the league.¹⁹ Party membership, in contrast, was a status that only a minority of students, who distinguished themselves through tireless political activism, would achieve. Among Tsinghua's 1963 graduating class, only 17 percent were party members.²⁰ Many others would apply after they had graduated and joined a work unit. Just over half of Tsinghua's junior faculty members, for instance, had joined the party by 1965.²¹

A complex mix of motivations inspired individuals to join the league and the party. As noted above, party membership was generally required for promotion to administrative positions, and by the early 1960s even technical cadres were expected to have at least achieved membership in the league.²² Students, therefore, were clearly inspired by career calculations. It would be a mistake, however, to think that their motivations were simply instrumental. During this period, many students were deeply committed to Communist ideas and collectivist values, a commitment evinced in my interviews through nostalgic accounts, punctuated by contemporary slogans. Many students embraced Communist expectations and liked to think of their career ambitions as public service rather than personal advancement. For instance, Mei Xuesi, who joined the Youth League while studying at Tsinghua in the early 1960s, indicated that he and others were well aware that membership was important for their future careers: "If you wanted to achieve something," he explained, "you had to be in the Youth League and then the party." He insisted, however, that students' thinking then was not as instrumental as it is now. Students today, he told me, *only* join the league and the party in order to advance their career prospects. "Then, we didn't think about those things—we were so pure, we believed in the party. I didn't think of my career, I just wanted to be a good person, a good student, to get my job done well." Mei added that joining the league "was like a youth trend—you had to join to be in fashion."²³ Whatever the specific weight of career considerations, ideological beliefs, moral compulsions, and peer appraisal in an individual student's motivations, the result was compelling pressure to join the league. The few who did not succeed faced social isolation and a compromised future. This increased the stakes and enhanced the power of those who monitored the gates.

RECRUITMENT CRITERIA

In recruiting new members, the political criteria considered by party and league branches were divided into two categories. The first, political performance (*zhengzhi biaoxxian*), was based on individual achievement, while the second, family background (*jiating beijing*), was ascriptive. Political performance was the most important criterion, and an individual's performance was evaluated in terms of three main elements: ideological commitment, collectivist ethics, and compliance with the authority of the party organization. Aspiring members were encouraged to diligently study Marxism-Leninism, and to demonstrate through their actions their commitment to the Communist ideals of hard work, selflessness, and a willingness to serve the people (*wei renmin fuwu*). These qualities were considered to be a reflection of an individual's moral quality.²⁴

The main criteria for joining the Young Pioneers in primary school were cooperation, conformism, and compliance with authority. Tong Xiaoling, who attended the primary school attached to Tsinghua University in the early 1960s, described the required qualities as follows: "Don't fight, help other students, help the teacher, and be obedient."²⁵ Every year, red scarves were presented to new pioneers in an emotional induction ceremony. Age of admission was seen as a good predictor of a student's future political prospects, and only a handful of "problem" students failed to get red scarves before they graduated. Once students reached middle school, they were also required to gain fluency in Communist political doctrine. Ultimately, however, the Youth League was looking for the same moral qualities expected of Young Pioneers. "To join the Communist Youth League," Mei Xuesi explained, "you had to be a good student, work hard, be a good helper, [do volunteer] work in the countryside, and don't say anything bad about the teacher, the country, or the party."²⁶

In party history courses, students learned about the heroic exploits of Communist revolutionaries and they were encouraged to follow in their footsteps by joining the league and the party. In the years since 1949, however, political activism had lost its subversive quality and became a more domesticated endeavor. The characteristics most prized in activists were now loyalty to the new government and compliance with authority. Liu Shaoqi, the party's organizational chief, made this clear in a series of lectures on the personal conduct expected of Communist cadres that were published in a thin volume titled

How to Be a Good Communist, which was required reading for those wishing to join the party.²⁷ Compliance with authority did not mean abject servility by any means. On the contrary, the party was seeking individuals who displayed an ability to work effectively in a bureaucratic hierarchy, both accepting guidance from above and providing direction to those below.

Teachers at Tsinghua and its attached middle and primary schools did not find the qualities elaborated in Communist guidelines for teaching morality to be completely unfamiliar, as many of the basic themes were not new. In Confucian tradition, proper moral training had long been considered an essential part of cultivating honest, benevolent, and loyal state officials, and the considerable benefits enjoyed by imperial officials came with a moral obligation to dedicate themselves to public service. During the late imperial and Republican periods, modern patriotism was grafted onto these older Confucian ideals. After 1949, moral education classes continued to promote all of these themes, although the Communist regime gave them a new ideological content.

The other major consideration in recruitment—family background—involved two sets of categories: class origin (*jieji chushen*) and political background (*zhengzhi beijing*). All families were assigned a class origin designation according to the CCP's taxonomy of classes (see Figure 1.1). These designations were based on the status of the family head between 1946 and 1949, and were inherited patrilineally during the first three decades after the 1949

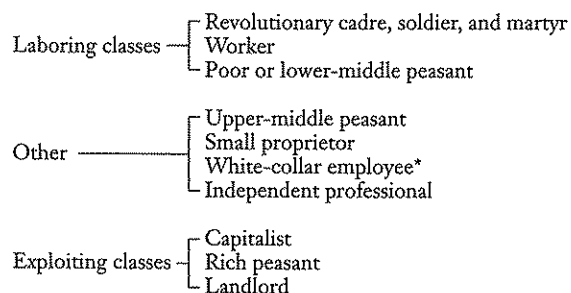


Figure 1.1 Class origin categories

*The category *zhiyuan*, which I have translated as "white-collar employee," included government officials, office workers, teachers, and managerial, professional, and technical employees. These occupations required a relatively high level of education, and the number of *zhiyuan* was very small relative to the population of prerevolutionary China. Their class position was, therefore, higher than that of clerical workers in developed countries.

Revolution.²⁸ Along with class origin, the political history of an individual was evaluated, and those determined to have committed counterrevolutionary or criminal offenses faced discrimination, as did members of their families.²⁹

Class line (*jieji luxian*) policies used these designations to give preference in political recruitment (as well as in school admissions and job appointments) to members of working-class, poor and lower-middle peasant, and revolutionary cadre, soldier, and martyr families. The overwhelming majority of the Chinese population belonged to these categories and most of the rest had middling designations that did not provide advantages, but also did not present great handicaps. For members of the small minority of families deemed to be part of the former exploiting classes or associated with counterrevolution, however, class line discrimination could have devastating consequences. This was especially true in the countryside, but even in the cities, where former capitalists and officials of the old regime often retained respectable positions, individuals with problematic class and political labels faced discrimination and were particularly vulnerable during periods when class line policies came to the fore.³⁰

Class line policies turned the class hierarchy that existed before the 1949 Revolution on its head, providing advantages for those who had been at the bottom and disadvantages for those who had been at the top. They were based on two related political and social rationales. First, the party wanted to promote to leadership positions individuals from social groups considered to be protagonists and beneficiaries of the Communist project, and to prevent these positions from falling into the hands of individuals associated with social groups considered to be hostile or potentially hostile to this project. Second, the party wanted to counter the substantial cultural advantages enjoyed by members of more educated families by providing political advantages to those whose educational opportunities had been more limited.³¹

These policies greatly benefited members of the new political elite and hurt members of the old educated elite. Family origin, however, was only one consideration in recruitment. The party was determined to recruit capable and committed new members, and party and league branches were instructed to look first at political performance. Children of revolutionary cadres had great advantages in the competition to join the league and the party, and party officials were often very solicitous toward these students, encouraging early membership applications and providing opportunities to assume leadership responsibilities. Nevertheless, even these students were expected to earn

their political credentials through hard work, and indications of aristocratic indolence were criticized. Students from old elite families that had been stuck with bad class labels were also invited to join the league and the party, but they faced particularly stringent tests of their political reliability. It was possible to overcome these handicaps, however, and many excelled in the political competition.

Bureaucratic Authority, Personal Dependency, and Social Hierarchy

During the Jiang Nanxiang era, the Tsinghua party organization was referred to as an “engine that leaks no steam” (*yong bu louqi de fadongji*). Jiang created a remarkably monolithic and efficient organization by removing opponents—including both nonparty faculty members and party officials—from positions of power, and replacing them with individuals who were loyal to him. At Tsinghua, as in all Chinese work units, decisions about hiring and promotions were handled by the party organization. Chinese universities generally preferred to hire their own graduates, and Jiang was particularly insistent on hiring Tsinghua graduates. He was convinced that the university provided the best technical training, but he also preferred to select teachers and cadres from among those groomed in his own political stables. Tsinghua graduates who were tapped to become administrative and political cadres at the university were referred to as “Tsinghua-brand cadres” (*Qinghua pai gambu*), and they were known for their strong loyalty to Jiang and the university party organization.

During the early 1960s, when Jiang served concurrently as the president and party secretary at Tsinghua and as China’s minister of higher education, he enjoyed unchallenged personal authority at the university. He was a demanding leader with a strong personal will and a penchant for order and discipline. His motto, addressed to the entire university community, was: “Be obedient and productive” (*tinghua chuhuo*). “You couldn’t disagree with him,” said Zhuang Dingqian, a mid-level Tsinghua cadre who retains a profound respect for the late university president. “Jiang Nanxiang’s authority was very strong at Tsinghua—everyone listened to him.”³² Although Jiang’s tight control stifled debate, the orderly and disciplined atmosphere also fostered a certain kind of dynamism at the university, and even those who had chafed under Jiang’s political tutelage admitted that in the early 1960s morale at the

university was high. Teachers and students worked extremely hard, inspired by intense political and academic competition and a widely shared ethic of public service. Mai Qingwen, a university party official, recalled the period with nostalgia. “Under Jiang’s leadership, control at Tsinghua was very strict,” he said. “Cadres were not corrupt; there were no power struggles; they didn’t attack each other; everybody worked for Tsinghua’s future.”³³

Jiang’s personal authority and the power of the university party organization were completely intertwined, and the party’s formal hierarchy became a trellis on which informal personal networks flourished. Although these personal ties in some ways hindered the impersonal bureaucratic rules of the organization, they also reinforced authority relations between superiors and subordinates, and they became an integral part of an emerging social hierarchy. The power concentrated in the hands of party officials facilitated the development of relations of dependency with their subordinates, which in turn reinforced officials’ power. The party’s practice of rewarding loyalty to the organization was inevitably used by Communist cadres to reward personal loyalty among their subordinates.³⁴ Such clientelist patterns were established in the earliest stages of the recruitment process, because this process made loyalty a key selection criterion and it fostered a style of activism characterized by conformism and compliance with authority. This kind of compliant activism became an essential feature of the party’s political culture.

