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Framing the Event: Qinghua University and Chinese Politics during the Cultural Revolution

On 5 August 1968 Mao Zedong regifted mangoes, given him by the Pakistan foreign minister, to the Workers' Propaganda Teams who were then bringing two warring factions of Red Guards, the Jinggangshan Corps (*tuanpai*) and the Fours (*sipai*), under control at Qinghua University. Mao's gesture signaled an important change of direction in the mass campaigns of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The student Red Guards, who had been the main force in the first stage of the Cultural Revolution and taken out the "capitalist roaders", had run amok. Henceforth the working class would take charge of forwarding the Cultural Revolution.

From 27 July to 26 August was an anxious and confusing time for Red Guards in China. On the morning of 27 July, huge crowds of workers and a scattering of PLA men appeared before the campus gates at Qinghua University, demanding an end to all violent confrontations. At dawn on 28 July Mao Zedong summoned the five Red Guard leaders in Beijing to the Great Hall of the People for a meeting, which lasted from 3:30 A.M. to 8:30 A.M. Mao lambasted the Red Guard leaders for disobeying his order to "struggle, criticize and transform" Chinese campuses and instead forming viciously opposing factions which degenerated from diatribes even to armed combats. He revealed that he was the "black hand" behind the order sending in work

teams to quell the violence and told his “little generals” [Red Guards] that “they have now made mistakes (*xianzai shi xiaojiang fan cuowu de shihou le*).¹

On 5 August Mao instructed his bodyguard Wang Dongxing to distribute the case of mangoes given him by the Pakistani foreign minister to the workers who were occupying Qinghua University campus. On 26 August the Red Guards were told to stand down, officially and in print: the *People's Daily* editorial by Yao Wenyuan, a member of the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group, was headlined “The Working Class Must Exercise Leadership in Everything.”

In carrying out the proletarian revolution in education, it is essential to have working-class leadership; it is essential for the masses of the workers to take part and, in cooperation with Liberation Army fighters, bring about a revolutionary “three-in-one” combination, merging with the activists among the students, teachers, and workers in the schools who are determined to carry the proletarian revolution in education through to the end. The Workers’ Propaganda Teams should stay *permanently* in the schools and take part in fulfilling all the tasks of struggle-criticism-transformation in the schools, and they will always lead the schools.²

As one former Qinghua student remembers, upon hearing the broadcast of the 26 August editorial he realized that “the golden age of the Red Guards is over.”³ If Mao’s 28 July summons to the five Red Guard leaders had left the students with some illusion that they were still Mao’s right arm, the 26 August editorial made it unequivocally clear that, for the Red Guards in

particular and the students in general, the rampage was over and they must now accept the leadership of the proletariat. Qinghua students could no longer comfort themselves that Mao gave mangoes to the workers because “he did not like to eat the exotic fruit.”⁴ The Cultural Revolution had entered an unmistakably new phase.

Qinghua, Qinghua!

Qinghua, China’s leading university for science and technology, had occupied center stage in Beijing politics since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. The famous name “Red Guards” (*hongweibing*) originated with a group of politically active students at Qinghua Middle School, who organized on 29 May 1966, calling themselves the “red guards who defend Mao Zedong Thought.” On 1 August Mao publicly endorsed the Qinghua Middle School Red Guards, proclaiming their action against the counterrevolutionaries “righteous.” This approbation inspired Chinese students across the nation to form their own Red Guard organizations. Red Guards, consisting of middle-school, high-school, and college students, became Mao’s principal instrument in fulfilling the purpose of the Cultural Revolution: to shake up the Party as a whole in order to reinvigorate it; in other words, to “wreak havoc” with the establishment in an attempt to prevent it from going revisionist.⁵

Qinghua University's radical Red Guards, key among them the legendary Kuai Dafu, were instrumental in helping Mao to achieve the first step of the Cultural Revolution, that is, to "bombard the headquarters" and to "take out the capitalist roaders" among the leadership, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. The Cultural Revolution at Qinghua University started with rebel students putting up posters vilifying the university's Party committee for serious faults. Their posters took inspiration from Nie Yuanzi's large-character posters aggressively attacking the Party authorities at Beijing University, which were officially endorsed by *People's Daily* on 1 June 1966. An equal stimulus was the militant 2 June *People's Daily* editorial "Smashing All the Ox Devils and Snake Spirits." On 9 June, to carry out the Cultural Revolution, Liu Shaoqi sent an outside work team to Qinghua, led by his wife, Wang Guangmei. This work team, though purportedly siding with the Cultural Revolution, applied a top-down style antithetical to Cultural Revolution principles and aims. Kuai Dafu, a then third-year chemical engineering student, emerged as the most outspoken anti work team student, openly challenging the work team's authority. His challenge got him attention from the very top: a summons from Mao Zedong to attend the dawn meeting of Cultural Revolution activists on 28 July and an interview with Premier Zhou Enlai on 30 July and again on 1 August.⁶ As Mao became increasingly vocal in his struggle against the "capitalist roaders" at the Party's center, Kuai's experience opposing the work team became more than ever useful to him. Kuai later recalled that his conversations with

