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Talk About a Revolution: Red Guards, Government Cadres, and the Language of Political Discourse

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Twenty years ago, in "Family versus Merit in the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties," the historian Ping-ti Ho made the following remark, which is as valid today as it was then:

In an age in which there is an irresistible desire to theorize, especially in the Far Eastern field, not all scholars remember that factual control, which requires a laboriously accumulated knowledge of legal, institutional, economic, and social history, is a prerequisite to any responsible generalization. ¹

The present working paper is an attempt to establish a modest degree of "factual control" over an aspect of the social history, not of the Ming or Qing, but of China's Cultural Revolution as a prerequisite to future "responsible" generalization. In line with the focus of our project Keywords of the Chinese Revolution: The Language of Politics and the Politics of Language in Twentieth-Century China, *language* has been chosen as the aspect of social history subject to scrutiny. The language of the Cultural Revolution has rarely been studied seriously, and in China it is only recently that a handful of scholars have begun to concern themselves with it.² Outside China, while the "irresistible desire to theorize" has generated many studies of the politics of the Cultural Revolution, scholars from the relevant academic disciplines have on the whole shown little interest in how language was used to tackle social and political issues in the course of it.

As I have argued elsewhere, to gain access to the agora, PRC citizens must employ as their means of expression what in the eyes of the state count as "appropriate" formulations (*tifa*)³. They must in public speak the language of the state, or else not speak at all. Never was this more true than during the Cultural Revolution. The special status accorded the words of Mao Zedong contributed to the emergence of so-called "quotation warfare" wherein political arguments were carried out exclusively with the help of phrases from the selected works of the Great Helmsman. At one point, even words from the plainest vernacular attained special properties if Mao was known to have used them on some particularly significant occasion in the past. In the collected speeches from a congress of so-called "activists in the study of Mao Zedong Thought" we read: "We use an **entirely** (*wanquan*) and **thoroughly** (*chedi*) revolutionary spirit to open a sea-lane for the ships coming and going," and "every day we compare ourselves in the two mirrors of **extremely** (*jiduan*) and **utterly devoid of** (*haowu*)." ⁴ (Quotation marks and boldface as in original.) To use synonyms for these words employed by Mao in essays from the 1930s and 40s would not have been the sign of a true activist, and would not have landed one with a ticket to the congress in question. The language used had become a word game in which the participants shared a common esoteric knowledge of where each boldfaced word came from, and what its original connotations were. Today, the second sentence in particular makes no sense even to many historians unless they have "laboriously"--I assume this was what Ping-ti Ho had in mind--memorized the Maoist classics to the point where the sentence is automatically and instantly associated with the description in "In Memory of Norman Bethune" of the Canadian doctor as "extremely responsible in his work" and "utterly devoid of selfishness." ⁵

When the Cultural Revolution began, the students who were to form the core of the Red Guard movement were not always confident or particularly skilled in their command of the party's appropriate (*tuodang*) formulations. When new formulations in particular were introduced in the party press and Politburo documents, it was not always self-evident to what or whom they referred and what distinguished their meaning from that of earlier formulations. Even "old" and seemingly

very familiar formulations caused confusion in debates at times, because of the way they were used. When radical students at Qinghua University openly criticized the work team that entered their campus in early June 1966, they were denounced as trouble-makers by the central leadership responsible for despatching the work team. As part of this denunciation, the students were deprived of their status as genuine "leftists" (*zuopai*). By way of a logic that posited the metaphorically extended political "left" and "right" (as distinct from left and right in the physical world) as representing two sides of a circle (i.e. a continuum) rather than two extremes, the students who had gone "too far" in one direction suddenly found themselves accused of being no different from those who initially had set off in the exact opposite direction. Here is Vice-Premier Bo Yibo talking to Qinghua University student Kuai Dafu on 19 June:

I hope you will come and stand on the side of the leftist masses, and go and stand on the side of the work team. You must not be a leftist among the leftists (*zuopai zhong de zuopai*). To be a leftist among the leftists is to be a leftist in quotation marks, which is also to be a rightist (*youpai*). A circle consists of a left semi-circle and a right semi-circle. Going too far to the left, you end up on the right.⁶

Perhaps it was not surprising that among the many questions with which Red Guards soon turned to the CCP leadership for answers, that of vaguely understood and/or misunderstood terminology was a very common one. In the past, Vice-Premier Bo's answer to a question like "What is a 左派?" would most probably have been satisfactory; but now, as the young were asked by Mao in person to rebel against almost the entire party, answers from anyone other than a bona fide representative of Mao's "proletarian headquarters" would simply no longer do. On the day that her recent appointment as advisor to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in cultural affairs was made public, Mao's wife Jiang Qing told a mass rally in Beijing that the Chinese language had entered a state of flux: "Although we still go on using some of the [old] words, their content is now entirely different. . . . We're still using them, but their class content is the very opposite [of that given them by the exploiting classes]."⁷

In the politically charged atmosphere of the summer of 1966 thousands of students descended upon Beijing to "exchange revolutionary experiences." Their typical experiences included the more or less energetic physical and verbal abuse of teachers of bourgeois class background, as well as the clandestine formation of Red Guard (*hongweibing*) organizations not subject to party or Communist Youth League control.⁸ They also included struggles with new political labels, of which ones like "monsters and freaks" (*niugui sheshen*) and "black gang" (*heibang*) were two of the more prominent.⁹

At first it was not the party leadership's official policy to welcome students from all over the country to the national capital. On 12 August, in an internal memorandum forming the basis for an oral report to Mao, the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group (CCRSG) noted as follows: "The provinces and municipalities should be urged *not* to mobilize large numbers of people to travel to Beijing. The people that have already come to Beijing should be urged by the provinces and municipalities to return home and make revolution. There are already 7,000 persons from outside Beijing living on the Qinghua University campus, and food and accommodation has already become a problem." But the party chairman disagreed and told the CCRSG that one of the reasons why the Soviet Union had "turned revisionist" was because "too few people ever saw Lenin in person." According to CCRSG member Wang Li, Mao insisted that "large numbers of China's younger generation - the more people the better - should be given the opportunity to see the older generation of revolutionary leaders in person."¹⁰ And so it was that on 16 August, the head of the CCRSG Chen Boda ended up publicly urging students to come to--rather than stay out of--the national capital.¹¹ By mid-November 1966, Premier Zhou Enlai estimated that more than an

average of 200,000 persons were coming to Beijing each day, and that on peak days, the number reached 290,000. ¹² Between 18 August and 26 November 1966, Mao, Lin Biao, Zhou, Liu Shaoqi, Jiang Qing et al. were eventually "seen in person" by a total of eleven million Red Guards from all over China.

On 26 August-- initially in direct response to the stabbing of a Red Guard from Beijing's No.15 Middle School for Girls the day before¹³--the party and government leadership created an ad hoc General Liaison Station (*Lianluo Zongzhan*) to deal with the special problems posed by the steadily growing stream of young people coming to Beijing.¹⁴ According to Zhou Enlai, the Liaison Station was to serve three key functions: (1) to "support and serve" the Red Guards; (2) to "protect and take good care of" them; and (3) to "propagate and explain" to them the policies of the Center.¹⁵ Soon these functions were assumed by a permanent body designated the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office (*Wenhua Geming Lianhe Jiedaishi*), under the CCP Central Committee General Office and State Council General Secretariat. In the words of Wang Li, by directly monitoring the mood and movement of an important segment of "the masses," the Reception Office functioned as "a political thermometer that permitted us to gauge the progress of the Great Cultural Revolution."¹⁶ In November 1966 it was headed by one Wu Xianrong, who was directly responsible to Wang Dongxing and Tong Xiaopeng, director and deputy director respectively of the Central Committee General Office, and to Zhou Rongxin, secretary general of the State Council. In early 1967, the Reception Office also had direct ties to the CCRSG. On 30 April 1967, Chen Boda told office staff that if they had any problems, they could "at any time write a letter to comrade Wang Dongxing or to the Cultural Revolution Small Group Administrative Group (*banshizu*)."¹⁷ (The head of the CCRSG *banshizu* in 1967 was Mao's and Jiang Qing's daughter Li Na.) The total Reception Office staff at this point consisted of approximately 900 persons, including cadres recruited from as far away as Tibet and Hainan Island, in addition to a large number transferred from various parts of the central party, government, and PLA bureaucracy. ¹⁸

