DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM:
UNDERLINING IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY FOR
THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM

Democratic centralism is a constitutive theme of the Chinese theory of democracy equal in importance only with the class principle of democracy. In the 1978–1981 discussion,[1] the concept of democratic centralism, together with the concept of proletarian dictatorship, was adopted to justify a public discussion about democracy in socialism. The ideological correctness of these two concepts made it difficult to overlook their democratic aspects whenever stressed. The concept of proletarian dictatorship emphasized the importance of democracy as a feature that separates the proletarian state from other class states, while democratic centralism was used to demonstrate that decision-making processes without democracy lead to less desirable outcomes.

Democratic centralism originated as a Leninist term referring to inner-Party decision-making processes, in which free discussion, that is democracy, precedes the decision making and unified action, that is centralism. In China, however, this was only a minor, although relevant, definition of the term. More often the Chinese interpreted democratic centralism in the mass line sense. The mass line (*qunzhong luxian*) is an early Maoist notion of leadership which was essentially "from the masses, to the masses"[2], collecting mass initiative, transforming it into

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[1]   I will provide footnotes when articles contain original argumentation or mention illuminating details. More common viewpoints are not individually footnoted, but can be found using the topical and chronological list of articles provided in the appendix.

This choice reflects the repetitive nature of the discussion about democratic centralism. When one issue or viewpoint emerged, several articles echoed the same argument. Obviously, after one article had proved that a particular question could openly be discussed, other writers eagerly engaged in introducing and developing the theme and editors dared to publish articles about topics that had avoided censorship elsewhere. There may be other reasons for such repetitiveness too: if a certain viewpoint originated in the leadership, they may have allocated the task of writing articles reflecting their viewpoints to many writers who wrote for different publications. Likewise, when some issues obviously had high level backing, political activists picked up the themes to demonstrate their activism. For example, the flood of commentaries and explanations following the publication of the Mao Zedong's speech of 1962 can be partly explained in this way, although it is probable that many of these writers also picked up the theme because they consciously wanted to advocate democratization.

[2]   The mass line theory is formulated in "Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership," see especially Mao, Selected Works, vol. III, p. 119.

long term programs by the Party, and carrying these programs out with mass participation. In this feedback process, what came "from the masses" was democratic, and what was formulated by their leadership was centralist. Democratic centralism in the mass line sense was not only a principle of Communist Party life but was applied to Party contact with society. If Lenin understood democratic centralism as an inner-Party method for building its strength, it was very a Maoist idea to bring the masses into decision making and even in Party rectification processes. Still, formulating the best possible policies and achieving unity in implementing them was the core issue in both the Leninist and the Maoist approach.

The Chinese interpretation of democratic centralism is based on the dialectical understanding of the term. Unlike Lenin, to whom democratic centralism was a linear process, Mao Zedong and his companions understood democratic centralism to contain two equally important elements in cyclical interaction, which then will produce a higher form of unity, synthesis. In their thought, democracy and centralism form a dialectical unity of opposites, where one part is incomplete without the other. For the Chinese, with their *yin-yang* tradition and doctrine of the mean conception, dialectics must have been a natural way to scrutinize political processes.

Chinese dialectics are analogous to the ancient Chinese concept of Dao, which included everything, although the existing world and its dynamics came from seemingly contradictory and yet interdependent elements in constant interaction. Accordingly, one should avoid excesses and utilize this dynamic between contradictory elements. In Mao's thinking, we find similar interaction between democracy and centralism. They are contradictory and yet one: one cannot function without the other. Centralism requires democracy for its completion, and democracy needs centralism for its realization. Stressing democracy under centralist control was a way to persuade a person to follow social rules and ideological guidance by the Party; while emphasizing centralism based on democracy was a way to guarantee democratic supervision, discussion, and popular input. Excessive use of either democracy or centralism is harmful: either it blocks popular input or rejects discipline in the pursuit of common aims.

In this model, democracy means an upward flow of information and centralism refers to the adaptation of this information to political programs formulated by the leadership. These programs, then, are fed back to society and put into practice. Knowledge about the success of these programs, then, comes from democratic feedback. These dynamics of Maoist democratic centralism is essentially the mass line as Mao Zedong himself stressed.[3] The mass line theory, "from the masses, to the masses", concludes that all correct decisions must be based on the

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3   In his 1962 speech. See Schram 1974, p. 160.

needs and demands of the masses, but these needs and demands must be formulated into plans and policies by the leadership before any genuine improvement of the people's conditions is possible. These policies, then, must be carried out in a way that the masses can accept them. The mass line concept examines this process as interaction between the masses and the leaders, while democratic centralism refers to the same dynamics either in inner-Party processes or in Party contact with the masses.

1978: Beginning and background of the discussion

As a basic Leninist term, democratic centralism has been used throughout the history of the Communist Party of China to stress either Party discipline or democratic processes inside the Party. The new Party constitution passed in the Eleventh Party Congress in August 1977 stimulated the writing of a few articles which analyzed democratic centralism. Still, at the time the term seemed quite unfamiliar to the general public, or at least it needed special emphasis, even in the following March, when *Renmin ribao* introduced it in the "Explaining terminology"[4] column. The term democratic centralism was appearing sporadically in almost all newspapers when the Fifth National People's Congress of March 1978 ratified the new constitution. After ratification of the Party constitution, democratic centralism was, naturally, emphasized as a Party principle, while in the context of the constitution, it was used to refer to a system of organizing the state.

In the first half of 1978, the press stressed the need to redress the harm the Gang of Four had caused to democratic centralism inside the Party. This theme was a part of general criticism of the myriad evils (*wan'e*) of the overthrown Gang. After the Gang, political life needed both true popular participation and discipline to overcome anarchism, articles stressed. In this context, democratic centralism referred to Party discipline. In introducing themes of the new constitution of 1978, democratic centralism reflected the balance between freedom and discipline in using one's rights. Another common theme was the importance of democratic centralism for modernization. This theme originated from the call for uniting the forces for modernization made by Hua Guofeng in his report to the National People's Congress in 1978. In it he declared modernization to be the new "main task" (*zong renwu*). In modernization, democracy was meant to mobilize the people to contribute their efforts to the cause. Only if the people's will and needs are attended to, will they have a reason to willingly participate and contribute their experience and knowledge to the task. Some articles already mentioned the usefulness of democratic centralism in modernization on the grounds of gathering

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[4] Anon., *Renmin ribao*, March 12, 1978, p. 2.

information. Epistemology, which later in 1978 was connected with democratic centralism, was already evident in articles about the mass line theory. They equated the process of gathering experiences about practice with the centralization of experiences from the masses and the involvement of the masses in the implementation of the resulting policies.[5]

The beginning of full-fledged discussion about democracy can be dated to July 1, 1978, when the term democratic centralism became the keyword for making democracy a mandatory element of socialism. The term democratic centralism was used to prove, with correct socialist terminology, that democracy is necessary for the socialist system to both exist and function. "There is no socialism without democracy"[6], was concluded on these grounds. July 1st was the date when *Renmin ribao*, *Hongqi*, and most newspapers printed Mao Zedong's "Talk at an Enlarged Working Conference" (1962) dealing mainly with democratic centralism. The speech was simultaneously published as a booklet. Earlier research has identified reformist leaders to be in charge of the publication of Mao's speech.[7] However, the context does not support such a conclusion. The *Renmin ribao* editorial printed the day after Mao's speech was published praises Hua Guofeng in the manner of a personality cult and seems quite positive towards the Cultural Revolution.[8] Some of the earliest articles in *Renmin ribao* and *Hongqi* cited Mao Zedong in his radical period.[9] Along with leftist tones, the fact that Hua Guofeng had personally supervised the editing process of the fifth volume of Mao Zedong's Selected Works the previous year seems to suggest that Hua must have played a role in the publication of the 1962 speech as well.[10] Besides, the term democratic centralism had been part of Hua Guofeng's vocabulary even earlier. Hua Guofeng mentioned

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[5]   Fan Ran, *Guangming ribao*, Apr 18, 1978, p. 4.

[6]   Xia Zhengnong, *Fudan xuebao* 1978:1, p. 1.

[7]   They believe that Mao's speech was published because he admitted his own fallibility in it (Nathan 1986, p. 7) or because it reinforced the Party's orientation towards practice (Young 1980, p. 65), both being topics on the reformist agenda.

[8]   Anon., *Renmin ribao*, July 2, 1978, p. 1.

[9]   Especially the *Renmin ribao* editorial of July 2, 1978; Ma Wenrui, *Hongqi* 1978:7; and Sun Changjiang, *Renmin ribao*, July 27, 1978, have a strong leftist inclination and evaluate continuous revolution and Mao's Cultural Revolutionary statements in a positive manner. leftist articles linked the epistemological message of the recently published 1962 speech explicitly with Maoist roots, such as the text "Where Do Correct Ideas Come From" (1963). This text can be found in English for example in Fan 1972, pp. 267–269.

[10]   The Chinese leaders are careful to use officially approved versions of leaders' speeches, especially when the official editing process was under way, as it was in 1978 when Hua Guofeng and other editors planned to continue publishing new volumes of Mao's Selected Works. Quite likely, the "Talk at an Enlarged Working Conference" had just been approved by the official editing committee. Although Mao's speech of 1962 had already appeared in the 1960s in Red Guard editions, the officially edited texts by Mao stop at the year 1957, where his Selected Works vol. V ends.

democratic centralism in the "Political Report to the Eleventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China" of August 1977, as well as in the report on governmental work[11] in March 1978.

The *Renmin ribao* editorial also reveals why Mao's speech was issued: it was to promote the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. Their rule was labeled as a fascist dictatorship, and Mao Zedong's speech explicitly states that democratic centralism is the correct method for avoiding fascist dictatorship.[12] Soon, other articles pointed out that fascist dictatorship harms the people's enthusiasm and thus production.[13] The economic program referred to in the early articles commenting on Mao Zedong's speech is very Hua Guofeng-like as well. As Michael Sullivan has pointed out, Hua Guofeng returned to the mid-1950s development strategy which led to the Great Leap Forward.[14] The official policy was to achieve the Four Modernizations by the end of the century by putting all effort towards achieving this "main task". Assuming that the idea of concentrating all energies into a qualitative leap to a higher level lies underneath, a leap depending on mobilizing the masses and releasing their potential, as Mao had believed during the Great Leap Forward, taking a step to conclude that democracy is essential in activating this latent human potential is only a natural one.

1978 aims for democratization

In Mao's speech of 1962, as was repeated in the press analyses of that speech, centralism, that is making correct decisions and policies, was the core issue, but the leadership needs correct information about the situation in order to make correct decisions. Correct information can be obtained only voluntarily, since obstacles to expressing opinions tend to falsify the message. The importance of democracy lies here.

Mao Zedong's speech must be understood in the context of the failed Great Leap Forward. The economic catastrophe caused by this experiment was made worse by falsified reports upon which the top leaders' overoptimistic decisions were based. This led Mao to conclude that the problem had been centralization not based on the correct information and the disregard of the objective laws of development.[15] In 1978, the usefulness of democratic centralism in improving the

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[11] Hua 1978, p. 91.

[12] Anon., *Renmin ribao* July 2, 1978.

[13] Chen Pixian, *Renmin ribao*, July 26, 1978, p. 3.

[14] Sullivan 1980, p. 37.

[15] Some articles published in 1978 described the occasion of the original speech, e.g. Anon., *Lilun dongtai* 1978:5, p. 82.

economy and in strengthening the proletarian dictatorship seems to have hinged on three factors: on basing policies on correct information, on achieving unity and on mobilizing the masses. All three of these factors were interconnected: correct information provides for unity, unity promotes mobilization, and mobilization of the masses contributes to attaining correct information and unity.

Mao Zedong had reasoned that democracy is needed for centralization, which is essential for developing a socialist economy, which, then, strengthens proletarian dictatorship to prevent China from degenerating into revisionism. This logic can be understood in light of the 1962 politics, when fear of revisionism was stirred up by recent political changes in Hungary and the Soviet Union. The break with the Soviet Union had necessitated self-strengthening against all outside enemies, both ideological and military ones. For Mao, the aim probably was to develop the economy in order to make China a strong nation able to resist all foreign threats. This, nevertheless, was not the interpretation in 1978, when the Gang of Four was perceived as the archenemy of the system. Now strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat and avoiding revisionism referred to preventing power seizures of the Lin Biao and the Gang of Four kind. Democratization was now needed to protect against internal enemies rather than foreign ones.

The press perceived democratic supervision as an obstacle to revisionism and bureaucratism. Only mass participation can guarantee efficient dictatorship over bad elements and their reformation (*gaizao*), which, then, contributes to a correct Party line and stability. The masses can only be aroused to supervise leaders by using democracy. Democratic centralism strengthens the proletarian dictatorship, both because it facilitates mobilization of the people against the enemy and because it provides the people with the means to reveal bad people and deeds inside the system through expressing opinions and using *sida* rights[16]. In 1978, recommended forms of mass supervision were seldom institutional, although some articles mentioned inner-Party elections and reports in this context. Rather, they referred to active criticism by the masses. This was a direct continuation of Mao Zedong's stress on mass supervision over bureaucrats and the Party, but in dialogue with the Party which often made the final decisions.

It was argued that centralization of correct and comprehensive information provided for unity in ideology and action. The correct Party line and revolutionary success come from reflecting the people's interest and will and the objective laws of development. Somehow, there was a conviction that people can be united by the truth: the correct line contributes to united leadership. Obviously, rational people should have no reason to disagree with truth. It is as if disagreement could arise only with regard to facts and not preferences or contradictory interests.

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[16] Special commentator, *Zhongguo qingnian* 1978:2, p. 6. *Sida* rights include rights to post wallposters and to hold mass meetings.

According to a number of articles, differing opinions are only natural and even useful in reflecting people's differing experience, level of political consciousness, education, knowledge and familiarity with the situation. Thus, lack of knowledge was perceived as the source of division of opinions. These articles probably spoke only about differing opinions among the leading group, not among the masses. In this context, a common will to reach the best possible decision can perhaps be expected, and disagreement often reflects partial information and varying viewpoints.

Articles stated that the expression of different opinions and viewpoints contributes to mutual understanding, thereby facilitating united action. Indeed, the real unity can be attained only when subordinates know the intentions of the superiors and the superiors the intentions of those below them.[17] Yet, mutual understanding is only a preliminary step in solving contradictions, from which the real unity arises.[18] This logic is derived from Mao Zedong's division between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, which must all be solved in different ways.[19] Reflecting the 1957 speech, the 1978 discussion held that most of the contradictions in society, including those of the policy line and even class awareness, are contradictions among the people and should thus be handled democratically with a purpose of uniting and not dividing. Education through persuasion, criticism, and self-criticism is the correct method for achieving unity and correct consciousness. Indeed, education requires the persuasion of the masses, but also the correction of problems in cadres' work styles.[20] When contradictions among the people are handled well, all possible strata can be mobilized for pursuing common aims.

Maoist theory about unity stresses consciousness. Unity can be reached only if centralization is based on correct information. Therefore, true centralization can be achieved only with democratic methods. Discipline is another unifying element, but it must depend on conscious (*zijue*) implementation of common decisions. Democracy and discussion make the people and Party members voluntarily and consciously implement decisions.

Modernization, as articles stressed, needs a common effort by the whole of the people. With democracy, the masses can be activated to contribute their effort, knowledge, and skills to the modernization policy. Firstly, decisions centralized from the masses represent their interests. Basing policies on their interests

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17 Zhou Cuncheng and Yang Hongyu, *Huazhong shiyuan xuebao* 1978:3, p. 21.

18 That is to say, Andrew Nathan is correct in stressing the dialogue between the leaders and the led and in seeing unity as the hoped for outcome of Chinese democracy (Nathan 1986, pp. 49, 65), but that in Chinese theory this dialogue itself is not the desired outcome, but only a means for solving social contradictions.

19 "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" in Mao Zedong, Selected Works, vol. V, pp. 384–421.

20 Gao Pingle, *Guangzhou ribao*, Aug 3, 1978, p. 3.

increases the masses' enthusiasm for their implementation. Therefore, cadres should consult the masses, analyze the situation with them, and conduct field research (*guandiao*) to learn about popular moods. Secondly, in the course of modernization many new situations and problems are bound to appear. Therefore, it is important to utilize all the experience and knowledge of the masses. Democracy, that is, letting the people articulate their opinions, helps in avoiding mistakes, correcting them, overcoming difficulties, and solving problems. Thirdly, the people can be united to contribute to modernization when contradictions among the people are solved. Unity will bring more strength to the effort.

In 1978 and even later, democracy was the method to activate the masses to contribute to economic progress. This seems to refer to a participatory idea of democracy. When the people themselves can participate in decision making concerning economic and political construction, they will put their full effort into it and unite their forces to achieve this task. During the whole period of 1978–1981, democratization was meant to arouse the full human potential for modernization. Through democracy, this human potential can be best utilized both for making better decisions and for carrying them out in production.

Evidently, in 1978, reasons to democratize were still very similar to those seen during the Cultural Revolution: mobilizing the masses for socialist construction and for the blocking of revisionism. These are typical Maoist themes, present in Mao Zedong's speech of 1962 itself. But in 1978 these themes were applied to the tackling of problems created by the Cultural Revolution. They sought to rectify the ultra-leftist line and prevent its new ascendancy; they wanted to strengthen the socialist system itself by developing the economy after setbacks produced by the Cultural Revolution. Democracy was a unifying element providing decision makers with correct information and assisting in the solving of contradictions. Unity was strength both in the struggle against ideological enemies and in the mobilization of forces for modernization.

1978 incentives for democratization

In 1978, democratization was seen to depend on the cadres themselves, and the top leadership especially was urged to give an example of practicing democracy. Articles urged them to consciously take a democratic stance and listen to the masses.

Democracy was still taken to be an ideological question. Apart from being a work style problem, obstructing democracy demonstrated a problem of world view. Whether or not to trust the masses, was the dividing line between historical materialism and idealism, articles maintained. According to historical materialism, human history is a history of developing production. Therefore, historical

processes use the power of the masses rather than the power of the individual. Revolution and modernization especially are processes involving the vast majority. In order to advance history and production, the masses must be mobilized, since the reality can be both known and changed only if one relies on the masses. A leader is useful only when she reflects the interest and will of the people and conforms with the demands of social and economic development. Under socialism, the people arguably are the masters of the country, while cadres are only their servants. In order to be real masters of the country in political, economic and cultural fields, the people must enjoy democracy and the right to articulate their opinions.

Undemocraticness was allegedly a problem of one's class position as well. Articles sought to convince cadres that undemocratic practices are not Marxist but feudal or petty bourgeois habits. Articles appearing in 1978 often repeated the Maoist belief that the communists have the masses on their side and, thus, can only profit from activating the masses, while anyone supporting the bourgeois or revisionist line is afraid of the masses who could overthrow them. Apart from being an incentive for cadres to correct their mistaken practices, bourgeois and revisionist influences, along with China's inexperience with democracy, explained why undemocratic practices still continued under socialism.

In addition, articles cleverly appealed to cadres' ideological zeal. They stressed that democracy strengthens proletarian dictatorship against the enemy, which prevents the Party from turning towards revisionism and China from returning to fascist dictatorship. Indeed, even attainment of communism was possible only by abiding by the laws of development and representing the people's interests and will. Consequently, democracy is undeniably a part of the program.[21]

In order to advance democratization, articles appealed to cadres' personal interest as well. Democracy, that is, listening to the people and admitting one's mistakes, is likely to generate the support and respect of the masses. Indeed, respect and authority do not emerge from power and position, but from the ability to solve problems and handle situations, which all depend on the depth of one's knowledge of the situation.[22] Without listening to the masses, a cadre will fall into subjectivism. Then his decisions will not match the situation, and thus he will fail in his duties and harm the socialist cause.

Democracy was a Party tradition and the secret of its success, articles reminded readers. Mao Zedong himself was often said to have been good at practicing democratic centralism, while Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, sometimes even Liu Shaoqi[23], served as counterexamples. In Party history, good relations

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[21] Gao Pingle, *Guangzhou ribao*, Aug 3, 1978; Han Liewen, *Sichuan ribao*, July 25, 1978, p. 3.

[22] Commentator, *Guangzhou ribao*, July 20, 1978, p. 1.

[23] E.g. Zhao Yuting, *Shanxi ribao*, July 6, 1978, p. 2.

with the people made them support the Party and willingly carry out its policies. According to this interpretation, healthy democratic life inside the Party, e.g. in Yan'an times, resulted in the progression of the socialist cause in every field, while contrary situations, such as the 1957 anti-bourgeois campaign and later the Gang of Four dominance, caused regression. Not accidentally, along with the 1978 discussion about democracy, a campaign to revive good Party traditions was launched.

In the main discourse of 1978, democracy in democratic centralism mostly meant consultation, although individual exceptions can be found. Democracy was cadres' work style (*zuofeng*) in which mass initiative and activism helped in overcoming difficulties and solving problems. It was a personalized relationship, where the masses expressed their opinions and cadres centralized them. This relationship reflected the social and ideological supremacy of the cadres over the masses as centralizers and educators with wider and more farsighted views.

Articles revealed attitudes obstructing internalization of the democratic work style. Many cadres had complained about how troublesome it was to allow the people to articulate their opinions: when there were multiple opinions to choose from, they felt that centralization was complicated; they feared losing their own authority if the masses openly questioned their decisions; they found it difficult to be simultaneously responsible to higher Party organs and the masses. To address these worries, articles tried to show that authority emerges from correct decisions, and not from issuing orders. They assured that it was in the interest of the Party to implement decisions that accorded with the reality.

Democratic centralism and "Seek truth from facts"

Reintroduction of democratic centralism coincided with the discussion about the correct criteria of truth in the field of philosophy. "Seek truth from facts" (*shishi qiu shi*) and "practice is the sole criterion of the truth" (*shijian shi zhenli de wei yi ge biaozhun*) were slogans of the day. They wanted to demonstrate the incorrectness of the ideological orthodoxy of the Cultural Revolution characterized by the diligent quoting of the authorities and the copying of models. The complexity of practical situations, local variations, and ever changing reality meant that the effectiveness of measures could be judged only by the practical results of one's effort.

In spite of the emphasis on practice, this epistemology does not correspond with Western pragmatism but is a form of realism. In the Chinese theory, practice, a process of trial and error, is the only way for humans to find out about the objective laws of development. Indeed, objective reality is there, but the question is about man's limits in grasping objective laws.

Most of the earlier studies have divided Chinese leadership of the time into Whateverists [24] (*fanshipai*) and Pragmatists (*shijian pai*). The former were supporters of the Cultural Revolutionary interpretation of Mao Zedong's writings while the latter upheld a less literal and more practical interpretation of Marxism.[25] It would be tempting to connect epistemology behind democratic centralism with the Pragmatist political line. In fact, this epistemology is not exclusively Pragmatist. The epistemological aspect of democratic centralism is already evident in the early articles of *Renmin ribao* and *Hongqi* which, along with centralizing situations correctly by soliciting mass opinion, stress democratic centralism as a method of continuous revolution. These articles derive their epistemology directly from Mao Zedong's speech of 1962 and writings like "On Practice" and "Where Do Correct Ideas Come From" (1963). That is to say that Maoists and Pragmatists, although having differences in interpretation of Mao Zedong's ideological heritage, actually cannot be distinguished when it comes to the issue of practice as a criterion of truth.[26] One came to the same conclusion about the primary importance of practice from ideological and practical standpoints alike.

The fundamental role of practice lies in Mao Zedong's conception of interaction between reality and theoretical knowledge. For Mao, knowledge originates in practice and comes from the endless cycles of "discover[ing] the truth through the practice, and again through practice verify[ing] and develop[ing] the truth"[27]. Reality for a Marxist is essentially a social reality. In order to obtain knowledge about it, one must consult those who live in and participate in creating the social reality. In order to attain a full picture, one must seek the opinions and experiences of as many people as possible. This is where democracy comes in. Indeed, to recognize practice as the criterion of truth requires respect for the people's democratic rights, since the people have practical experience.[28]

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[24] Named after a slogan stressing that whatever Mao Zedong decided or instructed must be upheld.

[25] This division is shared by many Western and Chinese studies alike. Many studies, e.g. Zong 1989, pp.176–180, and Goldman 1994, p. 35, identify Pragmatists with the Dengist line and introduce Hua Guofeng as a Whateverist. However, contemporary research did not share this understanding. Sullivan 1980, p. 39, identifies the factions not as Hua Guofeng's and Deng Xiaoping's, stating both of them standing somewhere in the middle, but names Wang Dongxing and Chen Yun as their heads. Also, Garside 1982, pp. 187, 192, does not identify Hua Guofeng with the Whateverist faction. My contemporary press materials point to this latter conclusion.

[26] Sun Changjiang, *Renmin ribao*, July 27, 1978, even derives practice as the sole criterion of the truth directly from Mao's "On Practice".

[27] "On Practice", Mao Zedong, Selected Works, vol. I, p. 308.

[28] Xu Yuanpei, *Fudan xuebao* 1978:1, p. 8.

Articles emphasized that instead of an individual, Maoist interpretation takes the collective, a class or the masses, as a source for gaining knowledge about the objective world. Collectively the masses have vaster and more diverse knowledge than any individual, including a leader, can have. Therefore, correct ideas come from the reality, from the masses, not from any individual's subjective will. Correct information cannot be attained at once but comes from the cycles of "from the masses and to the masses" (*cong qunzhong zhong lai, dao qunzhong zhong qu*). The masses' action, thus, provides the practical test for truth. In these cycles knowledge becomes more and more complete.[29] This epistemology is based on the mass line theory.

Democratic centralism was underlined as the correct combination of theory and practice. Thus, democratic centralism was equated with the mass line process of collecting information. Practice means social reality, while the theory refers to the centralization process of making policies. In this model, social reality as perceived by the masses and the theory are continuously interacting with one another. Theories are formulated according to the reality, and reality is shaped with conscious action in line with these theories.

I am tempted to believe that the Chinese implicitly pursued this logic somewhat further and combined ideology and reality here. Centralization, then, would be a process of viewing information about local conditions in the context of Marxist theory, understood as the universal truth about the development of history and society. To this end, articles about local democratic life show that studying ideological materials was an important part of political meetings both inside the Party and with the masses. On an international level, then, the logic that any useful theory must be based on reality led some articles[30] to stress that revolutionary theory must be combined with the reality of each country.

Discussion about practice as the sole criterion of truth itself had multiple purposes. It was a direct statement against quoting ideological texts and copying models with no respect for reality; it perhaps was a tool in factionalist struggle and certainly determined the new political line; in addition it was an epistemological stance. Yet, in terms of democracy the most important aspect of the discussion about practice was that it explicitly assigned criteria to correct decision making. Correct decisions emerge only through a cycle of "from the masses and to the masses", democracy and centralism, or practice and theory. Thus, leadership processes required democracy to succeed.

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[29] Ma Wenrui, *Hongqi* 1978:7, p. 49; Sun Changjiang, *Renmin ribao*, July 27, 1978. Apart from the mass line theory, these articles base their view about the importance of practical knowledge on Mao Zedong's writings from 1971. A member of the pragmatist faction probably would have refrained from using Mao's Cultural Revolutionary statements.

[30] E.g. Li Jun, *Shijian* 1978:11, p. 19.

1978: Democracy as listening to opinions

In 1978, articles reminded leaders that consulting people as widely as possible is useful for knowing all aspects of the situation and for solving contradictions. Objective knowledge must take all sides into consideration, and this is possible only through democratic consultation. Thus, only democracy provides correct information for centralism. Accumulation of correct information, then, enables us to know the laws of revolution and modernization better. Moreover, the masses should be listened to, because without knowing their demands and conditions, one is unable to represent them.

Thus in the beginning of the discussion, democracy meant soliciting the people's opinions and views. Numerous articles taught cadres to listen to the people attentively, without letting his own prejudices and opinions influence him. Both at the grassroots level and in Party meetings, a cadre should be attentive and receptive to the ideas of others, instead of forcing his own views on others. *Sanbuzhuyi* (literally: three-no-ism) was the slogan for prohibiting the pressuring of those who disagree.

Even mistaken opinions need to be expressed, articles emphasized. Since no one can always be correct, it is unrealistic to demand that only totally correct opinions can be expressed, otherwise lots of useful information will not be expressed either. Prohibiting expression of opinions does not make these opinions nonexistent. Only if mistaken opinions can be expressed, they can be corrected. If mistaken opinions cannot be expressed, the correct ones cannot prove their correctness either. Only after listening is the time right for centralizing, that is, analyzing, selecting, and formulating programs and policies out of the most objective information available.

In 1978, democracy still referred to comprehensive listening to all opinions in order to find out the truth about the situation. Therefore, minority opinions were to be valued. Repeating Maoist logic, the truth is often first in the hands of the minority. Therefore, the minority should be allowed to keep its opinions, although it must agree to carry out the majority's decisions. The press even gave examples of how listening to the minority and conducting fieldwork about the issue contributed to implementing a correct policy that happened to originate in minority opinions.[31] Yet, this does not mean carrying out a minority decision, since the majority was convinced by the result of the research.

All of the above arguments sought to convince cadres of the importance of differing opinions and the need for diverse information in decision making,

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[31] Zhang Xiuyuan, *Chongqing ribao*, Aug 9, 1978, p. 3.

instead of forced unanimity with regard to the sole proposition by the first secretary. The press emphasized that differing opinions themselves are not a problem, since a cadre cannot accomplish his work well without listening to them.

Although understanding of democracy became more sophisticated during the discussion, all through the years 1978–1981 listening to opinions was stressed as the key link of democracy and the guarantee for the people's democratic rights. In 1978 democracy was still conceptualized mainly in terms of personal relationships between a cadre and the masses or a first secretary and other Party committee members. Although this understanding had no institutional means to force all cadres to respect people's democratic rights, it provided nuanced information about situations and popular moods in areas and units practicing this method well.

Centralization

Democratic centralist theory unites popular initiative with leadership. If democracy in the democratic centralist process means initiative from below, centralism refers to leadership roles in this process. Centralism includes tasks like collecting information, analyzing it, processing it into decisions, implementing these decisions and creating conditions for their implementation.

Articles defined the relation between democracy and centralism as a dialectical unity of opposites. Although Mao in his 1962 speech explicitly stressed that democracy is for correct centralization, as was often repeated in articles published in 1978–1979, correct centralization, or for many writers, even any centralization whatsoever, simply does not exist without democracy. Each complement of this dialectical unity depends on the other, which makes it impossible to determine which element is the primary one. If democracy is a prerequisite for correct decision making, so is centralization a prerequisite for putting democratic will into practice. The aim of democracy is centralism, but centralization is meant to implement democratic will. In other words, democracy is needed to arouse enthusiasm of the masses, while centralism is needed to guide this enthusiasm towards common aims.[32] Naturally, in some situations one aspect of democratic centralism needs more emphasis than the other, but in 1978–1981 the two aspects were mostly taken to be equally important.

Increasing democracy did not mean discarding centralism but rather understanding democracy as a prerequisite for centralism. Articles stressed that democracy is not spontaneous action by the people, but should accept centralist guidance in making activities comply with long term programs. Centralism is not tailism (*weibazhuyi*), doing as the masses say, nor is it anarchism, letting the people do

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[32]   Special commentator, *Liaoning ribao*, Jan 20, 1980, p. 2.

and speak as they wish without any concern for social order, articles taught. Rather, it is a method "from the masses and to the masses" combining democracy and leadership.

Centralization does not refer to arbitrary decisions made by a single leader, but on decisions based on democracy. Centralization requires collecting the people's opinions for decision making, instead of arbitrarily ordering them about. Many writers understood that, since centralization itself means collecting democratic information, there is no centralism without democracy. This view understood any undemocratic "centralism" as commandism (*minglingzhuyi*), making decisions on a basis of subjective will instead of popular experience and interest. Another view distinguished between democratic centralism and feudalist or bureaucratic centralism not based on the will of the majority. Accordingly, socialism would be the only system able to practice democratic centralization because of its extensive popular basis.

The term democratic centralism referred to several types of processes. Firstly, centralization referred to decision making based on democratically collected information. Many articles cited Mao's speech of 1962 which had compared the leadership with a factory functioning only if it has the people's opinions as raw material to process. Because the people's knowledge and opinions are scattered and unsystematic, they need to be centralized and systematized by the leadership. Centralization involved analyzing correct and mistaken elements of the people's suggestions. In this process, correct ones should be promoted and wrong ones corrected. Indeed, when opinions are centralized from the masses and correct ones are analyzed, the resulting decisions will be relatively correct and acceptable to the masses.[33]

Apart from decision making itself, centralization referred to implementation. The organization of forces for implementation combines both centralist discipline and democratic mass initiative. Democracy refers not only to "from the people", popular expression of opinions on which to base decisions, but also to "to the people", communicating with the masses about the ways to implement decisions taking local conditions into account. Decisions will thus have local support among both those who implement them and those who will have to follow them. Besides, implementation needs to accord with local conditions, which again can be gauged through the initiative and knowledge from the masses. Yet, lower levels of the Party and the people are obliged to abide by the decisions of higher organs exactly because they are products of centralization based on democracy.

Thirdly, many articles stressed centralism in its original Leninist sense as discipline and united action (*jizhong tongyi*). Indeed, democratic centralism

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[33] Yan Wen, *Dazhong ribao*, July 5, 1978.

combines listening to the people and the Party.[34] In China, this understanding of centralism as party discipline usually extended to mobilization of both the Party and the masses for implementing the Party policies and programs. Therefore, democratic centralism as Leninist Party discipline and in the mass line sense both essentially refer to a leadership method of concentrating forces for a common cause. Obedience was not demanded only from the people but also from the lower-level organs, which had to carry out decisions, although they had a right to express their differing opinions.

When viewing the course of democratic centralist processes, in addition to listening to the masses, the press materials reveal that there was also a strong manipulative element involved. All kinds of opinions should be listened to, articles posited, and only then begins the education: mistaken opinions should be criticized and explained and those who hold these views should be helped to overcome them. Indeed, one reason for letting all kinds of opinions be expressed was to educate the people to recognize the correct ones.[35] Yet, this education is not one-sided learning: cadres are supposed to learn from the masses' experiences, accept criticism, and conduct self-criticism if necessary. Moreover, this manipulative element required cadres to create an atmosphere and opportunities for the masses to express their opinions. In addition, cadres had the responsibility to find ways to implement correct suggestions and to explain the situation, if implementation was not possible. This manipulation could be classified as the fourth meaning of the term centralism.

Spring of 1979: Balancing between two excesses

The spring of 1979 saw stricter tones in democratic discussion in general, when the leadership felt forced to restrict democratic discussion when it evaluated that the democracy movement had exceeded the acceptable limits. The theory of democratic centralism was now used to answer the demands of this new situation. While the 1978 theme had been the need for democracy, now the emphasis was on centralism. If in 1978 participants in the discussion wanted to correct cadres' understanding, by the spring of 1979 the press attempted to educate the common people to use their rights within the officially-approved framework.

By the spring of 1979, the discussion had proceeded from discussing the need for democracy to discussing the contents and limits of democracy, at first mainly through negatively defining what socialist democracy is not. To this end, articles

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[34]   Huaxian Jiutan dadui Dang zhibu, *Guangzhou ribao*, Dec 17, 1977, p. 3.
[35]   E.g. Zhuang Dongliang, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 25, 1978, p. 3. This point is derived from Mao Zedong.

illustrated differences between socialist democracy and bourgeois democracy, between socialist democracy and anarchism, as well as between democratic centralism and bureaucratism. During this period, problems of democratic life, realistically enough, were said to arise from a lack of experience and knowledge about democracy. After the Cultural Revolution allegedly had substituted democracy with anarchism and centralism with fascist dictatorship, many people still had inadequate understanding of democratic centralism. Hence, articles recommended education about the correct relations between democracy and centralism and about the correct usage of democratic rights.

Democracy and centralism were defined as a dialectical unity in order to educate people to use their democratic rights correctly, but also to teach decision makers to deal with popular demands correctly. When using democratic rights, one is not free to do as one pleases, but must comply with the rules and social demands, respect others, and guarantee the normal functions of society. Dialectical unity of democracy and centralism accorded with freedom and discipline on the personal level, where the two are both united and in contradiction. Articles affirmed the need for democratic rights, but only to the point they observe centralist law and respect the democratic rights of the majority. Articles sought to convince readers that doing as one pleases is not equal to democracy, nor is it undemocratic to refuse to adopt particularistic demands. Indeed, democracy is not identical with the individual's or the masses' will. Rather, to respect democratic rights all opinions must be listened to, but of these, the best ones are centralized for implementation. Implementation of mistaken opinions would actually negate correct opinions, centralism and, in this way, even democracy.[36]

Decision makers, then, should accept popular initiative and also add centralist guidance to it. Correct leadership cannot ignore popular knowledge and demands, but it must also limit an individual's action to secure general wellbeing and to concentrate on realizable decisions. Articles reproved both kinds of deviations in the cadre work: newly begun democratization had not gone too far (*guo le tou*), unlike many cadres feared; similarly articles disapproved of cadres who do not address the masses' disorderly behavior or who understand democracy to mean handling everything according to mass demands. Hence, along with cadres' autocratic practices, articles criticized inadequate centralization.

Centralism now referred more to law and order than to the process of formulating them. Democracy under centralist guidance, then, meant that democracy takes place within the limits of law and social order.

