

LUSHAN CONFERENCE (summer 1959)

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"China bursts the still lakes." Kateb Yacine ^a

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Conference status

Let's take a historical look at the political stakes involved in the Lushan conference.

- 1) The People's Commune [PC] were an **event**.
- 2) This event **doubled** in size: at the end of April 1958, the peasants' Rural People's Commune [RPC], and in mid-August 1958, the women's Urban People's Commune [UPC].
- 3) This event took place **within the context of the Great Leap Forward** [GLF], which was not an event as such, but a result of state-political programming.
- 4) This event brought to the fore the question of **communist succession** from within the **socialist** revolution in progress.

In a certain sense, this event was intended to raise, through mass movements (those of the peasants and urban women of the people), a **socialist obstruction to communism** that could be formulated as follows: *how can the socialist state be made to wither away if the (communist) construction of socialism never ceases to strengthen it?*

Thus, CPR peasants had no intention of becoming wage-earners on state farms (such as the Soviet sovkhozes that replaced kolkhozes or state cooperatives in the 1930s), nor did CPU women want to become wage-earners in state factories (such as *Danwei*).

- 5) In so doing, this event confronted every member of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] with a **new kind of decision**: how to relate politically to this new question, event-driven by these mass movements?

This led to a series of decisions, all the more unpredictable in that they did not automatically follow from previous political choices.

- 6) It is very logical that this 1958 event deeply **divided the CCP**.

This division emerged in the summer of 1959 with **Peng Dehuai** simultaneously criticizing the GLF and the PCs: the GLF as an adventurist acceleration of socialist construction, and the PCs as leftist thrusts within this leftist acceleration.

- 7) **The Lushan conference** (July-August 1959) was devoted to a collective examination of this unexpected political division (the first in the CCP since 1949).

The CCP was divided not only over its criticism of Peng Dehuai (which led to the isolation of the "military clique"), but more deeply over how to criticize him: in the name of Marxist-Leninist disciplinary orthodoxy (as regards the construction of socialism) or of a genuinely communist political novelty (within the very construction of socialism)?

In this way, the ideological-political divide has intertwined a divide over critical **statements** and a divide over critical **enunciation** positions.

- 8) By the end of the Lushan conference, the general agreement on *critical* statements (isolation of the "military clique" and Peng's dismissal) masked a deeper, subterranean division over the specificities of a *communist* (and no longer just *socialist*) enunciation.

Thus, from Lushan onwards, *Peng Dehuai's own criticism* was divided into **two enunciatory positions**: that of the communist left (Mao and Ke Quinshi) and that of the socialist right (Liu Shaoqi and Teng Xiaoping).

- 9) This new division (between the different *ideological* types of *political* criticism) was all the more difficult to unravel in the summer of 1959, as it was then closely interwoven with the various **criticisms of a GLF** that was presumptuous (unrealistic growth rates), adventurous (ecological

^a November 1, 1947 (<https://orientxxi.info/lu-vu-entendu/de-lourdes-armees-de-marins-gonflerent-le-remous-de-la-poudre-un-poeme-inedit,7880>)

calamities) and ultimately disorienting (it reinforced socialist obstruction of communism by subordinating the intended revolution in the social relations of production to a precipitous development of the productive forces).

- 10) Hence a long period (1959-1961) of **building up the Right**, taking over the reins of the socialist state (Liu) and isolating Mao within the Communist Party (Teng), which finally led, at the beginning of 1962, to the 7,000 Conference, blocking the PC's properly communist dimension and re-establishing traditional socialist planning (putting the development of the productive forces in the driving seat).
- 11) Faced with this obstruction revealed by the first moment (1958-1962) of the Chinese Communist Revolution [CCR], Mao launched the **Socialist Education Movement** [SEM] (1963-1965) to try to overcome it ideologically.
- 12) At the end of 1965, the question of a **properly communist critique** of Peng was reopened, this time from the explicit angle of clarifying his singular position of enunciation (Yao Wenyan versus Wu Han).^a
- 13) In 1966, Mao launched the **Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution** [GPCR] in order to overcome the **Liu-Teng obstacle** (which hindered any movement of the SEM type) and thus *effectively* engage in the ideological-political work capable of overcoming **socialist obstruction**, since the key point of such work lay in its mass scale: only mass communist movements can unblock the socialist policies of the Party-State.
- 14) All in all, the **periodization of the CCR (1958-1976)** is thus presented in four stages grouped into two sequences:
 - I - **First sequence 1958-1965**: PC and SEM = CCR I
 - I.1 1958-1961: GLF and PC (rural and urban)
 - I.2 1962-1965: 7,000 Conference, then MES
 - II - **Second sequence 1966-1976**: GRCP = CCR II
 - II.1 1966-1968: GPCR until the end of the Shanghai Workers' Commune, Revolutionary Committees and Red Guards
 - II.2 1968-1976: second phase of the GPCR
- 15) In this respect, the **Lushan Conference** (summer 1959) is the culmination and turning point of the first stage (1958-1961) in the first sequence of the CCR.

