# What is to be Undone:
# Official Knowledge and Governing Practices in the Era of Reform

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For the past several decades, the study of contemporary Chinese politics has been dominated by the assumption that Mao's death marked the advent of a new era of demobilizational politics defined by a popular and elite rejection of the Maoist mass politics in general, and the Cultural Revolution in particular. In the now famed Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of December 1978, the scholarly consensus reads a fundamental break with the defining features of the Maoist past; others perceive a more gradual evolution from Maoist totalitarianism toward a more consultative, inclusive "soft authoritarianism." Both interpretations cite the more routinized collective decision making and institutionalized politics of the post-Mao era as evidence of a largely successful transition to a postrevolutionary epoch, facilitated in no small part by the preceding decade of Cultural Revolution-inspired internecine violence. Deng Xiaoping's 1979 pronouncement that "large-scale turbulent class struggles of a mass character have in the main come to an end,"[1] and the Party's stunning resolution that the decade of Mao's Cultural Revolution amounted to a "grave 'Left' error" that "did not in fact constitute a revolution or social progress in any sense"[2] marked a clear change of course in the history of the Party, one underscored by present efforts aimed the construction of a "socialist harmonious society." In contrast to the Maoist dictum that class struggle is the primary means of "continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat," the Sixth Plenum resolution released in 2006 asserted that "social harmony," and not the perpetuation of class conflict, resides in "the intrinsic nature of socialism." Even more startling to students of the Mao era, the resolution posited that "social harmony" had been a primary goal of the Party since the founding of the PRC, [3] a reversal that signaled to many that the social revolutionary impetus of the CCP had, at last and irrevocably, succumbed to the Thermidor.

Yet, notwithstanding the Party's "thorough negation" of the Cultural Revolution, its efforts to shape, direct, and reconstruct mass culture persist, suggesting that the post-Mao leadership has not repudiated in entirety the project of cultural revolution, but has instead cemented a long-term engagement with it. Speaking in 1966 on why it was necessary to carry out a revolution to transform culture, Lin Biao proposed that the fundamental change in the

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[1] Deng Xiaoping, "Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles," 30 March 1979, *Selected Works*, p. 176.
[2] Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, "Resolution on Certain Question sin the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China" (adopted June 27, 1981).
[3] Alice Lyman Miller, "Hu Jintao and the Sixth Plenum," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 20 (Winter, 2007).

economic basis of Chinese society that occurred in the wake of collectivization necessitated a thorough-going transformation in the sphere of social consciousness in order to keep pace with economic change, and to make way for further progress. The new frontline of revolutionary struggle was Chinese culture, which included "thought (*sixiang*), social consciousness, world outlook, customs and habits, political outlook, legal perspectives, artistic perspectives, and in the arts, motion pictures and drama, sculpture, literature, as well as the educational system, etc."[4] The goal of this new mobilization was to "meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole society…so as to facilitate the consolidation and [further] development of the socialist system."[5]

When viewed in this light, Deng Xiaoping's more recent efforts to construct a "spiritual socialist civilization," Jiang's Zemin's focus on the "comprehensive development of people" (*ren de quanmian fazhan*), and Hu Jintao's "socialist harmonious society" appear to be successive iterations of this longer-term agenda that derives in part from the Party's Leninist roots.[6] In his 1902-03 pamphlet, *What Is to Be Done?*, Lenin famously argued that the obligation and the duty of the revolutionary party "consists in a *struggle against spontaneity*," because the spontaneous impulses of the masses result "precisely in the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie." Lenin's chief instruction to his elite "party of a new type" was to "*drag* the labor movement *away*" from its spontaneous tendencies, and to mold it from without. Tactically, Lenin's strategy involved developing print media, courting mass organizations and "unifying local activities" to train them continuously it in the direction of social transformation, in effect substituting the revolutionary zeal of the Bolsheviks for the more muted popular impulses of the masses, and the unitary revolutionary culture of the Party for the heterogeneous culture of the masses."

Yet whereas Lenin and Mao sought to expand political struggle from the Party outwards, the post-Mao leadership has attempted to retain and refine the institutional capacity of the Party-state to shape popular culture, while steadily emptying it of political import and power. The 1981 Party resolution on CCP history that repudiated Mao-era social mobilizations laid blame for its excesses on Party cadres, who "habitually fell back on the familiar methods and experiences of the large-scale, turbulent mass struggle of the past," and who responded to rising social tensions "mechanically," and "substantially broadened

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[4] "Lin biotongzhi zai Zhongyang Gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua" [Comrade Lin Biao's address to the Central Work Conference] October 25, 1966.

[5] *Renmin Ribao* (August 9, 1966).

[6] Meisner observed that "At no time in the history of the People's Republic was there so great an emphasis on the Leninist character and leadership role of the Chinese Communist Party as during the reign of Deng Xiaoping." Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), p. 164.

the scope of class struggle."[7] In contrast to the Maoist model, Deng Xiaoping's 1979 declaration acknowledged that the Party's crusade against elements hostile to socialism would continue, but would focus instead on threats to social stability, targeting "bad elements of all kinds who undermine public order."[8] Deng's proposed method for managing these elements reversed the Maoist trend of mass mobilization by anchoring political work more narrowly in the hands of the Party's technocratic elite:

> Sound ideological and political work is needed to mobilize and organize the masses to carry out, energetically and voluntarily, an effective struggle against all forces hostile to political stability and unity. We should not mount a political movement to accomplish this, as we have done in the past. We should abide by the principle of socialist legality…and formulate and promulgate appropriate regulations and decrees.[9]

With the steady constriction of the scope of politics from a mass to a largely elite concern, and the redirection of socialism as an engine of socioeconomic change into a machinery of power and the bulwark of a stable social order, the remnants of Leninist mobilizational practices have commandeered over the course of the reform era, and transformed into a largely depoliticized and technocratic form of "social engineering" characterized by the elite manipulation of culture to serve Party-sanctioned aims and elite interests. As Arif Dirlik recently argued, "the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s played an important part in paving the way for the present by making culture into an object of manipulation, and an instrument for the political transformation of Chinese subjects."[10] Trading the mobilization and active participation of the masses in political struggle for a mixture of material inducements and administrative sanctions, the post-Mao Party first restored, and then redefined, the tactical and strategic role of the Leninist party through the deployment of democratic centralism and organizational discipline, but effectively abandoned the ultimate ends for which both means were sought: the deepening of what Lenin referred to as "revolutionary Social Democracy."

The Dengist reform agenda absorbed a number of the distinctive mobilization strategies and governing institutions deployed during the Cultural Revolution, but hollowed them out, and adapted them to serve instead the mechanism of the market. Reform era political order relies largely on market discipline, profit incentive, and private consumption to preempt social tensions and popular upheavals, and to shield the ruling elite from the popular dissatisfaction by depoliticizing socioeconomic decision-making through the systematic privatization and commodification of social life. Ironically, the

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[7] Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, "Resolution (1981).
[8] Deng Xiaoping, "Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles," 30 March 1979, *Selected Works*, p. 176.
[9] Deng Xiaoping, "Implement the Policy of Readjustment, Ensure Stability and Unity," 25 December 1980, *Selected Works*, p. 352.
[10] Arif Dirlik, "Markets, Culture, Power: the making of a 'second Cultural Revolution' in China," *Asian Studies Review* 25:1 (March 2001), p. 3.

implementation of this ideological repositioning required a deradicalized political environment that could not have been achieved but for the skillful utilization of practices forged during the Maoist era, and honed to deadly effect during the GPCR.