Cadres within the Reception Office ended up being a primary source from which Red Guards got their answers to questions not just concerning logistical problems like where to eat and sleep in Beijing, but also to ones about the authoritative definition of a "leftist" and "What's the difference between making trouble (*daoluan*) and rebelling (*zaofan*)?"¹⁹ Obviously, the Red Guards would have preferred if someone like Premier Zhou himself had personally guided them in these matters and resolved their problems for them, but this was not possible. On 11 November 1966, Vice-Premier Tao Zhu told Red Guards who demanded direct personal access to the senior CCP leadership to contend themselves with members of the Reception Office staff. "They can be trusted," Tao said. "Chairman Mao is the supreme commander, Lin Biao the deputy supreme commander, and the Premier is in charge of all major affairs: you cannot always take all your problems to them."²⁰

One of the rare occasions on which "the Premier in charge of all major affairs" himself nonetheless attempted to clarify a matter revolving around a controversial formulation was during a meeting with Red Guards in the Great Hall of the People on 1 September. A controversy had arisen over the new word "Mao Zedong-ism," of which Red Guards approved, but which Mao himself did not like:

During the Eleventh Central Committee Plenum, someone suggested changing Mao Zedong Thought to Mao Zedong-ism, but the Chairman himself did not approve. We've already become used to employing the phrase Mao Z edong Thought, and it also exerts major influence in the rest of the world. Given that Chairman Mao himself does not approve, it would be bad to force it upon him. . . . I urge you to discuss a possible change, and to consider choosing "Mao Zedong Thought Red Guards," or some other such name! You must not force your views on the Chairman. I do not in any way mean to reproach you. This is merely something that was not

given any thought [by those who brought it up]. Every organization should give the matter of what name to adopt some careful thought. ²¹

At the end of September, a name chosen by yet another Red Guard organization became the topic of conversation when Zhou at the end of September met with leaders of the so-called "Third Headquarters," the most radical Red Guard umbrella organization in Beijing. On this occasion, Zhou criticized the popular trend of changing one's own name from the "feudal" one by one's parents, to a supposedly more "revolutionary" one:

The name "Guard of Honor" (*yizhangdui*) is no good. It is feudal. Couldn't you could change it to "Advance Guard" (*qianweidui*)? That is what I suggest. . . . Now you all want to change your given names, but in my view you don't really have to! When I joined the revolution, some Anarchists argued that one should change one's name. [One Anarchist] called himself "Nameless" (*wuming*). In fact, he had a name all the same. Later, did he not change his name again? His family name is Chen and he works in the State Council Counsellor's Office, but Red Guards, please do not bother him. At the time, others told me to change my name, but I refused. Even when the Guomindang issued a warrant for my arrest, I still did not change my name!²²

Although to be concerned with the political overtones of one's given name might to some appear to be a rather juvenile obsession, it was not merely Red Guards who suffered from it. The fifty-eight year old Bo Yibo in his conversation with Kuai Dafu, further implied that Kuai--aside from being a "rightist" by virtue of assuming the position of a "leftist among the leftists"--had a rather suspect name. He later recalled his conversation at a meeting with a different group of Qinghua students:

I asked [Kuai] what his name was. He said his name was Kuai Dafu [lit. Kuai "Great Wealth" - transl.]. Its hard to say why he'd have a given name like that. That is a capitalist name. . . . Kuai Dafu explained to me and said: "My given name represents the nation." I said: "You're too wildly arrogant and ambitious."²³

While the matter of personal names and names of organizations had become somewhat less of an issue by 1967, Red Guards were still reminded of it now and then in conversation with CCP leaders. In one extreme case in the summer of 1967, CCRSG Advisor Kang Sheng even criticized a group of Henan middle school Red Guards for writing the (in itself still innocuous) name "Red Guard" on their red arm-bands in *the wrong color*--black, rather than white. The practice of using black characters, Kang insisted, was common among conservative Red Guards in Shandong, and it made the Henan Red Guards look like conservative sympathizers. (Without further ado, the Henan Red Guards present promptly tore off and discarded their arm-bands.) ²⁴

In 1966, Red Guards would on the whole appear to have accepted dealing with the Central Reception Office staff under most circumstances. They took careful notes of the answers given to their questions, and in some cases they even mimeographed unofficial conversation transcripts, giving these a wide circulation. A few dozen transcripts are currently available outside China, in document collections printed by popular organizations and by lower level party units in late 1966 and early 1967. The 400-page *Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Reference Materials*, edited and published by the Beijing branch of the China Automobile Industry Corporation and the state-owned Beijing Number Three Cotton Mill, for instance, contains the texts of a number of transcripts from September-November 1966, as does the multi-volume *Selected Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Reference Materials* put out by Beijing Chemistry Institute students calling themselves

the "Mao Zedong Thought Propagandists." The editorial information suggests that a typical transcript had been copied and re-copied two or three times prior to publication. In a few cases, variant transcripts of the same conversation were reproduced in the same collection. The textual quality ranges from excellent to appalling, but is generally acceptable. In a few cases, the transcripts were preceded by a note to the effect that "The record is incomplete, and has not been gone over by the speaker, and is thus presented only for reference purposes."

To the social historian, these Red Guard conversation transcripts are, despite their many flaws, in at least one important respect superior to similar CCP-texts from the same period, including occasional explanations of policy framed in question-and-answer form published in the *People's Daily*, *Liberation Army Daily* or *Red Flag*. They do not necessarily as accurately represent the CCP center's policy as accurately as do those texts, but they represent what an actual audience heard and remembered of an authoritative explanation of that policy. The texts are thus of interest in as much as they are the listener's record, and not the speaker's. They are not the "voice of the center," but the rare sound of that voice as heard by the Red Guards.

The remainder of this paper consists for the most part of annotated translations from conversations between Red Guards and cadres within the Central Reception Office. The immediate context of the question-and-answer session is given in each instance, since the explanations given were by no means fixed. The persons requesting clarification on points of usage were not seeking dictionary entry-type definitions, nor did they receive them; instead they were seeking vitally important guidance as to what this or that word or phrase meant right then and there. The speed with which the political situation in Beijing was changing in the autumn of 1966 is easily forgotten, but as Harold Wilson put it, "a week is a long time in politics." It is tempting to regard a text from--let us say--Monday 3 October as somehow a broadly applicable statement from just about any day, but in reality chances are that the conversation was contingent upon significant developments the week before (still not necessarily known to the historian), while making no reference to other contemporary developments long since known to the historian but not heard of by the Red Guards until the following Wednesday.

Having read and listened to a large sample of contemporary texts (for the needs of the illiterate and semi-literate, the China Record Company put out "vinyl editions" of quite a few *Red Flag* editorials in the winter of 1966-67, plus live recordings of some speeches by Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao at mass rallies!) ²⁵ I have determined that three policy documents created more terminological confusion among Red Guards than any others. The first document was, not surprisingly, the "Decision of the CCP Central Committee Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," (i.e. the "Sixteen Points") of 8 August 1966. The "Sixteen Points" had been drafted in July by CCRSG member Wang Renzhong, permanent Central Propaganda Department Deputy Director Zhang Pinghua, and a number of senior ghost-writers and had been through no less than thirty-one drafts before being ratified at the CCP Central Committee's eleventh plenum. ²⁶ When they were made public in the *People's Daily* on 9 August, they superseded all other programmatic documents concerning the Cultural Revolution hitherto issued by the CCP Center. To the extent that the formulations in them contradicted or conflicted with what had been said in earlier documents, it was the new formulations that were operative (*youxiao*). In one of his many speeches at Red Guard rallies in Beijing, Zhou Enlai on 10 September commented on the significance of the "Sixteen Points" as a repository of new formulations in the following way: "In the future do no longer employ the formulations black gang and black line. They are not employed in the Sixteen Points, and now everything should be done in accordance with the Sixteen Points. [At the rally in Tiananmen Square] on 31 August, did [comrade Lin Biao] not say that you must at all costs dare to struggle, dare to win, be good at struggling and be good at winning? We must at all costs thoroughly and to the letter implement the Sixteen Points." ²⁷