Lushan

The Lushan Conference (summer 1959) marked the first turning point in the CCR, as it revealed severe opposition from the Right to the GLF and the PCs. It led to the dismissal of Peng Dehuai (destined for a long story: a play at the beginning of 1961 condemning her, an article at the end of 1965 criticizing the play and announcing the GPRC) and her replacement by Lin Biao (whose "leftist" leadership role continued until the end of 1971).

Detailed knowledge of the Right's opposition to the GLF and PCs helps us to better understand the communist innovations launched in 1958 by the CCR.

It's possible to gain extraordinary insight into all this thanks to Li Rui's book on the conference, which, in over 350 pages, details the internal exchanges and discussions during the 40 days of this exceptional conference. We can follow, day by day, even hour by hour, the meetings where Mao discussed with Peng, where Lin Bio, Teng Xiaoping, Liu Shaoqi and Chou Enlai opposed Peng's supporters.

This report is based on the reading and study of this valuable book, by the way, written by an outspoken supporter of Peng Dehuai.

^a See *Long Walks*, n°2, p. 8

The book

Li Rui: *Lushan Huiyi Shilu (The true archives of the Lushan conference)*

Beijing: Chunqiu and Hunan Jiaoyu publishers, 1989. 377 pp.

Book in Chinese^a : I worked on a French translation (by DeepL) of this edition. ^b

This account is considered reliable because it is based on notes taken at the time by Li Rui for Mao's secretariat.

Li Rui (1917-2019)

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Rui

Since early 1958¹, Mao's part-time secretary, he attended all Central Committee [C.C.] meetings without speaking.²

He "*sympathized with Peng Dehuai's letter*"³ and was subsequently counted as the fifth member of the "Military Club", although he was not explicitly mentioned since, as he was not a member of the CC. ⁴he was considered a mere "*follower*".⁵

Following Lushan, he was dismissed and sent to "*work in the countryside*".

He wrote this book in 1988 from his old notes. A second edition was updated in 1994⁶ and a third in 1998.⁷

His personal viewpoint

During Lushan, Li Rui will give a long, self-critical review in early August⁸

His a posteriori assessment of Lushan details a Right-wing assessment in six criticisms⁹

See also his general viewpoint:

- in 1982 on Peng Dehuai¹⁰ ;
- in 1988 and 1992 on Huang Kecheng¹¹ ;
- in 1981 on Zhou Xiaozhou¹² ;
- on Zhang Wentan's speech of July 21, 1959 .¹³

At the end of this volume¹⁴, he explains the circumstances surrounding this book.



^a <https://adamcathcart.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/%E5%BA%90%E5%B1%B1%E4%BC%9A%E8%AE%AE%E5%AE%9E%E5%BD%95.pdf>

^b In this report, page references (indexed *LR*) refer to this translation, which I can make available to anyone interested.

More generally:

- **Details** are **given** in **footnotes** (a, b, c...);
- bibliographical **references** are given in **endnotes** (1, 2, 3...).

LUSHAN FILE

DETAILED TIMELINE 1959-1961

See the two Sycomore volumes (1980) on Mao's unpublished works:

I. *The Great Leap Forward* (1958-1959)

II. *The Three Dark Years* (1959-1962)

I'll distinguish international issues in blue, Mao's speeches in red, and cultural interventions in green.

1959

January 7. 40,000 managers and intellectuals return to Beijing after a year's work in factories and farms.

January 12. The *Renmin Ribao*^a decides to devote a regular page to cultural issues.

Note this constant political attention to the "cultural" dimension, which paves the way for the future "cultural" revolution...

January 16. Article in the *Hongqi*^b: with the mechanization of agriculture, "*production in agriculture will increasingly resemble production in factories*", requiring discipline to be organized as in a factory.

The "socialization" of agriculture would therefore be its "industrialization", subjecting peasants to the discipline of salaried workers.

January 20. Elimination of cholera, smallpox and bubonic plague.

February 5. *Renmin Ribao* editorial: "A congress on **the road to communism**".

See the question, opened up by 1958, of a path from communism *to* socialism...

February 27 - March 10. 2nd Political Bureau [PB] conference in **Zhengzhou** on rectifying the organization of the PCs.

February 29. In Shanghai, students will devote 8 months a year to study, 3 months to productive work and 1 month to vacation.