## Signifying mass consumption

Central to the tasks of the new Party-state following its accession to power was asserting its control not only over the material forces of production within Chinese society, but over consumption as well. New notions of individual identity and socialist comradeship were linked to the rise of new norms around the practice of consumption informed by a collective ethic of rationing and frugality. Between 1953 and 1955, the state steadily assumed control over urban food rations, establishing the compulsory sale of specified amounts of grain to state agents at regulated prices in order to ensure low-priced food for urban residents and the transfer of agricultural surplus from rural to urban areas. The December 1953 "unified purchase and marketing of grain" program was quickly extended to include cotton and oil crops, and then all major foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials. The June 1955 establishment of the household registration (*hukou*) system was soon followed by the State Council's "Provisional Measures Governing Grain-Rationing in Cities and Towns," laying the foundations of what would become a nationwide rationing system that would persist virtually unchanged for the next three decades. The original goal was to reduce overall grain consumption nationwide, while assuring a basic level of equity among of units and individuals. However, the new program institutionalized inequalities between urban and rural residents, and furthermore policed household consumption of food and other basic necessities down to fine gradations in both quality and quantity. City dwellers, whose subsistence was guaranteed by the state, were issued grain-supply cards with a specified allotment of grain-based staples for use at their local grain store, or, for an additional fee, to a local restaurant before purchase. Official regulations drew precise distinctions that differentiated down to the percentage of fine grain (meaning rice or wheat) in the diet, privileging the residents of large central cities over those of smaller municipalities. Rural residents were enjoined to practice collective self-reliance, and, in 1956, those classified by the state as agricultural households (*nongye hu*) were deemed ineligible for state grain rations.[11]

These institutional changes were preceded and followed by a series of mass campaigns propagating new socialist ethics governing consumption. In December of 1951, the National Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference issued a directive calling upon all mass organizations to engage in a vast "anti-corruption, anti-waste and anti-bureaucratism struggle." The original target of investigation was Party and state units, but the masses were enjoined to "assist" cadres and Party members in "tiger-hunting," seeking any evidence of the

[11] Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, "The Origins and Consequences of China's Hukou System," *The China Quarterly* 139 (September 1994), pp. 644-668.

misuse or waste of public resources, or of nonessential expenses not directly related to production or defense. The scope of investigations widened within the space of only a few months to include members of the bourgeoisie and other non-revolutionary classes. Targeted behaviors also broadened to include the "five evils" of bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of state assets and the leakage of state economic secrets. While the formal end of the "Five Antis" campaign came in 1952, the revolutionary ethics of diligence and frugality, and the voluntary restriction of both personal and collective consumption, continued to be propounded through the 1950s and beyond. The disciplinary norm of Lei Feng, the oft-celebrated exemplary PLA hero, has persisted as remarkably resilient icon of thrift, frugality and self-sacrifice, even decades after the adoption of market reform.[12]

The initiation of the GPCR saw a new set of ministrations applied to popular consumption that intentionally reversed the value system that defines modern bourgeois capitalism. Everyday material culture was deliberately infused with new, revolutionary values: foreign and luxury goods were uniformly shunned as corrupt bourgeois relics, and, under the directive to "Destroy the Four Olds and Establish the Four News," were confiscated or destroyed by Red Guard and other activist groups. Ordinary commodities and basic daily use, by contrast, were celebrated as signs of Spartan devotion to revolutionary ideals; items specifically produced for the military took on particularly high value, because they broadcast not only one's identification with the patriotic and revolutionary ethos, but also likely indicated a close personal or familial connection with a People's Liberation Army member. Ordinary products adopted overtly revolutionary brand names like Red Wave or East Wind. Storeowners renamed their shops the "May 7 Supermarket," and "Long March Pharmacy" in an apparent attempt to suffuse the everyday exchange economy with socialist revolutionary meaning. By the end of August 1966, Tianjin Red Guard units forced over four thousand department stores and other retail outlets to trade their traditional, "feudal" store names for new names "rich in revolutionary significance," and incited customs officers at one port to smash to smithereens old uniforms, including hats with visors, insignia, epaulets and brass buttons that "partook of feudalism, capitalism and revisionism." Nanjing Red Guards complained that," after Liberation, while the exploiting classes were overthrown, their ghosts remained in the street and road names, and the names shops and markets, theaters and hotels…at the sight of them, the fires of our rage shoot up

[12] One 1998 China Daily article arguing in favor of Lei Feng's continued relevance even "with the flowering of the 'commodity economy'" cites the case of Du Chunyan, a former state enterprise worker laid off in 1991 when her factory was on the verge of bankruptcy, "who opened a private store and learned to run it well with the assistance of some kind people" as evidence that the "Lei Feng Spirit" is alive and well in contemporary China. "China 'Lei Feng Spirit' is Still Relevant," *China Daily* (March 26 1998). On the resilience of Lei Feng as an exemplary icon during the reform era, see Beate Geist, "Lei Feng and the 'Lei Fengs of the eighties' – models and modeling in China*," Papers on Far Eastern History*, Vol. 42 (September 1990), pp. 97–124.

to the skies!"[13] According to Xu Bin [Ben Xu], the extraordinary politicization of consumption that took place during the GPCR effectively redefined the relationship between "need" and "desire" into an ideological polemic on mass level, but one that nonetheless reinforced existing inequalities despite a rhetoric of radical equalitarianism.[14]

With the effective end of rationing and the dismantling of the state distributive economy by which goods were bureaucratically allocated, the "iron rice-bowl" system of social welfare that had long served as a key link in the Maoist social contract came under attack. By the mid-1980s, the Party press suggested with increasing force and frequency that the surviving vestiges of Maoist egalitarianism represented a brake on social progress, as well as an unfair system that permitted some to be rewarded by the labor of others.[15] Under what Wang Hui has referred to as China's neoliberal governance[16] during the era of reform, first comradeship and then citizenship are increasingly defined by acts of self-disciplined selective consumption shaped by a discourse of discernment and quality. In myriad ways, citizens are obliged to participate in the new consumer economy as part of the overall program of nation building, and even citizenship itself is increasingly framed as economic, social, and cultural benefits that accrue from participation in the free market.[17] Unlike classical liberalism, which promotes participation in the free market economy and democratic government as modes of individual empowerment, the depoliticized forms of engagement under Chinese neoliberalism construes rights as a function of cultural development, and in particular links the process of raising the cultural level (*wenhua shuiping*) or improving the "quality'" (*suzhi*) of the national population. As Deng proposed in the 1980s, social conduct could be modified and regulated by appealing to self-interest. In other words, productivity could be mobilized by the availability of economic incentives to producers without resorting to the language of socioeconomic class, substituting economistic discourse and slogans for the Maoist language of exploitation and revolution.[18]

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[13] "Mao Zhuxi shi womende zuigao tongshuai, shiliutiao shi womende xingdong gangling: Hongweibing he geming qunzhong renzhen huoxue huoyong zhongyang jueding" [Chairman Mao is our highest commander, the Sixteen Points is our program of action: the Red Guards and revolutionary masses earnestly learn and apply in practice the decisions of the Party Central Committee], *Shoudu Hongwebing* (Sept. 18, 1966).

[14] Xu Bin [Ben Xu], "'Wenge shiqi de wuzhi wenhua he richang shenghuo zhixu" Dangdai Zhongguo Yanjiu 94 (2006), 3.

[15] Ann Kent, "Standards of Living, Relative Deprivation and Political Change," in David Goodman and Beverly Hooper, eds. *China's Quiet Revolution: New Interactions between State and Society* (New York: Longman Cheshire, 1997), p. 86.

[16] Wang Hui, "The Year 1989 and the Historical Roots of Neoliberalism in China," *positions* 12:1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 7-69.

[17] See, for example, Ren Yanshi, "Ensuring economic, social and cultural rights for all people," *Beijing Review* November 17–23 (1997), p. 1923.