> Often people understand only opinions and instructions of the leadership as centralism, this is very incomplete. Proletarian centralism is the embodiment of the people's

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36   Yang Haikun, *Jiefangjun bao*, May 13, 1979, p. 3.

common interest, common demands and common will, the forms of centralism include discipline, order, law, rules, resolutions etc. These norms of action formed by democracy are norms that people must abide by and are the crystallization and summation of people's common will, they are centralization. Relations between democracy and law, democracy and discipline are actually relations of democracy and centralism. So called 'democracy under centralist guidance' does not refer only to democracy under Party and superior organs, it refers also to democracy permitted and protected by the law, discipline, orders, resolutions etc. Without these kinds of centralist restraints, democracy may vanish and change into anarchism.[37]

Indeed, because centralism is based on democracy and represents the people's will, everybody must recognize its authority.[38]

To a naive democrat, a system may seem more democratic the less it limits individuals and the more it complies with the people's demands. Actually this is not the case. Any democratic system aims at building a system where the people's freedoms, rights and political influence can be guaranteed. Democracy is not anarchism, where an individual does not need to pay heed to common rules, nor is it mob rule, where the masses can overrule any institution or rule. Accepting common democratically decided rules is a precondition of any democratic system. Any democratic system limits the use of democratic rights, and the Chinese one is no exception.

By this time, democratic centralism was presented in a more institutionalized form. Centralization under which democracy was to take place referred to the laws which themselves were institutionalized. In 1978 democracy had mainly meant cadres' need to listen to mass opinions, but now maturation of democratic life, problems this development involved, and different participants and aims of the discussion all directed attention to democratic institutions. If in 1978 cadres wrote for cadres, by 1979, the discussion involved a much larger part of society. Discussants may have made a factionalist slide from Hua Guofeng's camp to the reformist camp, following the simultaneous change of the control over the press. This ideological change may explain the move from seeing democracy as direct influence of the masses to emphasis on more institutionalized forms of democracy.

In 1981, the discussion returned to argumentation seen in the spring of 1979. Again the message was that democracy and centralism must be balanced to guarantee both democratic input and implementation of the decisions, emphasizing the need to avoid both bureaucratism and the tendency to do as one pleases. Indeed, any form of democracy needs centralization. In bourgeois democracies, bourgeois party programs as well as democratically decided constitutions and laws centralize the will of the bourgeoisie. Obeying them is compulsory, even for

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[37]   Jin Wen, *Jiefangjun bao*, March 26, 1979, p. 3.

[38]   Chen Dingyu, *Neimenggu ribao*, Apr 2, 1979, p. 3.

the proletariat, whose interests this form of democracy does not represent.[39] Again, the aim was to persuade the people to channel their democratic activities properly.

The mass line

In 1978–1981, articles treated democratic centralism as an extension of the mass line in all inner-Party and Party-society relations, or they understood that the mass line practiced democratic centralism among a wider group of people. Articles saw the situation inside a Party committee to be analogous to a cadre among the masses: both were arenas for absorbing all kinds of practical experience and suggestions for decision making.

Nevertheless, the two terms were not nearly synonymous in the beginning. The mass line was originally a leadership method for absorbing mass initiative and popular demands into decision making. It was a method for processing popular demands into practicable long term policies and programs carried out with the assistance of the masses. This method took place through contacts between the Party and the masses. Democratic centralism, then, was originally an inner-Party method of decision making and Party discipline. Therefore, in the beginning these two concepts by no means pointed to the same kind of expression of opinions and processes of decision making. While the mass line allows the masses to express their views, it may still rely on one or a few cadres to make decisions, inner-Party processes allow for more restricted participation, but also for more equal relations between participants. However, if democratic centralism is understood in the Maoist sense to refer to the democratic upward flow of information for centralist decision making and implementation, there is no fundamental difference between the two concepts.

Understanding democratic centralism and the mass line as near equivalents seems to be relatively rare in early 1978. At the time, most of the articles discussed democratic centralism only as an organizational principle, but some treated democratic centralism as a method to gather correct information from the masses. Nevertheless, equating the two dialectical conceptions, "from the masses and to the masses" and democratic centralism,[40] originated already in Mao Zedong's speech of 1962. Obviously, this equation must be seen in an epistemological sense: both the mass line method and democratic centralism involve a hermeneutical cycle from practice to theory and again to practice, where democracy refers to a leap from social reality to theory and centralism to a step from theory to practice.

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[39] Zhu Gu, *Hongqi* 1981:6, p. 41.

[40] This equation is explicit in many later articles, see, e.g., Ji Hanxing, *Henan ribao*, Sept 15, 1981, p. 2.

Whether the equation had been accepted ever since 1962 or whether the 1978 discussion revived this interpretation for the current needs, is impossible to ascertain in light of my materials. However, the understanding of democratic centralism as a means to recognize correct decisions and grasp the truth was first discussed in the context of the mass line theory.[41] Thus, democratic centralism and the mass line may have been more distinct concepts in early 1978 than they were by the latter part of the year.

The mass line arguably conforms to historical materialism, which recognizes the masses as creators of history. Broad mass backing characterizes socialism and guarantees its success because it interprets historical processes correctly. Consulting the masses and clarifying the official goals for them allegedly produces correct decisions absorbing the mass initiative and reduces contradictions between leaders and the led by uniting their understanding and aims.

Throughout the Chinese communist movement, the mass line had been a method of mass mobilization. Especially in the early part of the discussion, articles treated the mass line and even democratic centralism[42] in the mass movement context. Indeed, the mass line included discussing with the masses how to carry out a mass movement in order to unite them for the movement under Party guidance.[43] Actually, the years 1978–1981 saw the mass movement tradition beginning to decline. The press reflected this change by starting to print articles setting limits for mass movements. The mass line theory, though, survived intact and has continued to appear in speeches to this day. Thus, the mass line profited from the new emphasis interpreting the mass line mainly as the grassroots form of a democratic centralist process and Marxist epistemology, making it useful regardless of context.

From 1980 onwards, some dissenting voices disagreed with equating democratic centralism with the mass line. Indeed, the two belong to different categories: the mass line is a work method for leadership to centralize scattered and unsystematic opinions into decisions, while democratic centralism refers to voting between two proposals and arriving at a binding decision according to the majority principle.[44] Indeed, while "from the masses, to the masses" refers to epistemology, democratic centralism is an organizational principle. Epistemology proceeds from empirical knowledge to a higher level of rational knowledge, but democracy and

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[41] In 1977, the slogan of "seek truth from facts" (*shishi qiu shi*) had already been introduced, and its connection to the mass line was eagerly pointed out in, for example, Anon., *Gongnongbing pinglun* 1977:12, which also mentions the slogan of the following year, "practice is the sole criterion of truth" (p. 72).

[42] Wang Weiliang, *Shijian* 1978:7, p. 48.

[43] E.g. Zhang Zhiyi, *Chongqing ribao*, Aug 29, 1978, p. 3.

[44] Zhang Decheng, *Renmin ribao*, Oct 30, 1980, p. 5.

centralism are of equal value. Democracy and centralism are one process and by no means correspond with the hermeneutical cycle of collecting and testing knowledge.[45]

These dissenters apparently wanted to point out the difference between inner-Party processes and Party-masses relations, not only because of the difference between their scopes, but also in an attempt to make democratic centralism into an institutionalized process. Rules of Party decision making can be reduced to exact rules, such as majority decisions, while the mass line type of extensive listening to opinions and centralizing information is too vague to have an institutionalizable content. Yet, extensive consultation of the masses needs to precede these institutionalized processes. Therefore, separation of the two terms attempted to affirm both the mass line and democratic centralism, but simultaneously use the latter to stress voting procedures.

Collective leadership

As indicated above, the Chinese version of democratic centralism, unlike its Soviet counterpart, is by no means limited to the Party but is a way to arrange the whole society. Yet, the Party was always one of the main arenas for implementing democratic centralism. Epistemological and participatory functions of democratic centralism could be utilized inside the Party, government, and military organizations alike, but also in Party relations with the masses and mass organizations. Both spheres of democratic centralism, Party democracy and the people's democracy, were often mentioned separately but together, and many articles did not clearly specify which sphere they referred to. Throughout the years 1978–1981, numerous articles treated democratic centralism mainly as the correct way of organizing a Party meeting.

The most important dimension of democratic centralism in the Party was collective leadership. Within collective leadership, all Party committee members participate in discussion, express their opinions and harmonize them in the course of debate. If the discussion did not result in a unanimous decision, articles usually recommended more investigation. A final decision would be ratified through a majority vote. This decision was binding. Each member had the right to maintain a differing opinion and even report it to superior organs, but was required to implement the majority decision.

The first secretary was the key figure for collective leadership. Obviously, the success of collective work depended largely on his subjective role: whether he agreed to play his part in listening to differing opinions, in conducting self-

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[45] He Kuang, *Dushu* 1980:5, pp. 14–16.

criticism, in allowing real majority decisions, and in implementing decisions according to the collective decision. Articles strongly criticized first secretaries providing insufficient background information about the agenda, thereby preventing committee members' from familiarizing themselves with the situation beforehand. Numerous articles reproached some first secretaries' patriarchal attitudes forbidding discussion or dictating decisions. These comments reveal that the reality of collective leadership often diverged from the ideal.

In the years 1978–1981 it was emphasized that there are no superiors and inferiors inside the collective leadership. Decisions are made by a majority vote, in which all members equally have one vote. The first secretary had the responsibility over routine work, but had no more weight in decision making than others. Although majority decisions bound the first secretary, he was still granted an active role in centralizing correct opinions and in criticizing wrong ones. The collective leadership strove to activate all committee members both for discussion and for implementation. According to articles, collective decision making was the best method to guarantee the implementation of decisions, since a cadre may boycott implementation of dictated decisions he cannot agree with.

Articles stressed that collective leadership must be complemented with personal responsibility in order to avoid undemocratic decisions, the shirking of personal responsibility, and trivial talk postponing decision making alike. Not all details need collective discussion or the first secretary's approval, but shared responsibility means that each member carries out democratic decisions pertaining to matters delegated to him. The personal area of responsibility, though, must not divide leadership nor lead to authoritarianism in one's own field. Indeed, collective leadership combines both the mass view that the minority obeys the majority and the organizational discipline guaranteeing that an individual obeys the organization.[46] According to some articles, combining collective leadership with personal responsibility accords with the proletarian world view by recognizing the roles of the masses and individuals alike in historical processes.

There was a shift in vocabulary concerning collective leadership during the years 1978–1981. When in 1978 and early 1979 articles borrowed Mao Zedong's analogy of the first secretary as a squad leader (*banzhang*), later articles, again by citing Mao, denied this analogy. This shift reflected the change in the understanding of the role of the first secretary. It seems that the analogy originally stressed the first secretary's role in leading participation by her own example in studying, investigating, analyzing and working hard.[47] The denial was explicitly grounded in the idea of equality of the first secretary and other committee members in deci-

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[46] Huang Tianming, *Yunnan ribao* Oct 8, 1981, p. 3.
[47] At least, this is the interpretation of Zhonggong dangshi dang jianshe jiaoyansuo, *Lilun yu shijian* 1979:1, p. 62.

sion making in which the majority principle differs from a hierarchical relation requiring absolute obedience of a squad leader by ordinary soldiers. Both of these understandings opposed the first secretary overruling decisions, but one from the participatory viewpoint and the other from the angle of majority decisions.

The rationale of collective leadership accorded with that of democratic centralism in general. Collective leadership was seen as a method of solving contradictions and achieving real unity among the leadership. This meant arriving at mutual understanding and acceptance of decisions, which, then, should lead to serious implementation of these decisions by each member. Its opposite was overruling all decisions and prohibiting expression of differing opinions (*yiyantang*) by the first secretary.

In a meeting, committee members allegedly offer their opinions and knowledge for the use of a Party committee in the same way as the masses bring theirs to the grassroots-level cadres. These differing opinions and knowledge once more were seen to reflect different angles from which to view the question and, therefore, were useful for achieving objective understanding of the situation. The justification for collective leadership was the same as for democratic centralism in general: limitations of an individual's experience and knowledge compared with the collective. Because of the relatively objective information about the social reality it possesses, collective leadership based on the mass line style leadership was seen to be the way of avoiding mistakes and correcting them in time.

Articles emphasized that collective leadership must be based on the mass line in order to attain correct information. To this end, members should consult lower-level organs and the masses. Since every cadre is in contact with different parts of the masses, collective leadership reflects opinions, knowledge, and experience of the masses in general. Therefore, representing and leading the masses requires collective leadership. Obviously, when the democratic centralist method is repeated throughout the Party hierarchy, it is supposed to convey correct information, the voice of the masses, and initiative from the grassroots to the top leadership.

One rationale for collective leadership was better supervision over leaders by both the Party organ and the masses. With Lin Biao and the Gang of Four in mind, its purpose was to stop misuse of power in time. Some articles paid attention to elections as a method of practicing healthy collective leadership. One article even recommended the Paris Commune and Yugoslavian style of rotating chairmanship.[48]

Discussion over collective leadership used the democratic centralist terminology to denounce over-centralization of power. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, preventing misuse of power, naturally, was one of the main motives

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[48]   Zheng Zhichu, *Baike zhishi* 1980:5, pp. 2–3.

for the democratic discourse in general. Articles emphasized that the most important decisions must be made collectively, not individually. Many articles used collective leadership to urge for less propagation of an individual's achievements without recognizing the role of the masses in making them possible. Apart from discussing concentration of power in general, it is possible that some participants wanted to undermine the personality cult built around Hua Guofeng. Nevertheless, this was not the mainstream, since many critics of personality cults treated Hua and his measures to overcome this problem positively.[49]

1980–1981: Equating democratic centralism with the majority principle

Since 1978, democratic centralism was seen mostly in accordance with the mass line theory. The Chinese theory, nevertheless, allows a narrower Leninist interpretation as well. Utilizing this understanding, some Chinese interpreted democracy in the democratic centralist process as the majority principle. This interpretation relied on the formulation of democratic centralism as "individual obeys the organization, the minority obeys the majority, lower levels obey higher levels, the whole Party obeys the Central Committee."[50] Now some articles eagerly pointed out that all these cases are actually instances of a minority obeying the majority: the organization, the majority, the higher levels and the Central Committee all represent a larger number of people than a single individual, group, or lower-level organ.[51]

Although this formulation lists the basic principles of Party discipline, now some writers consciously chose to interpret it to crystallize majoritarian decision making processes. They did not stretch the concept of democratic centralism when they used it to refer to the majority principle inside the Party or Party meetings. Yet, some articles implied that majority vote suits both the people's democracy and Party democracy alike.

In 1978, the majority principle was not the only democratic centralist method for solving dissent. Many articles reveal preference for consensus:

> If we are unable to unite opinions at one time, we do not adopt the simple method of a minority obeying the majority. Instead, if it does not work out once, next time [we] discuss anew, [and then] decide on the basis of united knowledge, then [each member]

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[49] See a contradictory combination of rejecting personality cults and crediting Hua Guofeng as an example to do so in Anon., *Renmin ribao* , Feb 1, 1979, p. 1.

[50] Formulated in the Eight National Congress of Communist Party of China (1956). Included in the new Party constitution of 1977.

[51] He Kuang , *Dushu* 1980:5, p. 12.

separately actively carries [the decision] out, preventing one person from overruling the question.[52]

Nor was there much faith in majority decisions as such. Indeed, majority decisions themselves are not enough, if the decisions are not preceded by discussion, analysis, and the gathering of comprehensive information.[53] That is, mere form is not enough to guarantee democracy. Indeed, still in early 1979 equating democracy with the majority principle was understood to treat democracy incorrectly only as a work method, instead of recognizing that democracy refers to the state system.[54]

However, by 1980–1981 some began to question whether unanimous decisions are democratic at all. Indeed, they only allow the minority to delay decision making, possibly for the purpose of advancing their own interests. The unanimity ideal provokes the majority to put pressure on the minority to give up its beliefs. Outward unanimity does not necessarily mean real consensus, but leaves many views unexpressed. Instead, majority decisions provide everyone the right to express and retain her views.[55]

On October 30, 1980, *Renmin ribao* published an article by Zhang Decheng questioning the Maoist understanding of democratic centralism as "centralism based on democracy and democracy under centralist guidance"[56] (*zai minzhu jichu shang de jizhong, jizhong zhidao xia de minzhu*). It proceeded from analyzing Lenin's original term to have meant democratic centralism (*minzhu de jizhongzhi*) and not a system of democracy and centralism (*minzhujizhongzhi*) in the Russian language. Thus, it is incorrect to say that any part guides another part. Hence, only the formulation "centralism based on democracy" is valid. Democratic centralism actually refers to the majority principle in voting about decisions or in electing representatives. Evidently, centralism is not outside or above but inside democracy. Therefore, centralism is not qualified to guide democracy.[57] Despite the theoretical guise, the aims of this article were practical. It expressed concern for misuse of the formulation "democracy under centralist guidance" for supporting authoritarianism and even denying democracy. It recommended rejecting this formulation and strengthening the majority principle in order to root out the patriarchalist leadership style and authoritarian decisions.[58]

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52   Party Committee of the Province First Construction and Engineering Company, *Qinghai ribao*, July 22, 1978, p. 3.

53   Yan Wen, *Dazhong ribao*, July 5, 1978, p. 3.

54   Zhang Xianyang and Wang Guixiu, *Renmin ribao*, Jan 22, 1979, p. 3.

55   Li Guihai, *Shenyang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 1981:3, pp. 34–36.

56   Formulation of the Seventh National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (1945).

57   Zhang Decheng, *Renmin ribao*, Oct 30, 1980, p. 5.

58   Zhang Decheng, *Renmin ribao*, Oct 30, 1980, p. 5.

At first, some sympathetic articles supported Zhang Decheng. One article went so far as to reject the formulation "centralization based on democracy" as well. It saw democratic centralism as one process of deciding according to the one-man-one-vote principle.[59] Another questioned whether democracy under a superiors' guidance is democracy at all. It feared that the formulation of democracy under centralist guidance leads to understanding democracy only as a means (*shouduan*) and not an end (*mudi*). In fact, democracy should be seen as the basis and, thus, the more important part of the democratic centralist process.[60]

Nevertheless, the majority of the articles rejected the idea that democratic centralism could be reduced to a mere majority principle. These articles compellingly refuted each of the arguments for equating democratic centralism with the "centralization based on democracy" formulation alone. Nevertheless, critics usually affirmed the majority principle itself, although they showed that too simplistic an interpretation was theoretically problematic and avoided questioning the Party role in democratic processes.

Their main argument relied on the dialectical unity of the two elements of democratic centralism. This argument sometimes proceeded from a dislike of anarchism, but more often from the impossibility of the implementation of democratic will without any rules or discipline. For example, elections, so favored by majoritarians, cannot take place without electoral law, a set election date, registration of voters, candidate selection, and other rules of organizing elections which all belong to centralism. After elections or majority decisions, majority will cannot be put into practice without centralist guidance. In addition, some articles pointed out that the majority principle as a form of obedience does not belong to democracy but to centralism,[61] or that "centralization based on democracy" in and of itself refers to centralization.[62] Logically speaking, if democracy includes centralism, one cannot want centralization of democratic opinion, because this is impossible without centralizing leadership.[63]

These critics did not buy the idea of the unity of democracy and centralism in the voting process. They held that these two elements, despite their dialectical unity, are not the same but belong to different categories. "Centralism based on democracy and democracy under centralist guidance" was a dialectical description of democratic centralism, the interdependency of its two elements, and as such valid. Although most of the articles did not place any part of dialectical unity

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59   Chen Chi, *Heilongjiang ribao*, Feb 17, 1980, p. 3.
60   Guo Fengzhou, *Changjiang ribao*, Dec 11, 1980, p. 4.
61   Li Feng, *Xinhua ribao*, Feb 10, 1981, p. 3.
62   Zhu Gu, *Hongqi* 1981:6, p. 44.
63   Sun Bin and Bao Xinjin, *Dong Yue luncong* 1981:4, p. 22.

above the another, some even saw no problem in placing correct forms of democratic centralization, for example the constitution, above democracy.[64]

Centralist guidance by no means refers to undemocratic guidance, articles stressed, since it is based on collective decisions and not on the decisions of any individual. The Party programs and laws arguably centralize the people's will and interest. Indeed, democracy does not stop in centralization, but the process of democracy under centralist guidance involves democratic discussion over implementation.[65]

Articles saw that the equating of democratic centralism with the majority principle ignores three other parts of the slogan "an individual obeys the organization, the minority obeys the majority, lower levels obey the higher levels, the whole Party obeys the Central Committee." Indeed, obeying the majority itself is not enough. A local majority cannot overrule central decisions. Therefore, obeying central decisions is the most important one out of the four; otherwise no policy can be implemented.[66] Indeed, an absolute majority principle is not practiced anywhere. Although decisions made by a single person must be curbed, in some instances individuals must have the power to make the final decision.[67] Apart from the majority principle, centralism includes obedience to central organs and the right to make independent decisions regarding issues which are under one's responsibility.[68]

Nevertheless, articles admitted that misuse of the terminology of democracy under centralist guidance is real, but the problem is not in the formulation itself. Stressing this formulation had not correlated with serious authoritarian practices in the Party history. Indeed, undemocratic practices arise from something else other than democracy under centralist guidance: from denial of democratic centralism and centralist guidance,[69] or from a wrong kind of centralization based on an individual's will and not on democracy.[70] Indeed, the formulation of democracy under centralist guidance does not lead to authoritarianism more than that of centralism based on democracy, where centralism can also be misinterpreted as decisions by an individual.[71] Rather than denying certain formulations, democratic centralism itself should be improved to better safeguard democracy, articles concluded.

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64   Xu Zhigang, *Henan ribao*, March 6, 1981, p. 3; Zhou Kang et al., *Shehui kexue* 1981:2, p. 64.
65   Wan Shaohua, *Hubei ribao*, March 5, 1981, p. 3.
66   Wei Lie, *Fengdou* 1981:4, p. 10.
67   Li Dabin, *Changjiang ribao*, March 12, 1981, p. 4.
68   Sun Bin and Bao Xinjin, *Dong Yue luncong* 1981:4, pp. 24–25.
69   Yu Xingzhou, *Shijian* 1981:3, p. 32.
70   Li Feng, *Xinhua ribao*, Feb 10, 1981, p. 3.
71   Wan Shaohua, *Hubei ribao*, March 5, 1981, p. 3.

The challenge by Zhang Decheng's article stating that democracy under centralist guidance is not an original Leninist principle was met in several ways. Some articles saw that Lenin's stress on organizational discipline and opposition to anarchism can be read to mean that he approved of this principle,[72] while others saw no problem in developing the theory itself.[73] Others noticed that democratic centralism is not something that was created in Lenin's mind, but is a reflection of contradictions in political life guiding and regulating these contradictions.[74] In other words, origin of the principle is unimportant, as long as it reflects reality.

Zhang Decheng had asserted that the meaning of "democracy under centralist guidance" was unclear, since centralist guidance refers sometimes to the decisions made by a leading organ, sometimes to the leading organs themselves, and sometimes to leading cadres.[75] Other articles used multiple strategies to answer this challenge. They noticed that having many meanings is not the same as having no definite meaning at all.[76] Others stated that the meaning is exact and refers to centralization based on democracy as applied by democratically formed organs in accordance with the constitution and Party policies.[77]

Equating democratic centralism with the majority principle gave a theoretical guise for recommending majority decisions and popular elections without Party guidance. *Hongqi* published an article openly criticizing this stance. It stated that Party guidance is an essential part of socialist democracy, since without the Party leadership, it becomes impossible to unite forces for constructing a proletarian state able to realize the people's will and interest. Even the majority principle itself cannot be separated from its political content, but can exist only in proletarian democracy.[78] Likewise, some articles backed the formulation "democracy under centralist guidance" simply because they believed that Party guidance over political processes is necessary for selecting the most suitable candidates in elections and setting ideological and political lines.[79] They feared that without this kind of guidance, politics would lose its socialist orientation.

In discussing the majority principle, democratic centralism was treated as a principle of decision making. This stance took a step towards the institutionalization of democracy, since a voting system can be institutionalized. Apart from

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[72]   Xu Zhigang, *Henan ribao*, March 6, 1981, p. 3.

[73]   Zhou Kang et al., *Shehui kexue* 1981:2, pp. 62–63.

[74]   Zhou Kang et al., *Shehui kexue* 1981:2, p. 62. He mentions contradictions between leaders and the led, upper and lower levels, as well as the minority and the majority.

[75]   Zhang Decheng, *Renmin ribao*, Oct 30, 1980, p. 5.

[76]   Hu Baochen, *Liaoning ribao*, Dec. 11, 1980, p. 3.

[77]   Wan Shaohua, *Hubei ribao*, March 5, 1981, p. 3.

[78]   Zhu Gu, *Hongqi* 1981:6, pp. 41–42.

[79]   Xin Tongwen, *Renmin ribao*, Aug 17, 1981, p. 3.

articles partaking in the theoretical debate over whether the formulation "democracy under centralist guidance" is correct, other articles demanded elections that genuinely respect the will of the electorate as a part of democratic centralism or even the mass line[80]. In addition to institutionalization, probably an even more important motive for emphasizing voting, however, was guaranteeing equality for all participants and a voice for all viewpoints. Majoritarians seem to have believed that a formal majoritarian process can measure true support authentically and legitimize minority views in ways that a consensual process involving hierarchical chains of command cannot.

Questioning the possibility of centralizing the truth

The 1978–1979 discussion had appealed to cadres and collective leadership to centralize practical knowledge in order to base their decisions on true information. At the time, democratic centralism was the main method for knowing the reality. The stress had been on gathering mass opinions and practical experience for decision making. The evils to oppose were disregard for popular will and actual conditions. Indeed, neither democratic centralism as an organizational principle nor superiors' decisions correspond to the truth, which can only be known by centralizing the grassroots-level information.[81] Since the truth may be in the hands of a minority, minority opinions must be valued. Therefore, simple majority decisions do not always lead to ideal results.

The equating of democratic centralism with the majority principle questioned the possibility of centralizing the truth through democratic methods. This view stressed that the truth can only be determined through practice, which makes it impossible for anyone to know the truth before testing a policy in practice. Centralization of opinions cannot, therefore, guarantee the correctness of decisions, although good criteria, i.e., the majority principle, reduce the likelihood of mistakes.

This stance had practical aims. It wanted to make the majority principle the sole criterion of legitimacy for a decision. Otherwise, there was always the possibility that a secretary may overrule decisions or someone would refuse to implement a policy by appealing to its incorrectness. In addition, the demand to obey the majority regardless of the correctness of a decision would help uproot many unwanted practices: it would give support neither to autocratic nor populist decisions;[82] it would respect minority opinions and would demand the adaptation of

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[80] Commentator, *Qinghai ribao*, Dec 22, 1981, p. 3.

[81] Hu Baochen, *Lilun yu shijian* 1979:12, p. 10.

[82] Yan Hong, *Hebei ribao*, May 20, 1981, p. 4.

decisions made by higher-level organs to local conditions;[83] and it would disallow a local majority to overrule decisions by superiors, who represent a larger number of people than the locality does.[84]

This stance met very little opposition, probably because it is theoretically sound and because it emphasizes the Party tradition of respecting minority opinions. In fact, many opponents of stripping democratic centralism of its relation to epistemological correctness agreed on the need to uproot undemocratic practices.[85] But these writers continued to reflect the tones of 1978, when discovering the truth was one of the main arguments for democratic centralism.

One article demonstrated that there is no contradiction between the majority principle and centralizing the truth, since decision making aims at centralizing the truth and majority opinions are usually correct. Centralizing correct opinions is not inconsistent with leadership processes, since leadership creates conditions for centralization and mass opinions are not automatically correct. Besides, rejecting a majority decision on the pretext of it being incorrect has nothing to do with the centralization of truth, which must be centralized from the masses. Decisions are not overruled because of a certain maxim, which actually makes a majority of cadres solicit for popular opinions, but because of patriarchalist attitudes.[86]

In the 1980–1981 discussion, the impossibility of centralizing the truth *a priori* was an argument to emphasize institutionalized methods of decision making, primarily the majority vote. Theoretically speaking, reduction of democratic processes to the majority principle may have necessitated the downplaying of the old concept of centralization. The majority principle is a much simpler concept than centralization in the mass line sense, involving multiple tasks extending from listening to all opinions, analyzing the opinions, seeking the truth, making decisions, educating, and persuading the public. Instead, the majority principle was simply a method for making decisions. To emphasize voting as the only legitimate decision-making procedure, other criteria for good centralization, such as seeking truthful information, needed to be deemphasized. Apart from this need, some articles were cautious about the epistemological aims of democratic centralism for the simple reason that claims of truth had been used to reject either certain majoritarian decisions themselves or the need to use majoritarian vote.

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83   Hu Baochen, *Lilun yu shijian* 1979:12, 11.

84   Zhou Baoxi, *Beijing ribao*, Dec 19, 1980, p. 3.

85   E.g. Hu Baochen, *Liaoning ribao*, Dec. 11, 1980, p. 3; Li Feng, *Xinhua ribao*, Feb 10, 1981, p. 3.

86   Sun Bin and Bao Xinjin, *Dong Yue luncong* 1981:4, pp. 24–25.

1980–1981: Clarifying the content of democratic centralism

Equating democratic centralism with the majority principle and seeking its independence from the mass line were attempts to clarify the content of democratic centralism. This attempt also involved an inquiry into different meanings and aspects of the concept itself. Some articles analyzed different usages and contents of the term. One article, for example, recognized that democratic centralism has three aspects: its organization building aspect refers to elections, reporting, and supervision; as an activity it refers to the process "from the masses, to the masses"; and as discipline it demands obedience of the majority, the organization, and the superiors.[87]

One article analyzed that democratic centralism referred both to a state system of centralized democracy compared to federalist democracy and to the organizational principle of a state or Party organ.[88] Its program was to increase the role of state organs and, especially, of the people's congresses. It recommended giving the people's congresses real power to make decisions, instead of seeing them only as consultative organs. The congresses should be democratic centralist organs through which the people could use political power.[89]

A debate took place between two articles. The first one wanted to stress both the need to centralize democratically but also the obligation to obey centralized will. It understood centralization as a higher form of democracy, because it represents collective will and not only an individual's will. Therefore, unity of democracy and centralism corresponds with the unity of the individual and the collective as well as short term and long term interests.[90] The second article responded that in democratic centralism one part is not above the other. Democracy is hardly equal to the individual interests or centralism with the collective interest. Rather, democratic centralism is merely an organizational principle, while solving conflicting interests is the task of state and Party policies and not one of democratic centralism.[91]

Clarifying contents of democratic centralism simultaneously aimed at making democratic centralist processes more practicable by reducing the likeliness of mis-

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[87] Wang Zhongzao, *Qinghai shehui kexue* 1981: the 60th anniversary of the Party issue, p. 71.

[88] Shijiazhuang gaoji buxiao kexue shehuizhuyi jiaoyanzu, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:3–4, pp. 58–59.

[89] Shijiazhuang gaoji buxiao kexue shehuizhuyi jiaoyanzu, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:3–4, pp. 59–60.

[90] Teng Wensheng, *Hongqi* 1980:6, p. 29. Notice that this does not mean harmony of interests, as the article itself stressed.

[91] He Kuang, *Dushu* 1980:5, pp. 14–15.

understandings. The Chinese communists see that compelling, unambiguous and transparent terminology has a direct connection to the practice of these principles, since when everyone understands these processes they will know how they are expected to act and it reduces confusion when everyone understands them in the same way.

Changing understanding of democratic centralism

The exact meaning of democratic centralism in Chinese parlance is graspable: it meant a dialectical process of popular input, decision making and implementation. The meaning of the term democracy in democratic centralism is clear. It referred to popular initiative in decision making and in implementation. Centralism, then, due to various uses of the concept democratic centralism, had various meanings. It could refer to the leadership functions in democracy, the process of decision making, decisions themselves or discipline in implementing the decisions.
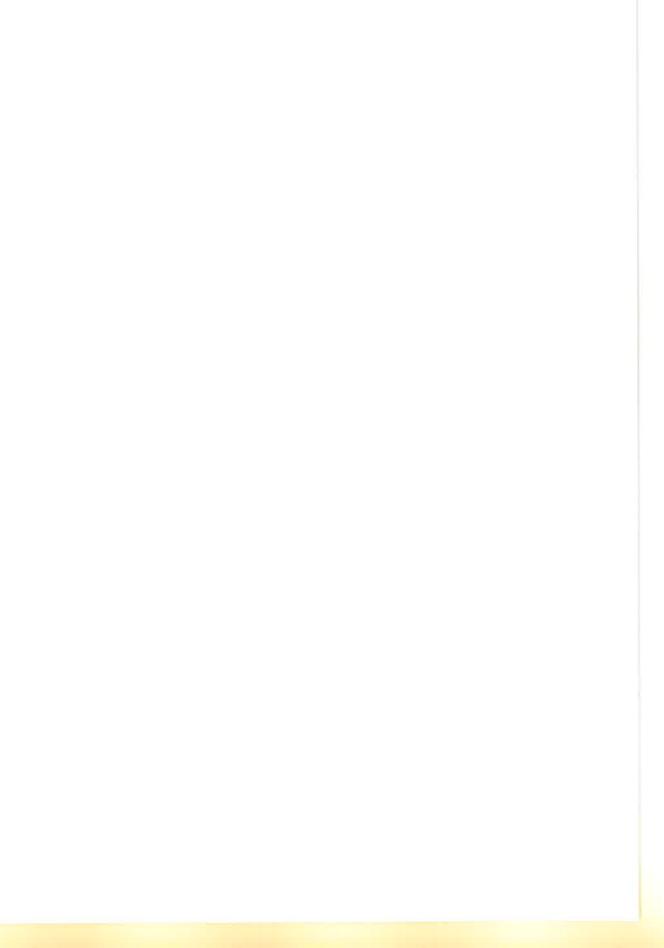
Despite of the unity of the general meaning, the Chinese used the term democratic centralism in various situations to describe quite different kinds of processes. All of these uses accord with the general umbrella understanding, but are not necessarily fully compatible in the details. Firstly, democratic centralism was an organizational principle according to the Leninist tradition: it meant party discipline resulting from free discussion. Secondly, it was a method of decision making in general: processing popular initiative into decisions and implementing these decisions. Thirdly, it was an epistemology about how popular experience could be used to formulate correct policies and test their usefulness. During the years 1978–1981 the press discussion chose to emphasize different parts of this tradition: sometimes it stressed democracy, sometimes the solicitation of popular opinions, sometimes the process of centralization, sometimes the results of centralization, and sometimes disciplined implementation.

The Chinese articles of 1978–1979 encouraged listening to popular opinions. One reason was that expressing opinions and respecting one's right to articulate them had too often been ignored in the reality of Chinese politics. In the Chinese parlance consulting the masses meant more than just the right to speak out. Understanding democracy as listening to opinions put a cadre in the middle of the masses activating and mobilizing them. The relation between a cadre and the masses was personal and direct: a cadre could ask for opinions in the course of ordinary production and daily life. Therefore, listening to the masses did not simply mean allowing them to speak, but rather meant a dialogue during the process of implementation. When a cadre accepted popular views or explained to the masses decisions made by higher-level organs, he was motivating them to participate in shaping their own future. Thus, by listening to their opinions a cadre

actually involved the masses in decision-making processes and implementation far more directly than Western electoral democracies or civil societies usually do. Simultaneously, the process lacked many advantages of institutionalization and was thus vulnerable to abuse and unclear about the actual range of popular involvement.

Both democracy and centralism were first understood in this participatory sense. Democratic centralism referred to a dialogue between a leader and the masses. Expressing, analyzing and implementing popular initiative, and summarizing experience are stages in this dialogue. Moreover, these stages formed a process for gathering information from reality, which either affirmed or negated the experiment. In this model, popular involvement itself was more important than the form in which this involvement should take place.

By 1980–1981, understanding democracy as listening to opinions from below had proven unsatisfactory. From 1979 onwards democracy was stressed to be a state system, not only a work style. Articles increasingly began to theorize democracy in an institutionalized context, such as in certain decision-making procedures or in representative institutions. By 1980–1981, the emphasis was on the form of decision making, instead of mass involvement. Now democracy meant freedom to choose between alternatives and the use of voting to formalize a decision. Simultaneously, it became less important to ponder who had the right to participate in voting. Emphasis on majority decisions did not explicitly raise the question of inclusiveness, and often discussion seems to have dealt with processes without popular participation within the Party. Inclusion of the masses, the central issue in 1978–1979, had given way to formalization of the decision-making process in order to avoid corruptibility of the process.

ANARCHISM: DEFINING LIMITS FOR
SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

In Chinese communist parlance, the term anarchism (*wuzhengfuzhuyi*), along with its near equivalent, ultra-democracy (*jiduan minzhu*), sometimes derives its meaning from the theory of democratic centralism. In light of this theory, anarchism characterizes any thought which overemphasizes democracy and rejects centralism. Consequently, in Chinese parlance anarchism refers to the act of defying Party discipline, state regulations, social norms, or the common good. Still, it was not the only possible term in the 1978–1981 discussion for rejecting centralism in favor of democracy. On the personal level disregard for centralism was also referred to as ultra-democracy, while local cadres' tendency to heed popular pressure against central initiatives was labeled as tailism.

Both terms, anarchism and its synonym, ultra-democracy, derive their meaning from the early communist movement in China. In the 1910s and 1920s, anarchism was an important trend in leftist thought mingling with Chinese communists' ideas and activities in many ways, as these ideologies had done in the early international socialist movement as well. As Arif Dirlik has shown, anarchist tradition contributed to some central ideas of radical leftism in the Communist Party.[1] Anarchism, or practices understood as anarchistic, formed a threat to Communist Party discipline, while bureaucratism, another threat, would have endangered Party relations with the masses.[2] In 1929, Mao Zedong expressed the importance of correcting ultra-democratic excesses in "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party."[3] It indicates that Mao Zedong understood the need to balance between democracy and centralism before using the term democratic centralism to express this balance.

Although there was agreement about the general meaning of anarchism in the 1978–1981 discussion, the term itself did not have a coherent use. Anarchism was simultaneously criticized as a form of current social behavior, as an ideology, as a theory of certain leading figures of anarchistic thought, and as a type of mass

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[1]   Dirlik 1991, ch. 8 and pp. 29–34.

[2]   There were many other deviations from the balance between democratic centralism as well, including commandism, isolationism, and warlordism. See their description in Steiner 1951, pp. 427–435.