March 1. Article by Chen Yun^c in the *Hongqi*: "*Some comrades would like individual enterprise construction to be concentrated in large and medium-sized cities [which amounts to strengthening potential where it already exists]. Their reasons are that this would ensure a rapid growth rate and involve less investment*". Instead, the article advocates that "*the majority of enterprises should be built and appropriately scattered in small and medium-sized towns and in regions endowed with mineral resources*."

Clear political division between the Socialist Right and the Communist Left over the town/country contradiction.

March 17. The Dalai Lama flees to India.

China-India tensions over Tibet flare up

March 23. *Renmin Ribao* article on manual labor in schools. In elementary school for children aged 9 and over, no more than 4 hours of manual labor per week. In middle schools, 6 hours then 8 hours a week. In universities and colleges, 2 to 4 months per year.

^a *People's Daily*: official newspaper of the CPC [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Quotidien_du_peuple]

^b *Red Flag*: CPC newspaper [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Flag_\(magazine\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Flag_(magazine))]

^c Chen Yun (1905-1995): one of the economists responsible for planning [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chen_Yun]

April 2-5. 7th CC plenary session in **Shanghai**.

- Adoption of the economic plan for 1959. Four major objectives:
 - o steel: 18 million tons
 - o coal: 380 million tons
 - o cereals: 525 million tons
 - o cotton: 5 million tons
- Move from a "**single-track**" system (where central control is imposed on local situations) to a "**dual-track**" system (combining central planning and locally decentralized control).
- In RPCs, **the brigade** becomes the basic unit of account, the one that owns the means of production, manages the CP industries, assigns work to teams, manages investments and distributes income.

Cf. two approaches to CPR: the brigade (intermediate level of the Commune) or the team (basic level)?

Floating chronology on this point.

The primacy given to the brigade first abolished the old system of "**three guarantees and a bonus**" (setting teams a production quantity, a cost price and a working time, with the surplus remaining as a bonus), then reinstated it after Lushan

April 12. The Bureau of Statistics publishes (in millions of tons) :

	1957	1958	1958/1957	Forecast 1959	1959/1958	1959/1957
steel	5,35	11,08	2,07	18	1,6	3,36
coal	130	270	2,08	380	1,41	2,92
cereals	185	270	1,46	525	1,94	2,84
cotton	1,6	3,31	2,07	5	1,51	3,12

In just one year of GLF, steel, coal and cotton production would have doubled, while cereals would have grown by 50%! In 1959, further slowed growth (around 50%) is forecast for the first three, but accelerated growth for cereals (94%).

In all, the four productions would have tripled in two years!

April 17-28. Session of the National People's Assembly [NPA].

We're talking about the State here, not the Party.

- Zhou Enlai presents a report on the work of the government.
 - o He comments on previous production statistics.
 - o In rural areas, at least 80% of the workforce must be devoted to agriculture.
 - o Urban factories could no longer recruit from the countryside, and had to send their surplus workers from the countryside back to their rural places of origin.
 - o In RPCs, we need to reduce administrative staff and only undertake infrastructure work in the off-season.

The aim of the RPCs is clearly to correct the "steel for all" impetus so that agricultural production no longer suffers.

- o In industrial companies, apply the "**single manager**" system.

The communist revolution still has no impact on social relations within factories.

The exact chronology of this system is fluid: roughly speaking, it was abolished during the GLF, then reinstated in 1962.¹⁵

- **Liu Shaoqi** is elected President of the Republic, replacing Mao.

In 1958, Mao decided to step down from the Presidency of the Socialist State to devote more time to leading the Communist Party.

Mai. Mao: Sixteen points on working methods.

These include: 1) Be inventive and decisive. 2) Leave yourself room for manoeuvre. 3) Ride the waves. 4) Seek truth from facts. 5) Observe the situation. 6) When faced with a complex situation, know how to make a decision. 7) Let the air in. 8) Avoid blocking debate. 9) A man can sometimes impose himself on others because he holds the truth. 10) Look at problems from a historical perspective. 12) Be responsible. 13) Free your thoughts.

May 25. Peng Dehuai met Khrushchev in Tirana. He is reported to have criticized the GLF and the PCs.

June 30. The USSR unilaterally suspends its military aid!

Was this decision prompted by Peng Dehuai's confidences?

July-August. Lushan Conference (see detailed chronology below).

July 14. Emergency order from the CC concerning **natural disasters** in early 1959.

July 21. The mechanical engineering industry doubled its production compared with the same period in 1958, i.e. 100% growth in one year!

August. Sino-Indian border incidents. Khrushchev begins to draw closer to India by declaring the USSR's neutrality on these issues between China and India!