[18] As Arif Dirlik noted in 1989, China's shift toward marketization was accompanied by a transition from a language of revolutionary hegemony to a more abstract language of management, efficiency, productivity, and labor discipline he referred to as an emerging "hegemony" of economistic language. Arif Dirlik, "Hegemony and the language of revolution:

The Dengist shift was ostensibly predicated on the assumption that with higher levels of productivity, standards of living would rise, and the nation as a whole would prosper, even as individuals were increasingly compelled to take more responsibility for their actions and the retreating state abdicated its responsibilities. With the emphasis on economic prosperity that followed Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour, producers were enjoined to embrace the commodity nature of culture and the presumably non-dialectical relationship of supply and demand. Deng offered a vision of a depoliticized egalitarian consumer public unsullied by divisions of socioeconomic class, in short, participation in the democratic consumption of leisure culture safeguarded by the creation of a secure (*anquan*) and stable (*anding*) society.[19] To this end, the state and Party have honed their interventions protecting and promoting consumption, targeting blackmarket profiteers, misleading advertising claims and the production and sale of counterfeit goods. State technocrats have expressed increasing levels of concern over the unrealistic expectations of Chinese citizens, particularly among young consumers, towards consumer society, and suggest that they need to be carefully monitored lest they fall prey to the fetishization of brand names (*mingpai re*) and foreign-made products (*yanghuo re*).[20]

The elite-managed transformation to a commodity culture conjoined in public discussion the quality (*zhiliang*) of commodities to the quality (*suzhi*) of the Chinese citizenry, and exhorted the production of high-quality products for consumption by a discerning public. Reform-era university administrators and faculty now openly apply the terms *chanpin* (product) and *zhiliang* (quality) to describe recent graduates, proposing, for example, that "students are now more like products (*chanpin*)" and "they need to be packaged a bit" in order to be competitive in today's labor market.[21]

Like the grassroots mass organizations of the Mao era, a new rash of consumers' associations sprang into existence beginning in the early 1980s, first at local and provincial levels and, with the establishment of the China Consumers' Association (*Zhongguo Xiaofeizhe Xiehui*, CCA) in 1984, at the national level. According to the *Beijing Review*, the CCA is a "semi-official [organization with] positions of responsibility …held by government officials "that seeks "to protect consumers' interests, to guide the broad masses in consumption, and to promote the development of the socialist commodity economy." Two of its presidents have concurrently served as vice-presidents of

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Chinese socialism between present and future," in Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner (eds.), *Marxism and the Chinese Experience*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), p. 43.

[19] "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital," *positions* 9:1 (2001), pp. 69-104.

[20] Jiao Runming, "Lun dangdai qingnian xiaofei wenhua"[On contemporary youth consumption culture], *Liaoning Daxue Xuebao* 135:5 (1995), as cited by Micheal Keane, "Redefining Chinese citizenship," *Economy and Society* 30:1 (1 February 2001), p. 12.

[21] Lisa Hoffman, "Guiding College Graduates to Work: Social Constructions of Labor Markets in Dalian," in Suzanne Gottschang and Lyn Jeffery, *China Urban: Ethnographies of Contemporary Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 59.

the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, and CCA office-holders have usually been officials of provincial or municipal Bureaus of Industry and Commerce. By 1997, the CCA had over 3,000 consumers' associations in existence at provincial and county level, in addition to being linked to a reported 45,ss grass-roots organizations. In 1987 the Chinese government declared March 15 "International Day for Protecting Consumers Rights" and launches annual media campaigns in association with the China Consumers' Association in order to draw popular attention to, and public interest in, the country's growing consumer economy. In 1995, the CCA media campaign involved a People's Daily column featuring the ten worst cases of consumer abuse during the preceding year, including the sale of liquor diluted with methanol in Sichuan that poisoned dozens, the production of faulty gas cookers in Henan that exploded when used by customers, and contaminated soybean milk in Jiangsu that sickened 1,300 primary school pupils. The practice has continued with the arrival of International Consumers' Day each March, and has more recently culminated in a live program on China Central Television featuring CCA officials responding to consumer complaints. More commonly, on a day-to-day basis, radio and television programs with titles like "Consumer's Voice" and "Consumer's Friend" offer advice on how to become discriminating consumers; special interest periodicals like Shopping Guide *(Jingpin gouwu zhinan*) and Commodities Review *(Shangpin pinjie* ) document the latest consumer trends.[22]

In addition to such practices aimed at fostering consumerism, Wang Jing notes the careful official cultivation of leisure culture, particularly with the adoption of the forty-four-hour work week and double leisure day (*shuangxiu ri*), otherwise known as the weekend, in May of 1995. That year, *Beijing Youth Daily* began publishing weekly special editions of periodicals devoted solely to leisure culture by way of educating the masses as to how to blend leisure, culture and consumption in a manner both useful and profitable to the elite. By way of inculcating not only the ideology of mass consumption, but also helping to construct a broader material basis for it, the interest rate was lowered twice in 1996 and four more times in 1998, inducing the public to save less and to consume more at least in 1996 and 1997. In 1996 the Beijing Municipal Commission's Department of Propaganda published a "Civilization Contract with Residents," mobilizing twelve subcommittees to implement a nine-month campaign under the rubric of a "double leisure day action package." Featured leisure activities were promoted, including sightseeing, visiting museums, and learning how to drive; leisure activities linked to specific commodities (i.e., automobiles, computers and sports gear and clothing) were singled out for special attention, ostensibly with the hope that increased consumer demand would soak up inventory and accelerate mass production.[23] The strategy has been so successful that in the past decade, Chinese commercial elites have focused enormous energy on the development of the "holiday economy" (*jieri jingi*): in

[22] Beverley Hooper, "The Consumer Citizen in Contemporary China," *Lund University Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies Working Paper* No. 12 (2005), p. 8.
[23] Jing Wang, "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital," *positions* 9:1 (2001), pp. 69-104.

1999, in Shanghai alone, retail sales of consumer goods amounted to 159 billion yuan, of which holidays consumption accounted for 50 per cent.[24] Other national holidays have also been given over to stimulating consumption: in recent years, some newspapers have begun urging their readers to commemorate National Humiliation Day, a holiday officially recognized in 2001 to note the razing of Yuanmingyuan by British and French troops during the second Opium War, by purchasing "national products" like patriotic cigarettes, straw hats, and face towels: "When you use the national humiliation towel every day to wash your face, think of how it is even better to wash away humiliation at the same time as you are washing your face."[25]

Red Guard efforts to saturate commercial activity with revolutionary meaning in an attempt to master the market failed in large part because its excesses proved numbing to the ordinary citizens whose "souls" they sought to "touch." Yet the overpoliticization of the comparatively smaller and narrower commercial markets of the late Mao-era may have set the stage for the depoliticization that made the "reform and opening up" policies of the Dengist era possible. The rendering of powerful political sentiments and monumental historic events into consumable commodities today likewise alters the fundamental nature of political discourse: the literal transformation of Mao's revolution into a dinner party, served by waiters parading as Red Guards at Shenzhen's popular eatery, the "Number One Production Brigade,"[26] effectively shifts any serious reconsideration of the interests and passions that inspired it outside the margins of reasoned public consideration. The institutionalized "dictatorship over needs,"[27] that characterized "actually existing socialism" in Mao's China and elsewhere has refashioned itself into a totalitarian regime of eternal desire.

## Representing the masses

Mao's concept of the mass line, according to Blecher, "is a way of resolving conflict by attempting to define or create collective agreement," that "assigns a vigorous role to leadership, but abjures leaders from acting in an elitist (or to use the Chinese terms, commandist or subjectivist) fashion."[28] According to Mao's famed 1965 formulation,

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[24] Li Guoren, "Jiari jingji mianmian guan" [A comprehensive analysis of the holiday economy], *Beijing Di'er Waiyuxue Xuebao* 95 (May 2995), p. 64.