Zhou were mostly about his interactions with the work team led by Wang Guangmei. Linking Liu Shaoqi's demotion from second to eighth rank during the Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth Conference of the Party Central Committee on 1 August 1966 to these conversations, Kuai realized how crucial and timely his information had been.⁷

By September 1966 the signals from the center were too clear to mistake. The Central Cultural Revolution Small Group (hereafter Central Group), led by Jiang Qing, escalated and intensified its accusations against Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. On 6 September the Third Headquarters of Beijing College-Level Red Guards became a protégé of the Central Group, with Kuai Dafu as its deputy chief. On 24 September, outspokenly encouraged by the Central Group, Kuai established his own Red Guard organization at Qinghua, the Jinggangshan Red Guards.⁸ The latter issued a declaration clearly targeting Liu and Deng:

The struggle between the two "lines" has been intense from the outset of the Cultural Revolution. In June and July some Central Party leaders followed the wrong class line, and to this day Chairman Mao's sixteen points could not be implemented.... We will take it on ourselves to remove any person from his position, no matter how high, if he defies Mao Zedong Thought.⁹

Kuai was the Central Group's most stalwart point man in condemning the "bourgeois reactionary line." On 6 October all the central leaders of the Party attended a mass meeting to formally launch the campaign against the bourgeois reactionary line. At this meeting Kuai led

one hundred thousand university students in an oath to blast the capitalist roaders. Overnight Kuai became a political superstar. On 9 October Kuai led four hundred Qinghua students to the center of Beijing, where they demanded that Wang Guangmei return to Qinghua and undertake self-criticism.¹⁰ In November and December, as Jiang Qing and other Central Group members encountered poster attacks by loyalist Red Guards, largely the children of high-level Party leaders, Kuai Dafu was again needed to defend the Central Group by verbally bashing the attackers.¹¹

In return, the Central Group was critical in helping Kuai establish himself on the Qinghua campus. On 17 December Jiang Qing particularly urged Qinghua Red Guards to unite. On 18 December Zhang Chunqiao went to Qinghua to urge Kuai to take the lead in uniting all of Qinghua's students, and that very day all Qinghua rebel students joined the Jinggangshan Corps, with Kuai Dafu as their leader.¹² On 25 December Jinggangshan Corps took its first action, again with the Central Group's direction and encouragement: Early in the morning, six thousand Qinghua students and teachers entered the center of Beijing via five different routes.¹³ They posted up anti-Liu and anti-Deng posters, shouted "Down with the reactionary capitalist line," and sang propaganda songs.¹⁴ This mass public criticism of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping had enormous impact. Apparently it realized the hopes of the Central Group, for on 30 December Jiang Qing and Central Group member Yao Wenyan went to Qinghua to congratulate Jinggangshan for its enthusiasm and for the example it had set.¹⁵

Kuai's reputation soared, and his Jinggangshan Corps became *the* model for all other Red Guards across the nation. Meanwhile, Kuai's ego also soared, and it was this that eventually brought him to grief.

Factionalism at Qinghua

Notwithstanding Kuai's exalted reputation outside Qinghua, at Qinghua maintaining student unity proofed iffy. Antagonism toward Kuai materialized soon after the formation of the Jinggangshan Corps. Within the Corps, Kuai had quickly built up an inner circle, comprising his old dissident comrades from the work team period as well as others who had more recently gained his personal favor. His ego inflated to the point of ordering a compilation of the "Collected Works of Kuai Dafu," after the fashion of eminent Central Party leaders.¹⁶ That was too much for Tang Wei, one of Kuai Dafu's earliest sympathizers, who publicly criticized Kuai. In his public letter of resignation, he condemned Kuai's dictatorial leadership and swelling egotism, the Jinggangshan leaders' factionalism, and their disrespect for the masses.¹⁷ Tang Wei's criticism of Kuai's radicalism and chest-thumping resonated especially with former student cadres. Although they had supported Kuai in criticizing the capitalist reactionary line, these student cadres found the newly formed Kuai inner circle truculent and thuggish. One member of the Kuai clique had claimed that all Qinghua Party members were rotten and needed to be

expelled from the party because “they obtained their Party membership simply by flattering leaders.”¹⁸ Such belligerence and confrontational rants perturbed many of Kuai’s earlier supporters, especially the former student cadres who had been drawn to Kuai by their shared revulsion over the maltreatment of the Qinghua cadres by the work team. The very first school-wide meeting after the foundation of the Jinggangshan Corps turned an airing of complaints against Kuai. Barely two weeks after formation of the Jinggangshan alliance on 18 December, these mounting dissatisfactions broke the alliance into five regiments (*zongdui*), all of which challenged Kuai’s absolute control.¹⁹