A second policy document that prompted many questions was the editorial entitled "Advance along the Great Road of Mao Zedong Thought," in *Red Flag* No.13, published on 2 October 1966. ²⁸ The

important formulation occurring for the first time in this editorial was "bourgeois reactionary line" (*zichanjieji fandong luxian*), which had an unusual history in that it originated not with Mao or any member of his CCRSG ghost-writer team, but with a Beijing Geological Institute Red Guard leader by the name of Zhu Chengzhao, who also happened to be the lover of one of Marshal Ye Jianying's daughters. The formulation referred, of course, to the "line" supposedly pursued by Liu Shaoqi et al. in the summer of 1966. Prior to the National Holiday celebrations on 1 October, Mao and the CCRSG had not yet been able to formally decide upon a name or "fixed formulation" (*guding detifa*) for that "line."²⁹ Traditionally, Mao's own line was automatically "revolutionary" (*geming*), and any line that opposed it likewise automatically "counter-revolutionary" (*fangeming*). But this time Mao hesitated to use the word counter-revolutionary to refer to Liu's line, because doing so would at this stage possibly alienate too many senior CCP leaders whose support Mao still needed. Literally in desperation, the CCRSG members who drafted Lin Biao's keynote address to the National Day celebrations in Tiananmen Square settled temporarily for the ugly, grammatically flawed, and previously unheard-of "bourgeois opposed-to-revolution line" (*zichanjieji fandui geming luxian*).³⁰ In the course of the celebrations, to which he had been invited in his capacity of co-founder of the "Third Headquarters," Zhu Chengzhao put forward his alternative formulation, to which Mao took an instant liking. Although "reactionary" was a less than perfect negation of "revolutionary," Zhu's label at least made grammatical sense. Furthermore, its meaning was just vague enough to permit the temporary postponement of the question of whether or not Liu's line had indeed been "counter-revolutionary." As the result of a last minute personal intervention by Mao, "bourgeois reactionary line" was written into the editorial in issue no.13 of *Red Flag*, which consequently appeared in print twenty-four hours late. One of a handful of key passages in it said that "There are a very small number of people who . . . stubbornly persist in the bourgeois reactionary line and do their utmost to use the form of inciting the masses to struggle the masses to attain their own ends."³¹

Of the conversation transcripts translated here, texts 3 and 4 relate directly to the *Red Flag* editorial. In text 3, from 8 October, the cadre from the Reception Office has obvious difficulty explaining what the "bourgeois reactionary line" refers to in concrete terms. In text 4, from 18 October, a group of Red Guards are told that "the central leaders have not yet produced any clear statements in this matter."

The third and final key text about which Red Guards asked many questions in the autumn of 1966 was the joint Military Affairs Commission (MAC) and PLA General Political Department (GPD) "Urgent Directive about the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Military Academies" issued on 5 October 1966 as Central Document *Zhongfa* (1966) No. 515 by the CCP Center.³² (The first draft of the directive had been produced by ghost-writers with the PLA All-Army Cultural Revolution Small Group, but its final text was revised and approved for release by the CCRSG and Mao personally.) Here again, confusion was caused by formulations like "the masses struggling the masses," "protect the minority," etc. In addition, who did the urgent directive's reference to persons "branded" (*dacheng*) as such-and-such refer to? And what was the difference between the procedure now called "rehabilitation" (*pingfan*) and that which in *Red Flag* editorial 13 had been called "liberation" (*jiefang*)? Transcript text 9 excerpted deals mainly with the MAC and GPD "Urgent Directive."

Text 1. Excerpts from the transcript of a conversation between Liu X X with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office, office 11, and Red Guards from the Beijing Iron and Steel Research Institute (2.00 a.m., Sunday, 11 September, 1966).³³

Question: What's the difference between to struggle (*dou*) and to criticize (*pi*)? ³⁴

Reply: Normally the word "struggle" implies a contradiction between us and the enemy. Use of the word "criticize," on the other hand, normally implies contradictions among the people. At a meeting, if someone is being subjected to "struggle" it means that pressure is being applied, and that he is not all that free to speak up. A person being subjected to "criticism" does have the right to speak up. Putting dunce-caps on people's heads, hanging placards around their necks, shaving their heads, forcing them down on their knees, making them stoop - these are merely ways of making them appear ugly. This is not the Center's policy. You should resolve matters on the political and ideological levels, and make sure that you are really convincing people heart and soul...

Question: What is meant by a person in power (*dangquanpai*)? Do cadres on the office level (*shiji*) count?

Reply: In organs under the Center, cadres above the level of department directors (*sijuzhang*) are all persons in power. In educational institutions, persons in power would be those comparable to cadres in power in organs under the Center, mainly leading cadres. Normally, cadres on the office level simply implement instructions from above. They are like peddlers, instantly buying and selling.

Question: At the time of land reform, the contradiction between ourselves and the landlords was an antagonistic one. What is the difference between the present antagonistic contradiction and that of the time when landlords were being struggled?

Reply: Every movement has its own historical background, and social development has the form of an ascending spiral. Some forms of struggle applied to the landlords are not entirely applicable to the present struggle against cadres. ³⁵

Question: What is a revolutionary cadre (*geming ganbu*)? ³⁶

Reply: Those generally acknowledged as such by the masses. Apart from rightists, cadres are all revolutionary. . .

Question: What is a leftist (*zuopai*)? ³⁷

Reply: The criteria for leftists are quite high. The broad workers, peasants and soldiers, revolutionary cadres, and revolutionary intellectuals are the main fighting force of the Great Cultural Revolution, but they cannot count as leftists. Leftists are the core elements of the main fighting force. They are generally acknowledged as such by the masses and the party and have come to the fore in struggle.

Question: Under point five in the Sixteen Points it says "concentrate our attacks upon a handful of bourgeois rightist elements and counter-revolutionary revisionist elements. . . ." Why has "counter-revolutionary" (*fangeming*) been put in front of revisionist (*xiuzhengzhuyi*)? What's the difference between rightist elements (*youpai fenzi*) and revisionist elements?

Reply: Adding counter-revolutionary means that the matter is serious. In essence, rightist elements and revisionist elements share a common nature. But revisionist elements wave the red flag to oppose the red flag, while rightist elements openly oppose the party. . . .

Question: Does criticizing reactionary academic authorities (*fandong xueshu quanwei*) refer to reactionary academics or academia in general?

Reply: It refers to reactionary persons, of course! Reactionary academic authorities are first of all political reactionaries. . . .

Question: What distinguishes a reactionary academic authority from a person with

ordinary bourgeois academic ideas (*yiban zichanjieji xueshu sixiang*)? [38](#)

Reply : The reactionary [authority] has a complete systematic theory and has for the past seventeen years refused transformation, refused to implement the long- and short-term policies of the party adopted a reactionary stand, and vainly attempted to transform the party and people around him. This is a contradiction between us and the enemy. Ordinary academic ideas are mainly a matter of the influence of old ideas, old consciousness and muddled notions. If there are no reactionary academic authorities in your unit, then criticize old ideas and consciousness. Smash the four olds; erect the four news. . . . [39](#)

Question :What does to have illicit relations with a foreign country (*litong waiguo*) mean? [40](#)

Reply: It refers to espionage activities. . . .

Question : What is meant by monsters and freaks, and the black gang?[41](#)

Reply: Monsters and freaks is a derogatory way of referring to landlord elements, rich-peasant elements, counter-revolutionary elements, bad elements and rightist elements. The black gang are rightists.

Text 2. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Shi Jingzhao and Ma Xuewu with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office and Red Guards from Sichuan (Wednesday, 14 September, 1966). [42](#)

Question: Some people maintain that as far as the people originally in leading positions are concerned, they should all be doubted in the course of the movement all be doubted. None of them should be trusted. Are formulations like these correct? [43](#)

Reply: To doubt them is all right, but mainly you should present the facts and reason things out. If no leading person at any level is to be trusted, then will not the party Center and Chairman Mao become like castles in the air? How could there possibly be that many monsters and freaks everywhere? The real monsters and freaks are still few in number. Doesn't it say so quite clearly in the Sixteen Points?. . . . [44](#)

Question :In some areas, some people don't expose actual problems, but merely say "Bombard (*paohong*) the headquarters! Roast (*huoshao*) the Provincial and Municipal Parties!" Are formulations like these correct? [45](#)

Reply: You cannot say things like that unless you have the facts (on those people). You must only bombard bad--not good people. And if you don't have the facts [on those people], how will you be able to? To call for indiscriminate bombardment is not right. "The leadership at all levels should be put to the test in the course of the movement" is a correct formulation. You may doubt them, but you must have the facts. . . .