From a state-building perspective, the party organization was a highly effective instrument of social control, and it gave the new regime a tremendous capacity to mobilize the population to carry out its program. The political credentialing system played a critical role, allowing the party to select and groom future leaders and to infuse young people with Communist values and ideology. At the same time, the system became the object of individual strategies to get ahead. Because the credentials distributed by this system—membership and leadership positions in the league and the party—were required to win jobs and promotions in the state bureaucracy, they became a very tangible, institutionalized form of political capital. More informal and less tangible, but just as important, were the personal networks derived from association with the ruling party.

By extending and consolidating the party’s power, Communist officials shored up their own elite status. Their positions in the party hierarchy provided them with personal political capital and gave them opportunities to pass their advantages on to their children. The party, however, was not a closed

organization, and children of the old elite classes as well those of more humble origins were diligently participating in the party-sponsored political credentialing competition. Thus, the party organization and its recruitment apparatus became the political foundation of an emergent class order. In fact, with the elimination of private property in the means of production, it became *the* most important mechanism of class differentiation in postrevolutionary China.

Challenging the Political Hierarchy

In the spring of 1957, Mao Zedong invited nonparty members to join in a campaign to Rectify the Party's Style of Work. The campaign, initiated just as the party was celebrating the completion of China's transition to socialism (with the elimination of private property in agriculture, commerce, and industry), was Mao's first major effort to address a problem that would preoccupy him for the remainder of his life—the emergence of a privileged elite made up of Communist officials. In launching the campaign, Mao highlighted three problems—bureaucracy (*guanliao zhu yi*), sectarianism (*zongpai zhu yi*), and subjectivism (*zbuguan zhu yi*). In the Chinese Communist lexicon, bureaucracy referred to cadres concentrating power in their own hands, sectarianism referred to cadres alienating themselves from those who were not in the party, and subjectivism referred to cadres making decisions based on narrow knowledge and considerations. All three problems were perennial concerns that Mao had made the targets of previous party rectification campaigns. This time, however, the prescribed methods were different. In the past, people had been invited to criticize local Communist cadres, but always in forums orchestrated by the party.³⁵ Now people were invited to air their complaints in a more spontaneous manner, and this kind of unrehearsed, unsupervised criticism was unprecedented.

The 1957 Party Rectification campaign was a continuation of the campaign to Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom and One Hundred Schools of Thought Contend (*baihua qifang baijia zhengming*) launched a year earlier, but now Mao requested that criticism be directed specifically at party practices and party officials. To the chagrin of other party leaders, Mao extended the invitation especially to intellectuals, who staffed the offices of enterprises, schools, and government departments, working under the supervision of veteran Communist cadres.³⁶ Mao's appeal to intellectuals to help rectify the party provoked a

storm of conflict between China's political and educated elites that had been building during the first eight years of Communist power. First, intellectuals seized the opportunity to criticize party officials, and then party officials struck back with devastating effect. The political credentialing system became a focal point of the debates, with critics challenging the value of political qualifications and denouncing the conformism fostered by the system.

In the years leading up to the 1957 campaign, Mao had often expressed his dissatisfaction with the stiff and orderly style of politics practiced by the party since it had taken power, and he had a particular distaste for scholastic means of teaching the principles of communism. "If the lectures in politics classes are so boring that they make people go to sleep," he suggested, "then it would be better not to lecture and instead let people sleep and save up their energy and spirit."³⁷ Nostalgic for the years of revolutionary upheaval, Mao preferred that young people learn politics directly through political struggle. The orderliness and conformity that Tsinghua's president and other Communist leaders prized made Mao uneasy. He favored open contention and this is what he demanded in the spring of 1957. "The meaning of the Central Committee," Mao told party officials at the outset of the Party Rectification campaign, "is that you can't control everything, you have to let go (*bu neng shou, zhi neng fang*); just let go, and let everyone express their opinions, let people speak out, criticize, and debate."³⁸ When Jiang Nanxiang resisted this demand and continued to prevent students at Tsinghua from holding meetings, Mao reportedly told him: "There's nothing to be afraid of. If you can't hold Tsinghua University, you can withdraw to Dongchang'an Street; the People's Liberation Army is there. If you can't hold Dongchang'an Street, then you can retreat to Shijiazhuang, or to Yan'an."³⁹

During May and early June of 1957, the Party Rectification campaign came to life at Tsinghua. Freed from the tight political control that had characterized Communist governance at the university since 1952, students and teachers organized free speech forums (*ziyou huantan*) in departments and large outdoor meetings to criticize university officials and policies. They plastered school walls with provocative big character posters (*dazibao*), handwritten manifestos that had become an important form of public political discourse. Students gathered names on a petition demanding that Tsinghua be reorganized as a comprehensive university, reversing the Communist restructuring that had made Tsinghua into a Soviet-style engineering school (see Chapter 2). Students and teachers from nearby universities visited Tsinghua, and

Tsinghua students and teachers went to other campuses to witness the polemics unleashed after Mao had called for “free speech and great debates” (*daming dafang dabianlun*).

CHALLENGING THE VALUE OF POLITICAL QUALIFICATIONS

During the Nationalist era (1927–49), the Tsinghua faculty had resisted government interference in the university and Mei Yiqi, who served as university president during most of that era, had championed university autonomy under the motto, “Schools should be run by professors.” Now the CCP not only insisted on running the university, but also on radically transforming it according to the Soviet model. Although President Jiang had appointed senior professors to positions of authority, they found real power was steadily shifting to the school party organization. The new power dynamics inverted the traditional status order in ways that were jarring for faculty members, especially senior professors. First, they had to listen to Communist cadres who were much younger, and second, the education level of many of these cadres was far inferior to their own. Although most Tsinghua faculty had made great efforts to accommodate themselves to the new regime, many bristled at the changes it demanded, and most had difficulty reconciling themselves to the Red-over-expert premise of the new order. In 1957 they questioned this premise, making the relative value of political and academic qualifications a central issue in the ensuing debates.

The two leading antagonists were Jiang Nanxiang and Qian Weichang. Both Jiang and Qian studied at Tsinghua in the 1930s and both participated in the historic “December 9” student movement against Japanese aggression in 1935. Afterward, Jiang left to join the Communist underground; when he returned to the university in 1952, he had long since abandoned the traditional silk scholar’s gown he had worn as a student and had grown accustomed to the plain cotton uniform of the revolutionary cadre. Qian instead went to Canada and then to the United States, where he studied rocket design at the California Institute of Technology, and in 1946 he returned, wearing a Western suit, to take a teaching position at Tsinghua. In 1949, Qian was among the professors who staunchly supported the new regime, and he encouraged young scientists and engineers to return to Tsinghua from abroad to help build a strong university and a strong country. Qian was appointed to serve as deputy president of the university and dean of academic affairs, and, as a renowned scientist

who was sympathetic with the government, he was invited to play a prominent role in discussions of national science policy, rubbing shoulders with top Communist officials.

Jiang and Qian voiced the competing claims of Communist officials and veteran professors to exercise power at Tsinghua. Yue Changlin, a senior Tsinghua professor who became one of the sharpest critics of the party in 1957, succinctly described the conflict between Jiang and Qian. “After 1949, no professor was a real leader of the university; even if they were leaders in name, they had no actual power,” Yue told me. “That’s why Qian Weichang struggled with Jiang Nanxiang. . . . Qian was the dean of academic affairs, but he wanted to lead the school. . . . Jiang was just a bureaucrat; Qian insisted that the leader of the school should be a scientist. Jiang demanded Communist Party control; he insisted that politics was the key issue. . . . They were actually both fighting for power.”⁴⁰

Qian had fully cooperated with the Communists, but he resented party control, and he now criticized party officials for pushing scholars out of the decision-making process. “In recent years,” he complained, “we have less and less of a feeling of being masters.”⁴¹ A man of great self-confidence known for speaking his mind, Qian brashly articulated what became a key refrain of intellectuals—that “nonexperts cannot lead experts” (*waihang bu neng lingdao neihang*). “We need people who have professional knowledge to express their opinions; we shouldn’t let those who have no professional knowledge spout nonsense (*wawa jiao*),” Qian declared. “Debates should be carried out among those who are academically qualified; promotion should also be based on academic standards. It is wrong to promote people based on mass support and how well they can talk the talk. . . . By academic leadership I don’t mean that old men must lead. It doesn’t matter if you are old or young, as long as you have academic qualifications, you can lead.”⁴²

Qian and other veteran faculty members criticized the party for bringing to the university rural origin cadres with relatively little formal education and placing them in positions of authority over highly educated professors. Liu Bing and Hu Jian, the deputy secretaries responsible for the party’s organizational affairs, were singled out for criticism. Liu and Hu were both of peasant origin; Liu had not finished middle school and Hu had only been to primary school (although both had participated in Communist training classes in Yan’an). They were, in the words of angry faculty members, “country hicks” (*tubaozi*) who had no business leading a university.⁴³ Veteran faculty members were also upset that

young party members, many of whom had only recently graduated, were being placed in positions of authority at the university and department level, and were now giving orders to their former professors. Senior professors, even those who were nominally department directors, were being left out of decision making, which increasingly took place in department party branches. Moreover, they complained, the selection of students and young teachers for special training and promotion was based more on political than academic criteria.