Opposition against Kuai intensified when “his men” verbally attacked the Central Group advisor Kang Sheng. Kuai’s core group claimed that Kang Sheng was a reactionary, which deeply irritated Jiang Qing and her Central Group allies. But notwithstanding his serious political mistakes and the challenges to him on campus, Kuai was still the golden boy in eyes of the Central Party leaders. On 26 February, when Vice Premier and Public Security Minister Xie Fuzhi received a Shanghai “power seizure committee,” he urged Kuai, who accompanied him, to build a stable power base at Qinghua.²⁰ After *People’s Daily* publicized the Guiyang Textile Factory model of uniting each workshop and *Red Flag* publicized Mao’s directive calling for “triple alliances” of revolutionary cadres, students, and soldiers, the pressure on the regiment

leaders to reunite their regiments was intense.²¹ Nevertheless, they were at a standstill until the contentious issue of how to deal with cadres came to the fore.²²

On 30 March 1967 a *Red Flag* article specifically condemned the work team's reactionary program at Qinghua, asserting that most of the Qinghua cadres were good revolutionaries.²³ The faltering regiment leaders quickly took heart, since the article resonated perfectly with their views on the former Qinghua cadres and sanctioned their absorbing the cadres into a power center that would replace Kuai's dictatorship. They plunged into the debate over Qinghua's cadres. The first step in the counterattack against Kuai's group was to lash out against the relatively vulnerable teachers' organization that supported Kuai. Regiment battle teams made up of former student cadres led the rhetorical assault on the teachers' organization for arguing that "all of Qinghua's cadres were rotten" and "professors who earned two hundred *yuan* were more revolutionary than cadres who earned forty-six *yuan*."²⁴ The anti-Kuai regiment leaders were strongly allied with the former Qinghua cadres. With the nation newly focused on Qinghua's cadres, they might rehabilitate the former cadres and at the same time discredit Kuai Dafu.²⁵

Their chance came on 12 April, when Kuai's clique made another serious gaffe, alleging that the *Red Flag* article of 30 March, rehabilitating the Qinghua cadres, was in error.²⁶ Seizing the opportunity, Shen Ruhuai, who had emerged as the most adamant anti-Kuai leader, and other regiment leaders formed the April Fourteenth Liaison (hereafter the Fours) on 14 April and

called themselves the “Rehabilitating Cadres Liaison.”²⁷ The repercussions were huge. Qinghua cadres joined the Fours, greatly enhancing this fledgling faction. On 29 April 1967 Qinghua cadres posted a public letter, “To All Revolutionary Cadres and Cadres Who Want to Be Revolutionaries.” In this letter they claimed that the Fours followed Mao’s teachings and were of all the factions the most resolute in combating the capitalist reactionary line.²⁸ On 1 May Kuai and his followers fired back, labeling the cadres’ letter an attempt to restore the old Qinghua.²⁹ Their strident tone and aggressive wording drove these cadres and their student sympathizers firmly into the tanks of the Fours.

Because cadres represented political authority at Qinghua before the Cultural Revolution, an evaluation of their role was in effect an evaluation of the old Qinghua during the first seventeen years of the People’s Republic, which in turn decisively affected one’s understanding and assessment of the Cultural Revolution. The Jinggangshan Corps’ evaluation was, of course, negative, that of the Fours, more favorable.³⁰ The argument stemmed from contradictions within the pre-Cultural Revolution Qinghua hierarchy and stratification of the sociopolitical power structure at Qinghua and throughout the people’s Republic during the previous seventeen years. Many interviewees recalled that such debates led them to reflect on the early People’s Republic power structure and their own positions in it, and that these reflections influenced their later decisions. Students came to understand their past positions more clearly and began to switch

their initial affiliations as the debates intensified and reached into the fundamentals of the power structure. The Fours expanded from about seven hundred people in mid-April when the Fours formed to about two thousand at the end of May, after six weeks of fierce argument and counterargument.³¹