Question: Some people argue that the things used by the black gang (including desks, chairs etc.) should all be smashed to pieces, and they demand that this be recognized as revolutionary behavior?

Reply: What's the use of smashing them to pieces? In the end, it will still be the state that has to make up the damage. I don't recognize this as revolutionary behavior.

Question: How should one look upon sit-ins and hunger-strikes? Do they constitute

forms of civilized struggle (*wendou*) or of violent struggle (*wudou*)? ⁴⁶

Reply: The Center has no instructions in this matter. If you truly want revolution, you must stay fit. Doesn't Chairman Mao say "Exercise, and defend the motherland"? If people don't eat for a very long time, they will starve to death, and how can they go on making revolution then? We should eat and drink properly, be full of energy, and then make revolution. Today, our state is in the dictatorship of the proletariat, and our revolution is one in the ideological realm. You may decapitate someone and bury him, but you still will not have resolved the problem of his thinking. Of course, you must not take the attitude of suppression either, towards hunger-strikes and sit-downs. . . .

Question: Is it "violent struggle" to put dunce caps on people, and hang black placards around their necks?

*Reply :*What do you think? (*Person asking question:* I'd say as long as you don't hit them, you can't call it violent struggle.) (*Another student from the Southwest China Teachers' College interrupts:* Some people even say that making someone wear a dunce cap is the highest form of civilized struggle. *Everyone laughs.*) As far as dunce caps are concerned, some leading comrades have already said that they do not advocate them. Lin Biao has already said that violent struggle strikes only at the body, while civilized struggle is able to strike at the soul. ⁴⁷ The present movement is also to resolve the question of who will win and who will lose in the ideological realm. I'll give you an example. . . . At one point, at such-and-such a unit, they were struggling a member of the black gang under the glaring sun. They put a cap consisting of half a peel of watermelon on his head. That cooled him off. At the same time, everyone else was still sitting there having their heads baked in the sun. Then they were going to take it off, when he refused. Now you tell me if this really is the way to expose their counter-revolutionary deeds? Revolutionary comrades should present the facts and actively expose the true state of affairs, since only if they do this will they be able to strike at the heart of the matter.

Question: Is it violent struggle to put dunce-caps on the heads and hang black placards around the necks of black gangs and monsters and freaks while struggling them?

*Reply :*It's for you to consider. We don't advocate it. It does not say in the Sixteen Points that you may do it. We present facts and reason, attempting to convince people by reason, and to touch their souls. This is how we struggle them until they are down, until they crumble, and until they stink. I am sure that with the help of Mao Zedong Thought, you will be able to defeat all enemies. (*At one point, we asked him if it was true that comrades Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng had said it was OK to put dunce-caps on people. He replied:* I haven't heard that.) ⁴⁸. . .

Question: Some children of workers and peasants and members of the Communist Youth League who originally showed a good attitude have in the course of this movement all been accused of being "royalists" (*baohuangpai*) in the course of this movement. ⁴⁹ How should we understand this problem?

Reply: What we mean by "royalists" are a handful of people who attempt to defend persons in power taking the capitalist road. Among students, the label "royalist" should be abolished. . . .

*Question :*How should we understand the issue of defending the minority? ⁵⁰

Reply : It is strictly a matter of defending a revolutionary minority, and of defending a minority adhering to the proletarian stand. Like Nie Yuanzi, at the beginning of the

movement at Beijing University; she was in the minority. You must not defend all minorities.

Question: Is it to "dismiss from office" ⁵¹ (*baguan*) and to be "temporarily relieved of one's post for self-examination" (*tingzhi fanxing*) the same thing?

Reply: First tell me what you think. (*Person asking question:* I'd say it's not the same thing.) "Dismissal from office" comes in a number of forms, and to be "temporarily relieved of one's post for self-examination" is also to be "dismissed from office." To stop performing all of one's duties is also to be "dismissed from office." The documents of the Center do not contain the expression "dismiss from office." (*One student cites an example:* In the Provincial Party Committee someone was "temporarily relieved of one's post for self-examination." Then they wrote large character-posters saying he'd been "dismissed from office." Some students say he hadn't: In the end, what is right?) To be exact, the right thing to say is temporarily relieved of one's post for self-examination.

Question: If the masses demand that so-and-so be dismissed from office, what should one do?

Reply: Neither the Sixteen Points nor the documents of the Center contain the formulation "dismiss from office." If someone is to be "dismissed from office," it has to be after discussion among the masses. Then the Cultural Revolution Committee has to investigate it, whereupon the superior level has to approve it.

Question: Do we need the permission of the Party Committee to struggle the black gang?

Reply: You do. You cannot simply grab anyone you like and struggle him. The Party still has to stick to its policy. The Party will, in accordance with the facts, determine if someone is to be struggled or not. Before you struggle someone, you must have sufficient factual evidence. You can only struggle those that should be struggled. You must not struggle someone first and then expose him afterwards. If you do, you will only give bad people the opportunity to do bad things, and you may be struggling the wrong person.

Text 3. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Wang X with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office, office 6, and members of the Beijing Petroleum Institute "Resistance University Combat Team" Red Guard faction (Saturday, October 8, 1966). ⁵²

Question: Was the sending out of work teams in itself a reactionary line? ⁵³

[*Reply:*]I have not heard it said that the bourgeois reactionary line was to intentionally or unintentionally, consciously or unconsciously, suppress the masses.

Question: When the work teams arrived, they invariably came up with all kinds of restrictions and committed mistakes. Was that the bourgeois reactionary line?

Reply: Just to commit a few errors cannot be said to constitute the bourgeois reactionary line.

Question: Can we understand it like this, that they did not direct the spearhead of struggle against the persons in power taking the capitalist road, but directed it against the revolutionary masses instead.

Reply: That's right! But there's also the matter of line, like running all things from the

top, by themselves, without consulting others. When dealing with the popular masses, one must not run everything from the top. All past rulers were a minority ruling over the majority, and that is also the bourgeois reactionary line. . . .

Question: What about the claim made by some, then, that here are "old revolutionaries confronting new problems"? ⁵⁴ Is to put it like that the bourgeois reactionary line?

Reply: That's what it is. Otherwise, why should we say that it's harmful to the movement? The inability to understand really comes from habit and old conventions. But that's not to say that they are counter-revolutionaries, or that they are the bourgeois reactionary line for certain. Whether or not they should be labelled the bourgeois reactionary line still has to be considered in the light of the actions of the individual.

Text 4. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Liang Wanchang with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office and two Red Guards from the Beijing Medical University (Tuesday, October 18, 1966). ⁵⁵

Question: What is the bourgeois reactionary line? How does it express itself? Why at present should it be thoroughly criticized?

Reply: The central leaders have not yet produced any clear statements in this matter, and I am only able to give you my own personal views based on the documents and editorials of the Center, in the context of the movement at present. . . .

[*Question*]: Could you please tell me how you look upon the expression "bourgeois son of a bitch" (*zichan jieji gou zaizi*)?

Reply: This is not a question of whether this one sentence is right or wrong. If someone curses those who adopt a reactionary stand, and who have not betrayed their parents (*beipan jiating*), is not a big deal. You must not accuse them, and say they were wrong in cursing. The thing is, if you curse, you will lose the masses and your popularity. People from a bad class background will distance themselves from you. Policy-wise, you may claim you are isolating the enemy, but in reality you are isolating yourself. If the proletariat does not attempt to win them over, the bourgeoisie will.