[3]   "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party" in Mao, Selected Works, vol. I, pp. 105–115.

action in the Cultural Revolution incited by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. Articles derived influence from the East and the West, from the theory and the reality, and from the present and history. What was really attacked under the label of anarchism varied, and, as a consequence, the aspects criticized. This, though, does not mean that articles did not have a common target in some contemporary tendencies nor that there was not a basic understanding of what could and could not be classified under anarchism.

In the 1978–1981 discussion, articles used the term anarchism to refer to either civil disobedience or local resistance to central policies. Anarchists allegedly used the official mind emancipation policy in ways that endangered social stability or questioned the need for limits of expression, such as the Four Cardinal Principles issued by Deng Xiaoping. Thus, anarchism was not defined as a certain ideological stance, but as the negation of officially approved behavior and ideological orthodoxy. The characteristics of anarchism in the 1978–1981 discussion were extremism, individualism, lax discipline, as well as the failure to adopt a clear proletarian class stand and apply theoretical orthodoxy, all derived from the early anarchist movement.

By anarchism, articles published in 1979 were usually referring to action and thought that reject law and discipline, while stressing an individual's freedom and selfish interests. Typically anarchists "[do] not want leadership, [do] not want government, [do] not want any authority, letting everybody have absolute freedom of action."[4] Often the anarchistic attitude was summarized as "doing what one wants to do" (*xiang gan shenme jiu gan shenme*), a saying which in Chinese connotes selfish action ignoring others and society.

In addition, early articles understood extreme individualism and nihilism as anarchism. In this light, not having any belief or conviction and doubting Marxism and socialism were signs of anarchism.[5] The Cultural Revolutionary slogan "Doubt everything, overthrow everything" (*huaiyi yiqie, dadao yiqie)* became an often quoted example of anarchistic thought. When anarchism was understood as pursuing the individual interest at the cost of collective interest and averting orders and organizational discipline, some articles even classified certain forms of bureaucratism under anarchism.[6]

Another use of the term anarchism referred to the theory of anarchism itself. Numerous articles criticized the contemporary anarchist phenomenon by analyzing original European anarchist theorists and the early anarchist movement in China. Interestingly, articles treated many early Chinese anarchists in a sympa-

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[4]   Zhou Xinming and Chen Weidian, *Guangming ribao*, Apr 28, 1979, p. 3.

[5]   E.g. Hua Song, *Hongqi* 1980:2, p. 23.

[6]   E.g. Commentator, *Jilin ribao*, Sept 5, 1979, p. 1; Wei Yue, *Qunzhong* 1980:1, p. 47.

thetic light for their opposition to feudalism, even if their ideology did not match what Marxism understood as the scientific form of leftist thought.

Despite differences in specific features of anarchism, articles widely agreed on the origins of anarchism in contemporary Chinese society. One commonly cited cause for anarchism in 1978–1981 China was the prevailing ideological confusion caused by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. According to articles, they had simultaneously practiced both anarchism, equating it with socialist democracy, and feudal fascism, depriving the people of their democratic rights. They believed in too much coercion and too much uninhibited mass action. That is, they had lacked the proper understanding of the relationship between democracy and centralism. The Cultural Revolution was then seen, probably correctly, as the major reason for obscuring the understanding of regular forms of democratic action.

Extreme individualism was detected as the main ideological foundation for anarchism already in the spring of 1979 discussion about rights and duties, which likewise emphasized the interdependence between individual and collective interests. Later, quotations from Lenin and Stalin often divided anarchism and socialism along the lines of individualism and collectivism. In January 1980 an article[7] placing the roots of anarchism in individualism was offered as a model for further writings.

The class background of anarchism was universally agreed to be petty bourgeois. Because of its dispersed production model, the petty bourgeoisie arguably tends to advocate individualism and freedom, while it resists organization and favors extremism. The backwardness of the Chinese economy with its traditional forms of production was thus the main reason for the appeal of anarchism among the Chinese population.

General course of the discussion

The term anarchism was in use in the press already by late 1977. The first target to attack with the label of anarchism was the extremist view of the Gang of Four which allegedly held that any authority or rules limiting the masses are undemocratic. At this early stage, articles stressed that production orders are necessary for advancing production and preventing disorder. Mass democracy (*daminzhu*) must be used for proletarian aims, not against the socialist system and authority, they reminded readers. Writers already knew such leading anarchists as Stirner, Bakunin and Kropotkin and reproduced Engels' and Lenin's arguments opposing their ideas for contemporary uses.

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7   Ma Jia, *Lilun dongtai* 1980:10.

Throughout the year 1978, articles refuted anarchism to criticize the Gang of Four. In line with the general criticism of the Gang at the time, criticism of anarchism claimed that the Gang had incited disorder in order to usurp state power. The target was not current development but the Cultural Revolution and its attacks against cadres and branches of the Party. Anarchism, then, meant resisting leadership one deems incorrect and rejecting the leadership of any organization in the name of upholding Mao Zedong thought, which were ideas associated with the Gang of Four.[8] Articles already defined anarchism as behavior which ignored centralism and party discipline, thus being a negation of democratic centralism. Combined with feudal fascist dictatorship, anarchism had distorted equilibrium between democracy and centralism under the governance of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, articles stated. Already in 1978, anarchism appeared to be antagonistic to democracy and the people's interests.

From the beginning of 1979, criticism of anarchism no longer aimed at demonstrating that the Gang of Four's "revisionism" did not represent correct Marxism and normal Party life. Rather, the term anarchism began to be used to refer to contemporary problems, but the purpose of educating readers remained. In the first two months the term anarchism still appeared in the press in quite a different light than it would in the following spring. These articles refuted the view that democratization had gone too far and produced anarchism, and at the same time opposed this view being used as an excuse not to democratize. Obviously, the term was already widely used then, most likely among some cautious local leaders, to reprove some negative incidents emerging from the new open social atmosphere. Yet, this negative interpretation had no official recognition. Evidently, at the time, the press and the top leadership were more willing promoters of democratization than many lower-level leaders.

By the spring of 1979, it was evident that not everything that some people understood as democratization fell under socialist democracy as it was officially understood. The leadership began to see the Democracy Wall movement not as a regular form of popular influencing, but as a social disturbance endangering stable development. They saw disturbances as the results of mistaken ideological understanding, which could be corrected only through persuasion and education. They concluded that contemporary social unrest was generated from unfamiliarity with the proper forms of democratic action and the regular channels of democratic influencing as well as from misunderstanding the connection between individual and public interests. They even borrowed democratic centralist analysis to describe the proper balance between citizen's rights and duties.

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[8]   Shi Qiao, *Zhejiang ribao*, May 17, 1978, p. 3.

From now on the aim in criticizing anarchism was to refute the challenge by the democracy movement and to stress social responsibilities. At the time, some people outside the official discussion seem to have questioned the necessity of the Communist Party leadership, especially after its grave mistakes during the Cultural Revolution. To the leadership this meant questioning the need for authority itself, especially since the Party leadership evidently interpreted the main problem of the Cultural Revolution to have been social unrest and a lack of united leadership. From this time onwards, the leadership began to see popular movements as a cause of disturbances and as an obstacle to effective governance, instead of being a way to promote popular power, as they had been seen during the Cultural Revolution and even in the previous year.

Simultaneously, a more relaxed social and political atmosphere had brought many previously hidden problems to light. Many citizens took their cases to their leaders to be solved, since the leadership had begun to rectify cases of injustice. In Beijing, appeals grew into a petition movement, making it obvious that there were far too many individual cases to be solved at once. Both the petition movement and the wall poster movement caused concrete problems for the maintenance of normal social order, although these must have been exaggerated in the press: they blocked traffic and stopped production. The conclusion the leadership drew was that the Cultural Revolutionary type wall posters and mass gatherings were harmful to social order, at least when used without considering the general social situation and concrete resources available for fulfilling demands. These activities proved to the leadership the dangers of unlimited social and ideological freedom. The leadership classified these activities as anarchism and, from March 1979 on, launched an attack against anarchism in the press. The following attack on anarchism was one sign of the generally more restrictive political climate of the spring of 1979.

In the beginning, argumentation remained on quite a concrete level, the stress being on the proper thought and conduct of a citizen. At this point, articles aimed at correcting improper behavior and ideas, such as staging demonstrations or blocking traffic to put pressure on the government. From the latter part of 1979 onwards, the approach became more theoretical and articles began to reproduce arguments of the founders of Marxism and the May Fourth Movement[9] (1919), in which the early Chinese communists had defended their views against then

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[9] The May 4th Movement arguments against anarchism became popular only in 1980. The earliest article about anarchism which specialized in the May 4th Movement dates to November 1979. Yet, the 60th anniversary of the movement in May of 1979 had already repeated its basic themes, democracy and science, and noted that anarchism had been as unable to solve Chinese problems then as it was now. For refutation of anarchism in this context, see Zhang Jinfan and Zeng Xianyi, *Beijing ribao*, May 15, 1979, p. 3.

popular anarchist thought. The main texts referred to were Engels' "On Authority" and Stalin's "Anarchism or Socialism?"

The article changing the course of discussion was first published as a Central Party School document and was written by Ma Jia, a professor at Fudan University. It was printed in January 1980. If the earlier intention had been to educate the people to understand that their democratic rights and freedom incorporate discipline and the need for centralization, Ma Jia held that anarchist theory by no means springs from the misunderstanding of the dialectical unity between democracy and centralism but from extreme individualism.[10] Although Ma Jia saw anarchism less in terms of democratic centralism, perhaps his emphasis on extreme individualism as the cause of anarchism still attempted to find a new approach to solving contemporary social unrest. Possibly having petition movements in mind, Ma Jia may have attempted to reprove personally-motivated demands as a wrong kind of individualism.

Ma Jia's article caused an upsurge in the study of anarchism and its classics. Historical research and theoretical analogy began to replace education about concrete principles. With this change, the discussion about anarchism began to lose its relevance to the contemporary social reality. Instead of using the term to refer to certain forms of defiance of social order and the pursuit egotistic interests, the term gradually assumed its original theoretical and ideological meaning. This change diminished the ability of the provided explanations to deal with the actual reasons for the social unrest, which was not caused by the reasons presented in these theories. If earlier concrete political education against anarchism had carried an understandable message to the common people by stressing the need to uphold social order, the newer interpretation was somewhat misguided in seeking a solution to a seemingly anarchistic phenomenon through ideological education against anarchism.[11]

The Chinese were not totally unaware of the duality in the use of the term. One article explicitly reminded readers about the difference between anarchistic thought (*wuzhengfusichao*) in contemporary China and anarchistic political ideology (*wuzhengfuzhuyi*) of 19th century Europe. One cannot mechanically criticize the latter in order to refute the former, nor should one allow one's political aims of criticizing contemporary anarchistic tendencies to dim his academic objectivity when studying anarchist thought.[12]

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10   Ma Jia, *Lilun dongtai* 1980:10, p. 27. This Central Party School document number 183 was published on Jan 25, 1980.

11   *Wuzhengfu zhuangtai* (anarchistic phenomenon) rather than*wuzhengfuzhuyi* (anarchism) is the term used in many early articles.

12   Chen Hanchu, *Dushu* 1980:6, pp. 7–8.

Yet, even after distancing itself from social problems, criticism of anarchism continued to deal with several contemporary theoretical issues. Criticism of anarchism tried to explain why freedoms should have limits in order to refute calls for unrestrained political freedom. Denouncing the unrealizable egalitarian economic structure of anarchism supported reformist policies to create more social differentiation in order to boost economic efficiency. Thus, topics criticized through analogies to the original anarchist movement included some topics articulated by the democrats and others connected with ultra-leftism. The discussion involved topics like essence of authority and freedom, which seem to have provided theoretical background for discussing such topics as the freedom of speech and the press. These points, although highly theoretical, suggested limiting rather than extending these freedoms.

There is a small possibility that in this later stage the criticism of anarchism offered a safe context for criticizing problems of contemporary socialism. I doubt this but cannot totally reject the possibility either.[13] More likely, these were instances where official publications refuted views first voiced by early anarchists and now advocated in unofficial discussions about democracy. For certain, the potential anarchism offered for criticizing state intervention in Chinese society was not systematically used, although some individual cases possibly exist.

What had begun as historical analogy developed into research of the early workers' movement in China. Sometime in 1981, the discussion concentrated almost completely on the academic study of anarchist thought and the workers' movement instead of on contemporary society. Articles had originally introduced early Chinese anarchists to use early communist arguments against them to tackle contemporary problems, but by 1981 this theme had developed into the study of anarchism itself. Its irrelevancy to the present political situation may have contributed to the fact that this discussion continued without disruption after 1981. In this last stage, interestingly, knowledge about anarchist thought had increased to the level where references to original anarchist thought made it implicitly clear that many of the previous points of criticism, e.g. unlimited freedom,[14] had emerged from inadequate knowledge of anarchist theory.

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13   How should one read the following idea, for instance: Anarchism, in the voice of its theorist Proudhon, finds fault both in a collective economy, which would limit freedom and independence, and in capitalist private ownership, because of the inequality it creates. Could the writer share this criticism? The article refutes this idea later, however, (in a correct manner making it publishable in the press) as a petty bourgeois stance which favors the preservation of the handicraft economy as opposed to the development of mass production. For this puzzling point see Feng Ganwen, *Sixiang jiefang* 1980:2, p. 14.

14   Li Xianrong, *Shijie lishi* 1981:4, p. 22.

Spring of 1979: Anarchism contradicts socialism

In the spring of 1979, the criticism of anarchism aimed at demonstrating that anarchism is not a socialist form of action or thought. At the time, demonstrating the anti-socialist character of an idea was still a powerful refutation. Moreover, this was the period of trying to find the correct interpretation for socialism now that the ultra-leftist line had been defined as a mistake. According to numerous articles, the confusion between anarchism and socialism had its roots in the Cultural Revolution, when Lin Biao and the Gang of Four had incited the people to oppose authority and rules in the name of the revolution. This seems to be a realistic explanation for many contemporary occasions of social unrest.

The first popular reactions to democratization in 1978 resembled the Cultural Revolution in many ways. There is nothing surprising here, since people are likely to use means familiar to them. Therefore, in 1978 the people began to use wall posters and publish unofficial magazines (*minban kanwu*), both direct indications of the Red Guard background of many Democracy Wall activists.[15] The petition movement, demanding the government redress injustices of the Cultural Revolution, adopted forms of mass protest encouraged during the Cultural Revolution to advance its demands. Thus, it was logical for the official press to engage in education about the difference between permitted forms of socialist democracy and activities endangering social order.

Articles assumed that the civil protest strategy was adopted because people still believed that it was an appropriate form of influencing under socialism. Many people must have still believed that mass participatory rights lauded during the Cultural Revolution were an officially sanctioned form of expression of political opinions as well as a form of popular supervision. Much effort was put into showing that people should refrain from using popular pressure, at least if it threatened social order and violated other people's rights. Indeed, disorder is useful neither for fighting class enemies nor for educating the people and cadres nor for supervising bureaucracy, since the damage it causes outweighs its merits.[16]

Articles explained the difference between anarchism and socialism from many angles. One was to show that anarchism endangers the socialist system.

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[15]   See, e.g., Goldman 2002, pp. 162–163, for how Democracy Wall activists utilized political methods and skills learnt as Red Guards. See also Garside 1981, pp. 247–256, for how Red Guard experiences exposing the urban youth to rural poverty had radicalized some former Red Guards. Rosen 1985, pp. 2–4, explains former Red Guard activism in the democracy movement as stemming from their disappointment with the direction the Cultural Revolution had taken since 1967.

[16]   Huang Ge and Li Xunyi, *Jiefang ribao*, March 12, 1979, p. 4.

Accordingly, anarchism did not correspond with socialism, because it opposed revolutionary authority and proletarian dictatorship along with all other forms of state authority. In power, the proletariat arguably should concentrate on consolidating its power, developing the productive forces, and improving living standards instead of undermining its own power. Contrarily, anarchism undermines the stability and unity needed for consolidating the proletariat's rule and developing socialist society. Indeed, establishing stability and unity requires the leadership of the Party, democratic centralism, and proletarian dictatorship, all of which anarchists' attacked.[17]

The press differentiated socialism from anarchism along the lines of collectivism and individualism. Articles saw them reflecting different class backgrounds and serving different economic systems. A petty-bourgeois handicraft economy emphasizes short term interests of the individual, while a socialist economy of mass production and public ownership relies on organization, discipline, and collective welfare. This difference is seen, for example in ethics where egoism and self-sacrifice for the collective good stand miles apart,[18] or on revolutionary roads, in which anarchism calls for individual action and terrorism, while socialism perceives that political and social change depend on organization.[19]

For those who stressed ideological correctness, anarchism was an anti-socialist form of thought just because the founding fathers of Marxism-Leninism had opposed it. Consequently, articles exposed personal rivalries and power struggles between Marxists and anarchists within the early workers' movement. Articles used theoretical controversies to demonstrate that anarchism is incompatible with socialism. Indeed, unlike socialism, anarchism would preserve private ownership, advocate class compromise, and oppose violent revolution.[20]

In order to demonstrate its incompatibility with socialism, articles reproduced anarchists' criticism of Marxism and the Soviet Union, primarily for their oppressiveness of the individual.[21] For example, Proudhon had advocated that while capitalism ignores equality, socialism ignores personal independence, while free society needs both.[22] I read the reintroduction of this at times even harsh criticism of socialism as aiming to demonstrate antagonism between the two forms of thought. Of the two, the Marxist stance was automatically understood to be the correct one. Thus, any instance when its truth is doubted would be erroneous, and

[17]   Zhang Xi'en and Zhang Ziyi, *Da zhong ribao*, Feb 20, 1981, p. 3.

[18]   Zhang Xi'en and Zhang Ziyi, *Da zhong ribao*, Feb 20, 1981, p. 3.

[19]   Liang Hua, *Guangming ribao*, Dec 23, 1979, p. 3.

[20]   Liu Xiaoliang, *Wenhuibao*, Feb 4, 1980, p. 3.

[21]   E.g. Shen Jun, *Huazhong shiyuan xuebao* 1981:2, pp. 53, 55, or almost any article about anarchism in China during the May Fourth period.

[22]   Xiong Jiaxue, *Xin Zhangzheng* 1980:11, p. 47.

even malicious. It would be tempting to interpret reproduced criticism as veiled criticism of contemporary Chinese society, but usually the context does not support this assumption.

In addition to theoretical and ideological inconsistencies with socialism, articles presented anarchism as a concrete threat to the socialist movement and revolution. Its aversion to discipline and organization splits and undermines the workers' revolutionary movement; after the revolution, it provides tools for opposing socialist authority. Indeed, an anarchistic revolution discarding all forms of authority, discipline, organization, and leadership could only result in destruction without any construction or continuity.[23]

After the discussion gained more theoretical depth, the importance of the argument that anarchism is incompatible with socialism and socialist society decreased. Although articles continued to emphasize theoretical differences between the anarchist and socialist schools, the stress was laid on refuting anarchist theory itself. This shift illustrates not only the academization of the discussion but also the changed situation. The 1978–1979 discussion had prioritized the refutation of ultra-leftist discourse and education about the version of socialism now understood to be the correct one, but by 1980 other priorities already prevailed. Simultaneously, new intellectual curiosity sought to learn more about non-socialist schools of thought and sought inspiration from their theorists. Introduction of anarchist thinkers most likely contributed to this aim of understanding alternatives available for China.

Misconception of authority

One main argument against anarchism was the impossibility of having society without authority. This argument theoretically strengthened the position which prioritized social stability above individual freedoms and wanted to safeguard the Communist Party's unrivaled position in the Chinese political scene. Despite some predecessors in the Cultural Revolution,[24] it is unlikely that in 1978–1981 anyone actually questioned the need for authority or government. Instead, the targets of this argument were contemporary social unrest and the interpretation of democracy as mass action supervising the authorities, which is how democracy had been understood during the Cultural Revolution. Articles often dismissed claims that any use of state authority means "suppressing democracy" as mistaken parlance.

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[23]   Che Mingzhou *Tianjin ribao*, Feb 12, 1980, p. 3.

[24]   See Shengwulian's manifesto in Benton and Hunter 1995.

Apart from the democratic centralist definition of anarchism as disregard for the need to balance freedom with respect for authority when using one's civil rights, the Chinese understanding of anarchism may have derived from the old dispute between Marxists and anarchists about the necessity of a proletarian authority after the revolution. Those who questioned the need for proletarian authority, namely Communist Party rule, and believed that the masses could rule themselves without the vanguard party upholding the proletarian dictatorship, were labeled as anarchists. Thus, in the 1978–1981 discussion, one reason to criticize anarchist understanding of authority was to defend the role of the Communist Party against widespread disillusionment with its rule after the Cultural Revolution. Articles contradicted these doubts by affirming the necessity of authority. Evidently, for those who held power, questioning the authority of the Party equaled questioning the need for authority itself.

One strategy for responding to the doubts was to demonstrate that democratic activities need authority and discipline. This argument was generated by the spring of 1979 argument that as democracy must be combined with centralism, freedom must go with discipline. This logic intermingled with attempts to clarify the concept of freedom by emphasizing the compatibility of rights and duties. Numerous articles cited how Engels rejected the idea that any interference by the authorities in one's exercise of freedoms and rights is undemocratic. The press related how Engels had argued that any society or any coordinated effort whatsoever needs authority and submission. It quoted Engels saying that authority is even more important in a socialist system which has a high level of economic development and mass production.

Only a few articles about anarchism openly demanded obedience of the Communist Party authority[25] and Marxist ideology[26], and they did so on the grounds that Marxism and the Party allegedly represent the people's interests and will. Yet, many others put effort into demonstrating the existence of justified authority. These articles rejected the anarchist conception that a state in and of itself is the cause of injustice and oppression. Indeed, a state and authority can be used both for coercion and for protecting the weak. Accordingly, a capitalist state is a means for maintaining social inequality while a socialist one is a means for the people's liberation. Under capitalism the people are oppressed, while under socialism they themselves govern the state.[27] Authority itself is not evil unless it is used in unjust ways.[28]

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[25]   Sun Shijie, *Xuexi yu yanjiu* 1981:1, p. 36.

[26]   Liu Shengfu, *Shanxi ribao* , July 18, 1981, p. 3.

[27]   Yu Qinghe, *Jiefangjun bao*, Jan 29, 1980, p. 3..

[28]   Liu Xiaoliang, *Jianghuai luntai* 1981:1, p. 79.

Some articles answered doubts about the role of the Communist Party by demonstrating the relativity of authority. Indeed, anarchists see authority as being either absolute or absent. In fact, authority is relative, but always present. When an authority figure makes mistakes, she loses some authority. But this authority can be regained by admitting and correcting one's mistakes. Leaders who have failings can be subjected to criticism or even recall. If a leader loses the basis of his authority by ceasing to represent the people, others will replace him. In the course of history, an individual that embodies authority may change, but the need for authority itself remains.[29]

Stressing the responsibility of the people to obey authority for the sake of maintaining social stability was another implicit motive writers had for supporting the need for authority. Articles argued that not all authority is based on force, and that democratic authority is beneficial to the people. Because democratic authority centralizes the interest and will of the majority, one should voluntarily obey it. Indeed, democracy and authority are interconnected. Authority must embody the will of the people, but it is simultaneously a means to turn popular will into practicable programs.[30] If the minority does not submit to the will of the majority, common aims cannot be achieved. Therefore, the majority has the right to use coercion against insubordination.[31]

One strategy for defending authority was to argue that the practical result of discarding authority is not freedom but dictatorship. Indeed, since authority itself is inevitable, the question is only about what kind of authority one wants. The kind of authority anarchism would produce is a fascist dictatorship, as the rule of the Gang of Four demonstrated. That is quite unlike the rule of the Communist Party, which represents the people's demands and interests.[32] From old China one can see that dictatorship and anarchism actually intertwine, one replacing the other in a vicious circle.[33]

Some articles doubted that anarchists really wanted to discard all authority and suggested that they, more likely, by opposing other forms of authority wanted to acquire positions of authority for themselves. Articles supported this argument with several examples ranging from Bakunin to the Gang of Four and the contemporary Democracy Wall movement. Indeed, anarchists strive for personal power, since personal power is the means of fulfilling their desires of freedom and wealth.

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[29]   Commentator, *Zhongguo qingnian* 1980:2, p. 3; Sun Shijie, *Xuexi yu yanjiu* 1981:1, p. 35.
[30]   Sun Shijie, *Xuexi yu yanjiu* 1981:1, p. 34.
[31]   Li Honglin, *Zhongguo qingnian bao* , March 24, 1979, p. 3.
[32]   Jing Kesuo, *Xin shiqi* 1980:1, p. 11.
[33]   Li Yanshi, *Guangzhou ribao*, May 17, 1979, p. 3.

Thus, they see the power of the collective as limiting their own power.[34] For example, the Gang of Four had incited anarchism in areas not under their control, but demanded obedience in the areas under their rule.[35]

In addition to these general themes, one article used anarchistic rejection of authority against the contemporary democracy movement vocabulary. The logic of this argument played with the Chinese terms for power (*quanli*) and rights (*quanli*), which are homonyms and share the first character (*quan*). Human rights, then, is *renquan* with the same *quan*. The writer started from Stirner's equalization of power and freedom or the ability to fulfill one's will, continued by demonstrating that this kind of individualist power is opposite to the power of the collective, and ended up classifying the theory of human rights as an example of such thinking.[36]

The topic of authority was used to affirm some forms of state authority and deny the acceptability of certain activities initiated from below. The writers emphasized that democracy means obeying decisions made in a democratic manner. Since the press took it for granted that socialist China made its decisions democratically, this argument was used to stress compliance with social order and state regulations.

Spring of 1979: Incompatibility with socialist democracy

In the early phase of the discussion, articles aimed at demarcating when a certain type of action was suitable for socialist democracy. Anarchism, then, was seen as being an incorrect interpretation of democratic action, which, for the sake of education, was contrasted with the standards of socialist democracy. This quotation illustrates the educative tones in articles well.

> Last year there was this kind of phenomenon, the minority of the people did not go to work and created disturbances everywhere. But can this be called 'only wanting democracy'? Is democracy not to go to work? Is creating disturbances democracy? Obviously, it shows a lack of elementary knowledge to equalize democracy and disturbances. Not to go to work or creating disturbances destroys democracy and are anti-democratic actions.[37]

This reasoning had a dual use. On the one hand, it educated common people to distinguish socialist democracy from such mass activities that endangered social

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[34] Xin Jian, *Dong Yue luncong* 1980:2, p. 68. Interestingly, the article quotes both Stirner and the Gang of Four as advancing the slogan "to have the power is to have everything."

[35] Shi Qiao, *Zhejiang ribao*, May 17, 1978, p. 3.

[36] Xin Jian, *Dong Yue luncong* 1980:2, p. 68.

[37] Li Honglin, *Gongren ribao*, Sept 17, 1980, p. 3.

order. It persuaded the people to use official channels to promote their demands. On the other hand, the aim was to assuage fears that anarchist phenomena were a consequence of democratization having proceeded too far (*minzhu guo le tou*). Clarifying the difference between anarchism and socialist democracy carried the message that democratization itself was to continue, despite the simultaneous curbing of anarchist tendencies. Indeed, anarchism does not result from too much but from too little democracy, because it arises from the people's unfamiliarity with democratic processes. Democratization itself, then, is the best guarantee against anarchism.[38]

Articles listed almost all of the basic principles of the socialist theory of democracy to demonstrate that anarchists do not agree with these principles. Indeed, anarchism denies centralism as a complement to democracy. It refuses to recognize the law that protects socialist democracy and the leadership of the proletarian party. It does not admit that democracy is a means and not an end in itself.[39] Likewise, it disapproves of the idea that democracy has a class character, which is a basic point in Marxist democratic theory.[40] Anarchism is not socialist democracy accepting the Four Cardinal Principles as its limits. Indeed, "It is not beneficial to socialism, the proletarian dictatorship, or the leadership of the Party, nor does it conform to the general principles of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought."[41]

According to many articles, anarchism ignores the dialectics of socialist democracy. At the state level socialist democracy combines democracy with centralism and the means of coercion, while in personal behavior it requires balancing freedom and discipline. Socialist democracy cannot allow some people to do as they please if their actions deprive others of their democratic rights. Indeed, democracy needs order. When anarchism separates democracy from centralism, democratic life becomes irregular.[42] Democracy cannot be separated from the means of coercion protecting the political system against crime and sabotage.[43]

Articles displayed motives for democratization to demonstrate that anarchism does not conform to the acceptable motives for social democracy. Indeed, democracy under socialism, aiming at liberating the whole of mankind, stresses the interests of the people as a whole, not the interests of the individual, like anarchism does.[44] Reflecting short lived moods of the spring of 1979, some articles

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[38]   Li Yanshi, *Guangzhou ribao*, May 17, 1979, p. 3.

[39]   Jiang Nan, *Hubei ribao*, Mar 29, 1979, p. 3.

[40]   E.g. Gu Zhaoji, *Jiefangjun bao*, Nov 23, 1979, p. 3.

[41]   Chen Yuqin and Lin Songjin, *Fujian ribao*, June 5, 1979, p. 3.

[42]   Ma Guozheng, *Qunzhong* 1979:4, p. 36.

[43]   Gu Zhaoji, *Jiefangjun bao*, Nov 23, 1979, p. 3.

[44]   Tan Ji et al., *Sixiang jiefang* 1980:2.

took democracy to be a means for socialist construction and modernization because democracy as a superstructure serves the economic base. Using this logic, anarchism is harmful to the economic progress necessary for the improvement of the common welfare and, thus, is insupportable.

Articles anticipated that anarchist democracy would cause society to fall into disorder. By violating social order, anarchism undermines preconditions for socialist democracy and modernization. Indeed, socialist democracy means administering the country according to the people's will. Centralization, that is, gathering the people's opinions and processing them into practicable plans is the only way to realize their suggestions, demands and wishes.[45] Anarchist democracy, without the leadership of the Party or law, would turn out to be the same kind of chaos and feudal fascism as seen during the Cultural Revolution.[46]

In 1979 the press discussion still examined the relation between anarchism and socialist democracy, although writers differentiated anarchism from socialist democracy using characteristics that fit well with democracy in general. Since democracy, socialist or not, requires the implementation of democratic will, people are expected to obey democratic decisions. Accordingly, the press emphasized that disobedience undermines socialist democracy and democratic order.

1980–1981: Anarchism is not democracy at all

In the beginning, articles analyzed the relation between democracy and anarchism for practical education only. Early articles still equated freedom with democracy and most writers understood too much freedom to be equivalent to too much democracy. When the discussion matured, this equation proved theoretically hollow. Instead of mainly discussing methods and channels of influencing, articles proceeded to provide a clearer understanding about what democracy is.

At first, a synonym of anarchism was ultra-democracy.[47] In early articles, it was explained that socialist democracy does not allow extreme freedom because in a socialist democracy the emphasis is put on the collective interest. To strive for extreme freedom was not anti-democratic in and of itself. In the beginning, the equation of uninhibited freedom with too much democracy was seldom questioned, although, in order to demonstrate that only socialist democracy is true democracy, many articles reminded readers that democracy actually refers to majority

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[45] Jiang Wenhua, *Dazhong ribao*, Apr. 9, 1981, p. 3.

[46] He Fulin, *Xinjiang ribao*, March 14, 1980, p. 3.

[47] This identification seems to have a very long history. At least already in 1903 an article, cited by Shen Jun, *Huazhong shiyuan xuebao* 1981:2, p. 46, had called anarchism as "ultra-democratism" (*jiduan minzhuzhuyi*).

rule. Logically, the conclusion that extreme individualism cannot be counted as democracy could be, and later was,[48] derived from this definition alone.

During the spring of 1979, anarchism was often identified with bourgeois democracy, and the two were discussed together as forms of individualistic democracy.[49] Partly this confusion arose from the inclination to understand every form of democracy, except the socialist form, as democracy of the minority.[50] It also seems to have emerged from Marxist class analysis, which defines anarchism as a thought of the petty bourgeoisie.[51] In addition it was due to the stressing of the individual[52] and his freedom[53] and rights that, from the socialist point of view, bourgeois democracy and anarchism both seem to share. Another reason was that democracy movement activists labeled as anarchists often had actually derived ideas from bourgeois democracy.

On January 25, 1980 Ma Jia published an article which maintained that anarchism is hardly democracy at all. He held that anarchism does not stress democracy but the individual. Actually, he noted, anarchism opposes all state systems and all forms of authority including democratic ones.[54] This statement was later criticized for only recognizing the theories of Stirner and Bakunin, while ignoring the democratic thinking of many other 19th century anarchists and the contemporary Chinese anarchistic tendency.[55] As correct as this criticism is, Ma Jia's point, nevertheless, marked a breakthrough in the discussion and brought a new dimension to it.

Even before, some articles had explicitly refuted equating anarchism with bourgeois democracy. Indeed, stressing democracy and freedom while ignoring

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[48]   E.g. Zhu Ronghe, *Xin Xiang pinglun* (New Hunan Review) 1980:2, p. 17, which, nevertheless, states that anarchists advocate ultra-democracy.

[49]   E.g. Jiang Qi, *Fendou* 1980:2, p. 10.

[50]   Shi Ding, *Hunan ribao*, Dec 20, 1979, p. 3.

[51]   Zhai Yanshi, *Xin Hua ribao*, May 17, 1979, p. 3. According to this article, however, the petty bourgeoisie may strive for both socialist or bourgeois democracy. In socialist China the illusion of bourgeois democracy often attracts them.

[52]   See Feng Ganwen, *Sixiang jiefang* 1980:2, p. 15, for identifying anarchism and bourgeois individualism. See also Zhai Yanshi, *Xin Hua ribao*, May 17, 1979, p. 3, who characterizes individualistic democracy as a political system focused on selfish gain and stress on freedom, obviously having both bourgeois democracy and anarchism in mind.

[53]   *Laissez-faire* is translated into Chinese as *wuzhengfu zhuangtai*. Hence, *laissez-faire* economy and political liberalism may seem very anarchistic to the Chinese. See Zhai Yanshi, *Xin Hua ribao*, May 17, 1979, p. 3.

[54]   Ma Jia, *Lilun dongtai* 1980:10. In the abridged version of his article printed for open distribution (*Renmin ribao*, Jan 31, 1980, p. 5) he even summarized that since anarchism stands for individualism, not for democracy, likewise even the contemporary anarchist phenomenon has an anti-democratic stance. That anarchism denies any state, even a democratic one, is already stated in Song Nianzhang, *Tianjin ribao*, Jan 4, 1980, p. 3.

[55]   Chen Hanchu, *Dushu* 1980:6, pp. 7–8.

centralism and discipline and emphasizing particular interests at the cost of general interests are characteristics of small producers' parochialism and can hardly be seen as bourgeois democracy.[56] Later other writers reminded readers that even though anarchism is not socialist democracy, it cannot be identified as bourgeois democracy either. Bourgeois democracy has its lawful limits, otherwise it could never have maintained stability. Anarchist theorists, for their part, rejected bourgeois democracies along with all other forms of the state.[57]

Articles also noted that extreme freedom is in fact pernicious to democratic processes. Indeed, democracy, like all political systems, is a form of authority. In all state systems, individuals and lower-level organs must obey the central power. Under any authority, some people obey others, the question being who follows whom. In dictatorships, central power is concentrated in the hands of an individual; authority originates from him and he is responsible to no one. In democracy the minority obeys the majority; central power is entrusted by the people and comes from representing them.[58]

Democracy has a close connection with order, articles argued. Indeed, this is firstly because democracy itself is a kind of order: democratic processes themselves must be institutionalized and written into legislation. Secondly, democracy is a means to protect a certain social and economic order. Thirdly, to be practicable, democracy needs orderly society to safeguard it.[59] Fourthly, violating order inevitably harms both modernization and democracy, which are means for economic progress.[60]

Democracy itself is collective, not individual action, articles held. Indeed, it limits the freedom of individuals and even, according to class analysis, those classes that do not hold political power. Democracy has implications of centralization and use of coercion as its complements in dialectical unity.[61] Articles argued that anarchist extremist democracy would turn out to be extremely undemocratic. If one is free to do whatever one likes, one thereby deprives others of their democratic rights. This is actually autocracy, not democracy. Moreover, if everybody has this freedom, everybody's democratic rights will be undermined by the chaos that would follow.

The aim in demonstrating that anarchism does not correspond with any form of democracy seems to be the same as in denying that anarchism has any connec-

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[56] Lin Xichun *Qinghai ribao*, May 29, 1979, p. 3.

[57] Ding Richu, *Minzhu yu fazhi* 1980:4, pp. 16–17.

[58] Li Honglin, *Gongren ribao*, Sept 17, 1980, pp. 1–3.

[59] Ke Ping, *Zhejiang ribao*, Jan 5, 1980, p. 3.

[60] Chen Si, *Qinghai ribao*, March 13, 1979, p. 3.

[61] Sun Xiaowen, *Guonei zhexue dongtai* 1979:10, p. 22. Apart from democracy and centralism, democracy and dictatorship form a dialectical unity in the Chinese communist theory.

tion with socialist democracy. Both aimed at persuading the people to use official channels for forwarding their demands. The new version of the argument was only theoretically more accurate in demonstrating that democracy itself means obeying collective decisions.

Misplacement of the individual

Individualism was one feature of anarchism which articles intensely opposed during the 1978–1981 discussion. One major task of the discussion was making the people realize that their personal aims and interests should be viewed in the context of totality. Articles wanted to persuade people to participate in building society in which their demands can be granted, instead of hindering this process by raising unreasonable personal claims, the satisfaction of which, put together, would undermine overall progress. This form of refutation was most likely aimed against the petition movement, although it reprimanded all excessive demands motivated by individual or group interests. Obviously, people in many localities had put pressure on their leadership through collective action in order to improve their living conditions even when the resources for improvements were scarce or lacking. Nevertheless, this inclination must have been overemphasized in the press.