[25] William A. Callahan, "History, Identity and Security: Producing and Consuming Nationalism in China," *Critical Asian Studies* 38:2 (2006), p. 202.

[26] John Ruwitch, "Eateries Capitalize on the Revolution: Restaurants Modeled on Mess Halls From the Mao era Appeal to Chinese Nostalgia for a Simpler Time," *Vancouver Sun*, 20 October 2007, p. A21.

[27] Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller and Gyorgy Marcus, *Dictatorship over Needs* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983).

[28] Marc Blecher, "Consensual Politics in Rural Chinese Communities: the mass line in theory and practice," *Modern China* 5:1 (January 1979), pp. 105, 122.

> In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily "from the masses, to the masses." This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain them until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action.[29]

While numerous critics of the implementation of Mao's mass line have charged that grassroots political participation in during the era of his rule amounted to little more than the ritualistic and formalized appearance of mass democracy,[30] others have argued that in the process of capturing power and carrying out social revolution, the CCP of necessity established close links with various social groups that involved a series of moderating compromises between the perceived interests of those groups and the Party's fundamental revolutionary goals.[31] The findings of more recent investigation into the nature of grassroots politics in the post-revolutionary period suggests that the Maoist state indeed developed and successfully institutionalized a broad range of governing practices designed to encourage the free flow of communication between cadres, particularly at the lower rungs of officialdom, and the masses, including "squatting on a spot" (*dun dian*), social investigation (*shehui diaocha*), the "four togethers" (*sitong*), "on-the-spot conferences" (*xian chang huiyi*), and the dispatch of cadre work teams (*gongzui dui*) to local communities. These practices, while limited in scope, did bring into the public and official realm opinions and ideas that were not expressed through other available channels. In his retrospective assessment of how these governing practices contributed to political participation over the course of the Mao era, Blecher concludes that they fostered a grassroots politics that was genuinely participatory, particularly with respect to basic issues of productive, material life, although occasionally they introduced radical elements into political life, as they did during the height of the Cultural Revolution. However, with the dismantling of the collective institutions in which such practices were instantiated under Dengist rule, direct political participatory processes were degraded and ultimately destroyed. With the deepening of market liberalization, the basic issues of material life, the politicization of which was central to Mao-era governing practices for the management of social tensions at the grassroots, have been reprivatized. Furthermore, in the shift toward more technocratic forms of neoliberal governance during the post-Mao era, indirect political participation in the form of the popular elections of local representatives

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[29] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works,* as cited by Blecher (1979), p. 107.

[30] See, for example, Martin King Whyte, *Small Groups and Political Rituals in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) on the limited scope and highly constrained nature of participation in political study groups.

[31] See, for example, Tang Tsou, *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms: a historical perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), esp. pp. xxv-xxv; Marc Blecher, "Structural Change and the Political Articulation of Social Interest in Revolutionary and Socialist China," in Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner (1989), pp. 190-209.

at the lowest levels of the state have largely replaced more direct forms of political participation.[32]

In contrast to the intermittent flourishing of radical local media in the form of Red Guard publications, broadcasts and big-character posters during the Cultural Revolution and the Democracy Wall Movement of 1979 that was overtly critical of the leadership and its policies, or perhaps in large part because of them, the Dengist state also moved to strengthen the hand of the elite over the public expression of popular opinion. In July of 1986, vice-Premier to the National Forum on Research, Wan Li, boldly asserted to a reluctant audience that, since the Party had ceased to regard "the class struggle as the key link," it was time to "draw a clear line between political and academic questions." As the experience of the Cultural Revolution demonstrated, the Mao-era "mass line" could and should no longer serve as a guide for rational decision-making or for research in the "soft sciences."[33] In July 1988, Hu Qili proposed that the transition from a "product economy to a socialist commodity economy" required a shift in ideological work to facilitate an end to "bad habits caused by 'leftist' influence," enjoining the mass media to "seriously explore new ways and set up new patterns in the course of practice."[34] Party documents from the early 1980s acknowledged that "the Party's press should carry criticism and self-criticism," but that it must be mindful of the role that criticism plays in enhancing "the reputation of the Party and the press." Accordingly, under Deng the Party leadership subscribed to a "no debate" decree, banning open media discussion of the political implications of market reforms, and imposing a near-total news blackout on so called "mass events" (*qunti shijian*) or protest of any form.[35]

As social tensions rose over the course of the 1980s, the Party leadership increasingly called upon those engaged in propaganda and ideological work to "guide public opinion" during periods of difficulty throughout the reform process. In recognizing that reform policies had led to a series of troubling social imbalances, Zhao Ziyang founded the Chinese Economic System Reform Research Institute (CESRRI) under the aegis of the State Council, and authorized the organization to conduct a series of large-scale national surveys in 1985 to measure the impact of reform policies. From February through November of that year, the new think-tank employed over four hundred statisticians and

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[32] Marc Blecher, "The contradictions of grass-roots participation and undemocratic statism in Maoist China and their fate," in Brantly Womack, ed., *Contemporary Chinese Politics in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 153-179.

[33] Xinhua News Agency, "Making decisions with a democratic and scientific approach is an important aspect in restructuring the political system", *Renmin Ribao* (overseas edition), 14 Aug 86 accessed via LexisNexis.

[34] Xinhua News Agency, "Hu Qili on Propaganda and Ideological Work," July 9, 1988, accessed via LexisNexis.

[35] Yuezhi Zhao and Sun Wusan, "Public Opinion Supervision: possibilities and limits of the media in constraining local officials," in Elizabeth J. Perry and Merle Goldman, eds., *Grassroots Political Reform in Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 300-326.

researchers and tapped resources from twenty-one government and educational or research units to produce 156 reports, all of which reassured elites that there was a high level of popular support for the Dengist urban reform program. The following year, CESRRI conducted another fourteen large-scale social surveys to collect and quantify public opinion with respect to matters of national policy, and, by 1988, CESRRI's success had spawned the creation of another fifteen public opinion institutes in Beijing. Stanely Rosen notes that several of these new "semiprivate" organizations were in fact established by individuals who had practical experience with the often turbulent history of "mass line" politics during the Maoist era. The ranks of new think-tank founders included the former top Red Guard leader of Beijing's high school students, as well as one activist who had risen to national prominence as a result of his activities during the 1976 Tiananmen incident, both of whom had been imprisoned during the 1970s for their participation in the mass politics of their day. Yet, despite the close connections of such researchers with the less structured practice associated with the Maoist mass line, both the framing of survey questions and analysis of poll results tended to show that members of the Chinese public collectively "affirm the achievements of reform, and are optimistic about the future."[36]

The trend toward greater levels of technocratic supervision combined with tightened media control proceeded apace following the transition to post-Dengist rule. Following the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations and the subsequent crackdown on the media, Li Ruihuan warned against "bourgeois liberalization" in the press, which, in exposing the "seamy side" of Chinese society, attempted "to seize the public opinion front from [the Party's] hands." Journalists were reminded to guide public opinion firmly "using party policies and programs to guide the masses and to transform party policies into conscious action of the masses."[37] In 1997, Jiang Zemin formally endorsed the policy of "public opinion supervision" (*yulun jiandu*) in his report to the Party's Fifteenth National Congress. The February 2004 Regulations on Inner-Party Supervision of the CCP that the media play a role in the supervision of public opinion "under the leadership of the Party" and "according to relevant rules and procedures," particularly for the express purpose of improving administrative and bureaucratic efficiency. In 1992, Xu Xinhua, the journalism bureau head of the Party's propaganda department issued a directive to the media to provide "correct guidance to public opinion." In practice, a new and apparently more open focus on specific cases of bureaucratic malfeasance and injustice has served to accentuate the policy agenda of the center, bringing to bear some limited pressure on local governments through the fear of exposure in the tightly leashed watchdog media, but has, in the final analysis, sustained the monopoly of the party-state's hold on power by "smoothing the rough edges of the current Chinese political economic transformation and policing the political, economic , and

[36] People's Daily (overseas edition), June 27, 1988, as cited by Stanley Rosen, "Public Opinion in Post-Mao China," in Richard Baum, *Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 64-72 (quotation appears on p. 72).