Question: Is the slogan "doubt everything" (*huaiyi yiqie*) right or wrong? ⁵⁶

Reply: The crucial thing has to do with what you doubt. Some people say this slogan was put forward by Marx, but then you have to take into consideration the historical circumstances under which Marx said this, and with respect to what. In the course of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution movement, when something has not yet been resolved, you may doubt the leadership in the various units. But then later, once what is right and what is wrong has been determined on the basis of investigation and research, you should not pass any subjectivistic judgements. We don't necessarily have to employ the slogan "doubt everything," but if you want to mention it you may. It is not counter-revolutionary to do so. The problem is that the slogan "doubt everything" is extremely fuzzy. It is easily misunderstood by others, who interpret it differently from what you do. And it is also easily exploited by the enemy.

Text 5. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Li Jingzhi with the Cultural Revolution

Joint Reception Office and members of the Machinery Institute "Masses Trusting the Party" Combat Team (Friday, 21 October, 1966).

Question: What is meant by the masses struggling the masses (*qunzhong dou qunzhong*)? [58](#)

Reply: There are no objective criteria. You must make a concrete analysis of the concrete situation. It's not really possible to lay down a uniform rule. It is a mixture of criticism, debate and struggle. You will have to clarify it yourselves in the course of struggle. [59](#)

Question: What does the Paris Commune's way of election mean?

Reply: It means a thoroughly democratic way of election, whereby the masses themselves decide through discussion . . .

Question: Do teachers count as cadres or as members of the masses?

Reply: The masses are distinct from the leadership. There are very many different levels of cadres, and where the line should be drawn is hard to say. (*Someone interrupts:* Are teachers to be rehabilitated (*pingfan*)?) *Reply:* If they were labelled counter-revolutionary, then they should be. The Urgent Directive of the Center's Military Affairs Commission applies to them too.

Text 6. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Yi Fushou with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office and Red Guards from Chongqing, Beijing and Harbin (Thursday, 27 October, 1966). [60](#)

Question: Has the Center sanctioned use of the formulation "five red categories" (*Zhongyang you hongwulei ma*)? [61](#)

Reply: It never has. The Center does not employ expressions like "five red categories" and "five black categories." Premier Zhou has also said that one should not use these expressions. [62](#) Marxist-Leninists maintain that one's class background is whatever it is. In the past, we referred to the black gang and the black line, but now we don't use these expressions either. The expressions black gang and black line fail to indicate the nature [of the gang or line]. If someone is a representative of the bourgeoisie, then he is a representative of the bourgeoisie. He is what he is. We hope that you will no longer employ the expression "five red categories." You should propagate Chairman Mao's class line on a grand scale, and act fully in accordance with Chairman Mao's instructions.

Question: [But] didn't Premier Zhou say that the Red Guards should be composed mainly of the sons and daughters of the "five red categories"? [63](#)

Reply: At the time you were already doing just that. If he didn't put it like that, how should he have put it? Hasn't he since told you to stop using this expression? [64](#)

Question: Now we feel the formulation "five red categories" is not comprehensive enough. It does not conform to the supreme instructions. In accordance with the Chairman's statements regarding class line, we feel the Red Guards should be composed mainly of the sons and daughters of the proletariat and semi-proletariat. Are we right?

Reply: Just act according to the Chairman's thoughts, and we will support you.

Text 7. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between unnamed member of the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office staff and Red Guards from Qinghua University (Autumn 1966). [65](#)

Question: What is the Party's class line in the schools? There is one formulation according to which (a) "class origin is taken into account," but (b) "not only class origin is taken into account," and (c) "importance is attached to the political attitude." Then there is another formulation, occurring in the Sixteen Points, where it says "the Party leadership should be good at discovering leftists, developing and strengthening the ranks of leftist, and should rely firmly on leftists." Which one of these is the Party's class line in the schools? What are the criteria for being a leftist? How are they related to class origins?

Reply: Actually, the two formulations are one and the same thing. As long as people whose class origins are one of the five not red-categories (*fei hongwulei*) or one of the seven [66](#) black categories, put strict demands on themselves, resolutely draw a clear line of demarcation between themselves and their parents (*jiating*), and thoroughly remold themselves, they too in the course of struggle can become leftists.

Text 8. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Feng Changxiang with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office and members of the Beijing Institute of Water Conservancy and Electric Power "Red Combat Regiment" Red Guard faction (Thursday, 27 October, 1966). [67](#)

Question: What do you consider to be the general orientation? We consider the general orientation to be ready to die in defense of the Party Center, to be ready to die in defense of Chairman Mao, to act in accordance with the Sixteen Points, and to bravely defend Mao Zedong Thought. [68](#)

Reply: The way you put it is also correct. The general orientation is to proceed under the leadership of the Party and with the Sixteen Points as one's norm to struggle a handful of representatives of the bourgeoisie who have wormed their way into the Party, and sweep away all monsters and freaks. To smash the four olds; to erect the four news, this is the general orientation. If it is directed against the revolutionary masses and the proletariat, then the spearhead is wrong. . . .

Question: What's the difference between making trouble and to rebel?

Reply: When we say that rebellion is justified, we have a revolutionary rebellion in mind. Rebellions have class character, a revolutionary content, and are directed by one class against another. We support revolutionary rebellions. But there are also ones that are "left" in appearance, and right (*you*) in substance, with people waving the banner of Mao Zedong Thought while carrying out acts that are counter to Mao Zedong Thought.

Text 9. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Wang Wenqi with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office and Beijing workers and Red Guards (Saturday, 29 October, 1966). [69](#)

Question: Some people who during the initial phase of the movement were branded (*dacheng*) "anti-Party elements," "counter-revolutionary" and "fake leftists, true rightists" by the Party Committees of the schools are now to be rehabilitated. How should we, in this context, understand the expression "branded"?

Reply: This is how I understand it. The so-called "branding" meant that it was a formal decision that the Party Committee, the work team or the Cultural Revolution Committee made public in one form or other (by making an announcement at a mass rally, or by putting up a written announcement somewhere). This is the only thing that counts as actually having been "branded." If the masses in large character-posters or at discussion meetings accused each other of being "anti-Party"--for instance, if Zhang so-and-so wrote a large character-poster directed at Li so-and-so--then this should not count as "branding." A few members of the masses writing something do not represent the [Party] organization. It only counts as branding if it is announced in the form of a large character-poster or public notice signed by the [Party] organization.

Question: In the course of the movement, if the [Party] organization organized the masses to write large character-posters directed at someone, or [to attack that person] at discussion meetings, does this count as "branding" or not?

Reply: It doesn't. Only an announcement in the form of a large character-poster or public notice signed by the [Party] organization counts as "branding." Only announcements signed by the Party Committee, the work team or the Cultural Revolution Committee count.

Question: What is the difference between "rehabilitation" and "liberation" (*jiefang*)?

Reply: The term "rehabilitation" as used in the Urgent Directive of the Center's Military Affairs Commission refers to those who were branded "anti-Party" or "counter-revolutionary" under the leadership of the erroneous line. They are to be "rehabilitated." The term "liberation" was used during the Four Cleanups to refer to the "liberation" of middle-level cadres, who were expected to put aside their burdens and take part in the movement without anything on their conscience. The term "liberation" as used in the editorial of issue 13 of *Red Flag* has the same meaning as the term "rehabilitation" occurring in the MAC Directive, and refers to those that were branded "counter-revolutionary," "anti-Party," etc. Because it happened under the guidance of an erroneous line, some comrades suffered mental and physical blows. As a result, they did not actively participate in the movement. The aim of rehabilitation is to make these revolutionary comrades put aside their burdens and participate in the movement. "Rehabilitation" and "liberation" are merely different formulations. It is not the case that "rehabilitation" refers to one category of persons, and "liberation" to another. . . .

Question: What is meant by a person in power? What level of cadres in factories, mines and enterprises counts as persons in power?

Reply: The Center has no concrete directive in this matter. Generally speaking, the cadres who control Party and political power within a unit are all persons in power. Didn't [an official with] the State Council Cultural Revolution Reception Office reply to this question when put to him by the [Red Guards from the Beijing] Iron and Steel Research Institute? ⁷⁰ I don't see it the way [he did]. If only cadres above the level of department directors count as persons in power, then does that mean that there are no manifestations of revisionism in basic level units? I am of the opinion that persons in power refers mainly to the leadership of an independent unit. During the Four

Cleanups, cadres on the workshop level were designated (*huawei*) persons in power, but there was no central regulation [to that effect], and it was not the same everywhere.