The struggle between Jinggangshan and the Fours intensified after May, over the formation of a campus revolutionary committee. The revolutionary committee was to be a legitimate, formal, long-term regime, possessing the resources to quash opposing opinion and eliminate antagonists. Kuai took this issue as an opportunity to delegitimize the Fours once and for all; the Fours were determined to fight back. Kuai's Jinggangshan had already established an election committee for the revolutionary committee and was preparing to celebrate the founding of the revolutionary committee on 28 May, while in Yuanmingyuan, the nearby former imperial park, the agitated Shen Ruhuai and his most dedicated followers held a secret meeting. Stating the conflict allegorically, Shen said, "Either the fish dies in the net or the net is torn to pieces. Kuai is already contracting the net. The only way for the Fours to survive is to break our way out!"³² In the early morning of 29 May 1967 Shen and other leaders of the Fours announced the establishment of the April Fourteenth Headquarters, marking their official organizational split from Kuai. The establishment of the April Fourteenth Headquarters had momentous effect. The planned founding meeting of Qinghua's revolutionary committee of Kuai's Jinggangshan did not

take place because Zhou Enlai, given the factional divisions at the school, refused to attend. This humiliation deepened the Jinggangshaners' hatred of the Fours.

Zhou Enlai's no-show for Kuai Dafu's revolutionary committee crushed Kuai's attempt to become the absolute leader of Qinghua. It also made both factions understand the importance of Central Party leaders' support for their positions. Trying to act on the signals sent by Central Party leaders, both factions shifted their focus to the world outside Qinghua. In July both factions escalated their campaigns, including to "drag out a small handful in the army (*jiu jundui yi xiaocuo*).” Since students on both sides were intensifying their actions and rationalizations so as to win the support of Central Party leaders, they were becoming ever more open to manipulation from the center.

Although the students' actions were often inconsistent, their ideologies grew increasingly systematic. Both factions displayed great interest in the theoretical social implications of the Cultural Revolution. Using Marxist class theory and terminology, they offered their own creative interpretations of the upheaval and of the preceding seventeen years. In August 1967, after being attacked by Jinggangshan's nationally circulated newspaper for weeks, the Fours' theorist Zhou Quanying wrote one of the most famous polemics of the Cultural Revolution, "The Fours' Spirit Shall Win!" Zhou's article influenced numerous Red Guards all over the country and was even perused by Mao.³³ The Cultural Revolution, Zhou stated, "was a revolution led by the

proletariat, who were also the leading class of the preceding seventeen years.” During the preceding seventeen years of the socialist regime, the overall class line “was correct and stable... those who in control were from the ‘good’ classes and those reined in were from the landlord, capitalist, and other ‘bad’ classes.” The article maintained that, notwithstanding problems in the central political regime, changes should be moderate and must not overhaul the entire sociopolitical structure.³⁴ Thus, Zhou Quanying opposed the idea of the Cultural Revolution as an all-out counterattack (*da fan’ge*) on the past and a wholesale redistribution of wealth and power.

Diametrically opposed were Kuai and his radical supporters, who called on their followers to “smash the old Qinghua completely (*chedi zalan jiu Qinghua*).” Their principle was, “Wherever oppression is worst, revolution is strongest.” To them, all Qinghua cadres were corrupt;³⁵ though the university leaders had already fallen, the second and third generations of cadres were also corrupt and remained a danger. Obsessed by the idea that the past must be utterly overthrown, the Corps insisted on stripping all vestiges of authority from the former cadres and vehemently denounced the policies of the preceding seventeen years.³⁶

“The Little Generals Have Now Made Mistakes (*Xianzai shi xiaojiang fan cuowu de shihou le*)”

By the end of 1967 Mao had backpedaled from his support of rampage and anarchy. In October 1967 Mao called on “all revolutionary organizations to forge great alliances.” These alliances were to form “revolutionary committees” to replace the old organs of state power. After a year of struggle and the purge of many “bad people,” Mao was anxious to get on with reestablishing order, via a “three-in-one” merger, comprising representatives of the PLA, the revolutionary cadres, and the revolutionary masses. In November 1967 the PLA had been ordered to desist from holding public debates and pasting up large-character posters and to focus on reimposing discipline on its officers; military academies were told to form three-in-one alliances.³⁷ In addition, Mao Zedong Thought Study Classes were organized nationwide; 86.4 million sets of Mao’s selected works and 350 million copies of the Little Red Book were published in 1967, and groups were brought to Beijing from problem provinces in the hope that local factionalism could be dissipated by Mao study. With these additional efforts, by 30 March 1968 eighteen of China’s twenty-nine provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions formed revolutionary committees.³⁸