[37] Xinhua News Agency, "Li Ruihuan on Propaganda Work," March 7, 1990, accessed via LexisNexis.

social boundaries of an emerging authoritarian market society."[38]

Oddly, the transition from the Maoist "mass line" dialectical model of intense engagement at the grassroots level to the more mediated process of polling and managing public opinion has been cast in official discourse as a shift in favor of increased mass participation. As one 1986 *Peoples Daily* article explained,

> When 'leftist' guiding ideas held the dominant position, and especially during the 'Great Cultural Revolution,' when the principles of socialist democracy were wrecked and trampled on, there appeared a very strange phenomenon: anyone who put forward views on political issues or undertook any study or discussion on such issues was politically questionable and had to undergo screening, and was even struck to the ground. The Third Plenary Session of the 11th CCP Central Committee opened up a new era in building socialist democracy, and politics regained its original meaning from being the affair of a few politicians it turned into the affair of millions of people.[39]

Yet the reconfiguration of "mass line" politics into the technocratic engineering of public opinion through polling and media supervision arguably reflects not the increasing closeness of the elites to the masses, but the further distancing of the post-Mao state from a social realm increasingly defined as an object for surveillance, manipulation and control. As Habermas noted, polls and surveys are not an expression of democratic will but a substitute for it, since they curtail the discursive conditions necessary for the development of ideas in the public realm. Bourdieu is even more critical, vigorously asserting that the construction of public opinion by polling and survey instruments is itself an

> *artifact* whose function is to conceal the fact that the state of opinion at any given moment is a system of forces, of tensions, and that there is nothing more inadequate than a percentage to represent the state of opinion… [the public opinion poll] creates the idea that a unanimous public opinion exists in order to legitimate a policy, and strengthen the relations of force upon which it is based or make it possible.[40]

According to Bourdieu, the process of surveying public opinion represents a tightly constrained form of participation that frequently requires respondents to choose among pre-formed responses to a framed question, a process from which

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[38] Yuezhi Zhao and Sun Wusan (2007). p. 324.

[39] "Political issues may be discussed", *Renmin Ribao* (overseas edition), 30 Aug 86 accessed via LexisNexis

[40] Pierre Bourdieu, "Public Opinion Does Not Exist," in Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub, *Communication and Class Struggle*, Vol. 1. (New York: International General, 1979), p. 125.

"there is every likelihood of creating pure artifact out of thin air. Opinions are made to exist which did not pre-exist the question." In the oft-recorded high rates of refusal and abstentionism among those targeted by pollsters, Bourdieu reads not only a degree of popular skepticism concerning the act of polling, but also a rejection of the implicit political philosophy of public opinion polling, "which credits everyone with not only the right but also the power to produce…a judgment" on any range of issues. On the basis of his study of nonrespondents, he concludes that their apparent indifference to the pollster is a manifestation of their disenfranchisement within a political system in which technical expertise and perceived competence is equated with political power.[41]

This shift from Mao-era "on the spot" social investigation to the large-scale random polling techniques reflects the very different orientation of the post-Mao leadership toward the construction of knowledge about society that is considered useful to the state. Mao-era social investigation drew clear distinctions between the use of statistics to explain natural phenomena, and those used in the social sciences, deriding the latter as "a poison of the capitalist class" (*zichan jieji dusu*). The primary reason for this was the Marxist critique of the notion of randomness in social, and particularly economic, phenomena, the fundamental nature of which can only be fully explained through historical materialism and Marxist laws of political economy.[42] Social investigation based on random sampling methods might fail to reflect accurately the class nature of a given society, thereby obscuring exploitative relationships beneath a cloak of numeric equivalence. Accordingly, Mao-era statistical surveys tended to rely on "typical example investigation" (*dianxing diaocha*), in which data is collected from typical cases to represent various social groups or classes, not unlike Western models of stratified non-random sampling, highlighting the contradictions and antagonisms between them.[43] The replacement of class-based analyses involving on-site direct engagement with social subjects with large-scale random sampling deliberately creates distance between the researcher and the subject or subjects under investigation, and dramatically depoliticizes the broader context within which social investigation takes place.

Indeed, popular skepticism in China regarding the nature of polling and resistance to the constrained participation it requires arose soon after public opinion surveys were formally legitimated by Zhao Ziyang's 1987 call to allow public opinion to play a "supervisory role" in policy formation. One poll of scientific and technical personnel in Jilin Province purportedly received a "cold reception," with fully a third of the respondents refusing to fill out the questionnaires. Several of these drew "a tiger's head and a snake's tail" (*hutou*

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[41] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 398-413.
[42] Zou Yiren, "Shilun tongjixuede xingzhi ji qiyu shuli tongjixuede guanxi," *Jingji yanjiu* [Economic Research] 1 (1980), p. 70.
[43] S. Lee Travers, "Bias in Chinese Economic Statistics: The Case of the Typical Example Investigation," *The China Quarterly*, 91, (Sept., 1982), pp. 478-485.

*shewei*) on the form, suggesting that despite a promising beginning, the process would likely come to no good end. Some even took the opportunity of the poll to express their anger that repeated calls to improve the situation of intellectuals had amounted to nothing but empty promises.[44]

More recently, under the leadership of Jiang Zemin, survey results have emerged as oft-cited fixtures in editorials and official addresses, solidifying in official discourse the post-Mao shift away from direct and potentially conflict-ridden engagement with the masses in favor of more mediated forms of indirect political representation in the era of reform. In this still-emerging discursive framework, the public opinion poll – with its ability to reduce profound social cleavages to broad aggregates – serves to mask socioeconomic divisions, and reduces complex political engagement to a simpler, more easily digested set of metrics. Through the new practice of polling, the reform-era public is more readily assembled as a legible aggregate subject that thinks and desires without contradiction, and whose pluralities are largely overwritten in the search for monochromatic majorities.

**Emoting publics**

Despite the power of Marxism's appeal to collective interest, Communist victories have depended heavily mass emotional appeals as well as ideology and organization. As Elizabeth Perry and others have argued, the mobilization of the revolutionary masses requires the effective "translation of radical ideas and images into purposeful and effective action demands not only conducive environmental conditions, but also substantial emotional engagement on the part of leaders and followers alike."[45] The "high tide of emotion work" sustained CCP rule through the 1950s and 60s, building upon devotion to the leadership and enthusiasm for revolution and increased production under the rubric of Maoist mass campaigns. The success of mass appeals for action and support for shifting elite agendas depended at least as heavily upon the ability of the Party to speak to collective passions as it did upon expressions of enlightened shared interest, and squarely addresses the question of how the Party has been able to shape a public over and through which to rule, and to win a measure of compliance for policies that clearly do not serve interests of the majority.

The emergence of what came to be widely known as the "Mao cult" arguably had it earliest roots during the Yenan era rectification campaign of 1942. Three years later, during the Seventh Party Congress in 1945, Liu Shaoqi hailed Mao Zedong Thought as "the greatest achievement and glory of our Party and the

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[44] *Keji Ribao* [Technology Daily], April 4, 1988, as cited by Stanley Rosen (1991), p. 75.