Question: So was it a mistake to designate cadres on the workshop level persons in power during the Four Cleanups movement?

Reply: I will make a note of this question, and ask the Center for instructions. . . .

Question: What is meant by a "royalist"?

Reply: Now, you should not use the term "royalist." The Chairman has said one should not use the terms "black gang" and "royalists." No one is able to explain what they mean, and the more you try, the more pedantic it all becomes. They don't serve a good purpose. (*Someone interrupts:* If some people accuse so-and-so of being a member of the black gang, while others say his problem is a contradiction among the people, then what should one call him?) Label the problem as whatever it is. Because, you yourself will not even be able to really explain what the term "royalist" means. You can say that so-and-so is biased, or that his motives are insufficient. Otherwise, the more you argue, the greater the confusion. In the end, you will not be able to locate a target for your attacks.

Text 10. Excerpts from transcript of a conversation between Liu Chuanzhen with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office and members of the Lüda Mao Zedong-ism Red Workers Rebel Regiment Central Command (Saturday, 19 November, 1966). [71](#)

Question: May the children of elements belonging to the five black categories join our revolutionary organization?

Reply: As long as they are revolutionary and as long as it benefits the state and the people, they too should be supported and permitted to join. Are you suggesting that the five red categories cannot degenerate (*bianzhi*)? Korea has changed its color! And haven't some of our leaders degenerated too? We take class origins into account, but not exclusively so.

Question: What sort of person does monsters and freaks refer to?

Reply: Certainly it does not refer simply to certain faults or mistakes committed by the working people or the revolutionary masses. . . . With real monsters and freaks, it's not a matter of mistakes or no mistakes. There is an extremely small number of persons who from their very soul oppose the Party and socialism, and who already constitute contradictions between us and the enemy. But simply to have said a few wrong words, or committed a mistake, does not make someone a monster and freak. Landlord elements, rich-peasant elements, counter-revolutionary elements, bad elements and rightist elements are monsters and freaks.

Text 11. Excerpts from a transcript of conversation between Han Shoulin with the Cultural Revolution Joint Reception Office staff and members of the Shanxi Revolutionary Rebel Staff and Workers Regiment (9.35 a.m. - 12.30 p.m., Saturday, 2 December 1967). [72](#)

Question: Who are really the people to whom "monsters and freaks" and "reactionary academic authorities" refer? Some units include ordinary staff and workers and

teachers from a bad family background, as well as people who have some blemishes on their personal record among the monsters and freaks: Are they right in doing so?

Reply: "Monsters and freaks" refers to landlord elements, rich-peasant elements, counter-revolutionary elements, bad elements, rightist elements, persons in power taking the capitalist road, and reactionary academic authorities who carry these labels (*dai maozi de*). It is wrong to include ordinary staff and workers and teachers from a bad family background, or ones who have some blemishes on their personal record among the monsters and freaks. "Reactionary academic authorities" should be at least professors! There are none in elementary and middle schools. Being a reactionary academic authority means that one's words count for something academically, and these people are opposed to the party, to socialism, and to Mao Zedong Thought.

Question: Some people now talk about distinguishing between the revolutionary masses and the masses. Is that right? How does one distinguish between the revolutionary masses and the masses?

Reply: Everyone is [a member of] the revolutionary masses, with the exception of landlord elements, rich-peasant elements, counter-revolutionary elements, bad elements, rightist elements, persons in power taking the capitalist road, and reactionary academic authorities who carry these labels. The revolutionary masses are the masses.

Question: Some persons in power say that only those are to be rehabilitated who in the course of the Great Cultural Revolution were branded counter-revolutionaries because they voiced criticisms (*ti yijian*) against the leadership or work teams, whereas those who were branded counter-revolutionaries after being exposed by the masses are not subject to rehabilitation. Is this argument correct?

Reply: It is not. They should all be rehabilitated.

Question: Some people say rehabilitation and rebellion are entirely unrelated. Is this so?

Reply: That's not right.

Question: What is meant by the five kinds of elements? How should we understand [this formulation]?

Reply: The five kinds of elements refers to those who prior to the [Cultural Revolution] movement already carried [one of] the labels landlord elements, rich-peasant elements, counter-revolutionary elements, bad elements, or rightist elements. Prior to the movement means prior to 16 May [1966]. There is a formal legal procedure that has to be followed when labelling, involving making the label public among the masses and known to the police authorities as well to the person concerned in person.

¹. In *The Chinese Civil Service : Career Open to Talent?* ed. Johanna M. Butterfly Menzel (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1963), 28. I am indebted to Tom Hart for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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². Chinese scholars today working on projects concerning the language of the Cultural Revolution include teachers of linguistics at Beijing University and a group of younger historians affiliated with the CCP Central Party History Research Office.

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³. Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 1992), 14.

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⁴. Sichuan Sheng Chongqing Shi Geming Weiyuanhui Zhenggongzu, ed., *Sichuan Sheng Chongqing Shi Shouci Huoxue Huoyong Mao Zedong Sixiang Jijifenzi Daibiao Dahui Cailiao Xuanbian* [Selected materials from the first congress of activists in the living study and living application of Mao Zedong Thought from Chongqing city, Sichuan province] (Chongqing, 1970), 45 and 107.

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⁵. Cf. reading of "Jinian Bai Qiuen" on China Record Company WM 001 (Beijing, 1966), side A.

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⁶. "Yu Kuai Dafu de Zhenglun" [Debate with Kuai Dafu] (19 June 1966), *Dadao Fangeming Xiuzhengzhuyi Fenzi Bo Yibo* [Down with counter-revolutionary revisionist element Bo Yibo] ed.), Hongdaihui Qinghua Daxue Jinggangshan Bingtuan Dazibao Bianweihui (Beijing, 1967), vol.1, 11.

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⁷. "Jiang Qing Tongzhi de Jianghua" [Comrade Jiang Qing's speech] (28 November 1966), in *Zai Wuchanjieji Wenhua Dageming Zhong Zhongyang Fuze Tongzhi Jianghua Chaolu* [Transcripts of speeches made by responsible central comrades during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution] (N.p., 1967), 269.

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⁸. The original Red Guard was the organization by that name set up by students at the middle school attached to Qinghua University at the end of May 1966. Not until the middle of August did "Red Guard" become a generic term. That month, interestingly enough, Zhou Enlai remarked as follows in conversation with students from the Beijing No.31 Middle School during a rally in Tiananmen Square: "Red Guard is a foreign name, while Scarlet Guard (*chiweidui*) is Chinese (*benguo de*). I prefer the name Scarlet Guard." See "Zhou Zongli Jiejian Beijing Sanshiyi Zhong 'Qi Yi' Chiweidui Duiyuan Shi de Tanhua Jilu" [Record of remarks by Premier Zhou during meeting with members of the "July 1st" Scarlet Guards of Beijing's No.31 Middle School] (18 August 1966), in *Wuchanjieji Wenhua Dageming Cankao Ziliao* [Reference material on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution] ed. Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongsu Beijing Qiche Fengongsu Wenge Dazibao Bangongshi (Beijing, 1967), 93.

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⁹. "Monsters and freaks" was used repeatedly by Mao already prior to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution when the expression occurred in the text of the "16 May Circular." The *People's Daily* editorial on 1 June 1966 was given its title "Sweep Away all Monsters and Freaks" by Chen Boda. On 6 June the *Liberation Army Daily* published an official guide to propaganda in the Cultural Revolution which described the movement as "the sweeping away of large numbers of monsters and freaks from the ideological and cultural fronts by billions of worker-peasant-soldier masses, revolutionary cadres, and revolutionary intellectuals armed with Mao Zedong Thought." In an entry devoted to "Monsters and Freaks" in *Wenge" Shiqi Guaiishi Guaiyu* [Weird things and weird words from the time of the "Cultural Revolution"] (Beijing: Qiushi Chubanshe, 1989), 123, Jin Chunming et al. note that "The practice of referring to individuals as 'Monsters and Freaks' came to an end with the smashing of the 'Gang of Four.'" "

"Black gang" was used extensively in the summer months of 1966, for instance in the *People's Daily* where an editorial denouncing the president of Nanjing University Kuang Yaming published on 16 June was entitled "Go All Out to Mobilize the Masses to Thoroughly Topple the Counter-revolutionary Black Gang." But the label subsequently did *not* find its way into the programmatic "Decision of the CCP Central Committee Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" of 8 August 1966. It was allegedly removed from an early draft of the text of that decision by Tao Zhu

and Zhou Enlai. At an informal meeting with Beijing Red Guards on 10 September 1966, Zhou Enlai explained that "[The label] black gang is too all-embracing (*meiyou bian*), and is [thus] imprecise. [Using it] easily hurts people. The Sixteen Points do not mention it, but only speak of anti-party and anti-socialist rightists. [The label] black gang has now been discarded." Cf. "Zhou Enlai Tongzhi Zai Shoudu Hongweibing Zuotanhui Shang de Jianghua" [Comrade Zhou Enlai addresses an informal meeting of capital Red Guards], in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs*, 155; Wang Nianyi, 56.