Also in October 1967 the central CCP ordered classes to be resumed immediately (they had been suspended for almost a year and a half), and newspapers began urging students to return to school. Responding to this call, classes were resumed in Qinghua on 30 October. But factional struggles there continued and even intensified. at Qinghua. After the focus of the two

factions' efforts shifted back to the campus, verbal competition between the Corps and the Fours escalated into armed skirmishes. The Corps persecuted several cadres who supported the Fours. The Fours aggressively lashed out against some teachers siding with the Corps. Both sides suffered casualties; neither would stop fighting.³⁹ Open war in March 1968, when Nie Yuanzi incited an armed fight at Beijing University, devastating the opposition and opening the way to the establishment of her own revolutionary committee. Soon after, in an April 1968 *People's Daily* article, Mao called on people to "never concede" when facing class enemies. Inspired by Nie's success and encouraged by Mao's new order, on 23 April 1968 Kuai Dafu started the famous Hundred Day War at Qinghua.⁴⁰

The Hundred Day War began with the Corps commanders occupying the university's Meeting Hall after midnight on 23 April. At dawn the Corps loudspeakers blared forth that four hundred spears allegedly owned by the Fours had been found, and that the Corps' action had frustrated a major offensive planned by the Fours.⁴¹ Not long after the Corps' announcement, the Fours occupied the Generator Building, just east of the Meeting Hall and across the central oval from the Science Building, which was their headquarters.⁴² From 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. the Corps launched a massive attack aimed at taking the Generator Building. They succeeded. Both sides used stones, tiles, spears, and sulfuric acid as weapons. More than fifty students were wounded, many by jumping out of windows in an effort to flee the fighting.⁴³

From 24 to 28 April the two sides continually vandalized buildings occupied by the other faction, destroyed the other's broadcast stations, and confiscated homes of members of the other faction. The primary aim on both sides was to control more buildings. Both sides managed to obtain weapons from outside the campus. In addition, using skills they learned at school before the Cultural Revolution, they manufactured bombs, cannons, rockets, spears, mines, and even "tanks." By the end of April 60 percent of the Qinghua students had left campus.⁴⁴

The final battle with cold weapons took place at the Bathhouse at dawn of 30 May. Again it was the Corps that took the offensive. First they tried to take the two-story Bathhouse with assault ladders, but the defenders easily held them off with long spears, then pushed forward with a contingent of spearmen behind a "tank" made from a tractor welded over with steel plates. The Corps fighters broke ranks and fled, leaving one of them run through by a spear to bleed to death. Infuriated, Kuai ordered his diehard supporters to pour gasoline on the Bathhouse and torch it. The Fours, trapped inside, were forced to surrender. The bloody battle of the Bathhouse was the last major confrontation. With one death on each side and many wounded or badly burned, factional leaders shied away from new face-offs in favor of protracted siege and countersiege.⁴⁵ To escape the bloodshed, even more students and staff fled the campus, leaving at most three hundred activists to fight it out.⁴⁶

Finally, in early July, Mao Zedong made up his mind to end the armed fighting. On 3 July in response to massive battles in Guangxi Province, the Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Committee, and the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group issued a joint directive, ordering the immediate cessation of combat, the clean-up of defensive installations, and immediate and unconditional surrender of all weapons to the PLA. Mao paid special attention to the internecine war at Qinghua University. Representatives of the Beijing Garrison (*weishuqu*) were dispatched to Qinghua on 7 July, bearing copies of the 3 July Directive, to stop the armed fights. These accomplished nothing. On 9 July the Corps decided to set fire to the Fours' headquarters, the Science Building. On the same day, three hundred Fours carried the body of one of their dead fighters to Tiananmen Square, in protest against the atrocities of the Jinggangshan Corps. The Fours also sent six urgent telegrams to Mao and the Central Party, asking China's top leaders to intervene.⁴⁷ On 12 July Liu Feng of Beijing Garrison went to Qinghua for a talk with the Fours and Kuai Dafu. Liu demanded that Kuai end his blockade of the Science Building and turn over all his weapons, again to no avail. On 15 July Kuai was received by Xie Fuzhi and other Beijing leaders. When asked to stop fighting, Kuai put forward his conditions: brand leaders of the Fours as "counterrevolutionaries," arrest the Qinghua cadres that had supported the Fours, order the Fours to publicly surrender to the Corps and to remove all their defensive installations.⁴⁸ Kuai had become obsessed with destroying the Fours.