[45] Elizabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 2002, 7(2), p. 112. See also Ronald Aminzade and Doug McAdam, "Emotions and Contentious Politics." In Ronald Aminzade et.al.,eds., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge UniversityPress, 2001); William A. Gamson, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action," in Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., Frontiers in Social Movement Theory, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

Chinese people." Mao gave his implicit ideological imprimatur to the movement in 1956, following Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, when he reflected: "The question is not whether or not there should be a cult of the individual, but rather whether or not the individual concerned represents the truth. If he does, then he should be worshipped."[46] The veneration with which Mao's theoretical contributions were treated persisted through the cataclysmic Great Leap period, and became an issue for central supervision at least as early as 1961, when the Central Propaganda Department was prompted to issue a report recommending that derided the appropriation of Chairman Mao's writings for nefarious and dubious purposes, such as curing cancer and as a businessman's guide to building a more effective corporate strategy.[47] Popular sentiment steadily built until the remarkable transition in August 1966, when popular veneration of the Great Helmsman came to encompass not only Mao's words, but his person as well. The famed "little red book," which bore not only a selection of pithy aphorisms and excerpts of his writings, but his image as well, and quickly attained a status that can be rightly described as not merely iconic, but reverential if not sacramental, within the context of popular culture during the mid-1960s.

The penumbra of sacrality surrounding Mao's image and the "little red book" at the outset of the Cultural Revolution ultimately gave rise to an elaborate and highly ritualized exchange economy in which the revolution (and Chairman Mao as its living incarnation) was central to an item's value. As Dutton noted of the economy of Mao badges in particular, which in popular discourse could not be "bought" (*mai*) but only be requested (*qing*) and, hopefully, bestowed, re-signified "the act of acquisition to an economy of intimacy and sacrifice that lies beyond the logic of money and market."[48] The everyday practices that infused the ritualized exchange economy of the Cultural Revolution period included the memorization and frequent repetition of Mao's sayings, the verbal exchange of references to Mao and revolutionary slogans in everyday speech,[49] and the restructuring of mundane time with morning and evening ceremonies of devotion.[50]

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[46] As quoted by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 262.

[47] "Zhonggong Zhongyang zhuanfa Zhongyang Xuanbu 'Guanyu Mao Zedong sixiang he lingxiu geming shiji xuanchuanzhong yixie wentide jiancha baogao'," [Party Central Committee transmission on the Central Propaganda Department's "Investigative Report Concerning a Few Problems in the Dissemination of Mao Zedong Thought and Achievements in Revolutionary Leadership"] (March 15, 1961).

[48] Michael Dutton, "Mango Mao: Infections of the Sacred," *Public Culture* 16:2 (2004), p. 177.

[49] Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun, "Revolutionary Rudeness: The Language of Red Guards and Rebel Workers in China's Cultural Revolution," *Indiana East Asian Working Paper Series on Language and Politics in Modern China*, No. 2 (Summer 1993).

[50] Autobiographical accounts of Red Guards and even ordinary citizens reveal that, at the height of the heyday of the Cultural Revolution, the day began with "morning instructions" (*zaoqingshi*) and concluded with the "evening reports" (*wanhuibao*). This ritual apparently had its roots in a local ritual devised by two thousand mostly female workers at the Beijing General Knitting Mill, that was reported upon in the press and circulated by the CCP center for nationwide

Without denying that many of the practices described above had their origins in spontaneous popular expressions of devotion and affection, the radical proletarianization of every aspect of cultural life was not merely encouraged, but was also engineered, by the radical Leftists within Party leadership. State-sponsored Mao worship during the Cultural Revolution aimed to resolve the growing "contradictions among the people," initially as part of a PLA-initiated campaign of the "three loyalties and four boundless loves': "loyalty to Chairman Mao, Mao Zedong Thought, and Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line." While the campaign was officially called off by the Party center in June 1969, the popular practices and sacred economy it spawned continued through the early 1970s. In some rural areas, the Three Loyalties Campaign came on the heels of the most violent reenactment of class struggle since Land Reform, presumably in order to promote social unity and inspire popular dedication to the revolution during a period of tremendous ferment and social violence. In a manner reminiscent of the Great Leap Forward, the attempt in the late 1960s to "cleanse the class ranks" required not only the abolition of private plots, but also the voluntary surrender of privately owned breeding sows, fruit trees, fishing nets and even family cooking utensils in a broad effort to "combat selfishness." Not surprisingly, the effort met with confusion, reluctance and, ultimately, mass resistance. Alarmed central and local leaders accordingly responded with palliative measures in the form of the various ritualized practices of the Three Loyalities campaign, encouraging rounds of collective study sessions and encouraging party activists to lead rural residents in daily renditions of the Maoist "loyalty dance."[51]

On the heels of the most dire mass-based challenge faced by the post-Mao state in 1989, the popular practice of Mao worship made an arresting come-back.[52] In the wake of the dramatic increases in social unrest that culminated in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of the spring and summer of 1989, and their bloody denouement, Dutton notes, "Mao's image was transformed from Great Helmsmen into the great logo."[53] Possibly dating back to a 1989 car wreck in which the passengers claimed they had survived because of the supernatural protection afforded them by a Mao medallion hanging from the rearview mirror, and reaching a climax around the centenary of Mao's birth in 1993, an unprecedented wave of nostalgia and commodification swept the country in the form of Mao Zedong fever (*Mao re*). The vestigial iconography of the earlier Mao cult had been ordered destroyed in July of 1978 by the Party center; the celebrated *Quotations of Chairman Mao*, defined by the Central Department of Propaganda to have been "produced by Lin Biao in an attempt to amass political

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"implementation accordingly in the light of actual conditions." See MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006), p. 263.

[51] Jonathan Unger, "Collective Incentives in a Peasant Community: Lessons From Chen Village," *Social Scientist* 5:10/11 (May-June 1977), pp. 40-43.

[52] See, for example, Zhou Qun and Yao Xinrong, "Xinjiu Mao Zedong chongbai," *Ershiyi shiji* [Twenty-first Century] 21 (December 2003).

[53] Michael Dutton, "From Culture Industry to Mao Industry," *boundary 2*, 32:2 (2005) p. 155.

capital," were ordered removed from bookstore shelves, and single-sheet compilations and remaining posters, were to be pulped in order "to eliminate the impact of Lin Biao and the 'Gang of Four'."[54]

The spontaneous rebirth of popular interest in the deceased chairman was initially greeted with ambivalence by the Dengist leadership. Dating back to 1984, speculation flourished in the Hong Kong press about Deng's possible motives for fueling sporadic outbursts of Mao fever, and whether or not veneration of Mao ultimately contributed to or detracted from the prestige of the post-Mao Party.[55] On the centennial of Mao's birth in 1993, Wan Li, former chairman of the National People's Congress, expressed his concern that high-ranking Party members were attempting to whip up "Mao fever" to challenge Deng's reforms, an impression that was shared widely enough to inspire a popular saying at the time: "To heat up Mao is to cool down Deng."[56] Arguing that social "stability is of the paramount importance," Wan Li charged that "China can no longer sustain another disturbance caused by 'leftism' or rightism" and enjoined leading cadres to remain vigilant lest "a small handful of those in the party who…pose as staunch guardians of Marxism-Leninism, [and] publicize the practical function of Mao Zedong Thought."[57]

Yet despite such concerns, the Party leadership soon discovered that the fad served not to increase social tension, but to quell it. Those capable and willing of paying for top dollar for the diversionary experience of revolutionary re-enchantment proved to be relatively unmoved by the political force of Mao's critiques of the party-state. There is now little doubt that the Mao craze of the early 1990s, as well as subsequent outbreaks of Mao fever, were increasingly state-sponsored and Party-managed phenomena. In early 1990, a front-page story in the People's Daily reported a rush on posters of figures from the Communist pantheon in certain parts of western Hunan. From August 1989 through the end of the year, Xinhua bookstores in ten counties and municipalities in west Hunan sold an unprecedented sixty thousand posts of Chairman Mao. In Yuanling county alone, over thirty-five thousand posters were sold.[58] Other entrepreneurial state-run enterprises quickly joined the fray. Government-owned

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[54] Central Department of Propaganda Request for Instructions Concerning the Disposal of Extant Objects Related to 'Loyalty,' (28 July 1978) and Central Department of Propaganda Circular Concerning the Withdrawal from Circulation of Quotations from Chairman Mao (12 February 1979), translated in Geremie Barme, *Shades of Mao: the Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 129-30.