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10. Quoted in Cheng Qian [pseud. for Wang Nianyi], manuscript (1992) "'Wenge' Mantan (II): Zhongyang Wenge Xiaozu de Yi Xiang Jianyi" [Informal discussion about the "Cultural Revolution" (II): A proposal by the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group].

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11. Chen Boda, "Zai Dafeng Dalang Li Chengzhang" [Growing up with the wind and waves], in *Chen Boda Tongzhi Bufen Zhuzuo Zhuanji* [Special collection of selected writings by comrade Chen Boda] (N.p., n.d.), vol.2, 46-47.

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12. "Zhou Zongli Zai Beijing Gongren Tiyuguan Jiedai Gongzuo Jinji Huiyi Shang de Jianghua" [Premier Zhou's speech at an urgent meeting in the Beijing Workers' Stadium about reception work] (16 November 1966), in *Zhongyang Fuze Tongzhi Guanyu Wuchanjieji Wenhua Dageming de Jianghua (Xubian)* [Speeches by central responsible comrades concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (vol.2)] (N.p., 1967), 54.

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13. The Red Guards at Beijing's No.15 Middle School for Girls became famous for proposing that China's traffic lights be rebuilt to show "red" when it was time to go, and "green" when it was time to stop. After consulting with the Minister of Public Security Xie Fuzhi and soliciting the opinions of drivers, Zhou Enlai turned down the proposal. See "Zhou Enlai Tongzhi Zai Shoudu Hongweibing Zuotanhui Shang de Jianghua," 154.

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14. Ibid.

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15. "Zhou Zongli Dui Beijing Shi 'Hongweibing' Daibiao de Jianghua" [Premier Zhou's speech to Beijing "Red Guard" delegates] (1 September 1966), in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs*, 135.

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16. "Wang Li Tongzhi Zai Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting, Guowuyuan Mishuting Youguan Renyuan Dahui Shang de Jianghua" [Comrade Wang Li's speech at a mass rally of relevant staff with the CCP Central Committee General Office and State Council General Secretariat] (1 January 1967), in *Wuchanjieji Wenhua Dageming Ziliao: Zhongyang Shouzhang Jianghua (Yiyuehao)*, ed. Beijing Shifan Daxue Jinggangshan Gongshe Honglei, [Material from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Central Leaders' Speeches (January)] (Shanghai, 1967), 3.

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17. Original minutes of "Chen Boda, Qi Benyu Tongzhi Siyue Sanshiri Lingchen Jiejian Lianhe Jiedaishi Quanti Renyuan Shi de Jianghua" [Comrades Chen Boda and Qi Benyu address the entire staff of the Joint Reception Office before dawn on 30 April], 1.

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18. Ibid., 1 and 14.

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¹⁹. See [below, text 8](#).

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²⁰. "Zhongyang Shouzhang de Jianghua" [Speeches by central leaders], in *Zai Wuchanjieji Wenhua Dageming Zhong Zhongyang Fuze Tongzhi Jianghua Chaolu*, 148.

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²¹. "Zhou Zongli Dui Beijing Shi 'Hongweibing' Daibiao de Jianghua," 135.

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²². "Zhou Zongli Zai Jiejian Shoudu Dazhuan Yuanxiao Hongweibing Zaofan Silingbu Zhuyao Fuzeren Shi de Jianghua" [Premier Zhou's speech during a meeting with the leaders of the Capital Universities and Colleges Red Guard Revolutionary Rebel General Command], in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongshe*, 200.

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²³. "Bo Yibo Fuzongli Lai Kan Qinghua Dazibao Shi Dui Zhouwei de Tongxue de Tanhua" [Vice-Premier Bo Yibo's conversation with the students around him while looking at big character-posters at Qinghua], in *Hongdaihui Qinghua Daxue Jinggongshan Bingtuan Dazibao Bianweihui*, 12.

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²⁴. "Zhongyang Fuze Tongzhi Di Qi Ci Jiejian Henan Gefangmian Fu-Jing Huibao Daibiaotuan" [Responsible comrades from the center meet for the seventh time with mixed delegation from Henan in Beijing to report on situation] (21 July 1967), in *Zhongyang Shouzhang Guanyu Henan Wenti de Zhishi Ji Fu-Jing Huibao Jiyao Huibian* [Collection of instructions by central leaders concerning the Henan question and minutes of reports given during visits to Beijing] (Zhengzhou: Henan Erqi Gongshe, 1967), 48-49.

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²⁵. E.g. "*Xuexi Shiliu Tiao Shouce*" *Zhuanyongpian* [Records to be used with Handbook for the study of the sixteen points], China Record Company WM 002-5 (Beijing, 1966).

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²⁶. Wang Nianyi, *Da Dongluan de Niandai* [Years of great turmoil] (Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1988), 56.

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²⁷. "Zhou Enlai Tongzhi Zai Shoudu Hongweibing Zuotanhui Shang de Jianghua." Alternative transcript in *Dazibao Xuan* [Selected big character-posters], ed. Yiyuan Hongweibing Zongbu (N.p., 1966), vol.1, 31.

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²⁸. Cf. Wang Nianyi, 93, for actual publication date.

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²⁹. Cf. the editorial in the *People's Daily* on 1 October, in which there is no reference to any other "line" than Mao's.

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³⁰. In *Peking Review*, the English translation of Lin's speech published on 7 October marked a slight improvement on the Chinese original, and the formulation read "the bourgeois line of opposing revolution" [lit. *zichanjieji de fandui geming de luxian*].

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³¹. While reciting the crucial passage in Lin Biao's speech to the Red Guards on 3 October, Lin Jie (senior member of the *Red Flag* editorial board) replaced Lin's formulation with Zhu Chengzhao's,

or at least that is what is suggested by one extant transcript. See *Wuchan jieji Wenhua Dageming Cankao Ziliao Xuanbian* [Selected reference material on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution], ed. Mao Zedong Xuanchuanyuan, vol.5 (Beijing, 1966), 24.

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32. Text in *Wuchan jieji Wenhua Dageming Youguan Wenjian Huibian* [Collected documents related to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution], ed. Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting Guowuyuan Mishuting Wenhua Geming Lianhe Jiedaishi, 5 vols. (Tianjin: Tianjin Shi Geming Weiyuanhui Zhengzhibu Yanjiuzu, 1968), vol.1, 34-40.

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33. "Zoufang Guowuyuan Wenge Jiedaishi Tanhua Jiyao," in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongsi*, 391-92. Variant text: "Jieda Youguan 'Shiliu Tiao' Yinan Wenti: Guowuyuan Wenge Jiedaizhan Dafu Gangtie Yanjiuyuan," in *Yiyuan Hongweibing Zongbu*, 175-77.

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34. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point one: "At present, our objective is to *struggle* against and crush those persons in power who are taking the capitalist road, to *criticize* the reactionary bourgeois academic 'authorities' and ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes..."

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35. Implied here is that the practice of putting dunce caps on people's heads, etc. mentioned under question one is a "form of struggle" no longer "entirely applicable."

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36. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point two: "The broad masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals, and revolutionary cadres form the main force in this great cultural revolution."

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37. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point five: "The party leadership should be good at discovering leftists, developing and strengthening the ranks of leftists, and should firmly rely on revolutionary leftists."