Tsinghua professors also resented being required to teach special classes made up of party cadres of worker and peasant origin who had little previous education. "Workers' and peasants' classes are also another typical sectarian method," declared Professor Tang Shuxiang at a forum organized by teachers in the electronics department. "They bring worker and peasant party members here to study, and we spend an awful lot of effort to train them, but the results are still bad."⁴⁴ A salient theme articulated by Qian and other party critics was that young party and league members—both students and young teachers—did not show the proper deference to professors their senior in age, professional rank, and knowledge. Qian complained that the Communists were ruining teacher/student relations. "You want to help them study, but they have a skeptical and critical attitude in learning from you; even worse they want to struggle against you," he wrote. "How can anyone teach under these conditions? How can anyone learn?"⁴⁵

When Qian and other professors argued that it was wrong for nonexperts to lead experts, they were directly challenging Communist pretensions to authority at the university. Both sides, however, recognized that the implications were much broader. The debate was over the relative importance of academic and political qualifications in selecting people to fill decision-making positions in all sectors of society, and members of the educated classes were voicing a deeply held belief that they were better qualified to lead society than the Communist usurpers.

DENOUNCING POLITICAL PRIVILEGE AND CONFORMISM

In addition to criticizing political intrusions on the prerogatives of cultural capital, the party's intellectual critics also condemned the Communists' tight political control and warned that the new system was giving rise to social differentiation based on political affiliation. The language they used was shaped by the narrow ideological boundaries the party imposed on the discussion,

which were respected by most of those who spoke out. They were aware that their criticisms would be most effective when presented within the prevailing political paradigm and, in fact, Communist rhetoric about democracy and social equality provided ready templates for poignant critiques of the party's practice. A rank-and-file member of the Youth League pointed out that elections for committee positions were often like arranged marriages because the leadership imposed their favorites, and he criticized the political counselor system as bureaucratic because it concentrated power in the hands of a few individuals who were appointed from above.

Faculty members criticized an emerging status hierarchy connected with political affiliation. One noted that party members and those who were applying to join the party all sat together at the same tables in the cafeteria, refusing to mix with the masses. Another complained that his students no longer even greeted him after they joined the party. Becoming a party member, he said, seemed tantamount to moving a rung above other people and joining a distinct class. In a similar vein, Professor Ding Zeyu criticized the system of preferential treatment cards, established in 1956, which provided senior professors and cadres with special access to health care and other goods and services, slyly pointing out that rank was replacing wealth in providing privilege. "In the past, the Nationalists had advantages over the masses because they had money, but they never issued preferential treatment cards."⁴⁶

Qian Weichang forcefully criticized the party's culture of conformism and its stultifying effect on Communist cadres. "Today the cadres they train are all obedient—in fact, they only act when you push them," he declared. "They have no ability to think independently. Only those people who do not use their brains can get along with the party."⁴⁷ Further developing this theme in a speech published in the national daily, *Chinese Youth*, Qian condemned Communist efforts to impose ideological and organizational fetters on young people. "When they talk about educating youth, they mean an unlimited number of rules, drawing lines to confine youth," he wrote. "Why is education not seen as training and reason, but rather as limitation and control? This has to do with the low level of the cadres, but more important it reflects the remnants of feudal thinking. There was a whole set of feudal sayings about how to 'educate' youth, requiring 'maturity and prudence' and 'refinement and cultivation.' Today, although we don't use this language anymore, some of the content has been reincarnated in sayings like 'submit to' and 'humbly listen to the opinions of the masses.'"⁴⁸

By early June, critics of the party were becoming increasingly bold. At free speech forums held at Tsinghua, party leaders were denounced as “local tyrants,” “fascists,” and members of a “privileged class,” and party and league activists were referred to as their “running dogs.” One professor compared the Communists to the Manchurian rulers of the Qing dynasty, a metaphor that recalled nationalist narratives about Han civilization being overrun by barbarians. Speakers called for the abolition of the party committee system and even demanded that the party withdraw from the school. Others suggested that the party “return state power to the people.”⁴⁹

ANTI-RIGHTIST COUNTERATTACK

In mid-June 1957, after enduring six weeks of increasingly sharp criticism, party officials retaliated with a vengeance, launching a campaign against “bourgeois Rightists.” Deng Xiaoping, the CCP’s general secretary, organized the campaign and Mao endorsed it. Vocal critics were denounced as champions of the old exploiting classes who wanted to reclaim power and retain their monopoly over knowledge and the privileges this entailed. Using top-down methods of mobilization perfected in previous political movements, party and league activists were called upon to defend the party. At Tsinghua, department and schoolwide meetings were held to denounce teachers and students accused of being Rightists and school walls were covered with a new layer of big character posters. This time, however, the content of the speeches and the posters was carefully orchestrated by the party organization. In a front-page article in the school newspaper, several students of Meng Zhaoying, the director of the electronics department who had been denounced as a “Big Rightist,” criticized him for disparaging party members as “yes-men with wooden brains” (*weirwei nuonuo de mumagua*). “A party member must obey the party’s decisions and the instructions from above, that’s the only way to maintain the party’s fighting power,” they argued. “If party members all followed Meng’s advice and questioned the party’s demands, what would happen to the unified action of the party? Wouldn’t that destroy the party’s thinking and organization?”⁵⁰

Meng and other vocal critics of the party were made to pay a heavy price for their temerity. Across the country, hundreds of thousands of people were punished as Rightists, including 403 students and 168 teachers and other employees at Tsinghua.⁵¹ Many teachers were removed from their posts and some were sent to labor in the countryside. Qian Weichang, Meng Zhaoying, and

several other senior professors were removed from the administrative positions they held. Those promoted to replace them included senior professors who were more reticent during the Party Rectification movement and proved their loyalty during the subsequent Anti-Rightist campaign, as well as young party members. He Dongchang, who had been an underground student leader at the university before 1949, was tapped to take over Qian’s duties overseeing academic affairs.

The Anti-Rightist campaign also targeted many party and league members who had spoken out during the Party Rectification. A subsequent campaign in 1959 specifically targeted “Right deviationism” in the party; eleven party members were denounced as Right deviationists, fifty-three were said to have displayed “serious Right deviationist thinking problems,” and 146 members were singled out for “help.”⁵² Eventually, almost all the teachers who had been punished, including Qian Weichang, were allowed to return to teaching, and by 1964 all but ten of the 168 Tsinghua employees who had been denounced as Rightists were formally rehabilitated. Nevertheless, everyone who had been stigmatized, including those whose Rightist “hats” were formally removed, continued to face discrimination until after the end of the Cultural Revolution decade.

The Anti-Rightist campaign made it clear that criticism of party officials and party policies would not be tolerated. Speaking before a school meeting in 1958, Jiang Nanxiang warned, “[The Rightists] underestimated other people, the masses, and the party; they lacked the attitude of seeking truth from facts and were not sincere and well behaved. They thought they were really something and could play with others. . . . The Rightists should not overestimate themselves in the future—they’ll lose in the end. This experience should be studied in order to develop a well-behaved attitude (*laolao shishi de taidu*).”⁵³ The impact on members of the university community was profound. Students and teachers who witnessed the punishment of those who had spoken out learned to measure their words carefully. Yang Yutian, who had just begun studying at the university in 1957, recalled, “The impact on us was—don’t talk carelessly or recklessly; you have to do what the party says (*ting dang de hua*).”⁵⁴ Students who arrived at the university in the wake of the Anti-Rightist campaign were eager to keep their distance from the controversy. Wei Xuecheng, a young woman who arrived at Tsinghua in 1958, told me that students in her cohort were not interested in criticizing the party. “We thought people should listen to the party; we wanted to be obedient tools of the party.”⁵⁵

Why did Mao in 1957 first call on intellectuals to criticize the party, and then turn on those who heeded his call? One common answer is that he and other Communist leaders were simply playing a trick on intellectuals by encouraging those with dissenting opinions to speak out so they could be identified and suppressed.⁵⁶ Others have suggested more complex reasons. Roderick MacFarquhar argued that Mao's decision to invite unsupervised criticism of the party was strongly opposed by most party leaders and he was compelled to beat a hasty retreat after criticism got out of hand.⁵⁷ Merle Goldman proposed that this episode was one of a series of cycles in which the party first relaxed control over intellectuals in order to encourage their creative participation in solving problems it faced, and then repressed dissidence in order to re-impose political control.⁵⁸ Because this book does not delve into biography or the details of elite party politics, I cannot arbitrate between these interpretations. If we consider the events of 1957 in light of the persistent conflicts over political and cultural power during the Mao Zedong era, however, three general observations can be made. First, the bureaucratic power of party officials—which Mao made a target of the 1957 Party Rectification campaign—was a problem he returned to again and again, each time with greater virulence. By soliciting unsupervised criticism by intellectuals, Mao opened the way for a much more profound discussion of this problem than would have been possible had the party been asked to rectify itself. Second, Mao was completely unsympathetic with intellectuals' conviction that their expertise made them more fit to run the country than the Communists, and much of the most hostile invective directed against intellectuals during the Anti-Rightist campaign reflected his thinking. Third, Mao was a master of Machiavellian manipulation of contentious political forces for his own ends, and he was probably not dismayed by the sharp conflicts between new and old elites produced by the Party Rectification campaign. These points, however, can only be fully discussed once the dramatic events that unfolded a decade later, during the Cultural Revolution, are brought under scrutiny. In this subsequent upheaval, the antibureaucratic themes of 1957 would be brandished by a movement with a much wider class base and much greater destructive power.