Finally, in desperation, Mao agreed to the measures for which Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping had been excoriated two years earlier: work teams. At Mao's direct order, the 8341 Army (Mao's own headquarters unit) and Beijing Garrison set up temporary headquarters outside the Qinghua campus, in preparation for entering the university. In addition, some thirty thousand employees of sixty Beijing factories were organized into "Capital Mao Zedong Thought Workers' Propaganda Teams" and sent onto campuses to propagate Mao's directive to stop fighting and to advance the formation of alliances. The teams assigned to Qinghua University arrived there on 27 July 1968 and were welcomed by hard-pressed Fours. The Corps, however, greeted them with shots and stones, as ordered by Kuai Dafu. Five members of the Workers' Propaganda Teams were killed; 731 were injured.⁴⁹

The 27 July fiasco shocked the Central Party leaders. For Mao, it was the end of his illusion that, if revisionist party leaders could be swept aside and he could speak directly to the people, they would unfailingly follow him. The hearts and minds of his revolutionary adherents were not unfailingly at one with his own, as he had hoped. Nor could they any longer be controlled by his directives. They could only be brought back into line by force.

One day after the Qinghua debacle, the Chairman officially "summoned" the principal Red Guard leaders of the capital, Nie Yuanzi, Kuai Dafu, Tan Houlan, Han Aijing, and Wang Dabin to a meeting in the Great Hall of the People. The Great Hall was a red-carpet venue, but

the rebels had been summoned to hear the death sentence pronounced on their movement. Mao pointed out that Kuai and the other leaders could each rely only on two or three hundred hardcore supporters, whereas he could send in thirty thousand workers, not to mention the number of troops under Lin Biao.⁵⁰ Mao and Lin emphasized that Red Guard violence had alienated all sections of the population, including many students; the Red Guards had not pursued struggle-criticism-transformation as charged, but had taken up arms against one another. Mao laid out the alternatives he offered them: (1) military control, or (2) “struggle-criticism-quit” and “struggle-criticism-disperse.”⁵¹ In fact Mao imposed both: PLA units moved onto many campuses, and simultaneously members of the principal Red Guard units were dispersed “up to the mountains and down to the countryside.” And Red Guard leaders ended up in farms and factories, making revolution as true proletarians.⁵²

It was time for the Red Guards to leave the center stage. The term Red Guard was to live on for another decade. But the exciting days of the Red Guards were over soon after July 1968.

Mangoes, The Cult of Mao, and Politics during the Cultural Revolution

On 4 August Pakistan’s foreign minister presented Mao Zedong with a case of mangoes. The following day, which was the second anniversary of Mao’s large-character poster “Bombard the Headquarters,” Mao instructed his bodyguard, Wang Dongxing, to present the mangoes as

gift to the workers of the Propaganda Teams stationed at Qinghua University Campus.⁵³ Mao's gift generated great excitement immediately on arrived on the Qinghua campus. According to Hinton's interviews, workers stayed up through the night, looking at and touching the mangoes, discussing the implications of the new policy, and contemplating Mao's act.⁵⁴ As Murck puts it, "Chairman Mao's refusal to eat the fruit was read as a sacrifice for the benefit of the workers."⁵⁵ And the transformation of the mango from fruit to near-divine symbol was swift.⁵⁶

The sudden emergence of the mango into mass political discourse had much to do with the cult of Mao. In the first years of the Cultural Revolution it was Mao's personal endorsement that had given the Red Guards their historical stage. It was then Mao's chastisement that changed the power dynamic of the Qinghua Red Guards. Finally, it was Mao's abandonment of the Red Guards that led to their downfall. With that, the Cultural Revolution entered its second period, the sudden rise of the symbol mango, which signified the beginning of the new era of 'three-in-one' revolutionary alliance. But did the Cultural Revolution really enter a new stage? Would the workers and the PLA carry out the struggle-criticism-transformation in schools?

Tragically, the dispersal of the Red Guards did not put an end to violence, but instead proved to be prelude to an even wider-ranging campaign of terror, during which even more people were tortured, maimed, killed, driven to madness or to suicide. Many in August 1968 had already forgotten that when the Cultural Revolution first started, its goal was to "touch people's

souls” (*chujī rén línghún*) and to remake people’s ideals. The Little Generals demonstrated their failure to achieve that goal. Would the workers succeed instead? What was the purpose of the Cultural Revolution, and why did the reality differ so drastically from Mao’s vision?