Articles stressed that an individual's interest can be best satisfied as a part of the collective interest. Under socialism there is allegedly no fundamental contradiction between the two, although some friction may arise. Indeed, under socialism all profit will return to workers. Therefore, one advances his own material interests best by participating in production and by placing his interests within the context of the whole.[62]

For democracy this meant that one should use his democratic rights with the collective in mind. Arguably, this does not diminish one's democratic rights in any way, but allows everybody, not just some individuals, to enjoy their rights. Indeed, the Cultural Revolution evidenced what happens if socialist democracy is separated from collectivism: when democracy becomes anarchism, democracy itself will be trampled on.[63]

Furthermore, articles denied any possibility for genuine democratic representation resulting from the individualist standpoint and the striving for the fulfillment of personal interests. Indeed, one reason is that authority and the collective good are in the interest of the people; another is that the personal interests of those

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[62]   Miao Zengrui, *Tianjin ribao*, Mar 17, 1981, p. 3.
[63]   Li Zhe, *Jiefangjun bao*, May 2, 1979, p. 3.

who incite anarchism are not.[64] Anarchists are not even trying to represent the people – although they may claim so – since anarchists find the people to be restricting their own individualist desires as well.[65]

Articles doubted that individualism, which they equated with egoism, can ever attain its own aims. Indeed, on a personal level, individualistic demands can never be totally satisfied.[66] On the social level, anarchism can never lead to true liberation of an individual, because its revolutionary methods are insufficient for abolishing economic exploitation and political oppression, articles claimed. Indeed, because anarchism overvalues the powers of an individual, it tends to oppose organization and stress individual action, which in revolution leads not to victory but to destruction and terrorism.[67]

In this refutation individualism referred to demands that pursued one's own interests and demands at the cost of the collective good. The nearest equivalent for this term individualism (*gerenzhuyi*) in Western parlance would be egoism rather than individualism. The Chinese defined a person's political rights as responsible action much in the same way as the continental tradition of democracy in Europe, which stressed a social citizen instead of an abstract individual of the liberal tradition. Therefore, this stance cannot be read as rejection of individual interest as long as it aligns with the general interest, available resources, and accepted political norms.

Spring of 1979: Misuse of freedom

The early version of the argument that freedom is not unlimited appeared in the discussion about rights and duties in the spring of 1979.[68] This argument stressed that in socialist society one cannot do as one pleases but has to accept his responsibilities as a citizen who enjoys rights but must simultaneously fulfill his duties. These duties include the duty to abstain from disrupting social order and from violating the freedom of others.

The discussion about rights and duties had educated the public about correct personal behavior. Under the theme of anarchism, articles continued on the same topic on both personal and social levels. They took the theory of democratic

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64 Song Nianzhang, *Tianjin ribao*, Jan 4, 1980, p. 3.

65 He Fulin, *Xinjiang ribao*, March 14, 1980, p. 3. As can be guessed, the anarchist authority he quotes here is Stirner.

66 Dong Peiwei, *Zhejiang ribao*, Dec 19, 1979, p. 3.

67 Luo Weiwu, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 48.

68 The themes of the rights and duties discussion are sometimes evident in the discussion about anarchism as well. For example, Zhang Wenhuan, *Renmin ribao*, July 2, 1980, p. 5, evaluates Stirner still in terms of wanting only rights and evading duties.

centralism as their starting point when they held that freedom and discipline reflect democracy and centralism on the personal level. The main element in this equation seems to have formed a dialectical unity, where the two seemingly contradictory parts complement each other. This equation saw freedom as a form of democracy and civic duties as a form of discipline.

The discussion about anarchism noted that stressing only democracy and freedom while ignoring law and discipline leads to violations of social order and, thus, the law and the people's interests. One should use his democratic rights in a proper way and, when necessary, subject his own personal interests to the general interest, articles argued. Indeed, the anarchistic concept of freedom is even more backward than that of the bourgeoisie, who understand that freedom should be practiced only in the scope recognized by the law.[69] Later many articles even cited some famous bourgeois philosophers, mainly Montesquieu, and Western constitutions to stress that freedoms have their lawful and socially acceptable limits.

An individual's absolute freedom can only lead to the violation and limiting of everybody else's freedom; society with absolute freedom would actually be the most unfree society of all, articles claimed. Any democracy or freedom should respect order and rules. Neither a bourgeois nor a socialist democracy can let all of its members enjoy unlimited freedom, articles contended. Otherwise, chaos would follow and the whole system would collapse. Under these conditions nobody can enjoy freedom or democracy, they concluded. Indeed, freedom has limits in all societies. For example, relatively unlimited bourgeois freedom goes with an exploitative ownership system, economic crises, and loose morals.[70]

Apart from treating refutation of anarchists' conception of freedom as an argument for social order and as a reminder that every citizen's duty is to advance common welfare, articles employed class analysis to emphasize that freedom should be seen in its social context. Unlike anarchists, Marxists see no freedom arising from humanity itself, some articles stated. Because man is a social being, his freedoms must be viewed in the context of one's class status and the social system that either guarantees or suppresses his freedom. Accordingly, as long as exploitation prevails, an individual cannot attain real freedom. Indeed, the exploiting classes use force to maintain their authority, which appears to the proletariat as oppression. Under the socialist system, authority is as important as ever, but it is accepted voluntarily.[71]

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[69]   Li Xianrong, *Shijie lishi* 1981:4, p. 23. He quotes both Locke and Montesquieu, the latter being an often cited bourgeois authority in these articles.

[70]   Gu Zhaoji, *Jiefangjun bao*, Nov 23, 1979, p. 3. See also Liu Xiaoliang, *Jianghuai luntai* 1981:1, p. 79, in which absolute freedom inevitably leads to destroying others.

[71]   Lan Tian and Xiao Yun, *Xinjiang ribao*, March 21, 1980, p. 3.

Because one's freedom depends on the social system, articles saw the people's freedom protected best under socialism. One article claimed that socialist freedom with the freedom to criticize, discuss and elect the leadership is the widest type of freedom, but this freedom must merge with discipline and punishments for violations of the freedom of the majority.[72] Another noted that socialist freedom is freedom from exploitation, which means that it protects the freedom of the widest possible majority.[73]

This earlier version of argumentation against too narrow an understanding of freedom mainly aimed at correcting the Cultural Revolutionary understanding that democracy means uninhibited mass action. In the earliest phase, articles directed their criticism against the Gang of Four. Indeed, only a disciplined and organized revolution brings liberation and social freedoms, unlike the Gang of Four's conception that the people can liberate themselves (*ziji jiefang ziji*). This conception emphasizes individualistic absolute freedom, which actually diminishes freedom by attacking social order and discipline.[74]

The next step was to blame the Gang of Four for misconceptions of the limits of using one's democratic rights. According to a number of articles, the Cultural Revolution had glorified everything coming from below and interpreted any attempt by the leadership to guide mass action as an attempt to limit the people's freedom. This misunderstanding obviously still prevailed in some people's minds making them interpret contemporary democratization processes correspondingly. The correction of the people's understanding about freedom was intended to demonstrate that limitations do not necessarily restrict freedom, and if fact, the existence of limitations may even be a precondition for the majority to enjoy freedom and democracy.

On a deeper level, the discussion probed the social meaning of freedom. Articles argued that individuals gain from being members of society and, therefore, are responsible for acting within accepted limits. Using a Marxist interpretation, articles saw that individual freedom depends on a free society. The Marxists saw themselves as realists, because they understood that any attempt for individual liberation was bound to be partial without corresponding social change.

At this point, articles wanted to educate readers about how to understand freedom. Freedom was not doing whatever one wants to, but rather, acting as a rational member of society. This stance may value individual freedom, but sees it resulting only from social cooperation and emancipation from forced social bonds

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[72]　Feng Conglin and Zhang Qingming, *Lilun yu shijian* 1979:12.

[73]　Jiang Zhaoyi and Zhou Jiquan, *Huadong shifan daxue xuebao* 1980:6, p. 3.

[74]　Shi Qiao, *Zhejiang ribao*, May 17, 1978, p. 3.

and unequal social relations. Emphasizing this conception, the press wanted to dissuade people from disrupting social order.

1980–1981: Misconception of freedom

From stressing social limitations of freedom, the discussion moved on to questioning the anarchist conception of freedom itself. The shift occurred partly because of the treatment of anarchism had adopted more theoretical tones. Quite likely, the target of the criticism changed at the same time. By the end of 1979, the petition movement and the wall-poster movement were appeased in Beijing. As a result, "too much freedom" no longer threatened social order.

Yet, a new agenda had appeared: calls for freedom of speech and freedom of the press even in the official press. In order to justify socialist limitations to civic freedoms, writers used the argument that freedom is never without limits. This shift in objective definitely occurred, but it is difficult to time it exactly or to ascertain what proportion of the articles published in 1980–1981 had this aim in mind. The new target is evident in very subtle ways: in the casual mention of civil liberties in the context of contemporary anarchism and the very brief mention of them in introductions to anarchist theory,[75] and in discussions about unlimited freedom in the context of bourgeois rights. Simultaneous restraint in the open press discussion about freedom of speech from the beginning of the 1980 gives contextual evidence of the new target.

According to a number of articles, anarchists have an idealistic conception that everything restraining their will limits their freedom. Marxism holds that there is no absolute freedom. Freedom does not mean detachment from reality, but rather the ability to attain one's goals according to the laws of development. No one is free from the laws of nature, but by knowing these laws and accepting them, one is free to use them for his own and mankind's benefit. The conclusion was the better one masters these laws, the freer one is.

Apart from the limits emanating from the laws of nature and the stage of historical development, articles maintained that freedom has social limits. Inside society, one must live according to the rules of that society, which emanate from respecting the freedoms of others. Indeed, society has many inevitable restrictions including social order, law and ethics. Some articles even included ideological criteria, like the Four Cardinal Principles, as proper social limits in China. Indeed, a person who understands the inevitability of these limitations does not regard

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75   Li Huaxing, *Fudan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 59, proves that early Chinese anarchist Cai Yuanpei stood for freedom of speech. Jiang Zhaoyi and Zhou Jiquan, *Huadong shifan daxue xuebao* 1980:6, p. 2, mentions the subject of unlimited civic liberties in Bakunin's writings.

them as oppressive, unlike a person who does not. If one violates these social restrictions, one necessarily violates the freedom of society as a whole.[76]

Seen from the dialectical perspective, freedom and discipline complement each other in a unity of opposites, articles asserted. Already the discussion about rights and duties had maintained that rights by definition imply respective duties. The discussion over anarchism took this logic further by declaring that freedom pursued to the extreme turns out to be non-freedom. Indeed, the law may deprive a person of her freedom, if she oversteps the limits of the law.[77]

Social limits to freedom are preconditions for the existence of society, articles declared. Thus, an individual must agree to fulfill his duties towards his society, since living inside society itself allows more freedom for an individual. The law protects collective freedom by limiting individual freedom. Indeed, one should obey the law because it represents the will of the people and allows the people to enjoy their freedoms. Thus, discipline and law actually protect freedom. Socialist society is freest when the law prevails, and a citizen is freest when he obeys the law.[78]

Not all Chinese equated natural freedom with social freedom. Some writers probed the historical development of human societies to find two analytically different sets of restrictions on people. In primitive society, man is not free from the forces of nature, but in this he is equal with all of his human companions. In class society, the restrictions of nature on man diminish, but distinctions between people sharpen. Indeed, only by collective action one can really change his destiny, but the higher organizational level necessary for progress brings more limits along with more choices in life.[79]

According to Marxism, freedoms inside society are class based. One can only attain freedom within society. Therefore, to achieve more personal freedom, one should strive for freer society by overthrowing the system of exploitation along with the state institutions supporting it. Yet, even under fair institutions freedom can never be unlimited but must be moderated by the necessary rules of orderly society, articles reminded readers. Indeed, in class society, a ruling class not only limits the freedom of other classes, but also the freedom of its own members.[80]

In the latter half of 1981, criticism of absolute freedom departed from the context of anarchism. Unhealthy tendencies were now labeled as bourgeois liberalization (*zichan jieji ziyouhua*), against which the press launched a comprehensive attack. Adopting a term like this indicates a more restrictive political atmosphere,

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[76]   Gu Zhaoji, *Jiefangjun bao*, Nov 23, 1979, p. 3.

[77]   Si Lin, *Shijian* 1980:2, p. 28.

[78]   Han Yi, *Tianjin ribao*, May 12, 1981, p. 3.

[79]   Yan Cunsheng, *Xin Xiang pinglun* 1981:11, p. 25.

[80]   Han Yi, *Tianjin ribao*, May 12, 1981, p. 3.

much in the same way that the attack against the anarchist phenomenon had done
in the spring of 1979. Absolute freedom, until then discussed under the topic of
anarchism, became an essentially bourgeois phenomenon. [81] Anarchism was
sometimes linked with bourgeois liberalization.[82] However, simultaneously more
sympathetic and more academically accurate evaluations in the study of anar-
chism probably benefited from the change, enabling the history of anarchism to
become a relatively value-free field to study.

Although articles now discussed the concept of freedom in the practical
context of bourgeois society instead of the theoretical context of anarchism, the
prevailing interpretation was still the one firmly established during the period of
criticism of anarchism. The accepted notion of freedom still stressed the "con-
sciousness" approach that freedom is the knowledge about and the ability to
change the existing limits of freedom, the "practical" approach that freedom
means the ability to act, and the "collectivist" approach that freedom is freedom of
the people instead of a sole individual. [83] The notion of unlimited freedom
continued to be the target of criticism, and 1981 even saw the return of terms like
ultra-democracy.[84]

Anarchism in fighting bureaucratism

The Cultural Revolution had advocated spontaneous and uninhibited mass action
as a means of combating bureaucratization. In 1979–1981, the press used the label
of anarchism to challenge this argument. At the time, the petition movements used
demonstrations and mass protests to demand reexamination of misjudged cases
and cadre malfeasance both locally and in the administrative centers. In addition,
the Democracy Wall movement exposed acts of bureaucratism in unofficial pub-
lications and wall posters. To avoid the rise of an ungovernable situation and to
maintain state control over the punishment of misconduct, articles promoted the
use of institutionalized channels for solving problems of bureaucratism.

Articles reminded readers that the bureaucratic tendency of a minority of
cadres is not a sufficient reason to negate the state's and the Party's authority or to

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[81]   For theorization of freedom in the essentially bourgeois context, but with the repetition of
       themes previously appearing in the context of anarchism, see Wang Hongchu et al., *Sichuan
       shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1. This article appeared already in March 1981. For the concept of
       absolute freedom (*juedui ziyou*) in its new bourgeois context, see Xiao Qing, *Guizhou ribao*,
       Sept 21, 1981, p. 2. The latter even uses an interesting term of "anarchistic bourgeois world
       view" (*wuzhengfuzhuyi de zichan jieji shijieguan*).

[82]   E.g. Xiao Yan, *Fendou* 1981:3, p. 10, who sees anarchism as the political side and bourgeois
       liberalization as the organizational side of the same phenomenon.

[83]   See, e.g., Sui Rushi, *Qinghai ribao*, Nov 25, 1981, p. 3.

[84]   See, e.g., Zhao Huizhen, *Fendou* 1981:11, pp. 7–8.

assume that all leaders are antagonistic to the people. Indeed, bureaucratism under the socialist system is a remnant of the old society, a remnant which a socialist system strives to free itself of. Therefore, one cannot condemn the revolutionary authority as anti-democratic just because there is some bureaucratization in its ranks.[85]

Anarchistic methods for solving bureaucratization would intensify rather than solve contradictions, articles claimed. Indeed, one must not attack the proletarian political system, which can guarantee the unity and discipline necessary for socialist construction. If socialist construction fails to boost the economy, the proletarian dictatorship will be unable to defend itself against attempts at bourgeois restoration.[86] Putting pressure on leadership would only cause the detrimental reordering of priorities and, thus, prevent the tackling of even the most urgent and solvable problems. In the long run, this situation would hinder the modernization process, which makes improvement in the people's living standards possible.[87]

Rather, one should solve bureaucratization under the guidance of the Party, articles declared. They assured that the Party is totally able to correct its past mistakes. Indeed, anarchism even works against its aim of overcoming bureaucratism, because it opposes supervision by the Party and hinders democratic supervision, both of which are effective means for rectifying bureaucratism.[88] By slowing down economic progress, anarchism hinders the creation of material means for comprehensive democratization, which would provide the best means for fighting bureaucratism.[89] Besides, the Cultural Revolution had already proven that using anarchism to fight bureauratism was as efficient in producing a new bureaucracy as it was in overthrowing the old one.[90]

Finally, articles maintained that anarchism and bureaucratism are by no means antagonistic to each other. Indeed, often the same people who resort to anarchism when they do not hold power, adopt bureaucratism after gaining power. This is because they care only for themselves and use anarchism or bureaucratism only for their personal benefit.[91] Further, by undermining democratic centralism from different angles, anarchism and bureaucratism give each other an opportunity to rise.[92]

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[85]   Zhu Ronghe, *Xin Xiang pinglun* 1980:2, pp.16–17.

[86]   Shi Qiao, *Zhejiang ribao*, May 17, 1978, p. 3.

[87]   Dong Peiwei, *Zhejiang ribao*, Dec 19, 1979, p. 3.

[88]   Gu Zhaoji, *Beijing ribao*, Nov 12, 1979, p. 3; Qun Sheng, *Fendou* 1980:1, p. 9.

[89]   He Fulin, *Xinjiang ribao*, March 14, 1980, p. 3.

[90]   Dong Peiwei, *Zhejiang ribao*, Dec 19, 1979, p. 3.

[91]   Gu Zhaoji, *Beijing ribao*, Nov 12, 1979, p. 3.

[92]   Liu Weihua, *Dazhong ribao*, May 25, 1979, p. 3.

Anarchism is not practicable

The ultimate refutation of anarchism was the demonstration of its impossibility in practice. This strategy sought to dissuade those attracted by anarchism by showing that their thinking and behavior would bring about the kind of social order they did not aspire to have.

According to articles, anarchism is not practicable, first of all, because of its unwanted results. It causes social disorder and slows down economic progress, both being harmful to the common people's interests. In a chaotic society satisfaction of the people's needs and execution of their will have no protection. One article reminded readers of earlier experiences and estimated that after having undergone misfortunes brought on by anarchism during the Cultural Revolution, the people are bound to oppose anarchism.[93]

Secondly, articles claimed that anarchism is impracticable because of the impossibility of its theory. In the revolution, it relies on individuals instead of the masses, which would make it unable to produce fundamental social change. After gaining power, anarchism would allegedly produce chaotic and backward society unable to satisfy the people's needs. Indeed, anarchism can only be a passing stage before order is restored. In a feudal, petty bourgeois country like China restoring order would result in dictatorship, as is shown by the sequence of dynasties in Chinese history. That social life needs order is a fact which cannot be changed at will.[94]

Another argument against anarchism stated that the absolute freedom of some would lead to sacrificing the rights of the majority. At worst, this could end in minority dictatorship. According to a commonly reproduced argument from the 1920s, society based on total freedom to participate in or to retreat from any social agreement or organization is an impossible one. There will always be too many differing opinions to make consensus on a large scale and unanimity in complex matters possible. As a result of the freedom to refuse to participate, even one person could sabotage the whole effort supported by the vast majority.

Finally, echoing the criticism of the egalitarian ideals of the Gang of Four, several articles reproved extreme egalitarianism. Anarchist egalitarianism unrealistically stresses equal distribution while ignoring production. Indeed, extreme egalitarianism combined with hostility towards money and wealth can only bring about a decentralized and backward country.[95] Articles classified this kind of

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[93]   Wang Jin, *Jiangxi ribao*, Apr 24, 1979, p. 2; Ying Jiaquan, *Xizang ribao*, Jan 3, 1980, p. 2.

[94]   Li Honglin, *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, March 24, 1979, p. 3.

[95]   Peng Yingming, *Wenhuibao*, Feb 25, 1980, p. 3.

egalitarianism as a petty-bourgeois phenomenon, which could never count for true socialism.

These arguments tried to dissuade people from using disruptive methods to pursue their interests and aims. Articles sought to demonstrate what the logical outcome, as they saw it, would be if the people were to reject their social responsibilities and discipline. Some also directed the criticism of anarchism towards other leftist themes, like the egalitarian ideal in the economy.

Summary of the discussion: Anarchism as a negation of socialist democracy
The objective of criticizing anarchism, from the point of view of the discussion on democracy, was to draw a line between socialist democracy and anarchism, or between democracy and mob rule. The Chinese press discussion was not prepared to see any alternatives between institutionalized influencing and chaos. If Western democracies and the Cultural Revolution had viewed social pressure on the government as a part of healthy democratic life, from 1979 onwards the Chinese classified pressuring the government as a potential cause of social chaos and as detrimental to development. Implicitly, this stance assumed that development can be rationally planned and does not need outside popular pressures to redirect development and to demand the inclusion of needs not officially recognized by the state leaders.

While in 1978, the main point of the discussion on democracy was that democracy is the only valid foundation for centralization, in 1979 it became necessary to stress that democracy still needs centralization. Curbing anarchism was introduced as a topic along with the issuing of the Four Cardinal Principles as acceptable limits for socialist democracy. Thus, the main point in criticizing anarchism at the time was to emphasize that democracy has reasonable limits.

Another aim in criticizing anarchism was to correct the misunderstanding that anarchism is an extreme, and thus a most advanced, form of revolution, as the Cultural Revolution had advocated. Its turbulent years had equated democracy with mass action initiated from below. Now it was necessary to underline that people are not resort to barricades for every complaint even if China democratizes. Even in a democracy, leadership is needed. Instead of mass movements, institutionalization of democracy was the word of the day.

In both of these approaches, anarchism was another end in the continuum between democracy and centralism, as well as between rights and freedom. Anarchism represented extreme democracy and freedom. It formed a trinity with socialist democracy and bureaucratism. Of these three, only socialist democracy properly balanced rights and duties, democracy and centralism, and democracy and use of coercion. Both anarchism and bureaucratism represent one-sided and

extreme views about political processes. Anarchism neglects duties, centralization and coercion, while bureaucratism overlooks rights and democracy.

Chronologically speaking, the discussion first aimed at demonstrating that even if anarchism is an extreme form of democratic action, it does not belong under socialism. It does not constitute socialist democracy, but harms normal order and democratic processes. In the second phase, the message was that anarchism is not democracy at all, but, on the contrary, undermines any kind of democratic system.

Socialist democracy, or democracy in general, was demonstrated not to be egotistic action, but a system requiring every member of society to condition himself in the interest of the majority. To be able to realize majority will and majority decisions – since this is what democracy is all about – a system needs both purposeful common action and the means of coercion to protect majority rights and the system itself from crime, power abuse, and foreign aggression. In other words, centralism is essential for democracy.

Another use of the criticism of anarchism was to refute certain ideas articulated in the unofficial discussion about democracy. Here, again, the stress was on orderly democratic processes instead of uninhibited initiative from below. Accordingly, institutionally channeled democratic input is effective in influencing, because it allows the concentration of forces in order to attain long-term aims, while mob rule inevitably means disorderly, chaotic conflict of many divergent personal interests. Democratic processes and institutions limit any individual, when demanding that she express her will through systemic channels. Yet, they also allow the people to attain their fundamental aims. No system allows unlimited democratic rights or action, but demands that citizens obey legitimate rules and use established channels, articles stressed.

In all respects, the most important lesson of the criticism of anarchism was that democracy itself needs order, authority, and leadership. There is no inherent contradiction between them, articles summarized. Indeed,

> Both theory and practice prove that developing socialist democracy and upholding order are totally consistent and interdependent. The more developed democracy is, the more the people have become masters of the state, the more the proletarian dictatorship can be consolidated, the faster socialist construction progresses, and the better social order we have. The better the order in all respects, the healthier the development of our democracy will be.[96]

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[96]   Li Honglin, *Zhongguo qingnian bao* , March 24, 1979, p. 3.

BUREAUCRATISM

Bureaucratism (*guanliaozhuyi*) is an old Marxist conception familiar from the writings of Lenin and Mao Zedong. The Chinese press often quoted Lenin referring to the inefficiencies of administrative bureaucracy, while to Mao Zedong bureaucratism was an attitude among cadres or leaders which made them distance themselves from the masses' opinions and interests. The different situations these revolutionary leaders faced explain their divergent emphasis: Lenin was apparently frustrated with old tsarist working methods inside socialist state organs after the revolution, while Mao Zedong was concerned with cadres' ability to arouse all human potential for the communist cause in communist-controlled areas during the revolution. Nevertheless, these two approaches share the basic assumption that socialist rule should respect popular interest and the initiative of the masses, which bureaucratism fails to do. Thus, in 1978–1981 articles contended that bureaucratism was antagonistic to a democratic work style and to the people's interest.

Bureaucratism refers to mechanical bureaucratic solutions which disregard popular needs and demands. Bureaucratic systems encourage authoritarianism and red tape. They do not consult the masses and show indifference to the variance in concrete situations. Bureaucratism could be intentional, if one did not care about popular needs but only about advancing one's own status and material wellbeing. One could deliberately misuse her powers or accept material benefits. Yet, in an environment where one is rarely dismissed from a post once appointed it is easy to resort to customary practice and adopt a bureaucratic work style while being quite unaware of its gradual development. An overstaffed and overlapping administration breeds inefficiency and the shirking of responsibility by passing decision making onto others or to higher-level organs. This kind of work style leads to issuance of subjective and dogmatic orders originating in books or at higher administrative levels regardless of the actual local situation. The result was a systematic, even if sometimes unintended, disregard for the consequences. Bureaucratism often resulted in the promulgation of detailed executive orders in cases which could have been solved during the production process or according to economic laws. Evidently, bureaucratism was exactly the kind of conservative thinking the contemporary "emancipate the mind" and "seek truth from facts" campaigns criticized. Bureaucratism was contrary to everything democratic,

including popular influencing, a transparent government, government for the common good, and the mass line.

In the articles published between 1978 and 1981, Lenin personally became the paragon of anti-bureaucratic spirit. Articles cited not only his indignation over bureaucratic attitudes, but also the institutional measures he had promoted. They recommended his measures for China in radical and selective ways. Quoting Lenin, articles called for institutional reform, rule by law, the establishment an inspectorate, and more power for the masses. According to many of/a number of) the articles Lenin had urged for simplifying administration and for making the elected representative organ the highest organ of the republic. Lenin had suggested the establishment of an inspectorate, which has the power to investigate even the highest Party and state organs.[1] Citing Lenin, the press proposed that harm to the state and the people caused by beauracratism should be legally punishable in China too. Appealing to the Leninist tradition, all functionaries should keep in contact with the masses and participate in production, while all organs should welcome letters and visits from the masses. Recruiting workers and peasants to administrative organs could help prevent the full professionalization of bureaucratic structures. Lenin's program, as the Chinese saw it, had fought red tape by simplifying meeting procedures and using examinations for selecting talent. The most poignant writers even used Lenin to demand separating the tasks of the Party and the government and to advocate learning from efficient and meritocratic bourgeois bureaucracies.[2] Thus, some utilized Lenin's citations to advocate drastic changes in the Chinese administrative system. However, moderates also used Lenin's viewpoints to call for caution and patience in solving bureaucratization, even if they admitted that it had developed into an urgent problem in China.

Bureaucratism became an issue for several reasons. Firstly, it was a useful label for many unpopular Party practices and most likely was also a tool used to criticize certain individual leaders whose activities could be labeled as bureaucratism. In an attempt to democratize the Party, it was a suitable term for censuring unwanted practices without condemning the Party as an institution. Not surprisingly, articles often lamented that bureaucratism had damaged the Party's authority and reputation. Likewise, bureaucratism allegedly had harmed the Party's relations with the masses and thus had made Party work more difficult. Secondly, journalism had begun to reveal bureaucratic malpractices like misuse of power or accepting privileged treatment.[3] Numerous articles mentioned the oil rig,

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[1]   Xu Guoxi and Wang Chengfu, *Lilun yu shijian* 1981:1, p. 44.

[2]   Chu Ruigeng, *Hebei shiyang xuebao* 1980:4, p. 61–63.

[3]   See Commentator, *Renmin ribao*, July 10, 1978, p. 3, which is based on over 500 letters commenting on a letter revealing one case of bureaucratism published two months earlier (May 5) in the same newspaper.

Bohai Number 2, which sank in 1979 because of a bureaucratic disregard for safety. Many other, often local, examples of malfeasance or negligence attracted attention as well. Thirdly, bureaucratic overstaffing and inefficiency were expanding at the time, when rehabilitated victims of the Cultural Revolution returned to their already fully staffed former offices.

Writers used much effort to convince the reader, or perhaps the censor, that bureaucratism was not an insurmountable problem and even less an inherent characteristic of socialism. According to the discussion, even if its remnants still existed under socialism, bureaucratism characterized an old type of government lacking a mass basis. Most articles assured that a socialist government does everything it can to overcome the problem. This kind of rhetoric sought to be persuasive: it appealed to the leadership to act like good socialists should, and simultaneously tried to convince leaders of the need for institutional reform from within and to ask for patience from ordinary people. More critical voices, though, looked for the causes of bureauratization inside the communist movement in China. Indeed, the wartime need for centralized commands is prone to cause bureaucratism when this practice continues during the period of socialist construction.[4] Since promoters of faster democratization used authoritative sources and vocabulary, they could not be accused of undermining socialist rule, especially when Lenin and Mao Zedong had stressed that the problem needs attention under socialism.

Course of the discussion

Bureaucratism as a term was present throughout the discussion of 1978–1981. Mostly it referred to cadres' work style. Articles maintained that such cadre deviations as dictating decisions, suppressing discussion and differing opinions, and being inattentive to the needs of the masses, were directly opposite to the ideals of democratic centralism and collective leadership. Mostly, the anticipated method for solving the problem was ideological education in order to revive Party traditions. In subordinate clauses several articles recommended an institutional reform establishing popular supervision, elections, and recall as remedies for bureaucratization. Yet, institutional solutions were primary over the work style problems only in two contexts: in the discussion about the Paris Commune and in the discussion following Hua Guofeng's speech at the third plenary session of the Fifth National People's Congress (1980).

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[4] Huang Zongliang et al., *Beijing daxue xuebao* 1980:6, p. 61. Chu Ruigeng, *Hebei shiyang xuebao* 1980:4, p. 61.

At first, the theme of bureaucratism closely followed the discussion about democratic centralism. In 1978, articles used the concept to demand that cadres maintain close contact with the masses. As in the main discussion about democratic centralism, consulting the masses meant basing decisions on practical experience instead of making subjective or dictated decisions. At the time, the main remedies suggested for this unwanted habit were supervision by the masses and by the Party. One article, with admiration for the anti-Gang of Four demonstrations in April 1976, even recommended all forms of mass democracy (*daminzhu*) including using *sida*[5] rights, demonstrations and strikes to combat bureaucratism.[6] Articles called for the people and the press[7] to reveal bureaucratic practices. In this early phase of the discussion, the incentive for uprooting bureaucratism was the same as in the democratic centralist discourse in general: to reform superstructures and relations of production to suit the needs of modernization. Indeed, successful modernization requires respecting economic laws, arousing revolutionary spirit, emphasizing responsibility, efficiency and creativity, and solving new problems in innovative ways. Bureaucratism is an obstacle to them all.[8]

In the spring of 1979, some articles dealt with bureaucratism as one extreme in the continuum of the dialectical relation between democracy and centralism. As anarchism meant rejecting centralism, bureaucratism conversely ignored democracy.[9] Still in 1980, articles constantly mentioned that socialism practices democratic centralism in order to draw the normative conclusion that bureaucratism stressing centralism at the cost of democracy was anti-socialist in spirit.

In 1978–1979, bureaucratism was mentioned here and there, but it was not an issue in contemporary discussions, apart from the topic of the Paris Commune. The rarity of the appearance of the term bureaucratism in official publications is astonishing for two reasons. One is the centrality of the topic of bureaucratism in unofficial publications.[10] Many other topics, such as the Paris Commune, flexibly crossed the line between official and unofficial discussions, and there were no ideological reasons to avoid the term in official contexts. This scarcity is even more stunning because of the simultaneous emphasis on democratic centralism and the mass line and their democratic aspects in the official press. After all, bureaucratism was one standard deviation away from democracy in the mass line style of leadership. Still, the term bureaucratism was not often used to describe the

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[5]   *Sida* includes rights to speak out freely, air views fully, hold great debates and write big-character posters. In other words, they refer to mass meetings and wall posters.

[6]   Lin Chun and Li Yinhe, *Zhongguo qingnian* 1978:3, p. 35.

[7]   Hu Yunfei, *Heilongjiang dexue xuebao* 1979:1, p. 21.

[8]   Dan Rui, *Xin Hua ribao*, Nov 14, 1978, p. 2.

[9]   E.g. Zhou Xinming and Chen Weidian, *Guangming ribao* Apr. 28, 1979, p. 3.

[10]   See Paltemaa 2006, ch. 5.

absence of democracy in comparison with the correct democratic centralism practices. Rather, the absence of democracy was expressed in concrete terms such as the repression of the exchange of opinions.

Instead of the term bureaucratism, articles often used many of its synonyms, like people's servants (*gongpu*) changing into masters (*zhuren, laoye*). Cadres were urged to serve the people, make decisions collectively, or adopt other proper mass line roles that bureaucratism neglects, often without mentioning the word bureaucratism itself. One reason for using the term bureaucratism rarely was that the threats to democracy were conceptualized differently, instead of bureaucratism, articles criticized autocratism (*zhuanzhi zhuyi, duduan duxing*) or feudal fascism (*fengjian faxisi*).[11] Instead of examining the problem as a deviation from democratic centralism, writers treated suppression of democracy in class-based terminology. Perhaps bureaucratism seldom appeared because the most radical writers strove for direct democracy and abolishing the state. For them, bureaucracies themselves were the problem, not the improper work style of bureaucrats.

The opposite reasons explain the use of the term bureaucracy, instead of many of these alternative expressions, in 1980. By that time, writers were denying that bureaucratization was a class problem. They advocated the right to use and reward expertise,[12] not the eradication of social distinctions. If the discussion in 1978–1979 took it for granted that in socialism people are the masters (*dang jia zuo zhu*) and that the aim of socialism is to eradicate all obstacles to the people's self-rule, the debaters of 1980–1981 called for the institutionalization and distribution of power between institutions. Hierarchy and division of power were no longer viewed as the problem, but possibly even essential parts of well-functioning state machinery. The new approach was more elitist and, thus, naturally wary of any references to the class question.

If in 1978–1979 the problem of bureacratism was conceptualized using many other expressions as well, in the 1980–1981 discussion bureaucratism had developed into an umbrella concept for various kinds of problems and authoritarian practices. During the revolutionary period, bureaucratism had been but one of the many possible deviations from the mass line leadership style. Deviations in the authoritarian direction included phenomena like commandism, isolationism, bureaucratism and warlordism.[13] Historical development explains the absence of many of these concepts in the 1978–1981 discussion, as warlordism and isolation-

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[11]   Other expressions connected with bureaucratism used during the years 1978–1981 include patriarchalism (*jiazhangshi*), one person decides (*ge ren shuo le suan*), one has the say (*yiyantang*), blind orders (*xia zhihui*), and rigid uniformity (*yidaoqie*).

[12]   Misra 1998, p. 162–163, 181

[13]   Lewis 1966, pp. 78, 85.

ism, at least in its united front sense, had become outdated. However, the term commandism continued to appear in the press in 1978–1981.

The impetus for the press discussion came from Prime Minister Hua Guofeng's speech at the third plenary session of the Fifth National People's Congress. Articles cited Hua advocating decentralization of power, establishment of supervisory organs, and the reform of the cadre system. They lauded him for stressing institutional causes of bureaucratism and for calling for institutional reform to remedy the problem. Along with Hua, articles sometimes quoted Ye Jianying when reproving bureaucratism. The period drawing inspiration from their statements, which lasted from late 1980 to early 1981, marked the zenith of the discussion about bureaucratization both in frequency, in depth and in daringness of content.

The most overt criticism of bureaucratism disappeared from the press in early 1981, apparently because it had failed to draw further official support. This moment coincides with the waning position of Hua Guofeng, but possibly also indicates new awareness of the difficulties involved in the institutional reform. The will to guarantee central, regional, and local-level cadres' support for the economic reform and rearrangements within the leadership might have inhibited the drive for political reform.

In the latter part of 1981, the concept bureaucratism appeared again, now as a work method problem. As such, the main method to overcome it was no longer institutional reform but ideological education, although some articles[14] recognized the role of institutions and rules in promoting a good work style. The ongoing campaign against bourgeois liberalization explains ideological tones in articles. In the best rectification campaign manner, the new discourse stressed criticism and self-criticism and urged the revival of Party traditions. Selective interpretation of Party tradition probably thus facilitated a purge of leftists from influential positions. Not accidentally, bureaucratism was again seen to arise from exploiting classes' ideology,[15] rather than from institutional arrangements.

Bureaucratism and democratic centralism

The press argued that bureaucratism is contrary to Party values, including democratic centralism. Indeed, if democratic centralism combines the majority principle with hierarchical bureaucratic command, bureauratism stresses only centralism and resorts to a patriarchal leadership style unreceptive to differing opinions. Thus, bureaucratism disregards the democratic work style of the Party and

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[14]   E.g. Fang Renxuan and Zheng Weibiao, *Nanfang ribao*, May 25, 1981.