In any case, the events of 1957 displayed in sharp relief the antagonisms between the country's new and old elites. The Party Rectification campaign gave members of the old educated elite a chance to vent their grievances about experts being supervised by Reds, and they enthusiastically challenged the authority of the party organization and denounced the power and privileges of

the new political elite. In the subsequent Anti-Rightist movement, the party organization responded with a vindictive counterattack that reasserted its authority and discouraged further dissent, entrenching the political foundations of a newly emerging class order. This movement was also the beginning of a sustained assault on the old elites and the cultural foundations of their power, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

Conclusion

The twentieth-century Communist endeavor to eliminate class distinctions was the most ambitious and traumatic social-leveling experiment in human history. Leveling movements have punctuated all of recorded history, but none has surpassed the Communist movement in terms of duration, geographic scope, the number of people involved, and the level of ideological sophistication. Although it is difficult to precisely date the end of this experiment, the events of 1989 and the subsequent restoration of large-scale private property in most of the countries of the Soviet bloc and China was certainly a decisive moment. Although a number of Communist parties remain in power, almost all have brought back private property, abandoning an essential element of the Communist program and opening the way for a rapid polarization of wealth and income. By this reckoning, then, the 1990s marked the demise of the twentieth-century Communist project. Communist efforts to eliminate class distinctions, however, had come to an end much earlier. Long before the return of private property, Communist parties in the Soviet Union, China, and elsewhere presided over well-established class hierarchies based on public property, with a new class of Red experts on top. These countries were still in some sense socialist, but they had abandoned Marx's vision of a classless society in favor of Saint-Simon's vision of a society governed by the talented.

Although these Communist experiments were ultimately a spectacular failure, there is much that can be learned from this failure. There will inevitably

be more social-leveling movements in the future, and although private property is held sacrosanct by constitutions around the world today, it is hard to imagine that those without property will long tolerate a small minority of the population owning the great bulk of the wealth. Future social-leveling movements will undoubtedly revive demands for public ownership, and that is reason to look more closely into the origins and nature of the class hierarchies that the Communist experiments with public ownership produced. In this book, I have focused on class advantages derived from possession of cultural and political assets, and have examined conflicts surrounding the institutions that distributed these assets. I have shown that, despite promises to do away with class differences, the Chinese Communist Party, like its counterparts in other socialist countries, became a determined champion of class differentiation based on political and cultural capital. In this concluding chapter, I will return to the questions posed at the beginning of the book: when Communist revolutionaries dispossessed the propertied classes and created socialist systems based on public property, was their intention to build a technocratic class order? If not, was this result inevitable?

To lay the groundwork for answering those questions, I will first compare the Chinese with the Soviet experience, identifying goals, conflicts, processes, and results that seem to be common to the Communist project and others that seem to be peculiar to China. The aim is twofold. First, because the Soviet Union established the model that the CCP and other Communist parties followed, understanding the origins of this model will shed light on what happened in China. Second, a comparison of the results of the two most important Communist experiments will better enable us to answer the general questions posed above. In the following pages, I will first review the early history of the Soviet Union, extracting from a number of insightful studies those elements that have particular bearing on the subsequent Chinese experience, and I will then summarize the findings of the present inquiry.

The Circuitous Soviet Road to Technocracy

In 1917, the Bolshevik Party and the Russian technical intelligentsia had important potential points of unity. As Kendall Bailes noted, both were determined to use science to modernize Russia, and the Bolsheviks' dirigisme was not entirely foreign to scientists, engineers, and planners who had been

employed by the czarist state. Moreover, Lenin admired the knowledge and practical orientation of the technical intelligentsia, and in the chaos that followed the fall of the Russian monarchy—with armed workers taking charge of factories and peasants seizing land—many of the technical intelligentsia preferred the Bolsheviks, with their penchant for order and discipline, over some of their populist and anarchist competitors.¹ If the Bolshevik movement had been inspired by a Saint-Simonian vision, the two groups might have collaborated to create a technocratic society in relatively short order. The Bolsheviks, however, were instead committed to the Marxist goal of eliminating class distinctions. This goal put them sharply at odds with members of the educated classes, including the technical intelligentsia, and set up a protracted period of sharp conflict.

Relations between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the educated elite in the early years of the Soviet era were far more volatile and antagonistic than those between the CCP and the educated elite in China in the early 1950s. The first six months were particularly difficult, as a good part of the educated classes refused to cooperate with the fledgling revolutionary regime. The Bolsheviks responded to widespread strikes by decreeing compulsory labor service for all technical specialists; Lenin called the confrontation a civil war between the Soviet authorities, on one side, and representatives of the bourgeoisie and sections of the intelligentsia, on the other.² During this period, the Bolsheviks created a Red-over-expert administrative structure like the one later instituted in China. The party sent political commissars to supervise incumbent managers and technical personnel, and although it paid the technical intelligentsia well for their cooperation, it shunned them politically, instead reinforcing its own ranks by recruiting workers and promoting them to positions of authority. In 1928, ten years after the Bolsheviks seized power, there were only 138 engineers in the party, compared to 742,000 workers.³ Soviet factories were typically run by a Red director, who usually was a former worker and seldom had more than a grade-school education; this Red director relied on the assistance of a general engineer, who usually was not a party member.⁴

In Russia, as in China later, early Communist education policies fluctuated but moved generally in a radical direction. Lenin made Marx's comment about the need to eliminate the distinction between mental and manual labor into a fundamental goal of the new socialist state, and the education plank of the Bolshevik program, drawn up in 1919, promised to transform the school

“from the weapon of bourgeois class domination into a weapon for the total destruction of class divisions within society.”⁵ The program promised to provide free compulsory education for all children up to age seventeen, throw open the doors of universities to all, and establish a close connection between study and productive labor.⁶ These, of course, were promises for the future; at the time, most of the population was illiterate, there were few schools, and most teachers were hostile to the new regime. Schools, which remained largely autonomous for the first decade of the Soviet era, became the site of competing agendas. Soviet education authorities strove to implement progressive teaching methods based on practical learning and all-around intellectual development, many teachers tried to maintain conventional standards and methods, and proletarian students fought to take control of schools away from “bourgeois” teachers and students. In postsecondary schools, a wide social and political gap separated students from old elite families, who had graduated from traditional high schools, from working-class students, most of whom had been recommended by trade unions, the party, and the Communist Youth League to attend special workers’ schools to prepare for college.⁷

In 1928, the CPSU—now under Stalin’s leadership—moved decisively to the Left, embarking on agricultural collectivization and rapid industrialization, and commencing a period of cultural radicalism that Sheila Fitzpatrick has called the Soviet Union’s “Cultural Revolution.”⁸ Rapid expansion of primary and secondary education was accompanied by a massive adult literacy campaign. Postsecondary education also expanded rapidly, with emphasis on short-term technical programs and narrowly defined majors that quickly prepared graduates to join the industrialization drive. Grades, exams, and conventional lectures were criticized, and political classes, practical learning, and student participation in productive labor were stressed. Class discrimination against students from old elite families, which had begun with the Bolshevik takeover, was intensified, and 65 percent of admissions were reserved for workers and peasants and their children. Entrance examinations were eliminated and some 150,000 adult workers, a large proportion of whom were party members, were recommended to attend higher-level schools. This wave of proletarian students was urged to finally take control of schools out of the hands of bourgeois professors, by monitoring teachers, challenging their authority, and participating in school administration.⁹

Radical education policies coincided with attacks on educated elites in all

sectors, including industry and government. Factory workers were encouraged to challenge the authority of specialists, and the contributions of worker-inventors and worker-technicians, who had only on-the-job training, were celebrated as superior to those of engineers. After the Shakhty affair in 1928, in which a group of mining engineers were tried for “wrecking,” workers were encouraged to closely monitor the experts in their factories, and several thousand were arrested. In another highly publicized trial in 1930, a group of top-level engineers and experts in Soviet ministries and planning offices were accused of forming an “Industrial Party” and conspiring to replace the Bolshevik government with one run by technocrats.

TAKING THE TECHNOCRATIC ROAD

In 1931, Stalin delivered two speeches that marked the end of this period of cultural radicalism and the beginning of what Nicholas Timasheff famously called the “Great Retreat.”¹⁰ In the first, Stalin denounced “petty-bourgeois egalitarianism,” and in the second he announced that the old intelligentsia was coming over to the side of the Soviet government.¹¹ Radical education policies were gradually reversed. Recommendation of adult workers for higher education was curtailed, entrance examinations were restored, and school fees were introduced. Grades, course exams, and conventional methods of teaching were restored, and practical learning and student participation in labor declined. Students were admonished not to interfere in administration and encouraged to respect the authority of teachers. Class preferences were eliminated and attacks on the old educated elites, whether professors or engineers, were discouraged.¹² Professional ranks were restored and salaries and benefits were increased for those who had higher qualifications and made greater contributions, leading to a steadily increasing gap between workers and technical and managerial employees.¹³

In the early 1930s, hundreds of thousands of newly minted proletarian Red experts graduated and entered the labor force. They had originally been recruited to go to school so they could take the place of unreliable bourgeois experts, but in the end most of the old experts were retained. It turned out, after radical policies were discarded, that there was room enough for both old and new experts in the ongoing industrialization drive. Nevertheless, many of the young Red experts were promoted to take the place of the poorly educated Red directors and managers (who had been recruited in the 1920s

from the ranks of the workers), a process facilitated by the massive purge of officials in 1936–38.¹⁴ As a result, the Red-over-expert structure was replaced by a model in which political, administrative, and technical leadership were combined and authority was concentrated in the hands of a single Red and expert director. Members of the first cohorts of Red experts rose quickly in the party and state bureaucracies during the Second World War and the postwar years, and they came to dominate the Soviet leadership in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁵ Because of the strong class preferences of the late 1920s and early 1930s, these leaders were typically of working-class origin, but after class discrimination was eliminated, students were drawn increasingly from among children of the educated classes.¹⁶

Although political movements would continue to claim hundreds of thousands of victims in the years to come, after cultural radicalism was renounced in the early 1930s, major political campaigns did not specifically target members of the old educated elite or make social inequality connected with education a cause for political mobilization.¹⁷ In 1936, Stalin declared that Soviet society was composed of two friendly classes, the working class and the peasantry, and a stratum he called the “working intelligentsia.”¹⁸ This latter term, as Fitzpatrick pointed out, not only replaced the pejorative “bourgeois intelligentsia,” but now encompassed both members of the old intelligentsia and party cadres.¹⁹ By the time Soviet advisors arrived in China in the 1950s, the Soviet Union was administered by Red engineers, who had been selected by a decidedly hierarchical school system and a party organization dedicated to technocratic principles.