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38. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point five: "Care should be taken to distinguish strictly between reactionary bourgeois scholar despots and 'authorities' on the one hand, and people who have ordinary bourgeois academic ideas on the other."

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39. The four "olds" and "news" were old and new "ideas, culture, customs, and habits." Cf. "Sixteen Points," point one: "Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses. . . . The proletariat must. . . use new ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society."

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40. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point twelve: "As regards scientists, technicians, and ordinary staff, as long as they. . . maintain no illicit relations with any foreign country, we should. . ."

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41. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point three: "Dauntless communist fighters . . . encourage the masses to expose all kinds of monsters and freaks."

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42. "Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenge Jiedaizhan Da Sichuan Fu Jing Daibiao Wen," in *Zhongguo*

Qiche

Gongye Gongsì, 172-75.

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43. The formulation "doubt everything" (*huaiyi yiqie*) became especially popular among Red Guards after Tao Zhu's speech at Beijing's University of Medicine on 23 August 1966, when the vice-premier insisted that: "In the Great Cultural Revolution it is right to doubt everything (*huaiyi yiqie shi duide*). However, you may not doubt Chairman Mao . . . or the Chinese revolution under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, or that we are advancing towards communism along the socialist road. But aside from these things, you may doubt everything." See "Tao Zhu Tongzhi Zai Yike Daxue de Jianghua," in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongsì*, 111. See also below, text four, question three.

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44. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point eight: "In ordinary situations . . . good and comparatively good [cadres] are the great majority."

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45. In conversation with Qiao Guanhua on 3 January 1967, Foreign Minister Chen Yi remarked: "The students in the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute are divided into two factions over what to do with me: one faction says I should be 'struck down' (*dadao*), the other says I should be 'roasted' (*huoshao*). I don't know the difference between being 'struck down' and being 'roasted'?" Qiao Guanhua replied: "To 'strike down' means to hit someone until he's lying flat on the ground, whereas to 'roast' is the English 'Bwuto death' [sic], i.e. to roast someone until he's dead. Those children . . ." At this point Chen interrupted Qiao, exclaiming "Qiao, you old bureaucrat you: what do you mean by still calling them *j@childrenj*? Why, those people are Daring Revolutionary Generals (*geming chuangjiang*)!" See *Chen Yi Heihua Xuanbian* (Selections From the Black Utterances Of Chen Yi) (Beijing, n.d.), 12.

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46. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point six: "Arguments should be resolved through civilized struggle, not through violent struggle."

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47. On 31 August 1966, at the second Red Guard rally in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, Lin in his speech uttered those very words. A complete live recording is on "*Xuexi Shiliu Tiao Shouce*" *Zhuanyongpian*, record 2.

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48. I too recall that Jiang and Kang said something to this effect at some point, but have been unable to trace a source.

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49. The label "royalist" was very common during the first months of the Cultural Revolution, viz. the *People's Daily* editorial on 5 June 1966, entitled "To be a proletarian revolutionary, or a bourgeois royalist?" The expression had referred historically to remnant supporters of the Qing dynasty after the establishment of the Republic.

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50. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point six: "The minority should be protected, because sometimes the truth is with the minority."

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51. This is patently untrue.

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52. "Zhongyang Wenge Fangwen Ji," in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs*, 242-43.

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53. A problem with the *Red Flag* no.13 (1966) editorial was that although it declared that "It is necessary to thoroughly criticize the bourgeois reactionary line," it did not contain a definition of that "line." Hence this and the following questions.

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54. Cf. Liu Shaoqi's and Zhou Enlai's speeches at the 29 July 1966 mass rally in the Great Hall of the People, in which they described the "mistakes" of some senior party members in the course of the Cultural Revolution as those of "old revolutionaries confronting new problems."

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55. "Zhonggong Zhongyang, Guowuyuan Lianhe Jiedaizhan Liang Wanchang Tongzhi Jieda Yike Daxue Liang Tongxue Wen," in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs*, 270-72.

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56. Cf. above, note n.

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58. "Fang Guowuyuan Jiedaizhan," in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs*, 274.

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59. Cf. "Sixteen Points," point seven: "It is not allowed, whatever the pretext, to incite the masses to struggle the masses, or the students to do likewise," and the editorial in no.13 of *Red Flag*.

In conversation with Red Guards from Qinghua University on 27 October 1966, Joint Reception Office staff member Cheng Yuan made a distinction between "the masses struggling the masses" and a "normal argument." The latter, he said, was "I argue my point of view while you argue yours," while the former was "something different." See "Zhonggong Zhongyang Guowuyuan Jiedaizhan Fangwen Ji" [Record of a visit to the CCP Center and State Council Reception Station], in *Mao Zedong Sixiang Xuanchuanyuan*, vol.5, 65.

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60. "Jiu Hongwulei Tifa Fang Zhonggong Zhongyang Guowuyuan Wenhua Geming Lianhe Jiedaishi," in *Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs*, 296.

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61. The "five red categories" were workers, poor and lower-middle peasants, revolutionary cadres, revolutionary army men, and revolutionary martyrs.

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62. The "five black categories" were landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, hooligans, and rightists.

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63. Cf. Zhou Enlai 18 August 1966: "The social foundation and core membership of revolutionary [Red Guard] organizations should consist of persons from 'five red category' background, but you may accept persons whose [family] background is no good if they are very revolutionary."

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64. In conversation with Red Guards on 22 October 1966, Zhou Enlai had remarked as follows about the label "Five red categories": "I have never seen this expression used in any editorial or official document. In conversation, we too use the expression 'five red categories' but that is because you keep using it all the time. That does not count." See "Zhou Zongli Zai Jiejian Ge Xiao Yuan 'Duoshupai' Daibiao Shi de Jianghua" [Premier Zhou's speech at a reception for delegates representing former "majority faction" delegates from various schools], in *Shouzhang Jianghua Huiji* [Collected leader's speeches] (Beijing: Shoudu Dazhuan Yuanxiao Hongweibing Geming

Zaofan Zong Silingbu, 1966), vol.2, 7.

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65. "Dang de Jieji Luxian Shi Shenmo?--Fang Zhonggong Zhongyang Jiedaizhan," in Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs, 384-85.

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66. The "seven black categories" were the five already mentioned, plus capitalists and capitalist roaders.

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67. "Guowuyuan Fangwen Ji," in Mao Zedong Xuanchuanyuan, vol.5 (Beijing, 1966), 60-64.

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68. This question is linked to the editorial in no.12 of *Red Flag*, entitled "Adhere to the General Orientation of Struggle," recorded on "*Xuexi Shiliu Tiao Shouce*" *Zhuanyongpian*, record 3. Like the editorial in *Red Flag* no.13, this one confused Red Guards with certain novel formulations. On 16 October 1966, a member of the editorial board had the following question put to him by Red Guards from Beijing, Jilin, and Shandong: "*Red Flag* recently published three editorials. Are the formulations used to refer to the [current political] situation in these editorials really consistent? It used to say 'Adhere to the general orientation of the struggle,' but now it says 'Criticize the bourgeois reactionary line?'" The editorialists reply to the Red Guards was: "You must not look at this matter in such a metaphysical fashion!... Only by proceeding in accordance with the Sixteen Points will you be able to guarantee a correct general orientation." See "*Hongqi Zaizhi Fangwen Ji*" [Record of a visit to *Red Flag*], in Mao Zedong Sixiang Xuanchuanyuan, vol.5, 43.

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69. "Zoufang Zhonggong Zhongyang Guowuyuan Wenhua Geming Lianhe Jiedaizhan Tanhua Ji Yao," in Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs, 304-307.

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70. See above, text 1.

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71. "Shangfang Zhongyang Guowuyuan," in Zhongguo Qiche Gongye Gongs, pp.351-2.

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72. "Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting, Guowuyuan Mishuting, Wenge Jiedaizhan Dui Youguan Pingfan Zhengce de Jieda" [Replies concerning the policy of rehabilitation from the Cultural Revolution Reception Office under the CCP Central Committee General Office and State Council General Secretariat], in *Guanyu Qingli Jieji Duiwu de Cailiao Huibian* [Collected materials on the cleansing of the class ranks] (Kunming, 1968), 52. This transcript originates with Red Guards in the Nanjing No.4 Middle School for Girls and the New China Middle School.

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