[15]   Fang Renxuan and Zheng Weibiao, *Nanfang ribao*, May 25, 1981.

equality between cadres and the masses. Patriarchalism means that the minority will decide, instead of reaching decisions by a majority vote. Still, patriarchalism is sometimes understood as proletarian centralization.[16]

In Party life, the over-concentration of power was seen as authoritarianism, contrasted with democratic centralism, collective leadership, and the centralization of collective knowledge. Articles stated that for a long time concentration of power and the use of administrative decisions to manage society were misunderstood as characteristics of a socialist system and a planned economy. This understanding reveals unfamiliarity with the laws of development. Indeed, over-centralization of power makes it possible to misuse one's power and suppress democracy. The result is that the masses are deprived of full democratic rights to administer the state.[17]

Writers complained that unified (*yiyuanhua*) Party leadership had often been interpreted as centralizing power in the hands of the Party committee and the Party secretary. Indeed, when those having differing opinions tacitly approve the first secretary's view, power will be concentrated in his hands.[18] As a result, one person decides everything, no matter how important or trivial the matter. Here an individual has replaced the Party authority. Other Party members either remain silent or can participate in the discussion but not in the decision making. In addition, lower-level offices have no power to make decisions. This leads to red tape, since all matters need the superiors' approval.[19]

Class basis of bureaucratism

The Marxist classics' comments regarding the Paris Commune provided one basic description of bureaucratization: the servants of society turning into its masters. According to historical materialism, social division of labor caused states to emerge, when some members of a society specialized in managing common affairs for the common good. However, when this administrative stratum began to strive for its own particular interest, instead of the common interest, antagonism between the privileged administrative stratum and the commoners suppressed under its bureaucratic rule resulted. Using Marxist parlance, bureaucratism emerged with the class society, when a part of society rose above the rest of the society to rule over it.

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[16] Li Changqing, *Xin Changzheng* 1980:11, pp. 12–14.

[17] Fang Zhou, *Hunan ribao*, Oct. 23, 1980.

[18] Li Peiliang, *Qunzhong* 1980:12, p. 2.

[19] Li Peiliang, *Qunzhong* 1980:12, p. 2.

Writers took bureaucratism to be an inherent part of the exploiting classes' political systems. The exploiting classes allegedly need a privileged bureaucracy to suppress the working people's opposition. Feudalism, with open and legal privileges, marked the zenith of bureaucratization. Compared to feudalism, many articles recognized that capitalism had taken measures to prevent bureaucratization by advocating the separation of powers,[20] elections to reduce concentration of power,[21] and the legal recognition of the common people's equality and rights.[22] Nevertheless, the communist theory states that no exploiting class' political system can prevent its rulers and functionaries from striving for their own interest. Even under the most democratic bourgeois rules, bureaucracy forms a privileged stratum above the people and workers are left with relatively little influence when powerful capitalists dictate decisions, articles contended. Although moderates recognized that bourgeois systems have their merits, they rejected their suitability for China. Indeed, bourgeois democracies may check bureaucratism to some extent, but for the proletariat, the bourgeois bureaucracy and representative system will eventually become an exterior force they are not able to influence. To overcome bureaucratism, rather than implementing bourgeois legal limits to popular participation, what is actually required is that all people participate in administration.[23] Therefore, to eradicate this type of bureaucratism the proletariat must overthrow exploitative state systems.

If bureaucratization was seen as typical for the exploiting classes' rule, articles needed to explain why bureaucratization continued under socialism. They claimed that bureaucratism under socialism is not rooted in the political system but arises from the ideological influences of the old society and from incomplete institutions. Bureaucratism itself is in discord with socialism because it prevents the superiority of socialist systems from manifesting. Thus, under socialism bureaucratism is mainly a contradiction among the people and not a class contradiction. This means that solving bureaucratism does not require any systemic change. Bureaucratism can be uprooted because socialism establishes the people as the masters of the state, articles asserted. The socialist system should use legal, electoral, and moral methods to overcome bureaucratism. The analysis separating systemic and concrete problems was used to draw normative conclusions that socialism must put effort into uprooting bureaucratism. Because socialist cadres derive their power from the people, they must use it for the people's interest, articles urged. Indeed, under socialism, the people as masters have the right to

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20   Chen Jinquan, *Guangxi ribao*, Nov 27, 1980.

21   Dong Zhixin and Yang Shaoping, *Lilun yu shijian* 1979:9, p. 8.

22   Lin Boye and Shen Zhe, *Hongqi* 1981:5, p. 13.

23   Special commentator, *Heilongjiang ribao*, May 20, 1981.

prevent administrative positions from becoming privileges and, if necessary, take back powers they have granted.[24]

According to this view, socialist cadres and state institutions differ fundamentally from the bureaucrats serving the rule of the exploiting classes. Indeed, the old type of bureaucratism under the exploiting classes' rule resembles bureaucratization under socialism in the sense that it erodes democracy and harms the working people's interest, but there are many differences between these two types of bureaucratism. Their economic origin is not the same, since one arises from private ownership and the other from the incompleteness of collective ownership. Their class character differs, as one characterizes the exploiting classes' rule and the other consists mostly of mistakes committed by well-intentioned individuals. Accordingly, in the former the contradiction between rulers and the ruled is antagonistic and in the latter non-antagonistic. The solution to traditional bureaucratism is overthrowing the government, while the second kind can be solved within the socialist system.[25] Socialist cadres emerge from the masses and serve them wholeheartedly, articles reassured readers. Cadres' power comes from and is used for the masses. Thus, unlike officials in exploitative systems, socialist functionaries keep in close contact with the masses and accept supervision by the masses. Yet, articles frequently admitted that deviations from this ideal were common. Some articles even promoted learning from the capitalist countries' methods for uprooting bureaucratism. One article openly stated that in practice functionaries in socialist China disregard the people and evade supervision by the masses even more than officials in capitalist countries.[26] Many other writers possibly meant the same thing when quoting Lenin's admiration for the efficient bureaucracy in bourgeois Germany.

The class explanation aptly illustrates how frameworks of thinking changed only gradually after the Mao era. Class analysis was normative in the contemporary context, although there already were official cues that after the successful socialist transformation class struggle was mainly a thing of the past. Since articles hardly tried to appeal only to leftist leaders, the class explanation shows internalization of the class discourse and values emphasizing socialism as the most advanced political and economic system. Using class analysis, articles blamed the petty bourgeois production models for causing bureaucratic thinking, obviously to advocate socialization and collectivization. This ideal was becoming anachronistic due to the privatization and decollectivization already evolving in the countryside. This shows that in 1978–1981 many intellectuals, possibly even reformist leaders,

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24   Commentator, *Hebei ribao*, Oct. 15, 1980.
25   Cao Zhicheng, *Jiefangjun bao*, Oct 9, 1980, p. 3.
26   Anon., *Guangming ribao*, Oct 17, 1980, p. 2.

could not predict the direction the Chinese economy was to develop due to reforms. Although the period of 1978–1981 is often seen as the watershed in economic thought and practice, in fact patterns of thought were still much more traditional, and rather than cause social and economic change, often adapted to it.

Feudal bureaucracy

When stressing differences between the old and new types of bureaucratism, some writers may have been commenting on the discussion over feudalism. Although many writers distinguished between bureaucratism under socialism and bureaucratism under exploitative political and economic systems, the contemporary feudalism discourse stressed continuity between imperial and socialist bureaucracies. Contrarily, emphasizing that the two types of bureaucratism have a different class basis may have been an attempt to make a clear division between them.

Already in 1978, articles explained bureaucratism as feudalist or as the influence of the exploiting classes in socialism. At that time, the Gang of Four was blamed for feudal autocracy, making feudalist influences a suitable scapegoat for various problems under socialism. Later, feudal bureaucracy became a common analogy to contemporary bureaucratism. At the time, the feudalism analogy was directed at Mao Zedong and leftist rule in general. After all, it was easy even for an ordinary reader to recognize who the emperor was and who had belonged to his court.

Feudal influences were blamed for such bureaucratic phenomena as privileges, seeking self-interest in public office, authoritarianism, and nepotism. Feudal dictatorship was held to be responsible for many problems of bureaucratism, including strict stratification, conservatism, incompetence, privileges, and corruption. The evils of feudal bureaucratism included red tape, shifting responsibility to others, passing issues on to superiors for decision making, and low efficiency, all of which allegedly hindered the growth of the productive forces.

A feudal ruler relied on a bureaucracy extending from the center to the periphery to loyally implement his rules. Articles describe how an emperor controlled the bureaucracy by keeping responsibility for appointments, promotions, and assignments in his own hands. Allocation of official ranks and hierarchical privileges were the means the emperor utilized to guarantee the loyalty of officials. In recruiting, he considered personal relationships, favors, and family background more than ability. Indeed, one of the primary criteria for appointments was the degree of obedience. As a result, officials did not need any political or economic expertise to hold an office.[27] In one article it was noted that another feudal

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[27]   Li Guihai, *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 1981:1, pp. 95–96.

criterion for appointment was military achievements. Yet, military competence did not guarantee ability in civil administration, as the fate of the Qin dynasty demonstrates.[28] It is easy to see that these examples alluded to the Mao-era China, which had rewarded political loyalty more than professional skills and favored leaders who had been credited in the course of the revolutionary war. Whether emphasis on the military skills referred to Mao Zedong himself, is impossible to ascertain.

As one article stressed, feudal bureaucracy did not decentralize power nor practice collective leadership. Rather, by fragmenting power among bureaucratic organs, an emperor concentrated power in his own hands.[29] Although a feudal official's position was very uncertain vis-à-vis the emperor, towards commoners he held absolute power. Indeed, under feudalism, the masses were deprived of political power. Bureaucracy was strictly stratified in order to separate officials from commoners. Usually bureaucracy only fulfilled the emperor's orders. Even remonstrance to remind the ruler about the plight of the common people was only meant to make the emperor mend his ways and, therefore, demonstrated loyalty to the system. Sometimes an emperor fulfilled some of the people's aspirations, but this was not equivalent to democracy, since he disallowed the people to participate in governing.[30]

Reasons for bureaucratization under socialism

Articles recognized that socialism does not automatically rid itself of bureaucratism. Some explanations traced its institutional causes. Incomplete institutions and channels for popular supervision allegedly make it difficult to prevent bureaucratism. Underdeveloped democracy and incomplete legislation provide chances for bureaucratization. Indeed, a socialist system with public ownership, distribution according to work, and the people's democratic dictatorship constitutes a system able to put an end to exploitation. After public ownership has solved the contradiction between socialized *(shehuihua)* production and private ownership of the means of production, it becomes possible to manage an economy in a planned way, rationally using all resources for the interest of the whole society. However, without concrete institutions *(zhidu)* this kind of united leadership has in practice resulted in the over-concentration of power. When a minority governs the whole country, bureaucratization is the outcome. Obviously, existing bureaucratic phenomena do not negate the superiority of socialism, but reflect

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[28] Wei Wenxuan, *Jinyang xuekan* 1981:1, p. 51.

[29] Li Chuntang, *Hunan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:3, p. 61.

[30] Sun Wenliang, *Lilun yu shijian* 1980:12, p. 15.

shortcomings in the administrative system.[31] Admitting that the socialist system has bureaucratism because of the incompleteness of its institutions was a way to argue, either implicitly or explicitly, for institutional reform.

The press introduced many concrete reasons for the existence of bureaucratism under socialism. Some derived authoritarian and patriarchalist leadership habits from feudalist and bourgeois influence. Small production, which the articles mentioned as the economic base of bureaucratism, allegedly caused inefficiency and lack of concern for time, value, and available resources. Conservatism, patriarchalist and authoritarian attitudes, and attempts to benefit from one's official position were other reasons for bureaucratization.

In order to explain its continuance in socialist China, numerous articles penetrated the most fundamental causes of bureaucratism. Using Marxist analysis, they saw the possibility of using common powers to promote private interests remaining as long as some people can use power over the rest of the society. This possibility ends only when administrative tasks are equally shared and everyone can participate in administration. However, economic and educational backwardness currently make it impossible for everyone to participate in administration. Indeed, under socialism, bureaucratism is illegal and state functionaries are responsible to the people, who elect and have the right to recall them. Still, in the present stage, China cannot prevent bureaucratization, since as long as the state exists the people are separated from the power they should collectively hold.[32]

Writers probed into ideological explanations as well. Articles found fault in ideological education. Some mistaken ideological stances, including the view of history emphasizing outstanding leaders instead of the masses, or concentrating on centralism and ignoring democracy in democratic centralism, as well as the mistaken comprehension of whether leaders are masters or servants of the society, have all endorsed bureaucratism. One article named the Cultural Revolution as being one cause of bureaucratization because Party members who had been recruited during that time period had been influenced by the Gang of Four's feudal fascist thoughts or had been able to enter the Party for the purpose of pursuing power and wealth.[33]

Due to the newness of the socialist system and China's resultant lack of experience with socialist development, the dangers for bureaucratization had been underestimated in China, articles maintained. For a long time, the Party had not been familiar with the origins and correct methods for solving bureaucratism. Bureaucratization had been understood as a problem of work style, ideological

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31   Guang Yu, *Guangzhou ribao*, Oct. 30, 1980, p. 3.
32   Jin Jingfang, *Jingyang xuekan* 1980:3, p. 5–6.
33   Jin Guangxiong, *Yanbian daxue xuebao* 1980:3, pp. 47–48.

stance, or class stand. However, ideological education and political movements used to combat bureaucratization had proved ineffective without corresponding institutional reforms, articles concluded. In addition, writers blamed insufficient experience, along with the model offered by other socialist states, for causing misunderstanding of the true features of socialism. Indeed, the Soviet Union had provided a model of extreme centralization of power in the hands of the Party and the supreme leader, especially in Stalin's times. In the Soviet Union democracy became only a formality, since its elections provided no choice for voters.[34] The Chinese communists, for their part, got the blame for continuing measures necessary in wartime, such as undefined terms of office,[35] and concentration of power, even after the Party had consolidated its power.

Although some bureaucratism existed under socialism, bureaucratism was presented as a threat to socialism. Many articles asserted that bureaucratism prevents the superiority of socialism from actualizing. Indeed, bureaucratism endangers socialism, because it obstructs the reform of the economic administration system necessary for modernization; it hampers democratization needed for arousing the full human potential for the modernization cause; it harms the selection and education of cadres with ability and expertise; its elitism prevents collective ownership and socialist equality from materializing; and it hinders establishment of democratic state organs for the proletarian state.[36] Numerous articles quoted Lenin saying that bureaucratism was the main threat to the continuance of socialist rule.

Because socialism by definition relies on collective ownership, writers probed into how bureaucratization has been able to deprive the people of their collectively held power. A radical formulation of this point explicitly argued that the basic meaning of socialist democracy is that the people enjoy different forms of ownership and control over the means of production, on which their right to administer the state is based. Thus, legislation and other measures must be adopted to develop socialist democracy and the people's right to rule. Contrarily, bureaucratism has deprived the people of the means to control power. This situation might even enable conspirators to transform majority rule into minority rule. As a result, the proletarian dictatorship could degenerate into something other than socialism.[37] Writers thus threatened that with bureaucratization socialism and collective ownership were endangered by bureaucratism, which may change the socialist majority rule into a minority rule system typical of exploiting classes.

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[34] Anon., *Guangming ribao*, Oct 17, 1980, p. 2.

[35] Guang Yu, *Guangzhou ribao*, Oct. 30, 1980, p. 3.

[36] Gao Hongding and Wang Yu, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, pp. 2–3.

[37] Li Changqing, *Xin Changzheng* 1980:11, p. 12.

Vindicating the Party rule

Evidently, the search for non-systemic causes of bureaucratism under socialism sought to answer an apparent legitimacy crisis. Officially published articles showed sympathy towards the doubts about whether socialism could succeed in eradicating bureaucratism, but simultaneously firmly refuted the possibility that Communist Party rule itself was the source of corruption and authoritarianism. The vindication of the socialist system and Party rule was not an easy task. According to class analysis, socialism does not need to produce bureaucratism, but the existence of bureaucratism was an obvious fact in China. In this situation, the official press wanted to show that the Party can solve bureaucratism because of its proletarian class background. The point was to convince readers that the socialist system itself was not the cause of contemporary bureaucratic and corrupt practices. This was a way to explain cases of malfeasance and corruption, while upholding the system.

The message was that the Communist Party itself is able to overcome bureaucratism and has a remarkable tradition of anti-bureaucratization efforts. Articles provided evidence of anti-bureaucratic campaigns, recent institutional reforms, and punishments following the Bohai Number 2 oil rig accident to demonstrate the Party's capacity and will to fight bureaucratization. Indeed, the Party had recently adopted several measures to overcome bureaucratism including elections, collective leadership, cadre system reform, the strengthening of representative institutions, and the invitation of popular criticism.[38] Articles thus tried to alleviate worries that the Party is a source of bureaucratism. Simultaneously, writers attempted to dissuade those who favored drastic anti-bureaucratic methods and expected immediate results. The official press advocated that the Party and the socialist system should be strengthened, not replaced, in order to overcome bureaucratism. Articles stressed that bureaucratism was a problem of a minority of cadres and, even then, mainly a contradiction among the people solvable without resorting to class struggle.

However, some writers probably consciously separated discussions about practical problems and systemic change in order to be able to demand concrete institutional reforms within an unquestionably socialist context. By showing that their criticism did not target the socialist system itself, they could legitimately seek practical and institutional solutions to bureaucratization.

Another strategy to save the Communist Party's reputation was to accuse particular individuals of causing the current situation with bureacratism. The

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[38]   Special commentator, *Heilongjiang ribao*, May 20, 1981, p. 3.

blame for bureaucratization easily fell on Lin Biao and the Gang of Four and their so-called feudal fascist dictatorship. Their example was discredited for abundant bureaucratic malpractices. Especially in articles published in 1978–1979, ultra-leftists were blamed for having distorted democratic centralism by stressing only centralism, with the result being the production of an authoritarian and bureaucratic work style. Ultra-leftists were blamed for disregarding the people's democratic rights, issuing blind orders, and practicing formalism (*xingshizhuyi*). Their ideological mistakes, such as instigating personality cults and confusing the relationship between the people as masters and officials as servants of the society, had bred bureaucratism. Ultra-leftists were accused of interpreting any criticism of leadership as "opposing the Party." In one article it was suggested that bureaucratism prefers secrecy and formalism over meaningful content for the purpose of concealing from the people how they are ruled in order to make them "docile tools" in the hands of ultra-leftist usurpers of power. For this end, the Gang of Four had used conspiracies, covert factionalism, and censorship.[39] Institutionally-oriented articles argued that the leftist line had disrupted the functioning of many former institutions, making practices such as elections and voting mere formalities.[40] This kind of argumentation can be interpreted as a moral judgment over the leftist line, but also as an attempt to find an acceptable method for political criticism. Instead of blaming socialist rule, directing accusations against certain individuals made it possible to admit to and correct bureaucratic practices without condemning the socialist state system itself.

Refuting the theory of bureaucratic class

In 1978, even the official press could still publish warnings that bureaucratism can lead to the emergence of an aristocratic stratum (*guizu jieceng*) above the people.[41] This kind of parlance betrays a leftist belief in the new class formation under socialism and the necessity of class struggle against all forms of elitism, including the privileged position of the Party and administrators. The extreme interpretation regarded the contradiction between a bureaucratic class and the people as the principal contradiction (*zhuyao maodun*) in a socialist society. In other words, class struggle against an oppressive state becomes the priority for socialist development. This idea originating in the radicalism of the Cultural

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[39] Wu Xuecan, *Jinyang xuekan*, 1981:3, p. 35–36.

[40] E.g. Ma Ming, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 8, 1980.

[41] Lin Chun and Li Yinhe, *Zhongguo qingnian* 1978:3, p. 35.

Revolution also appeared in the unofficial democracy movement, most notably in Chen Erjin's manifesto, *On Proletarian-Democratic Revolution.*[42]

By 1980, leftist voices had been silenced in the official press. In order to vindicate Party rule, some articles engaged in refuting the theory of a bureaucratic class inside the Party. To moralize interpretations expressed during the Cultural Revolution and within the contemporary democracy movement, the official press stigmatized the idea as continuing the style of anarchism seen during the Cultural Revolution, as worshipping bourgeois democratic methods as solutions to bureaucratization, or even as supporting foreign imperialism.[43]

Articles in the official press argued that bureaucrats do not constitute a class by any acceptable criteria. Writers viewed bureaucratism inside the Party as an ideological problem rather than a question of economic relations, which is the criterion used to divide a population into classes. Indeed, bureaucrats are only a part of a class and not a class themselves. In contemporary China, they belong to either the working class or the peasantry. Likewise, defining bureaucratization in the Party in terms of class difference reverses the relation between a class and a communist party, the latter being a part of the former and not the other way around.[44] Cadres are not owners of the means of production nor do they constitute a group which exploits other people's work.[45] Although opponents of bureaucratization stood on theoretically solid ground, they had purposely chosen to use the class concept in a very narrow sense. They had decided to recognize only the *ownership* of the means of production, not the right to manage or allocate the means of production in ways that produce economic inequality and political powerlessness. Seeing bureaucratism only as an ideological problem with no relation to class formation downplayed the question of exclusive control over the means of production, although previously in 1978–1979 this question had still been critically evaluated in the official press under the topic of the real essence of the proletarian dictatorship. In addition, the interpretation emphasizing ownership deliberately ignored the possibility that growing inequalities between opportunities available to social groups and strata could be analyzed as a sign of class distinction.

Even more than rejecting the possibility of new class formation, the press wanted to condemn the use of class struggle methods against the Party and state organs in the name of anti-bureaucratic struggle. In 1981, the press emphasized that bureaucratism is not the principal contradiction (*zhuyao maodun*) in a socialist society. In other words, the anti-bureaucratic struggle is not a priority for the development of socialism. Articles maintained that although superstructures based

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[42]   Chen 1984.

[43]   Lin Boye and Shen Zhe, *Hongqi* 1981:5, p. 16.

[44]   Lin Boye and Shen Zhe,*Hongqi* 1981:5, p. 14.

[45]   Kong Qian, *Jiefangjun bao*, Feb. 9, 1981, p. 2.

on collective ownership may have defects and need reformation in order to better suit the socialist economic base and the needs of modernization, the socialist system itself does not cause bureaucratism or new class formation. This discussion represented a general intellectual and political trend which began to move away from class explanations and class struggle methods. Unlike the interpretation prevalent during the Cultural Revolution, this new trend did not recognize that there could be any inherent contradiction between the people and the state.

Elimination process

Even if bureaucratism does not belong to socialism, socialism does not necessarily manage to avoid bureaucratism completely, the press acknowledged. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt measures for uprooting bureaucratism. These measures should aim at eliminating feudalist influences in ideology and work style. In addition, institutional measures are needed, since previous efforts concentrating only on ideological causes of bureaucratism allegedly failed to reduce bureaucratism permanently. The 1980–1981 discussion cited Hua Guofeng pointing out that political education is not enough for uprooting bureaucratism. Nevertheless, many articles simultaneously recommended the use of traditional Party techniques like ideological education, rectification campaigns, criticism and self-criticism, supervision from the masses and the Party, and collective leadership.

The institutional solutions for uprooting bureaucratism that were suggested in articles can be classified as four types. One method was democratization, including elections. Establishing democratic institutions would allow ordinary people to supervise their government. Clear electoral responsibility towards the people would improve functionaries' performance. Indeed, supervision by the masses would change their powerless position. They should be able to use people's congresses and workers congresses, as well as appointment and recall systems, to become the masters of the state.[46] This stance held that bureaucratism violates people's democratic rights.

The second proposed method was improving legal methods to deal with maladministration and corruption. When leaders are not above the law but can be punished, cadres arguably have an incentive to clean up the administration. Besides, law provides concrete measures to intervene in cases of malpractice. Indeed, Chinese law had thus far been a means for governing the people and not for keeping functionaries and their activities in check.[47] Now, because of flawed economic and administrative legislation, cadres may avoid punishment, even if their mal-

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[46]   Gao Hongding and Wang Yu, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 6.

[47]   Jin Guangxiong, *Yanbian daxue xuebao* 1980:3, p. 48.

feasance has caused losses to the state.[48] Therefore, anti-bureaucratic measures should be written into laws and decrees of legal responsibility for misdeeds, so that ordinary people can use appropriate laws and institutions to supervise functionaries.[49] Understandably, articles presented bureaucratism as the antithesis of socialist equality before the law.

The third solution was simplifying administration. Preferably, ordinary people should be educated to shoulder administrative tasks.[50] Reducing the gap between professional bureaucrats and ordinary people would reduce the chances for bureaucratization. Fourthly, following the tradition of Marxist social analysis, many articles scrutinized economic causes of bureaucratism. According to them, only modernization and growth of productive forces create a material basis for eliminating bureaucratism. Simultaneously, but not contradictorily, bureaucratism was one of the main obstacles to modernization.

Most of the articles stressed that overcoming bureaucratism would be a lengthy process. This argument was an explanation for the existence of bureaucratism in China after 30 years of socialist rule. Yet, an even more important purpose was to reevaluate the methods for uprooting bureaucratism. Writers recognized the urgency of anti-bureaucratic struggle, but at the same time warned against the unwanted results of impetuousness. They admitted that the Cultural Revolution had aggravated the problems of bureaucratism and disregard for the common people's influence in decision making, but they urged restraint when solving these problems and warned against extending class struggle because of bureaucratism. According to this view, extremist activities, such as petitioning for personal benefit or putting pressure on the state organs or bureaucrats through mass movements and struggle sessions, are deemed to be inefficient.

According to articles, patience was needed in overcoming bureaucratism under socialism for various reasons. Along with the long tradition of feudal bureaucracy and centralization of power, articles pointed to small production as a cause inherited from history. Overcoming a backward economy and culture was a lengthy process. Many writers also reminded their audience that reforming incomplete institutions takes time. Providing ideological education for cadres to make them realize their idealistic worldview is time-consuming as well. Thus, uprooting bureaucratism is a lengthy effort which includes modernization of the economy and institutionalization of certain political procedures.

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[48]   Lu Ming and Shi Xuewen, *Shaanxi ribao*, Sept. 24, 1980, p. 3.

[49]   Jia Chunfeng and Wang Mengkui, *Hongqi* 1980:3, p. 48.

[50]   Ding Yihai, *Sixiang zhanxian* 1980:6, p. 10.

Bureaucratism and popular participation in administration

Articles recommended democratization for uprooting bureaucratization. Similarly, they saw violations of democratic rights as facilitating bureaucratization. The press discussion, repeating the cure proposed by Lenin, expected that in a modern state administrative tasks become simple routines that anyone can handle, making it possible for common people to participate in administration. Popular participation and supervision leaves less space for bureauratism. Because of economic underdevelopment and a low educational level, at this time the people could not administer the state and enterprises directly but only through representatives, articles stated. This system in which cadres distribute the means of production only leaves room for indirect popular administration.

As long as the majority cannot rule itself, the possibility of bureaucratization remains. In this situation, only supervision by the masses can prevent the possibility that administrators will become privileged and use the power in their hands in disregard of the popular will. As one writer expressed it, although the people are entitled to collective ownership and the position of masters of society, they have no actual means for administering and supervising the state and for using distribution rights over the productive forces as long as cadres as a minority represent the people. Since this situation is unavoidable under the present conditions, effective systems are needed for preventing cadres, who are intended to be servants of the people, from turning into masters. Hence, the people's right to supervise, elect, and recall cadres must be institutionally guaranteed, as must other institutions monitoring cadres' ability and will to use their power so that it benefits the people. If cadres really represent the people's will and interest, collective ownership will develop into a higher form and stimulate the growth of productive forces. But if the people's rights remain only nominal, cadres can amass privileges for themselves and become the masters of society.[51] Indeed, some people's thoughts that the people themselves cannot participate in administration are not fundamentally different from the idea of a tutelage government in bourgeois China.[52]

Elections, supervision and recall were among those democratic institutions articles regarded as suitable for checking bureaucratism. Writers worried that the situation at the time allowed cadres to manipulate grassroots elections. As a result

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[51] Ma Ming, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 8, 1980, p. 4.

[52] Yue Ping, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 22, 1980, p. 3. The first version of this article was published already by the close of the 3rd Plenary Session of the 5th National People's Congress (Sept 10, 1980) for inner circulation in *Lilun dongtai* vol 12.

of cadre manipulation, election winners' feelings of responsibility towards the masses would not develop, but they would feel responsibility only towards their superiors. Articles urged for more meaningful elections including serious campaigning. Indeed, a candidate should publish her merits and platform, allowing the people to dismiss or punish her if they feel that she is not qualified to continue in office. [53] Mass initiative should be utilized when deciding about rewards, promotions of successful cadres, criticism of those who have committed mistakes, and dismissals of those who have been neglecting their duty.[54]

Apart from elections, articles recommended many forms of direct democracy, including workers' congresses and commune members' meetings. Some articles proposed that the current decentralization of economic power and the increase of enterprise autonomy should simultaneously expand the scope of direct administration by the people. Decentralized power should not be given to the manager so that she can make authoritarian decisions, but principally to the workers' representatives. Workers' congresses should have the right to discuss and decide matters within their authority. In addition, they should elect or give recommendations for the nomination and recall of managers. Indeed, factory management must work within the lines set by workers' congresses and under their supervision. Otherwise, Chinese workers are not masters and resemble capitalist wage labor.[55] Others demanded a genuine role for trade unions, because a trade union's agreement with an enterprise's decisions is vital to the workers' interests.[56]

Articles urged for supervision of bureaucratism by the masses, who should be able to turn to offices dealing with people's letters and visits, reveal and criticize bureaucratism in the press, and report cases to superior organs. They contrasted between the ideal functioning of these channels and their reality. Many writers worried that, in fact, those who criticized malfeasance were often punished, not those guilty of it. One article cited a case in which the cadre guilty of wasting resources remained in his post, while those who criticized him were penalized for speaking up.[57] Indeed, appealing to the higher levels of the government about abuses of power seldom brings about any results, because there are no concrete measures in place that secure the right of appeal. Despite the principle forbidding retaliation, the case is often delegated back to the violator himself. Regardless of the Party rules permitting any member to criticize any leader or participate in theoretical discussion in the press, the critic has often been accused of being a

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[53]   Jin Guangxiong, *Yanbian daxue xuebao* 1980:3, p. 49.

[54]   Anon., *Shijian* 1980:10, p. 15.

[55]   Anon., *Guangming ribao*, Oct 17, 1980, p. 2. This is one of the articles referring to the Yugoslav model of worker participation.

[56]   Anon., *Shijian* 1980:10, p. 14.

[57]   Commentator, *Hebei ribao*, Oct. 15, 1980.

class enemy. Freedom of speech is included in the constitution but speaking out is often taken as a crime (*yanzhizui*).[58] Indeed, although the masses should have the right to openly criticize the government they have elected, newspapers still might refuse to reveal administrative malpractices. Therefore, to guarantee the people's right to criticize the Party's and the government's work China needs laws protecting freedom of the press and freedom of speech.[59]

People's congresses in combating bureaucratism

An interesting, although minor, thread in the discussion about bureaucratism was its use in advocating a more autonomous and powerful role for the people's congresses. Deriving from the argument that the people still cannot directly administer the state but must rule through representatives, some writers were inspired to demand a meaningful role for the people's congresses. This topic coincided with parallel developments in the actual representative system. One anti-bureaucratism article even praised how the Third Plenary Session of the Fifth National People's Congress had taken the master's attitude and interrogated ministers and made demands on the government.[60]

Articles argued that the people's congress system has not fulfilled its constitutional role as the supreme organ of state power and as the instrument by which the people can participate in the administration of the state. Indeed, according to the constitution, all power belongs to the people and the people's congresses are the supreme organs of state power. Yet in practice a few sentences by a leader may overrule their will. The people's will cannot be successfully centralized by only a few leaders. Therefore, overcoming bureaucratism requires that the power is decentralized so that people's congresses, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, local governments and the Party all centralize the people's knowledge.[61] Indeed, the people's congresses represent the people's will and no individual or organization should rise above it. The relation between the people's congresses and the government is that the former should elect and supervise the latter; otherwise the government may misuse its power and bureaucratize. The correct relation between the people's congresses and the Party is that the latter formulates lines and policies and the former embody them in the state and society. This is not a hierarchical relation in which the people's congresses lack authority

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[58] Lei Yun, *Qunzhong luncong* 1981:1, p. 43.

[59] Anon., *Guangming ribao*, Oct 17, 1980, p. 2.

[60] Zhong Yuan and Tian Zeng, *Gongren ribao*, Oct 14, 1980, p. 4.

[61] Fang Hecheng, *Nanfang ribao*, Nov. 8, 1980, p. 4.

and only confirm Party decisions. Otherwise the people's position as masters will only be an empty slogan and bureaucratization will continue.[62]

The contemporary system was a far cry from the ideal. Divergence was recognized to be so wide that some articles interpreted the people's congress system as failing even in comparison with bourgeois democracies. Indeed, if socialist superstructures are incomplete, bureaucratism may arise. For example, the people should govern the country through the people's congresses, but too often they become instruments for discussion and implementation only, when cadres treat them only as ornaments and make decisions on their own. In county-level elections, bureaucratism and patriarchalism have too often played a significant role in candidate selection or in the nullification of the results if cadres find them unsatisfactory.[63] Indeed, the national people's congress should be the supreme power organ and not just an honorary organ. They must fulfill their constitutional role and not be only a formality. They should be staffed with competent members whose age and health allows them to work. People's representatives should be elected, be known to and keep in contact with their constituency and reflect the wishes of the electorate. When the congress is in recess, a representative must represent the people in his regular work.[64] Articles also stressed the delegates' role in supervision (*jiancha*).[65]

Bureaucratism and institutional reform

According to many articles, bureaucratism is not always intentional. Writers claimed that in faulty institutions even good and upright cadres cannot avoid bureaucratization and mistakes, and at the same time these institutions cannot prevent degenerated cadres or plotters from committing evil deeds. Good institutions, then, can monitor functionaries making it difficult for them to use power for evil purposes. Indeed, more than moral uprightness, education, or work style, institutions determine whether cadres implement the correct line, promote modernization, stay in contact with the masses, and do good deeds for the people. This is because institutions, unlike other methods, have a lasting and comprehensive influence on cadre behavior.[66] Inadequate institutions make it possible for ideologically weak cadres to degenerate and for privilege-seeking behavior to continue unchecked for a long time; corrupt people can take advantage of the situation

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[62]   Tang Shaohua and Wang Shoushan, *Xin Xiang pinglun* 1981:1, pp. 17–18.

[63]   Sun Youfu, *Shanxi ribao*, Oct 24, 1980, p. 3.

[64]   Yue Ping, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 22, 1980.

[65]   Anon., *Shijian* 1980:10, p. 15.

[66]   Ding Yihai, *Sixiang zhanxian* 1980:6, p. 11.

without the people being able to intervene.[67] No doubt, articles alluded to the Cultural Revolution here. They stressed the harm that can be caused when cadres are selected on the basis of criteria which disregard professional talent. Even good intentions can cause much harm if the ability to realize these intentions is lacking.

Numerous writers argued for reforming irrational institutions as a part of the drive to reform superstructures and relations of production deemed unsuitable for modernization. Many articles stressed that incomplete institutions and unclear power relations between institutions explain the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Incomplete institutions provided inadequate means for institutional checks and supervision by the masses. At worst, they bred patriarchal attitudes and privileges. In extreme cases, leaders had allegedly risen above the whole organization and made their own ministry or locality their own kingdom, where they disobey the Party and suppress the people. Not surprisingly, one incomplete institution articles criticized was the all too infrequent use of the majority vote[68] in decision making.

One frequently mentioned cause for bureaucratic practices was over-staffing, through the creation of numerous vice posts and empty posts. Bureaucratic organs have too many administrators and too few executors, articles claimed. Indeed, because of the inflexible division of tasks, the busy administrators are really busy, while others do not have a thing to do.[69] Administrative organs cannot find talented personnel, and yet at the same time they need to create jobs to accommodate incapable persons.[70] Over-staffing causes inefficiency, sluggishness, irresponsibility, delays, red tape, numerous documents and meetings, and the handing off of tasks to others. As a remedy, articles advocated simplifying organs and reducing personnel. As a solution for unclear responsibilities and limits on power, articles argued for decreeing definite areas of responsibility for offices and organs. One article even recommended that both the masses and the government should participate in stipulating rules for defining responsibilities and rules for administrators, making it possible to inspect and punish laxity and malpractices.[71]

The press reproached rigid administrative divisions for inefficiency. Overlapping and hierarchical institutions manifested as multiple organs, sometimes even within a single unit, or as similar organs in the Party and in the government. Writers openly recommended separating administration from enterprise management. They wanted to divide tasks between the Party and the government. The motivation was allegedly to strengthen the Party, allowing it to concentrate on the

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[67] Yue Ping, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 22, 1980.

[68] Yue Ping, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 22, 1980.

[69] Li Xiyan, *Qinghai ribao*, Oct. 29, 1980, p. 3.

[70] Lei Yun, *Qunzhong luncong* 1981:1, p. 44.

[71] Anon., *Shijian* 1980:10, p. 14.

Party tasks that were more important than routine administration. To make these demands more urgent, articles emphasized that bureaucratism hinders the implementation of the Party line. Indeed, managing everything leaves inadequate time for the Party to concentrate on ideology, Party lines, and organizational affairs, and to familiarize itself with the conditions of the masses.[72] For increasing efficiency, the Party should be able to concentrate on the essentials instead of secondary issues. Not every decision needs the Party's agreement. Indeed, the Party should lead politically, not organizationally. It should thus conduct its leadership through governmental organs.[73] Nevertheless, separating Party and governmental tasks was not a code expression for undermining Party power, since the Party leadership advocated the same program for similar reasons.

One form of bureaucratism is implementation according to the guidance given by higher-level organs, even when one knows that the orders are unsuitable for local conditions. In new situations, a problem is passed on to others or to higher-level organs. The resulting inefficiency delays modernization. One frequently mentioned solution for reducing both inflexibility and inefficiency was increasing the autonomy of the economic units so that they could make decisions about their own affairs. Decentralization reduces reporting and meetings, since it allows administrative organs and enterprises to independently decide matters under their own authority. Indeed, the misunderstanding that only administrative decisions are socialist inhibits development and makes uprooting bureaucratism difficult. Although the administration needs a hierarchy, not every social unit needs to be subordinated to another organ. Units like factories, shops, research institutions, or opera troupes should cover their funding through their own activities, rather than rely on an organ hierarchically above them. Delegating relevant powers would not only minimize bureaucratic mistakes made at higher levels, but would also reduce indifference for common ends at the lower levels.[74] Evidently, these voices supported the decentralization of economic responsibility, which was already gradually taking place due to economic reforms.