The goals of achieving a classless society and eliminating the distinction between mental and manual labor remained an official part of CPSU doctrine—and were consecrated in the country’s constitution—until the Soviet Union’s demise. After cultural radicalism was renounced in the early 1930s, however, this goal was to be accomplished not by means of class struggle, but rather through the gradual cultural improvement of the workers and peasants so that they reached the level of the intelligentsia, who now served as a model for emulation. This new interpretation provoked much less social turmoil, but it did little to diminish class differences. During subsequent decades, the salaries and material conditions provided for members of the intelligentsia grew steadily compared to those of workers, and the institutions that underpinned the social advantages of the educated elite and facilitated its reproduction across generations were elaborated and fortified.²⁰

China and the Soviet Road

In many ways, conditions in post-1949 China were much more propitious for technocratic development than those in the early years of the Soviet Union. Relations between the new Communist regime and the educated elite were much less confrontational as a result of several factors, including the CCP’s more secure hold on power, its governing experience in rural base areas (where it had substantial practice cooperating with local elites), and its comparatively moderate approach toward urban elites. This approach was encouraged by the new regime’s Soviet advisors, who came with blueprints for building socialism that reflected the technocratic turn that had taken place in the Soviet Union years earlier. Nevertheless, the CCP rejected the technocratic road, and instead embarked on a class-leveling project that closely resembled that undertaken in the early years of the Soviet Union.

The Chinese ending up re-creating many of the same policies that had been implemented in the Soviet Union decades earlier, but had since disappeared (even in official histories). No systematic scholarship has yet been done on the extent to which radical Chinese policies during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution were modeled after early Soviet policies.²¹ To whatever extent they were, it is clear that the fundamental impetus for both was the same: Marxist ideas as adapted by Lenin. The CCP was a product of the extraordinary global appeal of Leninist ideas following the October Revolution. These were ideas that appealed to revolutionaries, not technocrats. Leninist doctrine insisted on violent revolution and unremitting class struggle; its adherents were instructed to organize the most impoverished and oppressed of the workers and peasants to fight for a classless society. The CCP waged nearly three decades of rural warfare under Leninist banners, and it brought these ideas, along with a huge army of peasant cadres, to power in 1949.

The Chinese Communists, like the Bolsheviks, converted the means of production into public property, and control was concentrated in state and collective offices, access to which was provided by political and cultural capital. The latter was concentrated in the hands of the old educated classes, while the former was concentrated in the hands of party cadres. If class leveling had stopped with the redistribution of economic capital and left the existing distribution of cultural and political capital undisturbed, the stage would have been set for the relatively tranquil development of a technocratic order. Instead, class leveling was extended to the cultural field, and eventually to the political

field. In pursuing class leveling, the Chinese followed the Leninist theory and practice they had learned in the 1920s and 1930s, and to a great extent they were prisoners of this theory and practice, even when they extended their use into uncharted territory.

REDISTRIBUTION IN THE CULTURAL FIELD

The program that the CCP inherited from the Bolsheviks, as we have seen, called for eliminating not only private property in the means of production, but also the distinction between mental and manual labor. The concentration of education in the hands of the old privileged classes was seen as no more morally justified than the concentration of property. The willingness of Communist cadres to carry out radical redistribution policies in the cultural field was reinforced by the fact that the overwhelming majority—who were poorly educated peasant revolutionaries—had few personal assets at stake. They took the same kind of class-struggle approach in the cultural field that they took in the economic field, mobilizing the disadvantaged against the advantaged. Although cultural capital could not be confiscated and redistributed the way economic capital was, they redistributed educational opportunities, restructured the institutions that reproduced the unequal distribution of capital, and undermined the social authority and status of the educated elite. Although the Communists rapidly expanded the school system, they were not content with gradually improving the conditions of the lower classes; instead they were determined to tear down the advantages of the educated classes.

In both the industrial and education fields, the CCP initially adopted the technocratic models pioneered by the Soviet Union after the CPSU abandoned class leveling. In industry, it attempted to implement the Soviet “one-man management” model, which combined political, administrative, and technical leadership. In education, it created a meritocratic hierarchy of schools, which advantaged children of the educated classes. These policies had support within the party and, as we have seen, technocratic ideas had a great deal of appeal at Tsinghua and other universities that were charged with training Red engineers. Nevertheless, technocratic policies ran into tremendous resistance and were ultimately rejected, as the CCP moved to pursue cultural class leveling in an increasingly radical fashion.

The one-man management model, which placed expert managers in charge, was never popular with most Chinese Communist cadres, who had little tech-

nical expertise themselves and did not trust the incumbent experts. Instead, they preferred to keep power in the hands of party committees, and the CCP formally rejected one-man management in 1956.²² When the party took over factories (as well as government offices, schools, and other institutions), it established a Red-over-expert power structure, as the fledgling Bolshevik regime had done, in which incumbent managers and specialists were relegated to subordinate technical positions. Over time, this Red-over-expert structure was reinforced and reproduced because the CCP distrusted new university graduates (who were largely from old elite families) and preferred to promote workers to positions of power.

Starting in 1957, the CCP also rejected technocratic aspects of the Soviet education model and implemented much more radical policies. These policies were partially reversed following the collapse of the Great Leap Forward, but Mao revived the radical agenda in 1964, and cultural-leveling initiatives reached their height during the Cultural Revolution decade. The radical education program in China was very similar to radical policies that had been implemented in the early years of the Soviet Union, but the CCP carried it out in a more systematic fashion and for a longer period of time. The main goals were: (1) to redistribute educational opportunities, inhibiting the reproduction of the educated elite and dispersing education across the population; and (2) to alter the nature of education and of occupational divisions so as to eliminate the distinction between mental and manual labor. Hundreds of thousands of schools were built, and the length of primary and secondary education was reduced as part of a crash campaign to make both universal. All middle school graduates entered the workforce, starting in manual occupations, and postsecondary education, which could only be provided for a minority, was reorganized to hinder the reproduction of the educated elite. Entrance examinations were eliminated, students were recommended by factories, communes, and military units, and class line discrimination against old elite families was intensified. Short-term training programs—located increasingly in factories and villages—were developed and curricula were designed to combine theory with practical knowledge and manual skills, preparing graduates for occupations that would combine mental and manual labor.

By the end of the Mao era, class distinctions based on education remained enormous, but they had been significantly diminished. Radical education policies had many deleterious side effects, but they were effective in advancing their class-leveling goals. This conclusion contradicts Jonathan Kelly and

Herbert Klein's oft-cited thesis that revolutions cannot redistribute cultural assets. Based on studies of Bolivia and Poland, they concluded that radical social revolutions were capable of initially reducing inequality by redistributing physical property, but failed in the long run because they were incapable of reducing inequality based on education.²³ In the Chinese case, although the CCP certainly did not eliminate inequality based on cultural capital, during the Mao era such inequality never ceased to give ground to radical assaults. Ultimately, the fundamental obstacles that stymied class leveling in China were in the political, not the cultural field.

REDISTRIBUTION IN THE POLITICAL FIELD

While the CCP considered the cultural field—and the education system in particular—to be enemy territory, the political field was Communist territory. The party sought to capture this enemy territory and redistribute enemy resources, and at the same time shore up its own position in the political field by concentrating power in the hands of the party. Communist cadres saw themselves as leading the workers and peasants in a struggle against the old elite classes. Under this banner, the CCP reorganized villages, factories, and schools, making them into highly organized work units with semipermanent members, and within each unit it endeavored to concentrate power in the hands of a party committee. Thus, in the political field it came to power with an agenda of concentrating, not dispersing power. Nevertheless, the party was concerned that its own cadres were abusing the power they had and becoming estranged from the masses. To carry out a revolutionary agenda directed against the most powerful groups in society, it depended on support among the lower classes, and it required cadres who acted as revolutionaries-in-power, not privilege-seeking officials. It therefore attempted to employ the masses to monitor its own cadres. Party work teams were sent to villages, factories, and schools to mobilize work unit members to criticize local leaders for “bureaucratic” behavior—isolation from the masses, abuse of power, “commandism,” and suppression of criticism from below. Communist cadres were subjected to periodic campaigns—all initiated by Mao—against corruption and bureaucracy, including the Party Rectification campaign in 1957 and the Socialist Education movement in the early 1960s. Like campaigns in the cultural field, these campaigns became larger, longer, and more disruptive over time, culminating in the Cultural Revolution.

In the political field the Chinese also started with Soviet theory and practice. They borrowed from the Soviets not only the Leninist party model, with its vanguard status, hierarchical structure, and strict discipline, but also methods of rectifying problems in the party organization. The CCP's concept of bureaucracy—and the struggle against it—came from the Soviets. Chinese Communists learned to practice criticism and self-criticism and organize mass supervision of cadres from their Soviet mentors, and Chinese leaders were following Soviet precedent when they issued strongly worded denunciations of party officials for abusing workers and peasants, and when they discovered enemies within the party bent on restoring capitalism.²⁴ Nevertheless, both the goals and methods of the Chinese Cultural Revolution extended the Bolshevik struggle against bureaucracy in ways that made it qualitatively different.

Mao identified the target of the movement as an emergent bureaucratic class that was exploiting the workers and peasants. He was convinced that party officials had become the main danger to the Communist class-leveling project, and he adopted goals and methods that reflected this concern. While previous campaigns had targeted official abuse of power, the Cultural Revolution was the first that was clearly designed to disperse cadres' political power. The main goals were: (1) to redistribute political power within work units, by undermining the authority of cadres and enhancing the power of rank-and-file work unit members; (2) to weaken patterns of political tutelage and patronage; and (3) to prevent cadres from obtaining privileged access for their children to party membership, education, and employment. Mao went around the party apparatus and used his personal authority to spur the creation of an autonomous rebel movement. This movement, with Mao's support, effectively undermined the authority of the party bureaucracy, enhancing power at the top and the bottom at the expense of party officials in the middle. Mao gained much greater personal authority, and the masses—or at least some of them—enjoyed unprecedented power as local rebels mobilized people to criticize local party officials and decide who among them was fit to return to office.