¹ “Black hand” was the term used by Qinghua Red Guard leader Kuai Dafu, referring to the person who ordered to send in work teams to Qinghua University. *Weida lingxiu Mao zhuxi he tade qinmi zhanyou Lin fuzhuxi zhaojian shoudu dazhuanyuanxiao hongdaihui fuzeren Nie Yuanzi, Kuai Dafu, Han Aijing, Tan Houlan, Wang Dabin tongzhi shi de zhongyao jianghua* [The great leader Chairman Mao and his close comrade Vice Chairman Lin in dialogue with leaders of the Beijing college Red Guards, Comrades Nie Yuanzi, Kuai Dafu, Han Aijing, Tan Houlan and Wang Dabin] (Beijing: 1968), printed pamphlet, p.16. Hereafter, *Jianghua*. Special thanks to Richard Siao at UCLA for sharing his original document with me.

² Mao Zedong, as quoted in Yao Wenyan, “The Working Class Must Exercise Leadership in Everything,” in William Hinton, *Hundred Day War: The Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua University* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p.183.

³ Interview with Zheng Yisheng by the author, 2011.

⁴ Interview with Huang Xi by the author, 2011.

⁵ Mao Zedong, “Just a Few Words,” translation of “Zai Zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua, [Talk at the Central Work Conference] (25 October 1966)” in *China’s Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not A Dinner Party*, ed. Michael Schoenhals (Armonk, New York, London: M.E.Sharpe, 1996), p.8.

⁶ Interview with Kuai Dafu by the author, 2003.

⁷ Interview with Kuai Dafu by the author, 2003.

⁸ Zheng Xiaowei, “Passion, Reflection and Survival: Political Choices of Red Guards at Qinghua University, June 1966-July 1968,” in *China’s Cultural Revolution As History*, ed. Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew G. Walder (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p.48.

⁹ “Jinggangshan hongweibing choubei jianli weiyuanhui di yi hao jueyi [The first resolution of the preparatory committee of the Jinggangshan red guards],” in *Zhongguo wenhua da geming wenku* [Chinese Cultural Revolution database], ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue Zhongguo yanjiu fuwu zhongxin, 2002).

¹⁰ Xu Aijing [Han Aijing], *Qinghua Kuai Dafu* [Kuai Dafu of Qinghua University] (Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenge Lishi chubanshe, 2011), pp.146, 148.

¹¹ Ibid, p.163. On 15 November 1966 Yilin and Dixi from Beijing Agriculture Middle School put up the accusatory large-character poster at Qinghua University campus, targeting Mao’s “close comrade” Lin Biao. On 21 November Red Guards from the Number 8 Middle School attacked Kuai and those like him people and claimed to “resolutely resist people like Kuai to take charge of the Three Quarters.” On 30 November Li Hongshan from Chinese Forestry College put up a poster attacking the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group and urging people to “kick out the Central Group and to take over the Cultural Revolution on one’s own.” On 6 December Li Hongshan again attacked the Central Cultural Revolution Small group and even urged students “to criticize Chairman Mao in the most thorough manner.” Early December 1966 was plagued with the old loyalist Red Guards turning their spears against the Central Group. On 5 December Beijing’s elite middle schools, such as Beida Middle School and Qinghua Middle School, formed United Action (*Liandong*). They condemned rebel Red Guard students like Kuai Dafu and targeted Jiang Qing and other Central Cultural Revolution Small Group members.

¹² Interview with Kuai Dafu by the author, 2003.

¹³ Interview with Kuai Dafu by the author, 2003.

¹⁴ Qinghua daxue Jinggangshan lianhe zongbu yiwangxi zhandouzu [Qinghua University Jinggangshan united headquarters “recalling-the-past battle team],” in *Qinghua daxue Jinggangshan bingtuan wuchan jieji wenhua da geming dashiji* [The chronology of the Qinghua Jinggangshan Corps in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution] (Beijing: 1968), mimeographed pamphlet, 25 December 1966. Hereafter, *Dashiji*.

¹⁵ *Dashiji*, 30 December 1966.

¹⁶ Shen Ruhuai, *Qinghua daxue wen’ge jishi: Yige hongweibing lingxiu de zishu* [The Cultural Revolution at Qinghua University: Autobiography of a Red Guard leader] (Hong Kong: Shidai yishu chubanshe, 2004), p.51. Special thanks to Shen Ruhuai for giving me his detailed autobiography.

¹⁷ *Dashiji*, 20 December 1966; interview with Ji Peng by the author, 2003; Shen Ruhuai, *Qinghua daxue wen'ge jishi*, p.51.

¹⁸ *Dashiji*, 20 December 1966.