Bureaucratism and the cadre system

The discussion demonstrated a close connection between bureaucratization and problems in the cadre system. It stressed how imperative the reform of shortcomings in the cadre system was. Articles explicitly derived many bureaucratic practices from the appointment system and lifelong tenure, including misuse of

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[72] Li Peiliang, *Qunzhong* 1980:12, p. 3.

[73] Tang Shaohua and Wang Shoushan, *Xin Xiang pinglun* 1981:1, p. 18.

[74] Anon., *Guangming ribao*, Oct 17, 1980, p. 2.

position and power, privileges and illegal activities, disinterest in the common welfare, waste of state property, neglect of people's lives, or the propensity to adhere to convenient conventions.

Appointments from above nurture responsibility towards superiors and not towards the masses because they do not give the appointee the feeling that his power comes from the people, articles stated. Indeed, so long as superiors nominate or, at best, a closed meeting elects appointees, cadres' care for the people's interest and opinions does not have any effect on their position.[75] In addition, appointments cause dependency on one's superiors, writers worried. Indeed, if a small leadership group appoints a lower-level leader without the participation of the masses, it is difficult to alter the decision afterwards even if the masses turn out to be unsatisfied.[76] Moreover, supervision of appointed cadres becomes difficult, since they have links to higher levels. Therefore, even reporting cadres' bureaucratization to the higher-level organs seldom brings about results and may even cause retaliation.[77]

Lifelong tenure causes bureaucratization because cadres cannot be demoted or dismissed, articles noted. Safety of position tends to reduce one's initiative and sense of responsibility. Cadres, knowing that their position is safe, dare to enjoy special material treatment and ignore supervisory measures. Even incompetent or very old cadres remain in their posts and, indeed, block promotions of the able and active.[78] Furthermore, powerful leaders hold more than one position, although they are not able to handle all the responsibilities by themselves.[79] Over-staffing creates conditions for faction building and the development of an authoritarian work style. One problem articles mentioned with special concern was aging, which was an urgent problem around 1980, when the Long March generation of aged revolutionary leaders still remained in office. Indeed, lifelong tenure became a practice after the revolution when revolutionaries were still young and vigorous.[80] But now aging was an evident problem for administrative efficiency.

When appointments from above and lifelong tenure coexist with unclear responsibilities and limits of power, cadres' careers have no necessary connection with performance, articles established. A cadre can very well pass her time in office enjoying its benefits without performing her duties. In avoiding trouble for himself, a cadre can cause enormous losses to the state and the people. Often if a cadre messes one locality up, he will only be transferred to another place. Indeed,

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[75] Zhang Jue, *Shijian* 1980:12, p. 10.

[76] Gao Shaoxian, *Chongqing ribao*, Dec 27, 1980, p. 3.

[77] Wu Min, *Shanxi ribao*, Nov 14, 1980.

[78] Yu Guangzhong, *Xin Changzheng*, 1980:12, p. 13.

[79] Li Peiliang, *Qunzhong* 1980:12, p. 2.

[80] Commentator, *Hebei ribao*, Oct. 15, 1980.

as long as there are no clear regulations about the scope of work, it is safest to pass decision making on to the higher levels. This practice causes endless meetings and reporting and delays decision making.[81]

Demands for improving the cadre system allowed for an explicit call for popular elections, supervision and recall systems, even on the national[82] level. Arguably a good cadre system makes cadres recognize their responsibility towards the people. Besides, elections provide an effective supervisory method, since the electorate will not reelect bureaucratized cadres. However, in order to actually prevent bureaucratism, elections must be real and not dictated from above. Indeed, some elections are still only a form of appointment, when candidates are selected by higher-level Party organs.[83] Indeed, as long as the people have no rights to supervise and recall their representatives in genuine elections, in which the result is not dictated from above, bureaucratization cannot be averted. Elections and supervision prevent the people's representatives from distancing themselves from the people, rising above them, and misusing their power. Instead, electoral responsibility urges representatives to govern the country in line with the people's will.[84] Some articles contrasted genuine elections with the Cultural Revolution's consultation (*xieshang*) as a method to produce people's representatives.

In one article, the conclusion was drawn that only by being at times in higher and at times in lower positions, by having been in and out of office, can one understand both the situation above and below. Then one has wide experience to base decisions on. Therefore, those cadres who have been out of office, for example because they were humiliated during the Cultural Revolution, tend to be less bureaucratic and more receptive to the people's needs.[85] This article promoted factional interests, since many reformists had suffered from demotions and humiliation during the Cultural Revolution.

In addition, the press discussion paid attention to surveillance and control from above. Several articles recommended strict supervision of cadre performance by superiors and through the newly reestablished Party inspection committee. One article even recommended establishing similar kinds of inspection organs in the governmental system as well.[86] Indeed, the Party inspection committees should make bureaucrats administratively, economically, and legally responsible for their deeds.[87] Yet, since inspection committees are hierarchically subordinated to the

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[81]   Anon., *Shijian* 1980:10, pp. 13–14.

[82]   Wu Min, *Shanxi ribao*, Nov 14, 1980.

[83]   Wu Min, *Shanxi ribao*, Nov 14, 1980.

[84]   Tang Shaohua and Wang Shoushan, *Xin Xiang pinglun* 1981:1, p. 18.

[85]   Fang Hecheng, *Nanfang ribao*, Nov. 8, 1980, p. 4.

[86]   Anon., *Guangming ribao*, Oct 17, 1980, p. 2.

[87]   Jin Guangxiong, *Yanbian daxue xuebao* 1980:3, p. 49.

Party committee, they remain inefficient in inspecting their own administrative level.[88]

Articles recommended numerous measures for the timely handling of cases in which a cadre had abused power, broken the law, neglected his duties, or disregarded the interests of ordinary people. They also recommended several methods for appointing able persons in the first place, including rules for competing for an office, advertising vacancies, reviewing one's proficiency, examinations, promotions, and training talent. They urged for measures for the rewarding, punishment, impeachment, rotation, retirement, and dismissal of those who fail in their office. Additional institutional methods that were recommended included the utilization of inspection organs, organizational supervision by the Party discipline commission and higher administrative levels, as well as the implementation of effective legal procedures for handling cases of negligence and malfeasance.

Suggestions for reforming the cadre system coexisted with the hope of recruiting younger and more professional leaders. Appointments based on personal relations and flattery were labeled as feudal, while socialism should recruit talent. Indeed, as long as recruitment criteria are not institutionalized, whether or not cadres uphold good Party traditions will remain arbitrary and spontaneous.[89] Without an examination system there is no way to scientifically evaluate a cadre's professional, administrative and leadership abilities, especially if promotions emphasize background and social relations.[90] Promoting expertise was sometimes linked with elections and ending lifelong tenure. Ideological slogans like "practice is the criterion of truth" and "following objective laws of development" referred to the use of experts and a scientific approach instead of issuing blind orders.

Bureaucratism in economic administration

As a concrete example of bureaucratic institutions in socialist China, articles often mentioned the economic administration system. Articles clearly supported the actual reformist plans to give more room to enterprises to make more independent decisions about production and finances. Less administrative planning and more decentralization of decision-making powers were the orders of the day. Still, privatization was not. Writers often blamed small-scale production for economic inefficiency. Small-scale production arguably correlated with outdated management models, conservativeness, low socialization of production, restricted circulation of products, and backward technology.

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[88]   Anon., *Guangming ribao*, Oct 17, 1980, p. 2.

[89]   Gao Shaoxian, *Chongqing ribao*, Dec 27, 1980, p. 3.

[90]   Gao Shaoxian, *Chongqing ribao*, Dec 27, 1980, p. 3.

In articles it was maintained that economic performance was suffering from an over-concentration of economic decision-making power. Enterprise management was bypassed. Decision-making powers had been transferred from enterprises to administrative organs, from these organs to Party committees, and once inside a Party committee to the secretary. Likewise, local organs had lost much of their power to the central government, articles complained. The result was that governmental organs administered and interfered too much and too strictly, neglecting local requirements and needs. As one county secretary revealed, their Party committee even decided such trivial matters as sanitation or distributing bicycles.[91] In fact, over-concentration of power arguably means that only a small number of officials, instead of the majority, make decisions.

Articles commonly criticized the use of administrative methods, instead of economic measures and legislation, to manage the economy. Instead of administering the economy through sluggish and overstaffed administrative organs, one article recommended using such measures as the controlling of costs, profit, prizes, wages, rewards, taxation, and credits.[92] Another asserted that ministerial administration severs the economic contacts needed for mass production.[93]

Administrative command over factories was an example of bureaucratization. In calling for the granting of more independence to enterprises and local units so that they could make their own decisions according to the economic situation and not according to administrative orders, articles predicted that efficiency would rise and decision making would take less time. However, one article approached the relation between bureaucratization and decentralization from another angle. It contended that more autonomy for enterprises would reduce the number and size of administrative organs, which would then leave fewer chances for bureaucratism.[94]

Writers commonly complained that in the contemporary system decision-making power lay in the ministries and was therefore too distanced from the production level. Producers familiar with the situation have no power to solve problems, which are decided in the higher levels of administration by those who have no first-hand experience. Often higher-ups have no time to acquaint themselves with the situation, utilize producers' expertise or investigate the situation. Centralized economic administration generates authoritarianism as well as blind or rigidly uniform orders (*yidaoqie*). One article related examples like disallowing peasants to cultivate a better variety of seed, prohibiting a factory from enlarging its production even when there was demand for its products, and constructing

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[91]   Li Peiliang, *Qunzhong* 1980:12, p. 2.

[92]   Lei Yun, *Qunzhong luncong* 1981:1, p. 44.

[93]   Jia Chunfeng and Wang Mengkui, *Hongqi* 1980:3, p. 31.

[94]   Anon., *Shijian* 1980:10, p. 14.

irrigation systems in areas without a water source.[95] This kind of bureaucratism, which demonstrated indifference towards the interests of the Party, the state, and the people alike, relegates lower-level administrators to irresponsibility and passivity, when bureaucratism blocks their initiatives and kills the enthusiasm of the masses.

In the economy, bureaucratism allegedly had mobilized the workforce according to leaders' subjective wishes for massive projects often in disregard of the actual situation. Implicitly mass movements were accused of wasting labor and resources. Apart from movements like the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution, articles may have targeted the recent movement advocating learning from Dazhai, which was cherished by Hua Guofeng. In industry, these hints could also refer to the contemporary modernization program, which had ended in failure because of large investments made in massive projects which had failed to take local conditions into account.

Official's will and benevolent officials

The topic of bureaucratism supplemented many other contemporary discussions in 1978–1981. It, for example, was involved in the general epistemological controversy about the criteria of truth, when the discussion dealt with the subjectivity of leaders' will (*zhangguan yizhi*). In 1978, articles emphasized the historical materialist worldview, according to which only practical experience, not individuals or higher administrative levels, can determine truth. Instead of deciding things according to one's own subjective will, articles recommended the mass line as the correct method for gathering information and former experiences by consulting the masses or lower-level administrators. Confirming the main idea of the criteria of truth controversy, one article even reminded readers that Marxism is not a collection of unchangeable truths but adaptable to the needs of the time and local conditions,[96] meaning that even one's mastery of Marxist ideology does not excuse her from consulting the masses. In the beginning, the discussion probed the question of how a cadre can achieve the correct will. Articles recommended using the initiative of the masses to gain knowledge about reality, but they by no means rejected the "official's will" itself.

Later, articles completely rejected the usefulness of the concept of "official's will" claiming it advocated a wrong kind of conception of cadres' superiority to the people. Indeed, the fundamental question is not whether an official's will is correct or not, but whether a socialist cadre is a master or a servant of the

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[95] Commentator, *Hebei ribao*, Oct. 15, 1980.

[96] Li Min, *Nanfang ribao*, Oct 29, 1978, p. 2.

society.[97] This view took "official's will" to mean authoritarianism. Nevertheless, this new approach did not diverge from the earlier conception in their shared purpose of promoting the solicitation of popular opinions. Now writers rebuked "official's will" for being subjective and not analyzing all aspects of the situation. They blamed it for blind orders which were not based on practical evaluations and thus caused big losses. Indeed, in the past, this kind of thinking had led to the waste of labor and property in mass movements with disastrous results.[98]

Articles explicitly emphasized that the criticism of the concept "official's will" does not mean rejecting correct leadership, which centralizes decisions according to the mass line. One article, in passing, credited the experimentation with greater autonomy in Sichuanese enterprises as resulting from proper centralization.[99] However, these critics were attacked precisely for introducing ideas which opposed centralized leadership because there was a risk that their ideas could be used for inciting anarchism or could prevent some cadres from intervening in anarchist activities.[100] This article, again, argued that whether "official's will" is idealism or not depends on whether it reflects reality. Correct will is materialistic, mistaken will is idealistic.[101] Thus, this refutation sought to defend the concept in order to prevent unwanted consequences in society. Ironically, supporters thus opposed the former normative statement that had rejected the concept for its unwanted side effects allowing some cadres to interpret the slogan to allow undemocratic forms of decision making.

In late 1979 and early 1980 a discussion about benevolent officials (*qingguan*) began. Articles criticized popular yearning for benevolent rulers and administrators because it revealed undemocratic patterns of thinking. Putting hopes in an exemplary individual instead of the power of the masses was viewed as being a form of historical idealism. Under feudalism, benevolent officials may have done good deeds for the people, writers admitted. Yet, they served feudal absolutism and treated commoners as their inferiors just like any other officials serving the rule of the exploiting class. Compared to corrupt officials, they only aimed at preserving absolutist rule for a longer amount of time and, thus, considered the common people's welfare, instead of exhausting them. Even benevolent officials had upheld feudal law and avoided challenging the system itself. Indeed, they still

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[97]   Li Honglin, *Renmin ribao*, May 23, 1980, p. 5.

[98]   Li Honglin, *Renmin ribao*, May 23, 1980, p. 5.

[99]   Pei Feng and Song Daisi, *Liaoning daxue xuebao*, 1980:6, p. 16. These experiments were led by Zhao Ziyang.

[100] Zhu Gu, *Jiefangjun bao*, Mar. 12, 1981, p. 2.

[101] Zhu Gu, *Jiefangjun bao*, Mar. 12, 1981, p. 2.

championed for absolute obedience to the emperor and, thus, actually supported personal rule (*renzhi*).[102]

A communist cadre, on the contrary, is a servant of the people and listens to their will instead of ordering them about, articles maintained. Nevertheless, articles sympathized with people putting their hopes on an individual ruling them, because these hopes reveal political powerlessness and the absence of legal protection. When people are dissatisfied with their leaders, they can only hope for the higher levels of government to replace abusive leaders with benevolent cadres who care for their wellbeing. Indeed, as long as superiors, not the people, select cadres, even good superiors can make mistakes in cadre selection. Therefore, the people should not hope for "benevolent officials" appointed by higher-level organs to act as their masters. Rather, the people themselves should be able to select and, if necessary, recall their superiors.[103]

The press published no views opposing this stance, which obviously was a reaction to popular hopes of finding a new revered leader after Mao Zedong. This discourse opposed putting hopes on any particular leader. The leader the public put its hopes on may have been either Hua Guofeng or, more likely, Deng Xiaoping. These articles reminded readers that appointing a good leader does not guarantee lasting results, only the institutionalization of the democratic political system does. This argument resembled the novel *A Tragedy That Might Happen in the Year 2000*, published in the unofficial journal *Beijing Spring*, telling a story of conservatives usurping power from the reformists, because the democratic political system was not institutionalized.[104]

Interestingly, the discussion about bureauratism stimulated some discussion about civil society and its freedom from state interference as well. Writers treated the topic in a properly Marxist context. Apart from the discussion about the Paris Commune, this is the only other context in which I have found the topic of social autonomy. However, the article in question is clearly willing to restrain civil society association. This refutation evidently targets some opinions expressed outside of the official press, most likely in the context of the democracy movement. This article proceeds from the concepts of official (*guanfang*) and social (*minfang*). In 1978–1981, the people-run (*minban*) organizations referred to services run by the community, and also to the unofficial magazines and associations of the democracy movement. The article claimed that there is no dichotomy between *guanfang* and *minfang*. It contends that the confusion arises from the misconception of the nature of contemporary bureaucratism and from mistakenly

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[102]   Dahong Fenglin, *Jiefang ribao*, Jan 22, 1980, p. 4.

[103]   Gao Hong, *Xin shiqi* 1979:2, pp. 29–30.

[104]   It is introduced in Nathan 1986, pp. 87–89.

seeing the personal and the common good in contradictory terms. In fact, many cadres represent the people's interest and many commoners do not. Bureaucratism does not arise from *guanfang*, but actually violates both *minfang* and *guanfang*.[105] The article explicitly opposed those participants of the democracy movement who claimed to represent *minfang* as opposed to *guanfang*. Its writers established that neither the state nor social actors by definition reflect the people's interest. Therefore, some individual cases of bureaucratism are not equal to the whole state system being opposite to the people's interest.

Bureaucratism as alienation

Some articles examined bureaucratism as a form of alienation under socialism. From 1980 onwards the Chinese press heatedly debated whether alienation could occur under socialism.[106] Although many articles in this context understood alienation only as a capitalist phenomenon, many others saw the inhumanity and general powerlessness the masses and intellectuals had experienced during the Cultural Revolution to fit the description of alienation. Bureaucratism prevented the people from participating in administration and being truly equal, although equality and the right to partipate were both theoretically granted to them by collective ownership. On this basis, some articles treated bureaucratism as a form of alienation.

Indeed, as products can be alienated from workers, if their production shackles and exploits, rather than serves, them, likewise bureaucrats who use power given to them by the people to violate the people's interest and will or even to suppress them are an alien force to the people.[107] Bureaucratic privileges, merely formalistic voting rights and officials' lifelong tenure cause the ideal of people's position as the masters of society to diverge from the people's actual administrative rights. Similarly, actual collective ownership is not always linked with the people's control over the means of production, as it should be.[108] Indeed, both the over-concentration of power and the possibility of using the Party's power as one's personal power even in contradiction to the Party's will and interest result in the alienation of power. This kind of alienation can be prevented by legal guarantees of the people's rights to elect, supervise and recall cadres.[109]

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[105]   Cao Xianyong and Qin Zhengming, *Jiefang ribao*, Feb. 11, 1980, p. 4. It used democracy activist Wei Jingsheng as an example of commoners not representing the people's interest.

[106]   Brugger and Kelly 1990, ch. 6; Kelly 1987.

[107]   Chen Jinquan, *Guangxi ribao*, Nov 27, 1980, p. 3.

[108]   Ma Ming, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 8, 1980, p. 4.

[109]   Ding Yihai, *Sixiang zhanxian* 1980:6, p. 11.

Discourse of alienation is rooted in Marxist theory, but, contrary to Marx' predictions, many Chinese writers claimed that the establishment of a collective ownership system was not enough to end alienation. These writers surely strongly criticized the socialist system they knew, but they quite likely adopted Marxist analysis because they believed that they were contributing to socialism by pointing out imperfections in the contemporary system. Therefore, the debate about alienation carried strong normative tones. As one writer argued, socialism wants to abolish alienation. Abolishment requires revealing cases of alienation and analyzing their causes to find methods to end these alienating practices.[110]

Summary of the discussion

Bureaucratism provided a useful concept for criticizing Party practices, but as individual and concrete problems, not as systemic problems. Because the ideology and self-image of the Party contained many normative reasons for correcting bureaucratic mistakes, pointing out concrete problems automatically hinted that the Party should correct its practices.

Throughout 1978–1981, articles called for popular supervision as the remedy for bureaucratism, but the understanding of the nature of supervision changed during this period. In 1978, popular supervision still meant listening to concrete suggestions and criticisms from the masses and the lower ranks of the Party. In other words, the press recommended the mass line as the method for curing bureaucratism. Possibly, this interpretation of the mass line even continued to involve class struggle methodology: supervision would thus refer to criticism–self-criticism sessions. By 1980, the main problem was no longer conceptualized as a problem of either work style or correct socialist attitude. Instead of education and criticism from peers or from the masses, articles demanded institutional reform. Although throughout the years 1978–1981 bureaucratism continued to refer to work style problems and to concern an official's responsibility towards the masses, by 1980 the main method recommended for its eradication was designing institutions discouraging, checking, balancing, inspecting and, if necessary, punishing bureaucratic behavior.

This new interpretation involves an uneasy combination of institutionalization and aversion towards the effects of institutionalized bureaucracy. Originally the term bureaucratism idealized activism and flexibility, and in the Mao-era fear of bureaucratization led to the cutting of personnel, the subjection of bureaucrats to political education and mass criticism, the reassignment of bureaucrats to the grassroots level, and even caused purges. If institutionalization was traditionally

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[110]   Chen Jinquan, *Guangxi ribao*, Nov 27, 1980, p. 3.

antithetical to anti-bureaucratic struggle, the press now used an anti-bureaucratic agenda to demand institutionalized checks. Instead of demanding that bureaucrats adopt non-bureaucratic roles, the new agenda wanted to build more effective, albeit simpler, more decentralized and less overlapping, bureaucracies.

The new understanding of the anti-bureaucratic struggle resembles the classical liberalist agenda in many ways. Liberalism institutionalized checks and balances between different power organs because it feared that power can corrupt officeholders. Likewise, in 1980 the Chinese demanded the institutionalization of supervisory methods like elections and mutual checks within the administration, albeit mostly between different levels of government rather than between different state organs. He Baogang asserts that the Chinese have built their political system not on the fallibility of man, but optimistically with his developmental capacities, in mind.[111] This might be true of the Mao-era system, but after the Cultural Revolution a pessimistic view of human nature had emerged within the official public sphere.

Bureaucratism discourse reveals that the Chinese communists have always recognized the possibility of a special bureaucratic interest, although they have dealt with it on the individual, not on the systemic level. Still, the realization of the existence of a separate bureaucratic interest in the early 1980s had not yet led to the comprehension of the possible conflict between the interests of the state and the society.[112] Nevertheless, the terminology of bureaucratism implied that the interests of the state and the people may diverge. However, as long as bureaucratism was a work style problem, the state could overcome its separation from the society by reaching out to people and finding out what the people authentically thought their interest was. Thus, anti-bureaucratism discourse was also a normative call for democracy, even when it did not recognize any fundamental clashes of interest between the populace and their state.

Andrew Nathan has identified that the Chinese communists' conception of bureaucratism derives from a long Chinese tradition. He argues that even before communists, Chinese thinkers seldom admitted that the ruler could sacrifice the people's interest for his selfish interests. Instead, they blamed interference by bureaucrats in the natural solidarity between the ruler and the people for any violations of the people's interests. Thereby, early Chinese democrats demanded democracy in order to enable the ordinary people to help the ruler check bureaucratic corruption.[113] Yet, Andrew Nathan sees Mao Zedong as an exception because his demands for guarding against a bureaucratic ruling stratum reveals a

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[111] He 2000, pp. 90–92.

[112] To learn how this theme later emerged in the intellectual discussions, see Ding 2000, pp. 112–121.

[113] Nathan 1986, pp. 67–69.

concern that the state itself could develop an interest opposed to the interest of the ruled.[114] The same concern was expressed in the Cultural Revolution and by the Democracy Wall Movement alike. When the press explicitly rejected the possibility of the emergence of a new ruling class, it actually reestablished the belief that the society did not need the means to protect itself against the power of the state.

In 1978–1979, the press discussion still demonstrated concern with the ability of the state system to "change color", meaning that it can become antagonistic to the people's interests if it disregards the interests of the populace. It emphasized that the state system was meant to be abolished, not strengthened, in communism. Unlike this Mao-era legacy, in 1980, the new discourse spoke of the institutional means to restrict individual bureaucrats and single administrative organs. At the same time, it also focused on the importance of increasing administrative efficiency and recruiting more professional staff.

The discussion about bureaucratism provided the most urgent calls for institutionalizing democracy. Yet, apart from calls for democratization, much of the discussion about bureaucratism taking place in 1980–1981 actually urged for the reform of the economic system. In the context of bureaucratism, calls for wider distribution and decentralization of power in large part referred to economic power, unlike in the discussion about democratic centralism itself, which dealt mainly with the distribution of political power. Calls for economic decentralization and more independence for producers to make their own decisions coincided with the reformist agenda. However, decentralization and local autonomy were also familiar from the Maoist agenda. The simultaneous press discussions about and the official encouragement for worker management suggest that some writers perhaps still had leftist sympathies or that leftist and reformist agendas were less demarcated than they were later in the 1980s. What is common to both approaches is their skepticism towards bureaucratized Stalinist planning system.

However, reformists' domination in anti-bureaucratism theme in 1980–1981 is evident in the prevalent class stand. Many reformist leaders and intellectuals had a reason to shun all allusions to the possibility that a new bureaucratic class might be developing in socialist China. Deng Xiaoping had been labeled as the "Number Two Capitalist Roader" during the Cultural Revolution and many other reformist leaders and intellectuals alike had received discriminatory class labels. The new reformist trend was to deemphasize class distinctions. Kalpana Misra observes that the intellectuals and state cadres benefited from the interpretation that the threat of the emergence of a new privileged elite was unfounded.[115] Moreover, he sees that intellectuals had their own platform for opposing the

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[114] Nathan 1986, pp. 72–73.
[115] Misra 1998, pp. 165, 181.

theory about the bureaucratic class because they wanted to grant that their own expertise would be better rewarded than it had been previously, when egalitarian ideals had prevailed.[116] Thus, those undermining the criticism of the bureaucratic class actually agreed with, and perhaps even promoted, growing distinctions of position and wealth. The discussion also strengthened reformist positions because it implied that neither administrative nor ideological control over the economy was desirable, the former manifesting in the economic planning bureaucracy and latter in the Party branch control over production unit affairs.

Kalpana Misra interprets the avoidance of class categories when the seeking the roots of bureaucratism in China as being an attempt to rebuild popular confidence in the leadership. Blaming feudalist culture became a handy explanation, because it avoided pointing out the link between property relations and bureaucratic authority.[117] This conclusion is possible. Still, the feudalism explanation originates in the criticism of the ultra-leftist line during the Cultural Revolution, which blamed the Gang of Four for having practiced feudal dictatorship. The category of feudalism was first used by leftist leaders and radicals for demanding democratization from class-conscious viewpoints.

Andrew Nathan construes the references to feudal culture as blaming the people's backwardness for bureaucratism. Thus, this explanation justifies the need for elitist guidance.[118] This interpretation does not seem plausible to me. Backwardness is not only an excuse for not democratizing; it can be true, for example when promoters of elections noted that the present infrastructure does not allow China to organize national-level elections.[119] Some articles referred to backwardness in an openly normative sense and found it lamentable that thirty years of socialism had not yet made conditions ripe for democratization. Others clearly referred to powerlessness. Indeed, a backward culture allows bureaucratism to utilize peasants' inability to defend their own interest or even legal rights.[120] These approaches hardly mean to imply that the people need elitist guidance because of their backwardness.

The discussion about bureaucratism was meant to weaken the state claim for a monopoly on power. Naturally, no anti-Party platform developed in the official press, although the fact that the press needed to defend the Party indicates that the

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[116]   Misra 1998, pp. 162–163, 167.
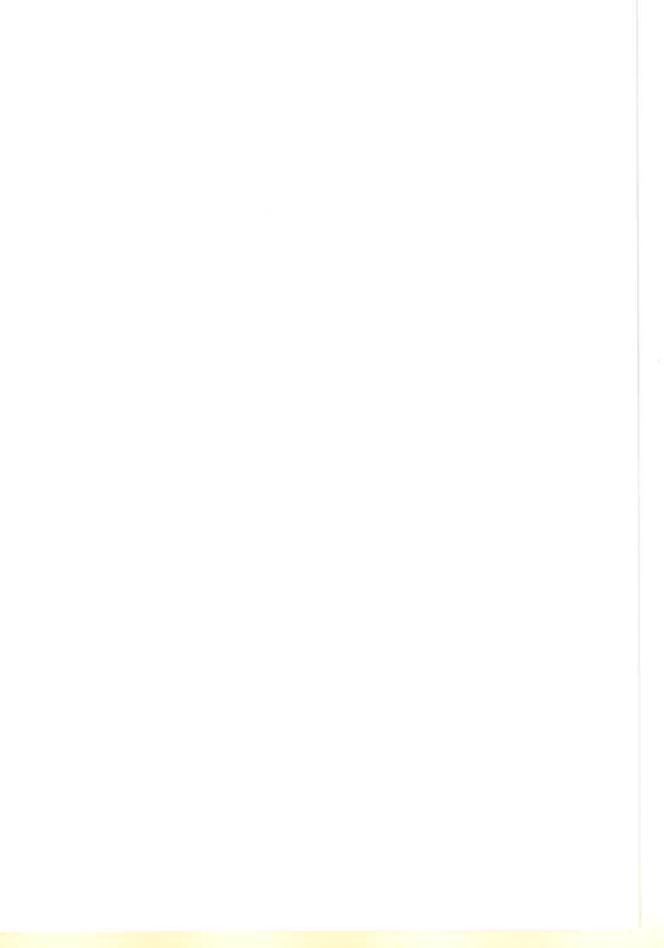
[117]   Misra 1998, pp. 162, 166.

[118]   Nathan 1986, p. 85.

[119]   After all, in 1980 a poor transportation network still meant that there were areas that could not be reached from national centers within a day or two. Television was a rarity then, and many villages did not even have electricity, so national electoral campaigning would mainly have to rely on the circulation of printed materials, which arrived in remote villages only after few days.

[120]   Jia Chunfeng and Wang Mengkui, *Zhexue yanjiu*, 1979:3.

anti-Party challenge was real in some non-official circles. For example, the well-known Chen Erjin's manifesto, although taking on a fully socialist standpoint, advocated a two-party system, that is, ending the Communist Party's power monopoly.[121] The official press defended the Party, but redefined its role. Censorship was not the only reason that the official discussion did not challenge the Party leadership, since the aim of many writers was to persuade the Party to voluntarily divide, delegate, and decentralize power. The discussion about bureaucratism promoted institutional checks on power and demanded a clear institutional definition of tasks and powers for all organs. Both checks on and well-defined limits to organizational powers would automatically limit the scope of the Party's power. Transfer of power to the state administration, the legislature, the judiciary, and enterprise management clarified roles, but also meant that the Party should not interfere in other institutions as long as they used their legitimate powers. Obviously, institutional reforms recommended in the discussion about bureaucratism would not leave the Party with a monopoly on power.

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[121]   Chen 1984, pp. 167–174.

THE PARIS COMMUNE: THE PARAGON OF SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

The Paris Commune (1871) was the paragon for proletarian democracy in the communist classics. Marx, Engels and Lenin had all admired its political system. Such Marxist classics as *The Civil War in France* and *State and Revolution* had used the practical example of the Paris Commune to sketch what a true proletarian state would look like. To an ordinary Chinese person, it was familiar from the early phase of the Cultural Revolution, when the main documents used to launch this movement recommended adopting the Paris Commune style of democratic rule.[1] At that time, the Paris Commune fever culminated in the establishment of the Shanghai Commune in 1967. The Paris Commune was a model for many radicals, both during and after the Cultural Revolution.[2] Thus, reviving the discussion about this model of democracy was not accidental because for many Chinese the Paris Commune type of socialist democratic rule and its form of an electoral system were what they knew best. In 1978–1981, the Paris Commune ideal appeared both in the official press and in Democracy Wall publications.[3]

In 1978, the Paris Commune became an issue precisely because of its roots in the Cultural Revolution. The first articles refuted the Gang of Four's egalitarian interpretation[4] of the wage system of the Commune or their overly anarchistic understanding of the Paris Commune style of elections as a method for replacing the incumbent government.[5] One article criticized the way the Commune had been used during Cultural Revolution to demand that all functionaries be elected. This particular article demonstrated that the Paris Commune system had combined

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[1] See, e.g., "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party concerning the Cultural Revolution." This document was adopted on Aug 8, 1966, published immediately in all major newspapers, and it is translated for example in Myers et al. 1986, p. 275. The Paris Commune (*Bali Gongshe*) provided inspiration for the leftists even earlier during the Great Leap Forward, as is evident in the naming of Chinese agricultural collectives as people's communes (*renmin gongshe*) (Gray 1990, pp. 308–311).

[2] See, e.g., Shengwulian, "Whither China?" in Benton and Hunter 1995, pp. 130–134.

[3] Lü Min, "Let us gradually abolish the bureaucratic system modeled after the Paris Commune", published in Widor 1984. Paltemaa 2006, ch. 9.

[4] Zhao Guozhu, *Liaoning daxue xuebao* 1978:1 and Luo Weiwu, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1978:4. Later this stance appears, e.g., in Chen Chongwu, *Wenhuibao*, March 16, 1979, p. 4.

[5] Li Guangyi, *Xiangtan daxue xuebao*, 1978:2, p. 70.

democracy and centralism by using both elections and appointments.[6] Apart from the general criticism of the Cultural Revolution for its ultra-egalitarian interpretation of the Commune, individual articles pointed out other misinterpretations as well. For example, one article reminded readers that although the Paris Commune had rejected separation of powers, this does not imply that power should be concentrated in the so-called *yiyuanhua*-fashion prevalent during the Cultural Revolution.[7] Corrective discourse continued throughout the years 1978–1981.

Very soon the discussion developed into a normative discourse calling for improving the existing political system along the lines of the innovations of the Paris Commune. In the beginning, the themes of the Paris Commune discussion did not diverge much from the general discussion about the need for democratization. Articles envisioned that Paris-Commune-style supervision could prevent the rise of leaders like Lin Biao and the Gang of Four and repeated the threat that the proletarian country could "lose its redness" if revisionists like them could get hold of state power. For example, one article stated that Lin Biao and the Gang of Four's trampling on the people's democracy had gone against the Paris Commune ideal. Still, in some localities such power fetishism was far from over in 1979. In these places, cadres demanded absolute obedience from the people, retaliated against those who dared to criticize them, and remained insensitive to the people's wellbeing. They had forgotten that cadres were entrusted with power by the people and that they should use their power to serve the people.[8] Like the article referenced above, many other articles published around 1979 included a moralistic call. To truly be a leader of the people one must serve the people in the way of the Paris Commune,[9] a writer urged, while another threatened that unless the Paris Commune system was adopted in China, the proletarian state system could regress into bourgeois parliamentarianism or even feudal absolutism.[10] Even later some voices measured socialism against lessons derived from the Commune to make a normative statement. For example, one article published in 1981 warned that because socialist rule by definition depends on people's democracy, socialist China must practice the democratic principle of the Paris Commune and reform those parts of the administrative system that are incompatible with socialist democracy.[11] However, the writer obviously did not only trust in ideological normativism alone, but supplemented it with appeals to instrumental benefits. Indeed,

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[6]   Li Guangyi, *Xiangtan daxue xuebao*, 1978:2, p. 71. Interestingly, the same argument was later revived to criticize optimism in 1979–1980.

[7]   Zhao Yongqing, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 69.

[8]   Wen Weimin, *Ningxia ribao*, Sept. 19, 1979, p. 3.

[9]   Bing Zhi, *Zhejiang ribao*, Mar. 17, 1979, p. 3.

[10] Cao Tejin and Sun Yaowen, *Shijie lishi* 1979:1, p. 19.

[11] Hu Jin, *Dongfang luncong* 1981:2, pp. 44–46.

people's democracy allegedly strengthens socialist construction, since it helps in the pooling of the people's collective wisdom and initiatives for economic development.[12]

Offering the Paris Commune as the paragon of socialist democracy, articles claimed that only by practicing the Paris Commune principle, can the people enjoy true democratic rights.[13] Writers asked that China learn institutionalization of democracy and popular supervision as well as methods for preventing economic and political privileges from the Commune.[14] Articles drew, both explicitly and implicitly, a connection between socialism and Paris-Commune-style democracy. Unlike nominal democracies only serving the bourgeois minority,[15] writers commonly asserted that the Paris Commune had been a true majoritarian democracy. Contrasted with the bureaucratic rule and exploitation of bourgeois democracies, the Commune was a working-class government with an officialdom wholeheartedly serving the people. Indeed, although the Paris Commune's democracy had developed from bourgeois democracy, it was in many ways opposite to empty bourgeois minority democracy: it held general elections which enabled the workers, as the majority, to be the true masters of the society, and used coercion only against the minority.[16] Allegedly, the Paris Commune allowed for more meaningful democracy by nominating candidates who represented the people's interest and by providing more chances for political influencing than rare occasions for voting do. Writers thus hinted that the institutions of real power should be directly elected. In addition, some articles supported other institutional reforms. Indeed, the Commune made the judiciary serve the people and concentrated real power in the government, instead of establishing separation of powers.[17] Predictably, these writers, and writers like them, implicitly shared a Marxist view that in bourgeois democracies people only elect the parliament as a facade, since the separation of powers allows the most important decisions to be made behind the scenes without popular control.

The first peak of the discussion about the Paris Commune was seen in 1978–1979. At this stage, the Paris Commune theme was closely linked to the topic of proletarian dictatorship. Echoing the discussion about the need for democracy under a genuine proletarian dictatorship, some articles in 1979 used the Paris Commune as a model to stress that democracy and dictatorship are interconnected.

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12 Hu Jin 1981:2, *Dongfang luncong* pp. 44–46.
13 Cang Hai, *Heilongjiang ribao*, Jan. 7, 1979, p. 3.
14 E.g. Guo Luoji, *Xin shiji* 1979:2, pp. 27–28.
15 Wang Zisong, *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, Mar. 17, 1979, p. 3, openly presents the USA as a bureaucratized bourgeois democracy.
16 Chen Chongwu, *Wenhuibao*, March 16, 1979, p. 4.
17 Lingyuan..., *Liaoning di yi shifan xuebao*, 1978:1, pp. 59–60.

Other writers connected the Paris Commune model with the Marxist aim of abolishing the state. For them the Paris Commune provided a model of a proletarian state taking steps towards the final democratization, to the point that the state itself becomes dispensable.