After fighting between rebel groups and moderate defenders of the status quo brought China to the brink of civil war, Mao authorized suppression of the factional conflict. The rebel organizations were disbanded and the party—which had been paralyzed for two years—was rebuilt, reconcentrating power in the hands of its officials. Mao, however, attempted to check bureaucratic power by creating a system of institutionalized factional contention that pitted rebels against administrators. Veteran cadres were returned to administrative

positions, while rebels were placed in positions that allowed them to mobilize opposition to the administrators. Radical leaders continued to mobilize political movements against party officials, but—unlike the rebels of the early years of the Cultural Revolution—they employed administrative measures and bureaucratic methods of mobilization. At Tsinghua, the workers' propaganda team mobilized students and workers to criticize university cadres and teachers. Although the system of governance they created prevented the restoration of an orderly bureaucratic hierarchy, it ended up perpetuating a culture of political tutelage, this time in a distorted form I have called sycophantic rebellion.

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao continued to insist on putting politics in command, that is, enhancing political at the expense of cultural power by giving precedence to political over technical and academic considerations and qualifications. His strategy was in essence to transfer power from the cultural to the political field, but at the same time to disperse cadres' political power. Ultimately, the fate of this strategy—and of the entire class-leveling project—rested on finding effective means to disperse cadres' political power. Although the early rebel movement was very effective in undermining the authority of party offices, the results of subsequent efforts to institutionalize factional contention and mass supervision over cadres were disappointing. Ultimately, the political experiments of this period provide little indication that Mao and his followers had found effective means of dispersing the power of Communist officials.

REPRODUCTION AND CONVERGENCE OF ELITES

So far, I have discussed the cultural and political fields separately, but China's New Class arose at the intersection of the two. This class was the product of the reproduction and convergence of the political and educated elites. The political elite was able to reproduce itself as their children acquired political credentials, and the educated elite was able to reproduce itself as their children acquired educational credentials. It was the convergence of the two groups, however, that created a technocratic class.

Structurally, the political and educated elites converged gradually as their asset structures became more similar. In 1949, there was little overlap; very few members of the educated classes belonged to the party, and very few party members had higher levels of education. Those who had a foot in both

camps—the Communist intellectuals—were tiny in absolute numbers and a small minority within each group. As children of the educated elite gained political credentials and children of the political elite gained academic credentials, the number of people who occupied the intersection of the two groups—the Red experts—grew steadily. Their twin credentials gave them a vested interest in the hierarchical structure of both the cultural and political fields, and their common experience in higher education and Communist activism imbued them with common values and perspectives that set them apart from the great majority of the population, including most of their parents.

The two elites also converged politically as members of both groups came to recognize a mutual interest in preserving social stability and halting class-leveling campaigns. During the first decades of Communist power, these campaigns were facilitated by the gulf between the new and old elites. Communist cadres saw the educated elite as representatives of the old order and believed that undermining the privileges they derived from cultural capital was part of the party's revolutionary mandate, while intellectuals saw Communist cadres as unqualified usurpers and resented the privileges they derived from political capital. In 1957, members of the two groups lined up on opposite sides of battle lines defined by political and cultural capital. In 1966, the same kind of inter-elite antagonisms exploded at many elite schools, but simultaneous attacks on both groups ended up forging inter-elite unity. One manifestation of this unity was the moderate factions that emerged at Tsinghua University and other schools. Budding Red experts of all class origins took umbrage at radical slogans denouncing party-affiliated college graduates as "new bourgeois intellectuals" and they came together in the moderate camp to defend both political and cultural capital.

This unity could not be consummated during the Cultural Revolution decade, when Mao and his radical followers throttled all elite pretensions. After Mao died in 1976, however, party officials and intellectuals discovered unprecedented unanimity in condemning the violence and egalitarianism of the Cultural Revolution. By then, the gradual convergence of old and new elites had established the conditions for the rapid consolidation of a technocratic class. Party leaders renounced class leveling, unambiguously recognized the value of cultural capital, embraced the old educated elite, and moved to transform the CCP into a party of technocrats. Intellectuals now acclaimed Deng Xiaoping—who had organized the persecution of dissident intellectuals during the Anti-Rightist campaign two decades earlier—as their savior. The party

organization and the education system were refurbished and Red experts were moved expeditiously into positions of responsibility, replacing veteran peasant revolutionaries and worker-peasant cadres. The new CCP leadership, like their Soviet counterparts, insisted they were not abandoning egalitarian Communist ideals, only the destructive approach of class leveling. In the future, everyone would get rich, but some would get rich first. As it turned out, after the institutions that underpinned class differentiation were rebuilt, they were reinforced, and social inequality increased steadily.

Communism, Technocracy, and New Class Theory

Because the Communist revolutions in Russia, China, and other countries ended up creating a technocratic order with Red experts on top, it is tempting to think that this was the plan all along. Konrad and Szelenyi presented this idea in a particularly compelling fashion, developing a narrative in which the Bolsheviks and other Communist parties were the vanguard of the intelligentsia and the architects of a technocratic order that fulfilled intellectuals' long-held ambitions for power. In other words, according to Konrad and Szelenyi, Communist revolutionaries from the beginning sought to realize a Saint-Simonian vision of socialism. In this book, I have considered the Chinese case and tell a much different story. The CCP finally did take the technocratic road, but only after it abandoned the road of class leveling. This change of course converted the party from the enemy into the champion of cultural capital, and it facilitated the consolidation of a New Class based on the convergence of old and new elites. It seems to me that the basic elements of this story—the abandoning of class leveling in favor of technocratic policies and the contentious convergence of old educated and new political elites—also fit the Soviet case, and they are likely to fit other cases in which Communist parties came to power by means of indigenous revolutions. Any general theory that seeks to explain the rise of a New Class in socialist societies, I believe, has to make a place for these elements. With these elements in place, New Class theory would then have to explain the changing orientation of victorious Communist parties. Why did these parties first take the road of cultural leveling, and why did they then abandon this road in favor of the technocratic road? In the Chinese case, I stress the importance of ideas in answering the first question, and the importance of interests in answering the second.

EXPLAINING CLASS LEVELING

Once the CCP had taken the technocratic road, it presented its earlier forays into cultural leveling as a deviation from socialist principles. The CPSU also disavowed its early radicalism, and both parties ended up presenting the Communist mission as fundamentally technocratic. While these reinterpretations gut the radical elements from Marxist doctrine, it is true that technocratic tendencies existed in both countries from the first days of Communist power. In China, the CCP made pragmatic compromises with the educated elite, it built a highly meritocratic education system, and technocratic ideas flourished at Tsinghua and other universities. The same was true, albeit to a lesser extent, in the Soviet Union. These early technocratic tendencies, however, always existed uneasily within parties that were generally hostile to them, and in both countries they were overwhelmed by class-leveling impulses. Moreover, the radical goals and the class-struggle methods of cultural leveling in both the Soviet Union and China were derived directly from Communist ideology.

In explaining the early hostility of the CCP to the educated elite and technocratic policies, I have stressed the peasant origin of most of the party's cadres. Scholars of the Soviet Union have, in a similar fashion, pointed to the working-class origin of most Bolshevik Party members in explaining the party's early hostility to bourgeois experts. These explanations are accurate, but they point to an intermediate mechanism, not the original impetus. The CCP and the CPSU were both founded by intellectuals who—because of their interpretation of Marxism—intentionally based their movements among the lower classes and made great efforts to elevate members of humble origin into leadership positions. After taking power, they maintained this orientation, promoting workers and peasants and discriminating against intellectuals. The justification for this class bias was that lower-class cadres were the most trustworthy bearers of the Communist mission because they had less vested interest in preserving class privileges. And this was true, at least in the case of cultural capital. In sum, the CCP and the CPSU were not hostile to technocracy because their cadres were recruited from the poorly educated classes; rather, their cadres were recruited from the poorly educated classes because the parties' guiding ideology was hostile to technocracy.

I have also explained cultural class leveling, and especially efforts to redistribute educational opportunities, as a manifestation of competition between new and old elites. Scholars of the Soviet Union have made similar arguments,

highlighting the CPSU's determination to replace White experts with Red experts. These arguments are sound, but if we interpret Communist efforts to redistribute cultural capital *simply* as a means to train a more politically reliable corps of specialists, we miss much of their content. In both the Soviet Union and China, ideologically driven parties experimented with a broad range of educational policies designed to eliminate the distinction between mental and manual labor. In the Soviet Union, because redistribution efforts faded quickly after a new corps of Red experts was in place, it is easy to view early radical policies through the narrow lens of inter-elite competition. This is not justified in the Soviet case, however, and still less so in the Chinese case, where cultural redistribution continued much longer, and was clearly intended to prevent the consolidation of any kind of educated elite, White or Red.

EXPLAINING THE TECHNOCRATIC TURN

Ideology is less important in explaining the technocratic turn. Because proponents of technocratic policies were always vulnerable to charges of revisionism and class conciliation, these policies were easier to defend with pragmatic rather than ideological arguments. Such pragmatism, however, was underpinned by important interests. The potency of these interests increased with the convergence of new and old elites, and the growing corps of Red experts became the key constituency and the main benefactors of technocratic policies. I have developed a detailed narrative about how evolving elite interests underpinned the technocratic turn in China, and although my knowledge is not sufficient to venture a narrative of this type in the Soviet case, I suspect that similar interests were involved.