¹⁹ *Dashiji*, 2-11 January 1967; interview with Shen Ruhuai by the author, February 2003; Shen Ruhuai, *Qinghua daxue wen'ge jishi*, p.57. These five regiments were: the Mao Zedong Thought Regiment (*Mao Zedong sixiang zongdui*), the Eights' Regiment (*Baba zongdui*), the East is Red Regiment (*Dongfanghong zongdui*), Chairman Mao's Guards (*Mao zhuxi jingwei tuan*), and the Tiananmen Regiment (*Tiananmen zongdui*).

²⁰ *Dashiji*, 26 February 1967.

²¹ “Lun geming de san jiche [On the revolutionary ‘three-in-one’ combination],” *Hongqi* p.5 (30 March 1967).

²² *Dashiji*, 1 and 7 March 1967; interview with Shen Ruhuai by the author, 2003.

²³ “‘Daji yidapian, baohu yixiaocuo’ shi zichan jieji fandong luxian de yige zucheng bufen (1966 nian 6, 7 yue Qinghua daxue gongzuozu zai ganbu wenti shang zhixing zichan jieji fandong luxian de qingkuang diaocha) [Attacking many to protect a few is the reactionary capitalist line (Investigation of Qinghua University work team's reactionary capitalist line on the cadre problem during June and July 1966)],” *Hongqi*, p.5 (30 March 1967).

²⁴ *Dashiji*, 1 April 1967.

²⁵ Interview with Shen Ruhuai by the author, 2003; interview with Ji Peng by the author, 2003.

²⁶ *Dashiji*, 13 April 1967.

²⁷ Interview with Ji Peng by the author, 2003; interview with Sun Nutao by the author, 2003.

²⁸ *Dashiji*, 29 April 1967.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 May 1967.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22 April 1967. The argument was expressed in a Fours' poster titled “Young Revolutionaries Should Have the Courage to Rehabilitate Cadres,” written by Shen Ruhuai's battle team.

³¹ Ibid., 14 April 1967, and 29 May 1967. On 14 April 1967 seven hundred people attended the founding meeting of the April Fourteenth Liaison. On 29 May 1967 two thousand people attended the founding meeting of the April Fourteenth Headquarters.

³² Interview with Shen Ruhuai by the author, 2003.

³³ *Jianghua*, pp.3, 20.

³⁴ Zhou Quanying, “414 sichao bisheng! [The Fourteens’ Spirit Shall Win!],” in *Wenhua da geming he tade yiduan sichao* [Heterodox thoughts during the Cultural Revolution], ed. Song Yongyi and Sun Dajin (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 1996), pp.390, 408.

³⁵ *Jinggangshan* (24 August 1967), in *Xinbian hongweibing ziliao* [A new collection of red guard publications], ed. Zhou Yuan, (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 1999), vol. 8, pp.3890-92.

³⁶ *Dashiji*, 18 and 20 November 1967.

³⁷ Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), p.241.

³⁸ Ibid., p.240.

³⁹ Interview with Sun Nutao by the author, 2003. The first large-scale armed battle took place in January 1967. Only the intervention of the Beijing Garrison under General Li Zhongqi made the two factions stop fighting. Even at the negotiating table, however, and in the presence of General Li, the two factions kept cursing each other.

⁴⁰ Interview with Kuai Dafu by the author, 2003.

⁴¹ Hinton, *Hundred Day War*, p.154.

⁴² Tang Shaojie, “Qinghua wudou yu xuanchuandui jinzhu [Armed Struggles at Qinghua and the Coming of the Propaganda Teams],” in *Bainianchao* [Hundred Year Tide] no. 9 (2000), p.64.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Hinton, *Hundred Day War*, pp. 160, 161.

⁴⁶ This number is Mao's estimate. In *Jianghua*, pp.2, 4. The estimate according to participant Tsu, was 400 at the end of July. About 300 students (200 with the Regiment and about 100 with the Fours) and an additional 100 outsiders who were "pretty bad people on the whole.... Most of them loved brawling and so both sides welcomed them...." (Hinton, *Hundred Day War*, p.168). I refer to 300, the number of students engaged in the fighting.

⁴⁷ Xu Aijing, *Qinghua Kuai Dafu*, p.340.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Tang Shaojie, "Qinghua wudou yu xuanchuandui jinzhu," pp.68, 69.

⁵⁰ *Jianghua*, p.3.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.18.

⁵² MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, p.251.

⁵³ Alfreda Murck, "Golden Mangoes: the Life Cycle of a Cultural Revolution Symbol," in *Archives of Asian Art*, vol.57 (2007), p.2.

⁵⁴ Hinton, *Hundred Day War*, pp.226, 227. Quoted in Murck, p.20.

⁵⁵ Murck, "Golden Mangoes," p.4.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.2.