Some writers emphasized that the original writings by Marx, Engels and Lenin about the Paris Commune contained important democratic aspects, and they claimed to correct the views held during the Cultural Revolution that one-sidedly stressed proletarian dictatorship. To oppose those who mainly drew the lesson of the need for relentless class struggle from the Commune, one writer even claimed that the Paris Commune was founded because the people had demanded democratic rights. Overthrowing the bourgeoisie had only been their secondary aim. The Paris Commune had only established a proletarian dictatorship to protect the people's democracy. The writer hinted at another contemporary controversy as well by concluding that democracy is not only a means but also the aim when the proletariat fights for political power.[18]

If the motivation in 1978–1979 had been mainly practical, by 1980 the discussion about the Paris Commune had gained theoretical depth. Instead of simply introducing and promoting certain democratic practices, articles now debated about what kind of heritage the Paris Commune should provide to newer socialist countries. Instead of the uncritical admiration seen earlier, in this stage of the discussion both the successes and failures of the Paris Commune were talked about. In 1981 the press discussion also highlighted the Paris Commune because that year marked the 110th anniversary of the Commune.

The discussion about the Paris Commune is a good example of the 1978–1981 discourse being extremely democratic in spirit, although not deriving from the Western models for democracy. Participants turned to Marxism for democratic ideals especially in the early stage of the discussion. This stage was still selectively receptive to some ultra-leftist views. For example, one article openly supported the idea that the Paris Commune model for democracy and law would secure representation of the people's will and arouse active participation of the masses, meaning that the masses would finally be able to liberate themselves (*qunzhong ziji jiefang ziji*).[19] By the early 1980s, some comments already complemented the experience of the Paris Commune with Western conceptions and models. For example, one critical commentator advocated the separation of powers contrary to

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[18]   Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 53.

[19]   Chen Chongwu, *Wenhuibao*, March 16, 1979, p. 4. This expression is familiar from the radical documents of the Cultural Revolution, including "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party concerning the Cultural Revolution" (Aug 8, 1966) translated in Myers et al. 1986, p. 272.

the standard socialist model derived from the Paris Commune.[20] This comment actually recognized that Marxists may have been mistaken in their distrust of the separation of powers typical for Western democracies. Yet, even after some Western ideas started to appear in articles, democratization and Westernization clearly constituted two different, and often incompatible, trends in the press.

To increase the ideological appeal of the Paris-Commune-style democracy, many articles reminded their audience of how Lenin and Chinese Communists had originally learned from the Paris Commune. Some did point out, however, that later on there had been regression in this regard both in the Soviet Union and in China. in this regard both in the Soviet Union and in China. Writers offered the Paris Commune experience as a solution to contemporary problems. For example, the Paris Commune model of democracy was allegedly most valuable to China, with its feudal absolutist tradition and its tendency to ignore the Marxist idea that socialism constantly widens the sphere of democracy.[21] Some others used it to praise contemporary development. They saw the revolution and the post-1978 period as being faithful to the Paris Commune ideals, unlike the Cultural Revolution.[22]

The Paris-Commune-style elections

One reason for discussing the Paris Commune ideals was to stress the model it provided for proletarian election systems. The topic coexisted with official enthusiasm to expand elections. This official interest was first expressed by Deng Xiaoping who called for workshop elections in late 1978,[23] soon to be followed by the new election law in 1979 and elections of communal-level people's congresses in 1980. Therefore, apart from advocating elections in general, this topic evidently sought to strengthen the official interest in elections.

From November 1978 to February 1979, the press took up Deng Xiaoping's call for elections in factories, offices, and other grassroots units. At the time, there was a strongly favorable atmosphere in the press for advocating all the possible benefits elections could bring. Articles repeated the arguments of this general pro-

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[20] Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 52. This view is contrary to Deng Xiaoping's stance. Deng repeatedly denied the suitability of the separation of powers for socialism. See, e.g., "Take a Clear-Cut Stand against Bourgeois Liberalization" and "Address to Officers at the Rank of General and Above in Command of the Troops Enforcing Martial Law in Beijing" in Deng Xiaoping, Selected Works, vol. III, pp. 195 and 299.

[21] Qu Xuewu, *Xinan zhengfa xueyuan xuebao* 1980:2, p. 36.

[22] E.g. Duan Yuzhen, *Xinjiang shifan daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 66; Zhao Mingyi, *Wen shi zhe* 1981:4, p. 104.

[23] See Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 57; Ma Ju, *Dushu* 1981:5, pp. 24–25, for advocating these grassroots elections in the context of the Paris Commune elections.

electoral discussion in the context of the Paris Commune experience. For example, one article held that elections compel representatives to show responsibility towards the people, while the ability to decide their own affairs will boost the people's enthusiasm for development.[24] Others used the example of the Paris Commune to show that appointments will only foster responsibility towards one's superiors, while elections enable the people to force cadres to be responsible towards them.[25] One article even held that the people should be able to use the Paris Commune style of elections to prevent the state "from changing color", unlike previously when the Chinese people had no chance to oppose Lin Biao and the Gang of Four through the law and democratic choice.[26]

Sometimes articles used the Paris Commune experience to demand for further steps in Chinese electoral reform. As one article declared, due to the continuity of its feudal tradition, for the first 30 years of socialist rule the Chinese representative organs and elections were only a formality. Finally the time had come for combining the system of appointments with elections in the Paris Commune style. Not only grassroots leaders, but also people's congresses at all levels should be elected in order to make them reflect the people's will and power according to the Paris Commune principle.[27] Obviously, the writer wanted to extend elections to the national level as well. Another writer promoted elections by showing that earlier methods to fight bureaucratism had been miscalculated and inefficient. Therefore, China must now learn from this mistake and from the successes of the Paris Commune elections and wage system.[28]

Chinese articles often related the three measures that the Paris Commune used to prevent bureaucratization. These measures, praised in the communist classics, included replacement of the standing army with the people's militia, establishment of elections and a system for recall, and reduction of wage differentials. There was some discussion about the people's militia and democratic procedures in the army. However, the Paris Commune elections and wage system mainly inspired the discussion about democratization and anti-bureaucratization measures in China.

Especially in 1979 articles about the Paris Commune elections dwelled in the details of the original elections on March 26, 1871. The Paris Commune elections had used some measures now adopted in Chinese elections, such as secret

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[24] Li Dasan and Gou Haibo, *Hebei ribao*, Mar. 2, 1979, p. 3.

[25] Cang Hai, *Heilongjiang ribao*, Jan. 7, 1979, p. 3; Li Dasan and Gou Haibo, *Hebei ribao*, Mar. 2, 1979, p. 3.

[26] Cang Hai, *Heilongjiang ribao*, Jan. 7, 1979, p. 3; Li Dasan and Gou Haibo, *Hebei ribao*, Mar. 2, 1979, p. 3.

[27] Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 53–57.

[28] Cui Yunpeng, *Hebei daxue xuebao* 1980:2, p. 17.

ballot,[29] the people's right to nominate the candidates,[30] and the open possibility to apply for a post.[31] The Paris Commune elections were thus offered as a model for China. When article writers commented that the Paris Commune had adopted direct elections and abolished former limitations for electoral rights to give the people real chances to influence political outcomes, they probably wanted to see the Chinese system improved along these lines.

With typical arguments, one article asserted that due to China's backwardness, autocratic tradition, and its workers' low level of education, the Chinese workers have not been able to control the state directly. Therefore, learning about the practices of the Paris Commune, such as grassroots cadre elections, will contribute to Chinese socialism. Through elections, workers will learn to care for the state and for enterprises. Elections would embody the people's mastery over state functionaries. Besides, elections make both career promotions and demotions possible, solving the problem of actual lifelong tenure in Chinese politics. Likewise, the Paris Commune type of institutional guarantees for majority voting when the leadership makes decisions can guarantee collective leadership and prevent dictated decisions.[32]

Articles repeated the communist classics' evaluation that the Paris Commune held true working class elections. The Paris Commune had a better election system than the bourgeoisie, they said. The system was truly responsive to the constituency due to its demographically fair electoral districts, frequency of elections, and the ease with which candidates could be nominated. For the first time, a truly equal vote was held. Articles praised the Paris Commune elections for allowing the people to choose functionaries according to their preference. In Paris the result, writers claimed, was finding competent, dedicated, and morally sound functionaries, who were willing to share weal and woe with the people. They were representatives of the majority, not least because of their proletarian background. Besides, since elections had adopted a simple method, almost all workers could participate in voting.[33] Later, unlike in bourgeois democracies measuring leaders' popularity in elections held only once every few years, the Commune held representatives under continuous supervision. The extreme view claimed that the Paris Commune elections not only provided a means to overcome bureaucratism, but also marked the end of social hierarchy.[34]

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[29] Qu Xuewu, *Xinan zhengfa xueyuan xuebao* 1980:2, p. 33; Cao Changsheng and Zhang Xuebin, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 65.

[30] Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 56.

[31] Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 56.

[32] Hong Yunshan, *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 1980:6, pp. 6–8.

[33] Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 55.

[34] Wen Weimin, *Ningxia ribao*, Sept. 19, 1979, p. 3.

I interpret this emphasis on truly working class elections and institutions to emanate partly from the habit of expression. After all, for decades everything classified as proletarian connoted something positive. In addition, articles surely attempted to emphasize that elections and socialism go together. Moreover, the stress on the proletarian character of the Commune elections indicated that other proletarian countries should establish a similar kind of election system. The contrast between bourgeois elections and the Paris Commune elections was meant to imply that even if China had little to learn from bourgeois political systems, elections themselves are applicable to socialism.

In 1979, apart from a few exceptional articles noting that the Paris Commune had consulted people in appointments,[35] most writers still seemed to believe that the Paris Commune had actually elected or had been prepared to elect all functionaries. Despite some cautious voices, election enthusiasm continued in several articles still in 1981. They used the Paris Commune experience to cite examples of electing not only state functionaries, but all leaders ranging from factory managers to army officers. The most enthusiastic supporters even claimed that all posts in the executive branch, the judiciary, and educational institutions had been elective in the Paris Commune.[36] Apart from all workers' representatives, the Paris Commune had allegedly elected army officers on all levels. One result of the soldiers' ability to entrust a person of their liking to leadership posts, was that the soldiers obeyed officers well.[37] However, by 1980 the discussion generally recognized that the Paris Commune used not only elections, but also appointments. Indeed, the Paris Commune had elected central and local leaders, while it had appointed members of the bureaucracy, army officers, and technical cadres.[38] When China carries out its democratic reforms and cadre system reform, one article stated, the Paris Commune experience as a whole must be utilized in the total reform of the political system instead of copying only a single element. China should decide on the cadre selection system most suitable for each case, instead of adopting a single system of only elections or only appointments.[39]

Instead of using the Paris Commune elections to support electoral reform, articles now attempted to demonstrate that elections are not the only democratic method for selecting leaders. Indeed, appointments according to ability, specialization, experience, and dedication are in the interest of working people. If, instead of using their personal relations to the candidate as one of the selection criteria,

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[35]   Anon., *Jilin ribao*, Apr. 11, 1979, p. 3; Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 56.

[36]   Shao Jingjun and Jiang Shilin, *Dong Yue luncong* 1981:2, p. 39.

[37]   Cao Changsheng and Zhang Xuebin, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, pp. 65–66.

[38]   Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 137–138, 143–144; Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 79.

[39]   Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 145.

superiors select nominees after collective discussion and secret voting, then no violation of democracy has occurred.[40] Bringing appointments back to the agenda obviously was not a way to absolve the contemporary personnel selection system. Instead, articles demanded appointments through an open and meritocratic process. To restrain the earlier haste to make all leadership selection happen through elections, articles advocated gradual reform which would increase elections but would leave appointments in effect for some posts. Indeed, even the Paris Commune did not extend elections to all functionaries, although the Commune valued appointments less than elections. Therefore, the correct path for China is the gradual extension of elections from the grassroots upwards, instead of demanding direct elections of all functionaries at once.[41] Besides, elections are not automatically democratic if they remain only as a formality and do not follow the mass line.[42] This statement suggests that the quality of elections is at least as important as is the expansion of their use.

Along with elections and appointments, articles promoted examinations as a legitimate form of cadre selection. Indeed, the use of elections, appointments, and examinations should be interlinked, for in cadre selection, only by applying all of them can the people's will be respected, can cadres be deployed in a rational manner, and can talent be found.[43] Articles introduced the Paris Commune examinations to demand meritocracy. From the Western viewpoint there is nothing questionable in demanding examinations for bureaucrats, especially if the examinations in question test the knowledge and abilities needed in the particular field of administration. However, to demand that only those who have passed examinations be allowed to stand as candidates for elections conflicts with the democratic principle of equality.[44] Such a demanding criterion, an obvious and purposed misinterpretation of the Commune, seems quite elitist, especially in a country in which many local leaders were still illiterate. No doubt, the writer in question was actually urging for increasing the portion of intellectuals in decision making.

Already in 1979 many articles suggested that the Paris Commune experience was not directly transferable to China. Indeed, the proletariat in 19thcentury France was familiar with a parliamentary and electoral tradition and, therefore, could directly derive experience from bourgeois democracy in their country. China, with its long feudal tradition, could not practice the Paris Commune style

40   Gao Fang, *Qunzhong luncong* 1980:1, pp. 104–105; Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 141–142.

41   Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 143–144.

42   Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 143.

43   Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 143.

44   This demand was made by Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 137, 145.

of elections all at once. Writers suggested that China should learn from the Paris Commune system of combining appointments with elections.[45] Even if the Paris Commune system could not be directly copied in China, China should institution-alize its universal principles of preventing the servants of society from becoming its masters by practicing elections and establishing a just public wage system.[46]

In 1981, many articles reminded readers that since the Paris Commune had existed only for a short period, its political system was far from complete. Thus, all guesses about the kind of system it would have established in the long run are mere speculations. Indeed, it cannot be known, for example, whether it would have elected all leaders in the long run.[47] Some writers even criticized certain mistakes in the Paris Commune elections, such as the hasty timing[48] or all too brief tenure.[49] However, even critics lauded these elections for choosing working class representatives, abolishing leadership selection from above, and terminating over-concentration of power. Indeed, although the Paris Commune electoral system remained incomplete, the system of cadre responsibility to the electorate provides all proletarian states a model for preventing bureaucratization.[50]

Still, some writers were unsatisfied with the discussion accentuating elections not due to fear of the consequences of quick democratization, but rather because they saw mere elections as being insufficiently democratic. One article declared that democracy does not only mean a citizen's rights to nominate candidates for elections, cast ballots, and supervise functionaries. Although democratic elections are an important facet of democracy, the main aspect of democracy is equal right within the ruling class to administer the state. This requires that elections must be general, equal, and direct, and must really reflect the people's will and safeguard their interest. Socialism and democracy are closely related because collective ownership manifests only through cooperative production relations. Unless the working people have the right to administer and allocate the means of production, the cooperative relation changes into a coercive relation between rulers and the ruled. Unless the people's economic interest and democratic rights are respected, they may feel that socialism is a useless alien force. If this happens, socialism will lose its mass basis.[51]

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[45]   Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, pp. 53–57; Li Dasan and Gou Haibo, *Hebei ribao*, Mar. 2, 1979, p. 3.

[46]   Wang Zisong, *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, Mar. 17, 1979, p. 3.

[47]   Zhang Gao, *Mudanjiang shiyuan xuebao* 1980:1, p. 7.

[48]   Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 19.

[49]   Liu Renxue and Liu Hezhong, *Jilin ribao*, Feb. 25, 1981, p. 3.

[50]   Luo Chaoping, *Wuhan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 10.

[51]   Hu Jin, *Dongfang luncong* 1981:2, pp. 45–46.

I have not found any article in the official press that would have explicitly used Paris Commune democracy to propose that China should follow its example and guarantee electoral rights for everyone, regardless of their class background. Implicitly, hints in this direction were made when some articles mentioned that in the Commune the bourgeoisie had retained its electoral rights and even used them to elect bourgeois representatives. However, considering the specific attack against this view in one article, it is possible that some unofficial sources or un-published discussions had openly rejected class-based discrimination in the grant-ing of political rights. This article refuted this idea by remarking that the Paris Commune elections had a definite class character. Even if its electoral system did not prohibit the bourgeoisie from voting, it had systematically favored the work-ing class.[52] However, this article may also be criticizing the opposite view that doubted the truly proletarian character of the Commune on the grounds of its insufficient dictatorship against the exploiting classes.[53]

The Paris Commune type of popular supervision

Mere elections are not enough to guarantee that the elected will continue to serve the people once they are in office. The press reminded readers that supervision and recall systems were an important part of the Paris Commune cadre system. For guaranteeing persistent responsibility towards the people, a polity needs to combine electoral selection, constant supervision, and a recall system. Indeed, only in this way it is possible to guarantee that administrators continuously serve the people and to prevent self-seeking behavior because those who practice bu-reaucratism or dogmatism either will not be elected in the first place or, if elected, will encounter checks on their use of power. Another benefit is that the direct responsibility over the government makes the people more interested in the affairs of the state.[54]

Especially in 1979, articles commonly stressed how popular supervision would reveal power struggles and malpractices. Many made an open analogy to Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, thus linking their own proposals with the official criticism of these leftist leaders. One article even predicted that the measures for supervision and recall would prevent the bureaucracy from developing into a privileged stratum.[55] Combating privileges, naturally, remained one of the major achievements of the Paris Commune throughout the discussion, but this emphasis

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52   Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 139–141.
53   E.g. Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, pp. 46–47.
54   Gao Hongtao, *Dong Yue luncong* 1981:2, p. 49.
55   Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 57.

on the Cultural Revolution and the possibility of new class formation under socialism soon vanished from the officially sanctioned arenas of public discussion.

Only with recall procedures does the electorate have adequate means to compel functionaries to serve the people wholeheartedly and to correct mistakes in time if unqualified people have been elected, articles stated. Without any means to recall, the people cannot guarantee that functionaries will never tyrannize them or violate their rights. Indeed, even if the people soon saw the flaws of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, they did not have procedures to dismiss them.[56] The Paris Commune allegedly was ready to recall anyone who was shirking responsibility or guilty of malfeasance. It did not permit the representatives to regard their position as honorary, hinting that China also should not promote functionaries on the basis of seniority, but on talent instead. Articles advocated the recall of the unrepresentative, the dismissal of the incompetent, and the punishment of corrupt leaders in order to make popular supervision effective.

Articles praised the Paris Commune elections for putting an end to lifelong tenure and for encouraging accountability, obviously wanting to improve the Chinese situation as well. They contrasted lifelong tenure, causing cadres to develop a sense of responsibility only towards their superiors, with the combination of elections and recall to encourage responsibility towards the electorate. In 1979, a writer praised a system of elections and recall as a means for the people to participate in state affairs and safeguard implementation of their will. As a result, lifelong tenure can be terminated and the people will rotate positions, in accordance with the Marxist affirmation of the workers' ability to administer without the need for a privileged bureaucratic stratum.[57] Still in 1981, some writers exhorted China to learn from the Paris Commune style combination of elections, supervision, and recall when developing its own socialist democracy. Indeed, apart from expanding democracy within the state organs and increasing contact between cadres and masses, it is necessary to let the masses struggle against illegal activities to compensate for institutional defects in the Party and state organs.[58] These writers wanted to assure readers that the Party and state authority will be enhanced too, if they allow popular supervision of their ranks and rid themselves of unpopular elements.

In order to facilitate supervision, articles called for more transparency. They introduced how the Paris Commune had promoted numerous ways for the constituency to stay in contact with their representatives. They related how Paris Commune functionaries had publicized a record of their activities, achievements,

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[56]   Cui Yunpeng, *Hebei daxue xuebao* 1980:2, p. 22.
[57]   Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 58.
[58]   Duan Yuzhen, *Xinjiang shifan daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 64.

and stances on certain issues. The Commune had established institutions for popular feedback. One article cited appeals to higher-level organs as a way for the people to communicate their dissatisfaction.[59] Ordinary workers could advance their opinions in letters to the editor and in letters to governmental organs. They could turn to mass organizations, such as trade unions, the women's federation, and the Communist Internationale, which provided communication channels between members and the political leadership. All of these channels were present in the Chinese system at the time, meaning that instead of institutional innovation, the press attempted to make these existing channels more meaningful.

The press suggested that the leadership should meet with their constituency face-to-face. Articles described how in Paris, people's representatives and decision makers often attended mass meetings. In mass meetings representatives answered inquiries and introduced their platforms, and also used these meetings to propagate laws and governmental measures and to inspire their audiences to support the common cause. Mass meetings provided the constituency a chance to comment on representatives' work reports. In this way the workers' clubs not only supported but also supervised leaders. Representatives listened to opinions and suggestions, some of which were adopted for policy making. Indeed, decisions thus solicited accorded with the people's interest, and also with socialist principles requiring the state to provide opportunities for the people to participate in administration.[60]

Articles praised how Parisians had used worker's clubs and press discussions to express their opinions. One article described how workers' clubs and trade unions had gathered workers to discuss political, military, and economic matters. Some had even published their own newspapers.[61] One article posited that freedom of press and assembly, along with decision makers' responsibility to participate personally in policy execution and to report to the people, were all beneficial ways of keeping functionaries in touch with the people.[62] When articles praised the channels of criticism such as the press, workers' clubs, and mass organizations, they were actually talking about political civil society with an independent press and independent associations. No doubt, articles implicitly urged China to follow the Paris Commune in this respect.

However, articles did not call for opposition in the Western sense. Articles commonly emphasized the proletarian, sometimes even anti-bourgeois, character of association. Articles maintained that the Paris Commune press and workers'

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[59]　Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1 p. 59.

[60]　Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 20.

[61]　Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 20.

[62]　Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 79.

clubs were organs for communication between the Commune and the masses.[63] One article even cited how public criticism had successfully convinced two leadership camps to unite.[64] Obviously, public criticism was meant to provide for more efficient leadership and civil society was thought to provide additional chances for democratic centralist communication between leaders and the led.

The Chinese discussion linked political rights granted by the Paris Commune with popular supervision of government. It contended that freedoms of speech, assembly, and publication facilitated popular supervision. Some writers even maintained that the Commune had permitted different ideological schools to publish their various views and even to organize.[65] The Commune did not demand unity, but tolerated different stances as long as one did not slander the Commune.[66] These writers requested at least contention of different socialist views, and possibly even non-socialist ones. For example, one article analyzed how freedoms of press and association had provided a channel for the people to safeguard their interest, to express their opinions, and to criticize their leaders.[67] The wish to expand political freedoms in China appeared throughout the discussion about the Paris Commune.[68]

The press discussion cited the Paris Commune measures to promote democracy at the workplace. At the time, China was reintroducing elections for workers' congresses in factories, and some factory managers had even been elected by workers. Numerous articles mentioned, and some even introduced, the experimentation of the Paris Commune in this field. As one article put it, the Paris Commune style democracy in factories, along with autonomy for education institutions and artists' associations, constituted democracy in which the people could participate directly in administration, instead of being ruled by others.[69] In addition, the discussion referred to many other contemporary topics in passing. The Paris Commune also served as an example of the democratic atmosphere in culture and the

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[63]   Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 20; Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 80.

[64]   Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 80. If this comment alluded to the contemporary Chinese situation, it was urging for the reformist leaders to unite with Hua Guofeng.

[65]   Gao Shuhua, *Mudanjiang shiyuan xuebao* 1981:3, p. 13. This comment could, and I believe does, suggest that even non-socialist organization should be permitted. However, if it referred to the contemporary power struggle within the Chinese leadership, it was urging for socialist pluralism. Considering that the Paris Commune ideal itself belonged to the leftist vocabulary, the latter interpretation is quite possible.

[66]   Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 54.

[67]   Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 80.

[68]   See, e.g., Cao Tejin and Sun Yaowen, *Shijie lishi* 1979:1, p. 14; Li Shihua, *Jilin ribao*, Mar. 18, 1981, p. 3.

[69]   Shen Baoxiang, *Wenhuibao*, Mar. 23, 1981, p. 3.

sciences,[70] or for using specialists.[71] Furthermore, one writer posited that the separation of politics and religion marked the ideological liberation of the Commune.[72] Perhaps the writer was calling for a similar ideological liberation in China, of course not from any traditional religion but from Maoist dogmas.

In 1978–1981, the Chinese press discussion praised the economic measures of the Paris Commune for preventing bureaucratization and corruption. As the communist classics presented it, the Paris Commune had paid functionaries salaries comparable to a skilled worker's pay in order to prevent public servants from becoming the masters of the society. Throughout the discussion, many articles maintained that relatively small wage differentials help uproot material privileges and misspending. Low wages had arguably guaranteed that functionaries serving the Paris Commune were honest and devoted to the Commune. Smaller wage differentials bring leaders closer to the ordinary people and make them more concerned for the people's wellbeing, articles commonly asserted. Likewise, the people trust leaders who do not pursue personal material gain. Indeed, the altruism of the Paris Commune and the Chinese Communist Party alike had won them the people's support in the revolution, but later pursuit of privilege in the Chinese Communist Party ranks had gradually undermined popular enthusiasm and the reputation of the Party.[73] Along with more equal pay for functionaries, some articles used the Commune example to urge for the prohibition of holding more than one office at a time.

In 1980 and 1981, many articles began to stress that the Paris Commune wage system did not mean full egalitarianism. Although this system was meant to eliminate former inequalities, it still rewarded skill and talent. Indeed, the Commune had no plan to level all wages. Its wage differentials were meant to be a permanent, not temporary, phenomenon.[74] This stance explicitly criticized the egalitarian interpretation of the Commune wage system during the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, all writers agreed that the wage system must not give undeserved benefits to those holding office. It should not encourage people to pursue a bureaucratic career in order to amass wealth or advance their social position. Echoing the criticism of the Mao-era system through an allusion to feudal rule, one writer described how the Paris Commune measures had curbed the feudal practices of using one's position to solicit bribes and to build factions by rewarding one's followers' loyalty with governmental positions.[75]

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[70]   Hu Jin, *Dongfang luncong* 1981:2, p. 47.

[71]   Guan Jingxu, *Anhui shida xuebao* 1981:4, p. 85.

[72]   Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 78.

[73]   Cui Yunpeng, *Hebei daxue xuebao* 1980:2, p. 20–23.

[74]   E.g. Xu Hongwu et al., *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 56.

[75]   Hong Yunshan, *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 1980:6, p. 8.

However, still in 1981 many writers supported the Commune wage system for the original egalitarian reasons. For example, one article could still state that the Paris Commune wage system rooted out the special privileged bureaucratic stratum, making its functionaries differ from the workers only in division of labor.[76] Others saw an egalitarian wage system as an economic embodiment of political equality under socialism.[77] Evidently leftist egalitarian voices could still receive publicity at a time when other writers had already begun to express their support for contemporary wage reforms meant to reward diligence and talent.

Democratic centralism in the Commune

The press also appreciated the Paris Commune for its model performance of democratic centralism. Indeed, unlike bourgeois bureaucratic centralization, the Paris Commune had initiated several measures to centralize popular opinions.[78] However, its mastery in democratic centralism did not mean that it had managed to correctly balance the relationship between democracy and dictatorship. Indeed, although the Paris Commune had properly handled the relation between democracy and centralism, it had failed in finding a proper balance between democracy and dictatorship against the class enemy. This failure had caused its military defeat.[79]

Many writers highlighted collective leadership in the Paris Commune. Comparing collective leadership favorably with the authoritarian meeting culture still common in China, they related how the Commune decision-making organs had collectively deliberated over all issues. Some purportedly interpreted that in the Commune deliberation had ended in majority vote in order to provide an extra measure against authoritarianism.[80] Writers lauded the Paris Commune measures for preventing the over-concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals, such as elimination of double offices,[81] or a rotating chairmanship.[82] Some articles explicitly contrasted collective leadership with personality cults.[83] A masterpiece of persuasion was the article claiming that despite its ideologically non-Marxist leadership the Commune often reached correct decisions due to collective

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[76]   Xiao Houzhi, *Wuhan shiyuan Hankou fenbu xiaokan* 1981:1, p. 5.

[77]   Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 79.

[78]   Chen Chongwu, *Wenhuibao*, March 16, 1979, p. 4.

[79]   Qu Xuewu, *Xinan zhengfa xueyuan xuebao* 1980:2, p. 35.

[80]   Xu Shanguang, *Wuhan shifan xueyuan xiebao* 1981:1, pp. 2–3.

[81]   Chen Yaobin, *Hebei ribao*, Nov. 6, 1980, p. 3.

[82]   Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p.59; Anon., *Jilin ribao*, Apr. 11, 1979, p. 3; Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 19–20.

[83]   Qiu Shaowei, *Gansu ribao*, Mar. 18, 1980; Li Shihua, *Jilin ribao*, Mar. 18, 1981, p. 3.

leadership. The Commune made decisions only after hearing differing opinions, after which the majority's decision was accepted. Since it based decisions on widely gathered opinions, the Commune was able to respond to demands of the masses and the revolutionary situation.[84]

Some articles identified elections with democracy and appointments with centralism. However, others responded that elections and appointments embody both democracy and centralism. Even elections simultaneously have democratic mass line elements and centralist elements like the Party leadership.[85] Another writer identified the Paris Commune elections and recall system as democracy, but saw that the Commune leaders also exemplified proletarian centralism, since the Commune functionaries were not only the people's servants but also their leaders. Because they dealt with matters according to the people's will and interest, the people supported and obeyed their leadership. Therefore, centralism under the Commune was based on democracy. This democratic way of centralization distinguished the Paris Commune leadership from bureaucratic or patriarchal centralization.[86]

The communist anti-bureaucratic tradition idealizing direct democracy is evident in the discussion about the Paris Commune. A milder stance merely noted that to oppose self-seeking tendencies among bureaucrats, socialist people's democracy should allow commoners to directly participate in the administration of the state in order to guarantee that cadres will respond to the people's will.[87] Certain articles went further and used the Paris Commune as an example of dismantling the bureaucratic system in its entirety. According to this position, the method of the Paris Commune for uprooting bureaucratization and abolishing a bureaucratic stratum had been to allow everyone to serve as a bureaucrat in turn.[88] In other words, these writers assumed that the Commune had taken one important step in the withering of the state, which happens when a country moves towards communism. Other writers, however, reproached this kind of extremism. Indeed, the people's supervision in the Paris Commune did not refer to overthrowing the whole bureaucracy or using hostile wall posters as had happened during the Cultural Revolution. Instead, supervision should contain reasoned and well-intentioned criticism and proposals.[89]

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[84]   Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 19–20.

[85]   Zhang Xisi, *Shandong daxue wenke lunwen jikan* 1981:1, p. 143.

[86]   Zhao Yongqing, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 70–71.

[87]   Hu Jin, *Dongfang luncong* 1981:2, p. 47.

[88]   Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 58; Qu Xuewu, *Xinan zhengfa xueyuan xuebao* 1980:2, p. 34; Gao Shuhua, *Mudanjiang shiyuan xuebao* 1981:3, pp. 12–16.

[89]   Zhao Yongqing, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 71.

1980–1981: Critical evaluation of the Paris Commune

From 1980 onwards, the press revealed that sometimes the Paris Commune had adopted far from ideal policies and institutional arrangements. To undermine dogmatic and one-sided admiration, the press now adopted the practice-oriented approach of evaluating both the successes and the failures of the Commune.[90] In the case of the Paris Commune, this reformist approach meant questioning many democratic implications of Marxist classics and the earlier leftist dogma. Besides, the new approach underlined that socialism was not the same in all countries and at all times, and even within a country proper policies could differ in different situations. Accordingly, any particular measure taken by the Paris Commune cannot be read as a standard for socialism in general. Therefore, China can be socialist even if it does not apply certain concrete measures of the Paris Commune.

Some of these critical articles explicitly reminded readers about the need for objectivity in studying history. Although they approved research of history for the purpose of finding inspiration for contemporary development,[91] they reproached using history in an instrumentalist manner to strengthen one's own position. They demanded that historical research must respect facts and avoid one-sidedness. The phenomenon should be put in its historical context and limitations of place and time should be recognized. Indeed, the Paris Commune was a pioneer of the new socialist society, but not its paragon. Thus, there are no grounds for taking its concrete measures as a general model for socialism. Still, this does not mean that nothing can be learned from the Commune just because it was not a fully proletarian state power.[92]

For the purpose of demonstrating the dangers of uncritically copying the Paris Commune model, some writers reminded readers that the principles of the Paris Commune have been misunderstood before. Many articles mentioned that the Paris Commune wage system had often been mistaken for absolute egalitarianism. Indeed, even Marx himself had criticized equating the Paris Commune wage system with the socialist wage principle rewarding each person according to her work.[93] Others even warned that the Commune model could be used for treacherous purposes, as allegedly had happened during the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, Lin Biao and the Gang of Four had used the Paris Commune model

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[90] In other words, this new approach derives directly from the calls to "seek truth from facts" and to recognize that "practice is the sole criterion for truth."

[91] See, e.g., Chang Runhua, *Guoji gongyun jiaoyancankao* 1981: vol. 3, pp. 5–6.

[92] Wang Lian, *Wen shi zhe* 1981:4, p. 96.

[93] Gao Chao, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 5.

against the proletarian state. Unlike the Paris Commune, in which the bureaucratic stratum was replaced with true social servants, the Lin Biao and Gang of Four used "elections" and "dismissals" to get rid of civil servants. In line with the Paris Commune, the Shanghai Commune they founded in 1967 had no Party, but the fact that the Paris Commune lacked proletarian party leadership is not its principle but its defect.[94]

This methodological criticism was used to argue that the Paris Commune principle could not be reduced to its election and wage systems. Rather, the Paris Commune elections were products of a particular situation, making them non-transferable to dissimilar situations. The Paris Commune had lasted for only 72 days and had extended only to Paris and its vicinities. Such limited experience hardly makes it a useful standard for a nation-state, critical articles maintained. Writers reminded readers that even the Paris Commune had used appointments along with elections. Indeed, the Paris Commune had elected only the leaders of the national- and grassroots-level organs, not the whole bureaucracy.[95] Even its haste to conduct direct elections received some criticism.

This stance argued that socialist states take many forms. Due to historical development and local variations they cannot be identical to the Paris Commune. As one article listed, socialist countries have, legitimately and respecting their particular situations, established such distinctive forms of authority as the commune, the soviets, and the people's congresses.[96] Moreover, newer socialist states have actually attained a much fuller experience with socialist systems than the Commune had.[97] Besides, not all Paris Commune measures were even socialist in essence.[98]

One way to censure the earlier uncritical admiration of the Paris Commune was to show defects in the Paris Commune model. Solutions like the abolishment of the standing army were simply unfeasible,[99] while some other Paris Commune measures cannot be practiced on the national scale or before the advent of full-scale communism.[100] Combining legislative and executive tasks had already proved to be impractical at the local level. In the Paris Commune, overburdened

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[94]   Gao Fang, *Qunzhong luncong* 1980:1, pp. 101–103.

[95]   Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 52.

[96]   Gao Chao, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, pp. 3–4.

[97]   Hong Yunshan, *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 1980:6, p. 6.

[98]   Gao Chao, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, pp. 3–4.

[99]   Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 52. Earlier Hong Yunshan had held a somewhat milder opinion, seeing that the standing army and police could not be abolished for a long time, see Hong Yunshan, *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 1980:6 p. 5.

[100]   Gao Chao, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 5.

decision makers had had to sometimes choose between skipping meetings and compromising implementation.[101]

In 1981,[102] some articles began to sketch an even darker picture about the reality of the Paris Commune style of democracy. These articles remarked that its democracy did not function ideally even during the Commune's short existence. Its democracy had resulted in discord between different authorities and in uncoordinated orders. Indeed, the authorities of the Commune held undefined and contradictory powers. Thereby, the Paris Commune had even been unable to establish exclusive control over its armed forces.[103] The Commune had decided even the most trivial matters collectively. Consequently, its representatives were left with too little time for essential issues and background investigation. The rotating chairmanship system diffused responsibility and harmed the continuity of leadership. Indeed, at some stages the Commune even elected a new chairman at each meeting, although it would be fully democratic to elect one for a designated number of years. This shows how the Paris Commune confused the difference between authoritarianism and authority. In order to prevent authoritarianism, they disregarded authority. Hence, they had been unable to properly handle the relations between democracy and centralism.[104]

The critical articles evidently used the Paris Commune experience to stress the need for order and unity. Instead of accentuating the democratic experience of the Commune, these articles accused it of insufficient centralization. The blame fell on anarchistic and bourgeois influences. The result, articles emphasized, had been the military defeat of the Commune. Indeed, it was a mistake to let the bourgeoisie participate in elections and conduct counterrevolutionary activities. Thereby, the Commune was to blame for both bourgeois liberalization and petty producers' anarchy, along with weakening the proletarian dictatorship and ignoring that "a strong and united revolutionary authority" is needed to guide democracy. The Commune ignored that a high degree of centralization based on a high degree of democracy is a prerequisite for proletarian democracy.[105] Evidently, this writer emphasized the need for Party leadership, both to blame the Commune for being insufficiently socialist and to oppose the standpoints which called for the relaxation of the Party's role.

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[101] Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 53.

[102] Individual voices had mentioned power struggles and unclear power arrangements resulting from the Paris Commune power structures even earlier. See Shen Chenxing, *Jilin daxue xuebao* 1979:5, p. 115.

[103] Ma Xiaoyuan, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:1, p. 2–5.

[104] Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 23.

[105] Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 78–80.