[55] See, for example, Luo Ping, "Notes on a Northern Journey," *Zheng Ming* 104 (June 1,. 1986), 6-10 accessed via LexisNexis.

[56] Rajiv Chandra, "China: On Centennial, Mao Mania Sweeps Nation," Inter Press Service/Global Information Network (December 22, 1993), accessed via LexisNexis.

[57] Chen Shaopin, "Wan Li says 'Mao Zedong fever' is not in line with national conditions," *Jing Bao* (5 October 1992), p. 55.

[58] Chen Xiaoya, "Lishishangde zhenjia 'Mao Zedong chongbai'—Mao Zedong pinpaihua, shenhua jiqi tuihua" [True and false 'Mao Zedong worship' in history—the brandifcation, deification and degeneration of Mao Zedong] *Beijing zhi chun* 162 (Nov. 2006), p. 27.

publishing houses reprinted millions of volumes of Mao's works; one newspaper reported that seven hundred thousand copies of Mao's *Selected Works* sold out in only four months. The astonishing success of such volumes prompted new compilations, including a *Mao Zedong Dictionary*, and a set of volumes detailing his military theories.[59] In early 1993, the Central Archives and Central Document Research Office quickly entered into a cooperative agreement with Shenzhen' s Xianke Recreational and Communications Corporation to produce a set of compact discs of seven of Mao's recorded speeches, including his October 1, 1949 speech marking the founding of the PRC marketed under the title "Voice of the Giant - Mao Zedong." State-run Central Literature Publishing House rushed into production a one hundred and thirty photo album of the former chairman, edited by his daughter.[60]

These sentimental celebrations of the Maoist past bolstered not only China's exploding mass consumer culture, but proved a formidable stimulus for its nascent tourist industry. Beginning in 1990, Shaoshan, the place of Mao's birth, recorded nearly two thousand five hundred visitors per day, and nearly three thousand per day by 1993.[61] A decade later, Party leaders have turned to marketing "red tourism" both as a means of patriotic education, and as vehicle for stimulating development in the resource-poor rural areas in which the early Communist leaders founded the first soviets, or to which they retreated in the face of attack. During his 2003 inspection tour of "patriotic education bases." Li Changchun paused briefly at the former headquarters of the Eighth Route Army in the foothills of the Taihang mountains to make the case that developing "red tourism" "is a political project of solidifying the party's ruling-party position, a cultural project of advocating the national spirit…and an economic project of advancing economic and social development of old revolutionary areas and improving the living standards of the masses."[62] Accordingly, at the behest of the Central Committee and State Council, the National Tourism Administration declared 2005 the "Year of 'Red Tourism'" and issued a list of "30 choice red tourism routes" and "100 classic red tourism sites." Referring to this effort not as a "campaign" but instead as a "program," an official serving on the national coordination group organizing the effort projected that the three-phase plan would bring an estimated twenty billion *yuan*, or 2.41 billion US dollars in benefits each year to the 150 designated sites, stimulating new construction, commerce and investment in infrastructure.[63]

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[59] Kyodo News Sevice, "China to upgrade Mao's Birthplace, Hong Kong Papers Say," (June 24, 1991), accessed via LexisNexis.

[60] Xinhua News Agency, "Firms cash in on rising Mao fever," BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (September 15, 1993); Nick Driver, "Mao Tse-tung fever picks up speed as birthday approaches," accessed via LexisNexis.

[61] Jennifer Hubbert, "(Re)collecting Mao: Memory and Fetish in contemporary China," *American Ethnologist*, 33. 2, pp. 145–161.

[62] Xinhua News Agency, "Chinese Official urges 'red tourism' to boost ideological training," BBC Worldwide Monitoring (November 13, 2004), accessed via LexisNexis.

[63] Xinhua News Agency, "China boosts 'red tourism' in revolutionary bases," BBC Worldwide Monitoring (February 22, 2005), accessed via LexisNexis.

Cashing in on these trends, in April 2004, a group of entrepreneurs in Sichuan's Dayi County broke ground the country's first Cultural Revolution museum complex. The blueprint currently includes a restaurant, a hotel, and a teahouse; when completed, the complex is planned as one part of a broader theme park designed celebrate a commercialized version of China's revolutionary past without any evidence of either the convulsive violence it spawned, or the continuing polarization of the social elements that figured as both its primary agents, as well as its victims. Promoting revolutionary nostalgia at a hefty price, the complex is designed to appeal to the moneyed and leisured domestic tourist in need of a break from the stresses of the Chinese capitalist rat race. The restaurant is designed to be a perfect replica of the "worker-peasant-soldier large canteen" (*gong-nong-bing dashitang*) of the 1960s; the hotel will be a perfect simulacrum of a Red Guard "reception center" (*Hongweibing jiedaizhan*); and the teahouse is to be named Spring Cometh (*Chunlai* ), after a teahouse that appeared in one of Jiang Qing's revolutionary model operas. As Dutton notes of the planned Dayi museum-complex,

> These forms do not just attract paying customers; they produce a consumer reality, and this, in turn, produces a mentality that proves to be…[an] effective and life-changing antidote to the Cultural Revolution… The commodity form seduces rather than challenges. One can challenge a claim to truth, but how does one challenge a theme park?[64]

Increasingly, the meaning of these events are not imposed by elites as much as simply circulated on the ever-widening market, in a form not threatening to either their producers or their consumers. It therefore becomes necessary to consider more than the matter of how the Party-state produces such meanings: it is equally important consider how and why people consume these framed versions of the past. The production and reproduction of passionate outbursts of "Mao fever" strongly suggests that one reform-era iteration of decades of CCP "emotion work" among the masses may well be the convention of more protean (and largely urban) publics, knit together not by the expression of collective economic and political interests, but, rather, conjoined in an inchoate shared sentimental longing for a pre-packaged and strategically sanitized version of the Maoist past.[65] The manufacturing of this sentimentalized version of the revolutionary past not only yields monetary gains for the many state- and Party-connected commercial outlets that hawk products and services related to "Mao fever" and "red tourism;" it also, as Lisa Rofel recently suggested, serves to inculcate new forms of individual and collective identity around desire. Just as the "speaking bitterness" (*suku*) campaigns of the Mao era encouraged individuals to reimagine their own personal biographies within the class-based

[64] Micheal Dutton, "From Culture Industry to Mao Industry: A Greek Tragedy," *boundary2* 32:2 (2005), p. 164.

[65] For a discussion of one Republican-era precursor to today's desiring public, see Eugenia Lean's "The Politics of Passion: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Public Sympathy in 1930s China," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001).

historic frames set by the Party-state, these new sentimentalized cultural forms—embodied in serialized television dramas, print media, and even urban built environments[66]-- help to bring into being new subjects shaped by inchoate longings, both for a Party-sanctioned version of the Maoist past, as well as the brighter, wealthier, future.[67] Yet the transformation of Mao and the revolutionary legacy that he represents into a consumable commodity neutralizes his critique of the post-revolutionary Party and state in manner more totalizing than any Party-based ideological campaign ever could. Mao the revolutionary leaves a powerful but ambiguous political legacy with which his successors continue to struggle; Mao the pop icon helps to inoculate the contemporary consuming public against any serious engagement with that powerful and ambiguous past.[68]

**Manufacturing Mass Culture in Contemporary China**

The visceral violence and social traumas that periodically erupted throughout the Mao era, and reached a new apogee in the late 1960s, are precisely what has, as Alessandro Russo noted, "made it so difficult to identify any rational meaning in the Cultural Revolution."[69] Yet it is equally difficult to make sense of China's profound transformations during the post-Mao era without anchoring that analysis firmly within the historical context from which it arose. Ironically, in the hands of the post-Mao leadership, whose ranks include many who suffered greatly during the height of the Cultural Revolution, the strategic policies associated with the decision to "open up and reform" have appropriated and extended much of the late Maoist program of cultural transformation, albeit to serve vastly different ideological ends.