Other scholars have attributed this turn to the inexorable effects of universal laws. Nicolas Timasheff, who produced an influential interpretation of the first quarter-century of Bolshevik rule, and Richard Lowenthal, who wrote a much-cited essay comparing the trajectories of Communist power in the Soviet Union, China, and Yugoslavia, presented arguments of this type with particular eloquence.²⁵ Because they recognized that victorious Communist parties were driven by class-leveling ambitions, both authors were able to capture the contradictions of these societies and explain the twists and turns of Communist power in a far more compelling fashion than those who fail to take the Communist project seriously. In each of the cases they examined, Timasheff and Lowenthal argued that a revolutionary regime attempted to impose

a utopian program on a resistant population, which was more interested in getting along or getting ahead than creating an egalitarian society. Individual and group interests pervaded both Timasheff's and Lowenthal's accounts, but they connected these interests to unalterable characteristics of the human species, and they interpreted individual actions as the working out of much larger forces. For Timasheff, the Great Retreat was dictated by the resilience of tradition. The Bolsheviks, he argued, encountered relentless popular resistance because they attacked the country's cultural foundations and national pride, and were trying to tear down traditional institutions that served as Russia's social fabric, including the family, the church, and the school; in order to maintain power, they were finally compelled to abandon their utopian experiments and embrace traditional institutions and ideas. Lowenthal, in contrast, argued that Communist class leveling was perpetually at odds with simultaneous efforts to develop the national economy, and that utopianism finally gave way to the requirements of modernization.

These are powerful arguments, and they are found in different forms in the works of other scholars as well. It is certainly possible that Communist goals were vanquished by human nature, the resilience of tradition, the requirements of modernization, or by a combination of the three. If so, it is also possible that the outcome was inevitable. These are questions that this book, unfortunately, cannot answer. My inquiry has been pitched at a less lofty level, examining particular sets of interests based on existing institutions. I have concentrated on those interests connected with the unequal distribution of cultural and political capital, and the institutions that facilitated reproduction of this unequal distribution. The most important of these were the school system and the Communist Party, and so I have focused my attention on conflicts surrounding these institutions and the groups that coalesced to attack and defend them. I believe the present analysis offers an adequate explanation for why class leveling was abandoned in favor of the technocratic road in China, and I expect similar analyses would go far in explaining analogous outcomes in the Soviet Union and other countries. There may be more profound reasons that made these outcomes inevitable, but as long as explanations based on privileged groups defending vested interests seem to suffice, I am reluctant to accept that the results were dictated by inexorable universal causes.

In any case, class advantages based on unequal distribution of capital—economic, political, or cultural—will continue to provoke demands for redistribution, and the resulting conflicts will continue to spur arguments denouncing

or defending institutions that reproduce unequal distribution. For decades, and probably for centuries to come, proponents of both kinds of arguments will take as a key reference point the events of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which represented the culmination of the twentieth-century Communist class-leveling experiments.

Reference Matter

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Saint-Simon's followers became stronger advocates of public property than he had been. For interpretations of the ideas of Saint-Simon and his followers, see Carlisle (1987); MacIver (1922); and Manuel (1956).

2. Elimination of the division between mental and manual labor is a basic theme in Marx's works; for one instance, see Marx (1978, 531).

3. Other technocratic accounts from this period include Bayliss (1974); Bell (1973); Galbraith (1967); Gouldner (1979); and Ludz (1972). Previous efforts to explain the rise of a new dominant class in countries ruled by Communist parties had generally focused on political power. In Milovan Djilas's 1957 book, *The New Class*, which cemented the term in the popular imagination, he described the progenitors of this class as a band of proletarian revolutionaries who destroyed the existing elite classes and leveled all competing foundations of social power; the ruling Communist party and its state bureaucracy—political power—became the sole hierarchy of social differentiation. Konrad and Szelenyi disputed this notion; although they recognized the political foundations of the New Class, they were more interested in its cultural foundations, which to them seemed to portend a technocratic future not only for socialist societies, but perhaps for the entire world.

4. The terminology of political and cultural capital was not used by Konrad and Szelenyi, but was adopted by Szelenyi in subsequent works on this topic. A few years after *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* was published in 1979, Szelenyi (1986) conceded that the New Class project—making knowledge the main basis of class power—had been at least temporarily obstructed in Eastern Europe by bureaucratic elites' efforts to retain their political monopoly. Up until 1989, however, Szelenyi maintained that the project was more likely to succeed in the East than in the West because planning was more congenial to such a project than the market (Szelenyi and Martin 1988). Since 1989, however, he and his colleagues have argued that the New Class project survived the demise of communism and has been able to flourish under capitalist banners (Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley 1998).

5. Konrad and Szelenyi (1979, 184–92, 203).
6. See Chapter 10.
7. Burawoy (1998, 5).
8. Three monograph-length studies have examined the technocratic transformation of the CCP: Lee (1991); Li (2001); and Zang (2004). A number of recent quantitative analyses have documented the persistence of dual political and technical career tracks, and have confirmed that Chinese officials increasingly must have academic credentials, but still must have political credentials; see Bian, Shu, and Logan (2001); Dickson and Rublee (2000); Walder, Li, and Treiman (2000); and Zang (2001). In addition, a number of scholars have analyzed the characteristics of members of CCP central leadership bodies (Li and White 1988; Li and White 1990; Li and White 1991; Li and White 1998; Li and White 2003; North and Pool 1966; Scalapino 1972; Zang 1993); of officials in individual cities (Chamberlain 1972; Kau 1969; Lieberthal 1980; Vogel 1967; Vogel 1969; Wang 1995; White 1984); and of particular groups of Communist leaders (Israel and Klein 1976).
9. See, for example, Chen (1960); Goldman (1967); Goldman (1970); Goldman (1981); Liu (1990); MacFarquhar (1960); Mu (1963); and essays collected in Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin (1987); Gu and Goldman (2004); and Hamrin and Cheek (1986).
10. Important works on post-1949 Chinese education policy include Chen (1981); Cleverly (1985); Cui (1993); Han (2000); Hayhoe (1996); Pepper (1996); Taylor (1981); Unger (1982); White (1981); Zhou (1999); and Zhu (2000). In addition to discussing conventional educational goals, a number of these authors have considered the role of the education system as a mechanism of class differentiation, and several quantitative analyses have gauged the impact of changing policies on inequality in educational attainment; see Deng and Treiman (1997); Hannum (1999); Hannum and Xie (1994); Knight and Shi (1996); and Liu (1999). Among the studies that have analyzed the structure and function of the party and state system are Barnett (1967); Harding (1981); Lewis (1963); Lieberthal (1995); Schurmann (1968); Walder (1986); Whyte (1974a); and Zheng (1997). Among the studies that have specifically examined the party and Youth League recruitment apparatus are Bian, Shu, and Logan (2001); Funnell (1970); Leader (1974); and Shirk (1982).
11. See Chan, Rosen, and Unger (1980); Lee (1978); Liu (1986–87); Rosen (1982); Wang (1995); White (1976); Yin (1997a); and Xu (1996).
12. For an overview of his tripartite framework, see Bourdieu (1986); for more elaborate discussions of class differentiation in the cultural field in France, see Bourdieu (1984) and Bourdieu (1989). Bourdieu's definition of class is broader than that employed by Weber, who limited class to market position (Weber 1978, 926–40). It is also broader than that employed by many Marxists, who define class largely as property ownership, but it is compatible with Marx's broader definition of class as position in the relations of production. In discussing precapitalist societies, Marx

emphasized that a person's class position was determined largely by his or her social position and possession of skills, while private ownership of property played a less important role (Marx 1973, 491–502).

13. Szelenyi's adaptations can be found in Konrad and Szelenyi (1991) and Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley (1998). Sun (2002) used this tripartite framework to develop an insightful analysis of class transformation in China.
14. Although terminology varies, there is wide agreement among scholars that in the absence of private property the principal mechanisms of class differentiation in socialist societies were political and cultural. See, for instance, Bell (1973); Gouldner (1979); Inkeles (1966); Lane (1982); Parkin (1971); and Wright (1994).
15. The classic treatise on human capital is Becker (1964).
16. Bourdieu (1986, 248–49).
17. When Bourdieu (1998) briefly discussed the class structure of socialist East Germany, he stressed the central importance of party membership, which he treated as a political form of social capital.

CHAPTER 1

1. Liu later became one of the founders of the People's Navy and served as its deputy commander. Zhou was transferred to Peking University as part of the reorganization of higher education in 1952; he would eventually become president of the university and serve as honorary chairman of the National People's Congress. Biographies can be found at: <http://www.library.hn.cn/difangwx/hxrw/xdrw/jfj/liudaosheng.htm> and <http://www.cast.org.cn/n435777/n435799/n676835/n677237/20641.html>.
2. North and Pool (1966, 389).
3. Townsend (1970, 303); and Lee (1991, 45).
4. Many future Communist leaders tested into rural middle schools, often tuition-free teachers' schools, where they were recruited by underground party organizers (Cong 2007).
5. Hinton (1966); and Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden (1991).
6. See Brugger (1976); Gardner (1969); Lieberthal (1980); and Vogel (1969).
7. Bo quoted in Zhu (2000, 1494).
8. Chamberlain (1972) and Wang (1995) documented the situation of "dual elites" in Tianjin, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Wuhan.
9. Li (2001).
10. The United States and several European powers compelled the Qing dynasty to pay indemnities after they invaded China to suppress the anti-Western Boxer Rebellion in 1900.
11. See Table 3.2. This survey used the CCP's class categories.
12. Yuan Yongxi, who served as Tsinghua's party secretary until he was displaced by Jiang in 1956, was also highly educated.