Although these articles denied that the Paris Commune style of democracy could be adapted to the Chinese conditions as such, they by no means undervalued democratization as a part of the heritage of the Paris Commune. Writers still admitted that the Paris Commune provided valuable experience about how to organize socialist democracy and elections. Although the election system was no longer seen as transferable from the Paris Commune, writers generally still held that competitive elections are an important aspect of proletarian democracy.[106] Indeed, even if the hastiness to arrange elections contributed to the defeat of the Paris Commune, the elections themselves were a characteristic of the new type of proletarian state.[107]

1980–1981: the Paris Commune principles

One press topic which emphasized democratic aspects of the Paris Commune was the discussion about the Paris Commune principles. By reinterpreting the ortho-dox Marxist vocabulary, articles borrowed its normative power. Hardly any truly socialist system could ignore such basic teachings by Marx and still remain social-ist, articles seemed to imply. Nevertheless, the discussion in 1980–1981 tried to avoid simplistically equating the Paris Commune principles with individual measures like elections, supervision, and an egalitarian wage system as had been common in 1979.[108]

The discussion began as a corrective discourse analyzing Marx' original say-ings about the Paris Commune principles. According to Marx' often cited words, the Paris Commune principle taught that the proletariat should not only seize state power, but should also use it for proletarian aims. During the Cultural Revolution, the interpretation of this principle had allegedly emphasized the aspect of prole-tarian revolution totally destroying the old bourgeois state system, articles held. Contrarily, the press wanted to emphasize democratic aspects of the Commune in 1980–1981. For this purpose, writers shifted the stress from the part mentioning the smashing of the bourgeois state system to the part emphasizing that the prole-tariat must establish its own political institutions.

Several articles turned to Karl Marx' writings and found that he had already concluded during the revolutionary wave of 1848 that it was not enough for the proletariat to try to forward their cause within a bourgeois state. Rather, they should seize power for themselves. This conclusion thus could not be the Paris

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[106]   See, e.g., Xu Hongwu et al., *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 53, Luo Chaoping, *Wuhan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 7.

[107]   Guan Jingxu, *Anhui shida xuebao* 1981:4, p. 46.

[108]   E.g. Shen Chenxing, *Jilin daxue xuebao* 1979:5, p. 119.

Commune principle. The new insight provided by the Paris Commune in 1871 dealt with the characteristics of the proletarian state system replacing bourgeois rule.[109] Articles stressed that Marx had highly appreciated the democratic character of this budding proletarian rule. This interpretation naturally led to a normative call for learning from the democratic aspects of the Paris Commune principle. Indeed, proletarian states must learn from the democratic principles of the Commune, which include measures like direct elections, decision by majority vote and anti-privilege procedures as well as freedom of speech and association.[110]

In attacking the interpretation of continuous class struggle prevalent during the Cultural Revolution, some writers not only emphasized democracy, but construed the two parts of Marx' quotation as separate phases of revolution with different tasks. According to this stance, the Paris Commune's two aspects are both important in proletarian liberation, but they are useful in different historical stages: before the revolution the primary aim is to smash the old state organs, while after the revolution the primary task is to strengthen the proletarian state and the people's democracy in order to prevent the servants of the society from becoming its masters.[111] Indeed, it would be a mistake to continue emphasizing the smashing (*po*) of the state when the proletariat already is in power and to ignore the construction (*li*) of new democratic institutions, like Lin Biao and the Gang of Four had done. Recognizing the proper tasks for each period demarcates socialism from anarchism, which concentrates only in destroying, and from rightist opportunism, which doesn't advocate smashing the old state. Instead, after the revolution it is time to concentrate on establishing a new system, which makes the people masters of society through elections, supervision, recall, and a just public wage system.[112]

However, other writers did not agree that Marx had defined two stages of proletarian revolution when he had emphasized both smashing the bourgeois state system and using the state for proletarian purposes. Instead, he arguably had specified two continuing functions of a proletarian state. Accordingly, the Paris Commune principle emphasizes both dictatorship against the enemy and democracy for the people. Following this line, one writer suggested that under the people's democratic dictatorship the proletarian state is a means for the people's economic and social liberation on the road to communism. In the Paris Commune, the state was not an instrument of class oppression but of common power of the majority of people. Thus, it is a suitable political form for the liberation of man-

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[109] E.g. Gao Chao, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, pp. 2–3; Liu Shitian, *Mudanjiang shiyuan xuebao* 1981:3, pp. 8–9.

[110] Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 52.

[111] Gao Chao, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 3.

[112] Zhao Mingyi, *Wen shi zhe* 1981:4, p. 101–104.

kind. The Paris Commune experience thus shows that democracy cannot be seen only as a method (*fangfa*) or a form (*xingshi*). Instead, safeguarding the people's rights to administer the state helps to unite the people and to protect revolutionary aims. Likewise, the Paris Commune experience shows that the people's rights are not bestowed by rulers, but result from the proletarian struggle to gain these rights.[113] Evidently, this interpretation opposed the continuation of intense class struggle in the socialist period.

If critics had censured the Paris Commune for having shown too much tolerance towards the bourgeoisie, some others offered its tolerance as something for China to emulate. Indeed, because proletarian democratization is the same process as proletarian liberalization, class struggle methods must be rational and humane. Coercive class suppression is unnecessary, since the Party aims at abolishing classes and class rule, but also because the Party should unite all possible forces against a minimal minority of elements undermining the state system. The Paris Commune experience gives insight about using democracy as an instrument to abolish the economic inequality which produces different classes. Although collective ownership is a requisite for the economic liberation of labor and for providing the economic base for the proletarian state power, economic liberation should create new forms of labor based on free organization (*ziyou lianhe*) allowing workers themselves to organize production.[114] Here the writer joined those contemporary voices who criticized the understanding that state ownership was synonymous with socialism.

Some writers advocated that the Paris Commune established its institutions not only for political, but also for economic liberation. Indeed, both Marx and Lenin saw proletarian power as an instrument for establishing a new economic order in which free association replaces former enslaving economic conditions.[115] Thereby, under socialist democracy all political power returns to the people giving the people full ownership and the right to control the means of production.[116] One article, for example, declared that the Paris Commune principles are the revolutionary principle of smashing the old state system, the democratic principle of an elected working class government, and the economic principle of free association. In the liberation of the proletariat, the revolutionary principle is a prerequisite for liberation, the democratic principle is necessary for the proletarian class content, while free organization is the final aim. By reducing the Paris Commune principle to its political principle only, the unity of political and economic reform is lost, and without this unity both revolution and democracy would become meaningless.

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113   Xiao Houzhi, *Wuhan shiyuan Hankou fenbu xiaokan* 1981:1, pp. 2–5.

114   Zhou Haile, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:3–4, p. 130–131.

115   Wu Qiong, *Guoji gongyun jiaoyan cankao* 1981:3, pp. 13–15.

116   Duan Yuzhen, *Xinjiang shifan daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 64.

The principle of free organization aims at liberating labor and establishing a class-less society; in this endeavor the creation of a public wage system that embodies political equality and abolishes the old coercive organs safeguarding the bourgeois economy plays a part. Economic liberation includes the socialization of the means of production, workers' democratic administration in factories, legislation protecting the labor force, as well as reforms for advancing proletarian education and culture. In this way, obstacles to free organization will be removed. According to Marxism, the Paris Commune principles reflect the course of the liberation of labor.[117]

These writers emphasizing economic liberation could have had several aims, and it is possible that they were not all alluding to the same kinds of developments. In contemporary China, control over the means of production could refer to workplace democracy in factories or reemerging private production in agriculture. The former is a traditional Marxist ideal taking place under collective ownership, while the latter implies private ownership. Workplace democracy was overtly on the agenda of several writers drawing inspiration from the Paris Commune.[118] They urged for democratic rather than individualistic control over the means of production.[119] Hence, free association seems to call for independent worker organization, such as independent labor unions, or direct worker control in factories.

Other writers turned directly to Marx and noticed that in the original texts in German and Russian, as well as in English translations, the Paris Commune principle as a term appeared in plural and not in singular form.[120] This interpretation allowed writers to choose any special feature they wanted to stress, at least of those mentioned by Marx, and refer to it as one of the Paris Commune principles. Many features familiar from the early part of the discussion reemerged, now as one of the Paris Commune principles. Again it was most appropriate to stress how the Paris Commune had organized elections, supervised its leaders, or eradicated privileges and inequality. For example, one writer maintained that the Paris Commune principle is embodied in all commune members' grasp of the common power and in the democratic centralist majority principle, interpreted to include collective leadership with a rotating chairmanship to prevent autocracy.[121] Several writers, evidently to support China's recent "opening up" in the areas of the

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[117] Zhou Haile, *Zengming* 1981:1, pp. 77–82.

[118] Workplace democracy was on the official agenda as well. For the development of workplace democracy, see Chen An 1999, ch. 2.

[119] As of 1981 the economic privatization plan had not yet reached Chinese cities; writers seem to have inquired into the issues of a more democratic workplace and society, rather than privatization and the ideal of a small state.

[120] The Chinese language seldom differentiates between singular and plural.

[121] Jia Fuhai and Cheng Jie, *Gansu ribao*, Mar. 17, 1981, p. 4.

economy and foreign relations, chose to emphasize the internationalism of the Commune.

Some articles warned against this tendency. One writer reminded readers that the Paris Commune "principles" cannot be listed, and some of the Commune's characteristics actually reflected conditions specific to France. Besides, the Paris Commune principles are interlinked. For example, the Commune combined legislative and executive powers in a same organ, local autonomy with centralized administration, and functionaries' elections with recall procedures and fair wage levels. Therefore, one single principle makes sense only as a part of the whole.[122] Another writer proposed that the Paris Commune principle refers to the general conditions and the road of the proletarian revolution. Instead of having one fundamental principle, this principle changes according to conditions.[123] In other words, listing individual features of this principle is partial at best.

From the principle of establishing a new society through smashing old state institutions and establishing proletarian democracy in their place, writers could discern extremely democratic consequences. As one article sketched, proletarian democracy aims at political and economic reforms, which make the abolishment of classes and class rule of any kind possible. Marx himself was cited to emphasize that the new proletarian democracy brings equality, quite unlike the earlier political systems that enabled the minority to enslave the people politically and exploit them economically. Hence, democracy and the people's government are not aims themselves, but instruments of working class liberation. Other forms of liberation are worker administration in factories, freedom of religion, and women's emancipation. Finally in communism free association prevails and everyone can participate in administering society and the state.[124] Another article stated that, contrary to the former belief that the masses need to be led by the able, the Paris Commune showed that the masses can govern themselves. They are capable of orderly and dedicated action for the common good even in the midst of difficulties. They know how to elect able representatives recruited from a large pool of talent among the masses.[125] These kinds of comments carried strong normative tones.

Many articles followed the Marxist tradition in claiming that the absence of a communist party leadership had been one of the main defects of the Paris Commune. However, in the context of the discussion about the Paris Commune principles, even the need for a united and disciplined could be interpreted in a democratic way. As one article argued, the failure of the Paris Commune proves

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[122]　Wu Qiong, *Guoji gongyun jiaoyan cankao* 1981:3, p. 14–15.

[123]　Gao Chao, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 3.

[124]　Zhou Haile, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:3–4, p. 125–129.

[125]　Jia Fuhai and Cheng Jie, *Gansu ribao*, Mar. 17, 1981, p. 4.

that a communist party is necessary to lead the people's emancipation. However, the Commune experience showed that advancing the people's interest and the socialist cause are possible only as long as this party maintains close relations with the people. Therefore, the eternal Paris Commune principle requires the Communist Party to improve its leadership and decentralize its power.[126] Indeed, the fundamental principle of the Paris Commune is to guarantee the people's supreme power to administer the state and run social affairs. Thus, under socialism no social group, organization, or individual may ignore the people's power or use this power single-handedly. Unless the masses possess true administrative powers and the ability to supervise leadership and the means of production, their enthusiasm to work for modernization may suffer. Even worse, the collective ownership of the means of production may cease to be a reality. Thus, a socialist society does not permit any repression or exploitation. On the contrary, it respects the masses and values their labor.[127] Another writer maintained that all political power returns to the people under socialist democracy. The people have full ownership and control over the means of production. Still, socialist democracy must uphold the Four Cardinal Principles because they reflect the true interest of the people. Their core is the Party leadership, the absence of which caused the failure of the Paris Commune. Yet, the Party should not resort to coercion to uphold its position, but rather it should lead through its exemplary working style.[128] Although these arguments emphasized the Party's role, they purposely limited its scope.

1981: Was the Paris Commune truly a proletarian dictatorship?

If the discussion about the Paris Commune principles fully affirmed the need to adopt some of the democratic experiments of the Paris Commune in China, those who doubted the transferability of the Paris Commune measures introduced another topic. They began to question whether the Paris Commune had been a proletarian dictatorship and a socialist system at all. For a Chinese educated in Marxist terminology a natural conclusion was that if the answer was negative, China, being at a more advanced stage of socialist transformation, had very little to learn from the Paris Commune. However, if the Paris Commune had all the basic characteristics of a proletarian dictatorship, China could derive lessons from its example.

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[126] Shao Jingjun and Jiang Shilin, *Dong Yue luncong* 1981:2, pp. 40–41, 43.

[127] Shao Jingjun and Jiang Shilin, *Dong Yue luncong* 1981:2, pp. 39–40.

[128] Duan Yuzhen, *Xinjiang shifan daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 64.

Those taking the extreme position denied that the Paris Commune had been a proletarian dictatorship at all. Having been run by people vaguely sympathetic to socialism, such as Proudhonian anarchists and Blanquists, it lacked Marxist ideological orientation. Thus, its measures were far from being truly scientific Marxism and, allegedly, were sometimes not even up to the standards of bourgeois democracy. Indeed, although the Paris Commune was a form of rule by the working class, a majority of its leaders were not socialists. Its leadership agreed only about overthrowing the old regime, but was not able to build any ideological unity once in power. Therefore, the Commune's existence was full of internal rivalries and questionable practices. For example, the minority had used the absence of the majority to ratify decisions, or organs had tried to abolish their rival organs. As a result, the Commune was already well on its way to developing into a dictatorship when the outside forces the Versailles Army occupied it. With regard to the economy, the Paris Commune supported small production and private ownership. Even when beneficial for the people, its measures did not exceed those decreed by bourgeois democracies. Apart from the working class representatives, the petty bourgeoisie held power in the Commune. Thus, the Paris Commune is an example of the proletariat grasping state power rather than of a proletarian dictatorship.[129]

This line of argumentation was influential and forced other writers to evaluate the significance of non-Marxist influences in the Commune. Those sympathetic to the Paris Commune model noted that despite its leaders' backgrounds, as working class representatives and under the influence of the proletariat, they had actually taken many correct steps towards liberating the proletariat;[130] those hostile to the Commune model blamed non-Marxists for the lack of discipline and leniency towards the enemy. One writer did not even care whether the Paris Commune measures were properly socialist or not. Indeed, measures taken by the Commune were not perfect or always conscious but still they can provide valuable experience in elections, supervision, recall, anti-privilege measures, simplification of organs, and administrative reform. This information is still useful for learning about ways to prevent bureaucratism, reform the state organs leading modernization, and bring about the advanced stage of the socialist system.[131]

Those who rejected the usefulness of the Paris Commune example turned to the earlier understanding that the main lesson to draw from the Paris Commune was that it had been defeated because it had not adopted sufficient methods against exploiters' economic and political power. In terms of the discussion about

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[129] Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, pp. 47–49.

[130] Guan Jingxu, *Anhui shida xuebao* 1981:4, p. 48; Wu Ti'an, *Shijie lishi* 1981:3, p. 13.

[131] Cao Changsheng and Zhang Xuebin, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 72.

the Paris Commune principles, this stance again saw that the main lesson of the Commune was the smashing of the old state and social structures. During the Cultural Revolution, this argument had connoted the importance of class struggle. Now it was used to argue that since the Paris Commune had not established enough coercion against the enemy, it had not formed a true proletarian dictatorship. Indeed, proletarian dictatorship refers to a transition period when the proletariat, already holding economic and political power, strengthens its power against the enemy, advances production, and abolishes the class system. The Paris Commune had not been a proletarian dictatorship because neither its leadership, nor its political, economic, and cultural measures were directed against the enemy.[132]

Another opinion, which denied that the Paris Commune had been a proletarian dictatorship, claimed that because the conditions in France had not been ripe for a proletarian dictatorship, the Paris Commune signified a workers' autonomous government.[133] Other writers maintained that the Paris Commune was a local autonomy, not a state power. Thus, it could not be a full-scale proletarian dictatorship either.[134] Several writers, regardless of their stance on the question of the Paris Commune's character, made a counterargument to the latter comment. They reminded readers about the Commune's intention to spread its rule to the whole of France, which caused it to act like a national government. Some users of this argument explicitly emphasized the socialist character of the Commune.

Some writers disagreed with the accusation made during the Cultural Revolution that the Paris Commune had concentrated too much on democracy and neglected dictatorship against the enemy. They asserted that the Paris Commune had combined people's democracy with dictatorship against the enemy. It had introduced many measures which targeted political enemies and economic exploiters. Indeed, both democratic and coercive elements of a state were existent in the Paris Commune, although the relation between them was biased towards democratic measures. However, the Paris Commune fared much better than the "all-round dictatorship" promoted by the Gang of Four, which totally ignored the people's democracy.[135] Thus, the Commune had allegedly practiced proletarian dictatorship as it was officially understood in China at the time. Since 1980, proletarian dictatorship had been defined as being synonymous with the term the people's democratic dictatorship, which combines democratic rule among the people with dictatorial measures against the class enemy. Articles willing to recognize the Commune as a proletarian dictatorship, regardless of its bias for democratizing at

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[132]   Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, pp. 46–47.

[133]   This stance is introduced in Wu Kejin, *Wenhuibao*, Feb. 23, 1981, p. 3.

[134]   This standpoint is introduced by Chang Runhua, *Guoji gongyun jiaoyancankao* 1981: vol. 3, p. 2.

[135]   Zhao Yongqing, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 70.

the cost of dictatorship, blamed this bias for the inadequate theoretical knowledge[136] and the short duration[137] of the Commune. A more outspoken view even interpreted this insufficiency as a proof of too little, not too much, attention to the people's democratic rights.[138]

One article stressed the primacy of democracy for a proletarian state. Indeed, the Paris Commune had been a true democratic republic with proletarian rule. Even if the Commune had had insufficient military power to safeguard its own state power and the people's rule, without proletarian democracy and the people's sovereignty a political power cannot be proletarian in nature. Proletarian dictatorship must be proletarian democracy, a fact that the Gang of Four's distorted evaluation of the Paris Commune in terms of only violence and dictatorship ignored.[139] One writer even overturned the proposition that the Commune's military loss was due to its inadequate attention to defense against the class enemy, suggesting that the Paris Commune had been able to resist the enemy for as long as 72 days precisely because of its democracy.[140] Moreover, the process for economic liberation under socialism would be impossible without proletarian democracy.[141]

Some writers contradicted the accusation that the class composition and class interest in the Paris Commune had not been sufficiently proletarian. Some suggested that even if the majority of the Paris Commune functionaries had not been Marxists, they were known working class representatives. Besides, the Communist International had worked actively in the Paris Commune,[142] alluding to the influence of its leaders, Marx and Engels themselves. Articles listed numerous measures the Paris Commune had taken to improve the conditions of the working class, such as regulations pertaining to working hours and workers' rights. Opponents of the proletarian nature of the Commune, then, declared that many of these measures were initiated by the bourgeoisie. However, one article saw no problem with bourgeois influences. They only show that the Paris Commune represented the interest of the people, not only the proletariat, if its measures benefited the proletariat, petty bourgeoisie, and peasants alike. [143] This class interpretation supported a wide class composition in the socialist state, somewhat resembling the contemporary official reevaluation of the optimal class situation in China.

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[136] Li Can, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 13.

[137] Wu Ti'an, *Shijie lishi* 1981:3, p. 7.

[138] Jia Fuhai and Cheng Jie, *Gansu ribao*, Mar. 17, 1981, p. 4.

[139] Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, pp. 17–18.

[140] Zhao Yongqing, *Sichuan shiyuan xuebao* 1980:4, p. 70.

[141] Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 18.

[142] Wu Ti'an, *Shijie lishi* 1981:3, p. 13; Wang Lian, *Wen shi zhe* 1981:4, p. 97–98.

[143] Qin Defen et al., *Beijing shiyuan xuebao* 1981:1, p. 18.

The mediating stance maintained that the Paris Commune was an embryo of a proletarian dictatorship or an attempt to establish a proletarian dictatorship, although due to its short duration, localness of its power, and inexperience it never succeeded in developing into a mature proletarian dictatorship. Indeed, the Paris Commune was the pioneer in establishing the proletarian democratic dictatorship. Even if the commune model was derived from the French revolutionary tradition, the Paris Commune was the first commune led by the proletariat. It replaced the old state power with new proletarian democratic political organs that aimed at socialist liberation. However, although the Paris Commune was undeniably a proletarian state power, due to its local and temporary existence it had not taken all necessary measures to be a proletarian dictatorship. In addition, the Paris Commune had suffered from its historical limitations and inexperience. This was evident in such errors as having no Marxist party leadership, showing benevolence towards the bourgeoisie, ignoring the need for an alliance with the peasants, and in insufficient ideological work among its own troops.[144]

One writer held that the Paris Commune had many characteristics of a proletarian dictatorship but was not yet one. These characteristics of proletarian dictatorship include overthrowing the old oppressive system and replacing it with new non-bureaucratic institutions. In addition, the Commune had taken measures typical for a proletarian dictatorship, ranging from the socialization of some factories to separating the state and religion. Nevertheless, the Paris Commune lacked some aspects of a proletarian dictatorship, such as the Marxist party leadership and the alliance between the proletariat and peasants. In addition, it had adopted insufficient political and economic measures against the former ruling classes. Therefore, the Paris Commune had failed to consolidate and complete the state system of a proletarian dictatorship.[145]

When it comes to the lessons that China can draw from the Commune, the mediating stance was very cautious about what to adopt. Indeed, one must recognize the Paris Commune's achievements and its historical limitations. Therefore, there is no reason to idealize the Paris Commune experience since by now China has a much richer revolutionary experience than the Paris Commune had.[146] Indeed, one must not demand that the Paris Commune exceed its historical limitations and evaluate it according to contemporary standards. Neither should anyone idealize its incomplete and unconsolidated proletarian dictatorship and mechanically copy its concrete measures. Still, the Paris Commune experience offers teachings for socialist revolution and construction.[147]

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[144] Wang Lian, *Wen shi zhe* 1981:4, pp. 96–100.

[145] Gao Shuhua, *Mudanjiang shiyuan xuebao* 1981:3, pp. 12–16.

[146] Wang Lian, *Wen shi zhe* 1981:4, p. 100.

[147] Gao Shuhua, *Mudanjiang shiyuan xuebao* 1981:3, p. 16.

Writers turned to the original Marxist classics to interpret texts, statements, and wordings, as well as their contexts, to find support for their different stances. There was a debate over whether Marx had ever said that the Paris Commune was a proletarian dictatorship, as if his failure to connect the two was a purposeful attempt to show that the Paris Commune had never been a proletarian dictatorship. However, although Marx had at first appeared not to have said that the Commune was a proletarian dictatorship,[148] soon it was found that Engels[149] had referred the Paris Commune as a proletarian dictatorship, and this correspondence was finally even found in Marx'[150] own words. Some writers tried to understand the original meaning of these statements. In one article, for example, it was suggested that the original proletarian dictatorship in Marx and Engels' texts referred to proletarian rule. The Paris Commune, by overthrowing bourgeois rule and establishing working class institutions and elections, was undeniably rule by the proletariat and, thus, a proletarian dictatorship.[151]

Paris Commune as a model for institutionalizing democracy

By the 1980s articles generally did not advocate copying the Paris Commune measures anymore. Still many articles drew inspiration from the Commune for different democratic institutional arrangements. The loose structure of the Paris Commune, planned to consist on relatively autonomous local communes, inspired some Chinese writers to demand more decentralization in China. Decentralization, though, meant different things to different writers. When the decentralization argument first appeared in 1978, local autonomy meant the adaptation of policies to local conditions.[152] Likewise, one writer in 1979 advocated democratic centralism on the central-local axis and saw it to require the delegation of power over implementation to the local levels.[153] By 1981, individual articles used the Commune to promote more local autonomy, leaving the central state to deal with important national matters only. Indeed, this ideal indicates the optimal combination of democracy and centralism between localities and the central government, leading to neither central absolutism nor localism or separatism.[154] One article related how under the Paris Commune even small villages had their own com-

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[148] Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 49.

[149] E.g. Chang Runhua, *Guoji gongyun jiaoyancankao* 1981: vol. 3, p. 2–3.

[150] Wu Ti'an, *Shijie lishi* 1981:3, p. 10.

[151] Wu Ti'an, *Shijie lishi* 1981:3, pp. 3–5.

[152] Lingyuan..., *Liaoning di yi shifan xuebao*, 1978:1, p. 61.

[153] Shen Chenxing, *Jilin daxue xuebao* 1979:5, p. 118.

[154] Zhou Haile, *Zengming* 1981:1, p. 78.

mune organization. Each locality arranged village representative meetings for running common affairs and for electing representatives to the national representative organ.[155] Another article demanded more power for social actors through work place meetings, school boards, and artists' organizations. Using this structure, the Commune had left all matters, apart from a few national questions, to local representatives under the people's direct control.[156]

Hence, the local character of the Paris Commune was used to demand local democracy. One writer argued that although the Paris Commune was definitely a proletarian dictatorship, due to temporal and spatial limitations it had in reality enveloped only the city of Paris. Therefore, the Paris Commune offers no model for proletarian dictatorship on the national scale. For example, a vast country like China needs to use an indirect system of elections. Still, the Paris Commune can provide inspiration for grassroots-level units and local autonomous governments. The Paris Commune demonstrated the benefits of local autonomy for encouraging the masses and mass organizations to eagerly participate in politics, for respecting local conditions, and for using supervision by the masses to guard against bureaucratization and privileges. This writer reminded readers that Marxists, such as Engels and Lenin, used to support local elected governments, until Stalin began to concentrate too much power at the center. The writer urged China to revive its pre-revolution tradition of mass organizations and wider local autonomy.[157]

Others were not satisfied to apply the Paris Commune style of elections at the local level only. One writer urged China to learn from the direct elections of the Paris Commune because grassroots elections as practiced in China are not sufficient, although they are more useful in clarifying the people's position as masters and the leadership's role as servants than appointments from above. Both people's congresses and leaders at all levels should be elected. In decision making, then, using the majority vote would have prevented an individual leader from dictating decisions, as had happened at the Lushan Conference and during the Cultural Revolution.[158] Reference to such incidents in Chinese history pointed directly to Mao Zedong himself, who had demanded Peng Dehuai's dismissal after Peng had criticized his leftist policies in Lushan.

Most of the articles mentioning the representative organs of the Paris Commune simply repeated the orthodox Marxist stance that the Commune had improved representative institutions when it replaced the old elitist, privileged, and secretive parliament with a responsible working organ. The Paris Commune, unlike bourgeois parliaments, had combined legislative and executive powers.

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[155] Liu Shitian, *Mudanjiang shiyuan xuebao* 1981:3, p. 10.

[156] Shen Baoxiang, *Wenhuibao*, Mar. 23, 1981, p. 3.

[157] Li Can, *Xinjiang daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 14–15.

[158] Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 53.

When legislators execute the laws they make and the orders they issue, they are supposed to be more in touch with the consequences of their decisions. This arrangement allegedly made it easier for commoners to supervise their leaders. In addition, executive powers arguably signified that the representative organ had true power, unlike bourgeois parliaments which, according to the Marxist interpretation, were forums for discussion only.

However, by the 1980s some Chinese writers began to question the benefits of amalgamating legislative and executive powers. Indeed, combining both legislative and executive powers was possible only at the local level, and temporarily under war conditions, but hardly otherwise.[159] Some writers even implied that the division of powers was necessary for preventing the over-concentration of power.[160] The principle of combining executive and legislative powers is perhaps incorrect altogether, because it lacks mutual checks and supervision and thereby easily generates autocracy.[161] The experience allegedly shows that the representative and executive organs must be separated and the former should be the working organ, which holds supreme power.[162]

Some writers drew inspiration for improving representative systems in China from the Paris Commune. Indeed, the people's congresses should become the true power organs. Governments at all levels must work under the supervision of the people's congresses. The congresses should have the right to dismiss members of government if they neglect their duties, break laws, or prove to be incompetent. To facilitate supervision, governments must report to the people's congresses about their work, mistakes included, and bring all important matters to the people's congresses for discussion and vote. In addition, representatives must listen to ordinary people's suggestions and demands in order to be able to truly represent them and to be responsible to them.[163]

One article analyzed factors making representative organs truly proletarian. It noted that Marx, Lenin, and Mao Zedong had appreciated the Paris Commune, soviets, or people's congresses as good systems for administering the state. In all these systems, after the proletariat had smashed the old administration it established its own popularly-based rule. All were republics with a supreme power organ that was supervised from the outside and the members of which were elected for a specified time period. Yet for the people to truly be the masters and administer the state, national and local people's congresses must really be the highest power organs. Therefore, the role of the people's congresses is not only a

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[159]   Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 52.

[160]   Yue Ping, *Jiefang ribao*, Oct 22, 1980.

[161]   Hong Yunshan, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, p. 53.

[162]   Wu Kejin, *Wenhuibao*, Feb. 23, 1981, p. 3.

[163]   Ma Ju, *Dushu* 1981:5, p. 25.

question of the system of government (*zhengti*), but also of the class nature of the state (*guoti*). Nevertheless, for a long time, especially when the Gang of Four attempted to concentrate absolute power in the hands of its members, the question of the state system was only interpreted to mean that the state was an instrument of class dictatorship, ignoring questions of the organization of political power and the socialist state. As a result of this neglect, the people's congresses did not function properly. For some time they did not convene at all. Even in normal times they only studied governmental reports without deliberating about them; they only praised and never criticized the government's work, nor did they recall any leaders. Decisions were made by unanimous vote. Thirty years of experience with such a system thus made it evident that China's socialist democracy needed political reform which would strengthen the people's congresses and the law, improve the electoral system, and separate the tasks of the Party and the state.[164]

Articles praised the Paris Commune for simplifying administration and cutting the size of bureaucracy. Indeed, the Paris Commune had clarified organizational duties, simplified organs, and reduced administrative personnel. It had used legal sanctions against corruption and neglect and had investigated a case of a military organ having exceeded its powers. The Commune reduced meetings and empty talk. These measures had increased the functionaries' sense of responsibility. Unless a proletarian state uses proper measures to uproot bureaucratism, its own organs may bureaucratize and become organs reigning over the people,[165] the article threatened.

The press discussion about the Paris Commune backed the contemporary drive for introducing legal responsibility for bureaucratic malpractices. Articles introduced examples of the Commune punishing officials guilty of irresponsible behavior or corruption as a way of drawing attention to the situation in China, where the contemporary press revealed stories about mutual protection among cadres and the usefulness of an official position in avoiding punishment. Contrarily, the Commune had allegedly punished those who had neglected their duty or committed illegal activities.

To promote the new program for establishing a rule by law system in China, some articles presented the Paris Commune as an exemplar in legality and the protection of citizens' rights. One article derived from the Paris Commune the lesson that all violations of democracy and the law must be struggled against. Furthermore, the law should represent the will of the majority. The judiciary should base its rulings solely on laws and be independent of any interference from

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[164]   Xu Shanguang, *Wuhan shifan xueyuan xiebao* 1981:1, pp. 3–6.

[165]   Cao Changsheng and Zhang Xuebin, *Kexue shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 1981:2, pp. 70–71.

the executive organs. Equality before the law should be established and one's position should not influence the allotted punishment.[166]

Advocacy of legality mostly concentrated on protecting the common people's democratic rights.[167] Even if the Paris Commune's dictatorship against the enemy had been insufficient, it had guaranteed wide democratic rights, which were protected by law, for the people.[168] Indeed, the law is necessary so that contradictions among the people can be efficiently dealt with in order to allow for the mobilization of all active forces in the development of socialism. The Soviet and the Gang of Four's experiences allegedly illustrate that treating all contradictions as antagonist class contradictions kills the people's enthusiasm and endangers socialism.[169] Certain writers concluded from the Commune's experience that, apart from guaranteeing the people's political rights and economic interest, the law is needed to suppress disruptive enemy activities.[170] Obviously, although these articles underlined the need for legal guarantees of people's democracy, in line with the contemporary orthodox understanding of the people's democratic dictatorship, the other function of the law, punishing the class enemy, was usually also taken for granted. However, one article wanted to clarify the rules concerning arrest, juridical process, and punishments for crimes by coding them into law.[171] In terms of the people's democratic dictatorship this actually meant protecting the rights of potential enemies of socialism as well.

Summary of the discussion

The discussion about the Paris Commune began as a normative call for democracy. In 1978–1979, the Paris Commune provided a model for many socialist democratic practices underdeveloped in socialist China. Articles used the example provided by the Paris Commune to demand free elections and free association. To use Western liberalist vocabulary, leaders' accountability to the populace and civil society were high on the agenda. Nevertheless, the use of the Paris Commune to articulate such ideas did not derive from any Western influences but continued the Mao-era discourse. This discussion parallels concrete press discussions about

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[166] Duan Yuzhen, *Xinjiang shifan daxue xuebao* 1981:2, p. 65.

[167] In their earliest forms, democratic rights involved the right to participate both in state and enterprise administration. See Chen Hanchu, *Lishi yanjiu*, 1979:1, p. 60.

[168] Qiu Shaowei, *Gansu ribao*, Mar. 18, 1980.

[169] Hu Jin, *Dongfang luncong* 1981:2, p. 46.

[170] Chang Runhua, *Guoji gongyun jiaoyancankao* 1981: vol. 3, p. 4.

[171] Zhou Haile, *Zhengming* 1981:1, p. 80.

competitive elections and press freedom. For a short period in 1978–1979, the press discussion even developed a dialogue with the parallel discussion in unofficial publications.[172] By 1980, participants in the discussion about the Paris Commune had begun to doubt the suitability of the Paris Commune model for China. At this stage, many articles claimed that the Commune was historically specific and not fully socialist. Therefore, China should not copy its democratic measures, at least not without adjusting them to Chinese conditions.

With textual analysis it is impossible to ascertain all the reasons for this change. Very likely, some leaders and intellectuals were not happy to see the continuation of the themes and methods prevalent during the Cultural Revolution. This was the time of the dismantling of institutions inspired by the Paris Commune ideal, such as the revolutionary committees founded during the Cultural Revolution. These institutional changes exemplified the shift in political ideals, which now emphasized institutionalized and mediated democracy instead of direct democracy preferred by radical leftists during the Cultural Revolution. Likewise, the desirable composition of the political organs had become less class-conscious. In addition, some leaders might have been concerned about the normative calls for direct elections and freedom of association, interpreting these calls as either challenges to Communist Party rule or dangerous simply because they challenged the gradualist approach to political reform advocated by the Party. With gradual reforms, the Party could design institutions supportive of its own ruling position. Instant reform had already proven to be unpredictable in the elections of 1980, in which direct elections were extended only to the county-level people's congresses.[173]

Intellectuals probably had their own reasons for being dissatisfied with the Paris Commune model. Many intellectuals advocated meritocracy and material rewards for the talented and well-educated. Both gradualist and meritocratic approaches are more elitist than the egalitarian Paris Commune ideal. Since the Paris Commune model militated against intellectuals' material self-interest, it is not surprising that the Paris Commune wage system received a great deal of criticism.[174] The Paris Commune had attempted to equalize political power as well. In the 1980s intellectuals usually believed that they deserved more than an equal share of power because of their extensive knowledge.[175]

One reason for the change in the evaluation of the Commune might be found in the changing standards of argumentation. By 1980, academic discussions had

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[172] Widor 1984, p. 67.
[173] For events in the 1980 elections, see, e.g., Nathan 1986, ch.10; Benton and Hunter 1995, pp. 202–221.
[174] See Misra 1998, p. 167.
[175] Goldman 1994, pp. 2, 7.

accepted "seeking truth from facts" as the scientific method. Hence, arguments not recognizing that ideas and institutions change over time and across geographic areas could simply seem unappealing and unscientific, regardless of how much the writer himself supported democratization. If the discussion taking place in 1978–1979 had idealized the Commune, from 1980 onwards articles adopted a more realistic view of the Paris Commune. The discussion gained more historical depth, while historical authenticity had been unimportant for the earlier discussion emphasizing the ideological meaning of the Commune as one of the general Marxist truths. The new historical analysis scrutinized both the successes and the shortcomings of the Commune. However, writers often used this critical information as selectively as earlier writers had used idealistic citations from the Communist classics, but now some selected their examples in order to question the suitability of the Commune measures for China. Both methodological and meritocratic approaches seem to indicate that those who wanted to reject democratic implications of the Commune came from the reformist camp.

The change could demonstrate academization in another sense as well. Many intellectuals had suffered repression during the Cultural Revolution. The institutions of the Cultural Revolution established with Paris Commune ideal in mind had not been receptive to intellectuals' conception of political representation. Instead of expertise, these institutions recruited people on the basis of political activism and ideological devotion. It is even possible that writers promoting the adoption of the Paris Commune institutions in 1979 had for the most part been nonacademic, like the pro-Commune writers in the unofficial publications were. Since the Paris Commune ideal was familiar to the Red Guards and other activists during the Cultural Revolution, many writers in 1978–1979 might have had this background. Instead, in 1980–1981 the discussion obviously mainly involved academic intellectuals and Party theorists who were well-versed in highly theoretical issues and had access to more than just popularly distributed sources. In other words, the change in discourse might reflect input from new writers having different values, and possibly different backgrounds, than earlier writers had.

Yet, academic writers might have changed their minds during the years of 1978–1981 as well. In 1978, the Mao-era discourse seemed natural for them and the Paris Commune appeared to be a good source to derive ideas for democratization from. Even those who doubted the leftist interpretation of Chinese socialism often turned to Marx and Lenin and found the Paris Commune ideal there. However, by 1981 discussants, in addition to being knowledgeable about socialism, also had some elementary knowledge about the Western classics of democracy. Now the Paris Commune model for democracy perhaps suffered from its orthodox Marxist background, when intellectuals probed into more contemporary democratic institutions in the West. It would be oversimplification to state that

they already had rejected the Paris Commune in favor of Western inspiration, but a shift from seeking answers from the Marxist classics to turning to the Western ideas and institutions had already begun by 1981.