Historically, one chief resource of the Mao-era party-state was its considerable power to mobilize mass participation and enlist the resources and energies of social forces to achieve ideological and practical ends. Yet in the mid-1990s, the party-state's reinvention of the notion of participation was systematically divested it of its ideological and political content, and the new collective project in which the Chinese public was invited to participate was the construction of a nominally egalitarian consumer-oriented paradise—a vast "consumer revolution" that "simultaneously incorporates contradictory experiences of emancipation and disempowerment"[70] for those who partake in it.

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[66] In addition to the Cultural Revolution-themed parks and restaurants noted above, newly constructed shopping malls and office parks are also helping to hype "Mao fever." See Patricia M. Thornton, "The Mao at the Mall" (currently under submission).

[67] Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[68] See, for example, Chen Xiaoya, "Dangdai 'Mao Zedong re" tou shi" [An examination of contemporary "Mao fever"], *Beijing zhi Chun* 162 (November 2006), p. 22-29, esp. the discussion on p. 29.

[69] Alessandro Russo, "The Probable Defeat: Preliminary Notes on the Chinese Cultural Revolution," in Tani Barlow, ed., *New Asian Marxisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 313.

[70] Deborah Davis, "Urban Consumer Culture," *The China Quarterly* (2005).

The Party's new consumer's republic has been purged of references to the class struggle that helped to produce it, and the political divides that had so thoroughly dominated the mass politics of the Maoist era. Seen in this light, the governing practices that define China's neoliberal policies of market reform represent an ambitious attempt to create new nonclass forms of identity and highly mediated forms of representation to disarticulate social conflict from the material relations of power. Over the course of the reform era, the Party-state has sought to appropriate and transform Mao-era methods of mobilization in order to generate an antipolitical politics that serves to obscure the very contestation and antagonism that represent mass democracy in action, and therefore, ultimately, the undoing of the core Leninist project of revolution to effect social democracy.

Marketization, in China as elsewhere, tends to extend or amplify deeply entrenched class privileges and inequalities. Instead, on-going market reforms continue to be mediated by existing class relations and political structures, and are carried out in no small part through the repertoire of elite governing practices inherited from the Maoist era. Largely emptied of their ideological content by the post-Mao leadership, these practices have been reinvented as a form of technocratic "social engineering" that sometimes aims to alleviate, but more generally to displace and to conceal, the very rising inequalities that result from marketization. Contemporary neoliberal forms of governance generally operate through a calculative logic that seeks to align the rational economic interests and limited political freedoms of subjects in such a way that individuals are mobilized to participate voluntarily in their own self-regulation. Whereas the mass mobilizations of the Mao era aimed to disrupt bourgeois social practies and routines in order to impose a new socialist order and to rectify the cadre ranks, mobilization during the post-Mao era has been redirected to stimulate consumption, depoliticize the consequences of state decision-making, and reorient mass unity around the inculcation of serial desires for commodities and nostalgic icons that facilitate non-democratic rule. Mass political participation is no longer seen as an end in itself, but instead, when it is permitted, serves as a mechanism for achieving better—meaning, more efficient and more effective--technocratic policy outcomes. These notions of participation shape the contemporary practices of depoliticized governance that elide the contestation and antagonism that represent the very core of direct democratic and mass participatory politics, and the progressive legacy of the Maoist mass revolution.

As I have argued, the transformation of these practices reflect deeper epistemological shifts that have important political consequences for the survival and adaptability China's authoritarian regime. It will be recalled that the Deng Xiaoping's accession to power was attended by a new wave of theoretical and discursive polemics designed to denude the "two whatevers" faction of loyal Maoists of their primacy in power. Deng's theoretical unraveling of radical Maoism began with "seeking truth from facts" (*shishi qiushi*), and progressed to the argument that "practice is the sole criterion of truth" and a new emphasis on Mao's thought as a "scientific system." Eventually, as Michael Schoenhals noted of this theoretical shift, Party theoreticians deftly maneuvered its "criterion of

practice" with the so-called "criterion of productive forces," thereby granting to rationalizations based upon economic productivity an unprecedented degree of official "truth."[71]

This deeper epistemological shift, which places economic production for the market at the center of the reform era project, is reflected in the shift from post-the Mao-era model of social investigation based upon an examination of "typical cases" (*dianxing diaocha*) to the random survey methods now more widely used for public opinion polling. In Mao's conception of scientific social investigation, notions of class and class struggle determined how "representative" (*you daibiaoxing*) cases were to be selected for study. When exemplary cases were uncovered, they were elevated as norms, propagating more widely the moral propositions they espoused through the "point to surface" (*youdian daomian*) method lucidly described by Sebastian Heilmann, [72] with the goal of creating what Borge Bakken refers to as an "exemplary society" governed by social revolutionary ideals.[73] However, the post-Mao abandonment of "class struggle as the key link" and the apparent acceptance of the role of randomness in social and economic events, have paved the way for new epistemologies of social knowledge, and new "ways of seeing like a state"[74] more conducive to the logic of depoliticized politics[75] associated with neoliberal globalization.

This vast depoliticization of Chinese society, which was made possible only by the disaffection sown by the tumult of the Cultural Revolution, has proved the key to the adaptive authoritarianism of the current regime. The political agenda of the late Maoist regime ultimately proved its own undoing: revolutionary radicalism under state socialism attracted, condensed and overdetermined the very sort of widespread social disaffection that Western-style market capitalism successfully deflects, disperses and disengages from the institutions in which power inheres. The PRC was by no means the only society to have experienced profound social turmoil during the 1960s; nor was it alone in adopting broad sociopolitical and economic reforms at the end of the 1970s that served to disperse, fragment and redirect social tumult. To a lesser extent, the Keynesian welfare arrangements of the capitalist West likewise served to mobilize and direct popular dissatisfaction against the institutions of the state, tendencies that the waves of privatization that originated by under the governments of Reagan and Thatcher also defused and mitigated. As Wang Hui rightly notes, the periodic return of mass protest over the course of the 1980s, culminating in the 1989

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[71] Michael Schoenhals, "The 1978 Truth Criterion Controversy," *The China Quarterly*, No. 126, (June, 1991), pp. 243-268

[72] Sebastian Heilmann, "From Local Experiments to National Policy: the Origins of Chian's Distinctive Policy Process," *The China Journal* 59 (January 2008), pp. 1-30.

[73] Borge Bakken, *The Exemplary Society: Human Improvement, Social Control, and the Dangers of Modernity in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[74] James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[75] Wang Hui, "Depoliticized Politics, from East to West," *New Left Reeview* 41 (September-October 2006), p. 41.

Tiananmen demonstrations, represented the final series of great mass eruptions pressing for a more genuinely egalitarian politics that arguably had its origins in the Red Guard movements of the 1960s.[76] In a consumer-driven market society like the one the current leadership is assiduously constructing, dissent, too is privatized, most often melting away into a vast sea of suppressed anxieties, personal inadequacies and an inchoate sense of dissatisfaction that serves to lubricate the global machinery of capitalism.

[76] Wang Hui, *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*, edited by Theodore Huters (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).