13. Fang and Zhang (2001, 25–26); and Li (1994, 10).
14. See Whyte (1974a).
15. Mann (1986).
16. Estimates of the proportion of the population aged fifteen to twenty-five that belonged to the Youth League are cited in Leader (1974, 701). In 1965 there were approximately eighteen million party members (Lee 1991, 17) out of an adult population of about 376 million (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Population Research Center 1985, 602–3; data is from the 1964 Census). Party and league members made up a higher proportion of the urban population and in some factories one-fifth of employees belonged to the party.
17. Liu and Fang (1998, 536).
18. For descriptions of the recruitment process and criteria, see Montaperto (1972); and Shirk (1982).
19. This proportion includes students who had left the league and joined the party. Data was provided for students who graduated in the winter and summer of 1963. See *QHGB* (March 16, 1963; May 11, 1963).
20. *QHGB* (March 16, 1963; May 11, 1963).
21. See Table 3.5.
22. For analyses of the continuing importance of political credentials in the administrative track, see Walder (1995); and Walder, Li, and Treiman (2000).
23. Interviewee 63.
24. Shirk (1982) wrote that the CCP strived to select young people of good moral character because, like other ideological revolutionary movements, it was seeking to create a “virtuocracy.”
25. Interviewee 58.
26. Interviewee 63.
27. Liu (1967).
28. The class origin system grew out of the Land Reform campaign, in which each rural family was assigned a class designation as part of investigations that preceded property redistribution; the system was later extended to urban areas.
29. Although class origin and political background were formally differentiated (official forms typically provided different places for each), in the popular consciousness and in practice the two categories were often conflated. This practical conflation has often been repeated in scholarly discourse.
30. Krauss (1981, 20–26); Wang (1995, 25–33); White (1976, 2); and White (1984, 143–44).
31. Advantages derived from peasant and proletarian class designations should be distinguished from those derived from association with the Communist Party. Both were political advantages, but peasant family origin was hardly a predictor of success, while association with the party was.
32. Interviewee 51.

33. Interviewee 92.
34. As Walder (1986) pointed out, limited mobility and dependence on goods and services distributed by work units enhanced the power of work unit leaders over members.
35. See Teiwes (1976). Hinton (1966) provides a fascinating ethnographic account of a party work team organizing villagers to criticize local Communist cadres during a 1947 party rectification campaign.
36. Chen (1960); Goldman (1967); MacFarquhar (1960); and MacFarquhar (1974).
37. Mao quoted in Zhou (1999, 22).
38. Mao quoted in Liu and Fang (1998, 561).
39. Mao quoted in *JGS* (Sept. 6, 1967, 4). Dongchang'an Street refers to Zhongnanhai, the party's headquarters in Beijing. The city of Shijiazhuang was captured by the CCP in a key civil war battle and became a launching pad for the assault on Beijing. The small city of Yan'an served as the Communist headquarters during the anti-Japanese War.
40. Interviewee 45.
41. *New Tsinghua* Editorial Committee (1957, 186).
42. *New Tsinghua* Editorial Committee (1957, 183–84).
43. Hinton (1972, 36); and Li (1994).
44. *XQH* (May 22, 1957, 3).
45. *New Tsinghua* Editorial Committee (1957, 187).
46. *XQH* (May 18, 1957, 4).
47. *New Tsinghua* Editorial Committee (1957, 203–6).
48. *New Tsinghua* Editorial Committee (1957, 77–78).
49. *XQH* (June 15, 1957, 1; June 22, 1957, 1; June 24, 1957, 4; Feb. 11, 1958, 3).
50. *XQH* (July 4, 1957, 1).
51. For accounts of the Anti-Rightist movement, see Chen (1960); Goldman (1967); and MacFarquhar (1974). The 403 Tsinghua students denounced as Rightists made up 4.4 percent of the student body. Assuming the great majority of the 168 employees criticized as Rightists were teachers, over 10 percent of the university faculty may have been so labeled. See Liu et al. (1987, 70); and Fang and Zhang (2001, vol. 1, 216, 490, 521, 525).
52. *XQH* (June 6, 1980, 1).
53. *JGS* (Sept. 6, 1967, 4).
54. Interviewee 48.
55. Interviewee 46.
56. See, for instance, Chang and Halliday (2005, 416–21).
57. MacFarquhar (1974).
58. Goldman (1967).

CHAPTER 11

1. Information about Tongfang can be found on the company's Web site, www.thtf.com.cn.
2. For biographical information about Lu Zhicheng, see www.thtf.com.cn. For biographical information about Rong Yonglin, see <http://www.cec-ceda.org.cn/huodong/2006zscq/ryl.htm>.
3. Chen (2006).
4. For Tongfang executive compensation, see <http://www.mediapoint.co.uk/investing/quotes>. Lu quoted in "Stock Option Creates a Flurry of Chinese Millionaires," <http://www.peopledaily.com.cn/english> (July 21, 2000).
5. Information about Tsinghua Science Park can be found at <http://www.thsp.com.cn>.
6. High-technology incubators operated by universities are discussed in Eun, Lee, and Wu (2006); Harwit (2002); and Sunami (2002).
7. Naughton (2007); and Garnaut, Song, and Yao (2006).
8. Li and Rozelle (2003); and Garnaut, Song, and Yao (2006).
9. National Bureau of Statistics of China (2006), 128–29. The public sector includes both state-owned and collective enterprises.
10. Naughton (2007).
11. Solinger (2003, 69).
12. Solinger (1995); and Wang (2006a).
13. Among sixty-three successful private entrepreneurs in Shanxi Province interviewed by Goodman, for instance, twenty-five were children of a party member, most of whom were "in positions of some responsibility within the party-state" (Goodman 2004, 159).
14. Balfour, Einhorn, and Murphy (2003); and Lam (2004).
15. Oster (2006).
16. *China Vitae* (<http://www.chinavitae.org>); and Chen (2008).
17. *China Vitae* (<http://www.chinavitae.org>); and Tkacik (2004).
18. Reuters (2003).
19. For biographical sketches of several successful entrepreneurs, see Goodman (2004).
20. The Hurun Report estimated that only one-third of the eight hundred multimillionaires on its 2007 list were party members (<http://www.hurun.net>). Searching the Hurun Report and three other popular lists of China's wealthiest individuals over the past five years, China's University Alumni Association found only three hundred university graduates, and—unlike top state officials—most of them had not attended the country's most elite schools (Xinhua 2008). Party membership and university degrees are far more common among this group of wealthy entrepreneurs than among the general population, but far less common than among upper-level state officials.

21. Chang and Wong (2004); Naughton (2004); and Yusuf, Nabeshima, and Perkins (2006, 41).
22. The *Almanac of Private Property in China 2000* reported that 19.8 percent of the owners of Chinese private enterprises were party members (Holbig 2002). In a 2002–3 national survey conducted by Tsai (2007), more than one-third of business owners reported they were party members. Among the owners of large firms in four provinces surveyed by Dickson (2007), half were party members and most of the rest wanted to join; the larger the enterprise, the more likely the owner was to be a member. Among sixty-three successful private entrepreneurs in Shanxi Province interviewed by Goodman (2004), 39 percent were party members.
23. Goodman (2003); and Dickson (2007).
24. Zhang, Zhao, Park, and Song (2005, 739).
25. Goodman and Zang (2008). See also Naughton (2007, 217–21); and Wang (2006b).
26. Fang quoted in Kraus (1989, 299).
27. Qian quoted in Cheng and White (1991, 362).
28. Buckley (1991), Hamrin (1990), Kraus (1989), and Li and White (1991) provided insightful accounts of the popularity of meritocratic and technocratic ideas in the 1980s.
29. Among the best-known technocratic scenarios published in the West during this period were those by Bell (1973), Galbraith (1967), and Gouldner (1979). Bell concurred that the rise of planning meant the ascent of the technical and professional intelligentsia, but he argued that social selection would never be based entirely on knowledge. Planning, he wrote, required adjudicating among competing interests and values, a process that ultimately was political, not technical, and which, therefore, would empower politicians, whose principal source of power was not technical competence, but rather the machinery of a political party. "It is not the technocrat who ultimately holds power," wrote Bell, "but the politician" (Bell 1973, 360).
30. Wei (2007).

CONCLUSION

1. Bailes (1978).
2. Lenin quoted in Lampert (1979, 12). See also Lewin (1985, 231); Fitzpatrick (1979, 87); Bailes (1978, 19–23); and Karabel (1997).
3. For the number of engineers in the party, see Bailes (1978, 138). Rigby (1968) provided data on the number of party members (p. 52) and the proportion of worker origin (p. 116). Many working-class party members had been promoted to managerial positions.
4. Bailes (1978, 64–66); and Lampert (1979, 22–24).
5. Lapidus (1978, 82).

6. All-Russian Communist Party (1953, 111-12).
7. Fitzpatrick (1979); Zhu (1997); and Zhu (2000).
8. Fitzpatrick used this term to identify the period of cultural radicalism between 1928 and 1931, in part, to highlight the similarity of Soviet policies during this period and those of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The term was widely used in the Soviet Union at the time, but not specifically to identify this period (Fitzpatrick 1999).
9. Bailes (1978, 159-261); Fitzpatrick (1979, 113-211); Lapidus (1978); and Zhu (2000).
10. Timasheff (1946).
11. Bailes (1978, 153-54); and Fitzpatrick (1979, 213-17).
12. Fitzpatrick (1979); and Timasheff (1946).
13. Lewin (1985, 254-55).
14. Fitzpatrick (1992, 149-82); Bailes (1978, 268-87); and Hoffman (1993).
15. Fitzpatrick (1992, 149-82); and Bailes (1978, 267).
16. Bailes (1978, 196).
17. Bailes (1978, 225-26) and Fitzpatrick (1993) show that old elites were specific targets between 1928 and 1930, but not during later purges, including those of the 1936-38 period.
18. Stalin (1976).
19. Fitzpatrick (1992, 15).
20. Bailes (1978, 410-11); and Moore (1965, 241-43).
21. Chinese education policies were influenced by remnants of radical practices that survived in the Soviet education system, and the CCP investigated the evolution of education policy in the Soviet Union (see, for instance, *JGS*, Dec. 7, 1967).
22. Schurmann (1968, 220-308).
23. Kelly and Klein (1981).
24. Andrie (1988); Chase (1987); Fitzpatrick (1994); Getty (1985); Hoffman (1993); Koenker (2005); and Luper (1996).
25. Timasheff (1946); and Lowenthal (1970). Lowenthal accurately predicted the demise of class leveling in China, based on the Soviet and Yugoslav experiences.

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