August 29. An editorial in the *Renmin Ribao* celebrates the first anniversary of the CP.

September 8. Industrial production up 65% in the first six months!

September 16th. Lin Biao replaces Peng Dehuai.

September 22nd. *Renmin Ribao* editorial in favor of public canteens.

September 29. The CCP now has 13,900,000 members.

October. Theater festival in Beijing (with Molière, Ibsen, Shakespeare...) to mark the 10th anniversary of the PRC.

October 1. Lin Biao announced that the main objectives of the Second Five-Year Plan (1958-1962) had been achieved three years ahead of schedule (confirmed by Zhou Enlai on October 6)!^a

October 16. *Hongki*: agricultural difficulties ⇒ "At the very least, we need to double our cereal production and triple our cotton production."

October 20th. There were 45.32 million workers in China in 1958 (compared with 9 million in 1949).

November 1. In *Hongki*, Ke Qingshi reports on dissension over mass campaigns. "Some say that mass movements are good for revolutionary struggles, but **not for construction**. Others say that instead of using them in the modern industrial sector, we should set up 'a **normal order of things**'. According to others, while it's true that mass movements can be used to bring about political reforms in factories and enterprises, they **should be avoided** when it comes to implementing technical reforms, because in this case, it's necessary to rely on "systematic scientific methods"."

November 5. According to *Planning and Statistics*, "the information and **statistics are inaccurate**".

How did it take so long to figure this out???

November 17. *Hongki*: "PCs are the **inevitable** result of China's social development." The point here is to refute the right-wing position maintaining that "the creation of the PCs was **premature**", that they were in a "deplorable" state and that **there should be "no nascent shoots of communism in a socialist society"**, that the "combination of the wage system with the **free** supply system was wrong", that collective **canteens** had been "imposed" on the peasants....

The Right criticizes the PCs (and no longer the GLF) as bringing into existence "shoots of communism within socialism". In this respect, two points are decisive: communist gratuity ("to each according to his needs") and public canteens.

Note, however, that, against this, the Left argues for the inevitability of PC rather than its event-driven emergence. In other words, the Left and the Right share the same ideological measure: historical-social

^a However, they both took place at the end of 1959 (after only two years) and not at the end of 1960!

necessity! This, of course, is a weakness: if it turns out that PCs were not historically necessary, that they were merely a contingent possibility, then the Right's conclusion (*to freeze their development*) should be binding on all!

1960

January.

- 1) The Council of State orders a return to centralized plan control against the GLF's decentralized system and its "localist" tendencies.

A move to the Right or a legitimate reaction against false statistics and bogus reports? It's hard to tell the difference here...

- 2) Crisis on the Editorial Board of *Wenyibao* (*Literary Journal*)

Content unclear...

January 22. Provisional production statistics for 1959.

	Forecast 1959	1959/1958	1959 achievements	^a
steel	18	1,6	13,35	1,67
coal	380	1,41	347	1,29
cotton	5	1,51	2,4	1,15

All in all, "*the main objectives of the Second Five-Year Plan were successfully achieved three years ahead of schedule*" and even exceeded in various areas of heavy industry, light industry and agriculture (cereals, cotton but not soya or livestock).

Growth is being rebalanced in favor of agriculture.

Evolution of the ratio between industrial and agricultural growth rates :

1953-1957	1958	1959
4	2,65	2,35

February 22nd. Chinese Youth Journal : "*Why does Mao Zedong Thought have such great power? Simply because **it is the truth**.*"

Mars. Mao: *Notes on the Anshan charter.*

Anshan was the country's leading industrial enterprise. It was modelled on the Magnitogorsk Charter in the USSR (a Soviet combine with a single management). Since 1959, workers have begun to trust mass movements, distrust the single-accountability system and advocate *the triple alliance*. They have now drafted their own charter.

So, following on from Lushan, the **communist** revolution in social relations also began **the factories**.

March 7. Release of " Chinese women during the GLF " that presents the transformations in Chinese women's lives brought about by the creation of the PCs

Note the persistence of this political lack of distinction between GLF and CP!

The aim is "*to **socialize** household work, transforming the **tedious, mind-numbing** chores of housework into economic socialist work.*"

Two different points are at stake here.

- 1) It's a question of socializing the work of reproduction as we do the work of production.
- 2) But should we legitimize this socialization by devaluing housework as necessarily "mind-numbing"? If this work is inescapably uninteresting, how can it be socially emancipated? In that case, it couldn't be done by paying housekeepers (for whom this stultifying, and therefore alienating, work would then

^a Please note: the report is based on 1958 statistics, which have obviously changed!

be reserved) or by transforming housewives into factory workers (for the sole purpose of increasing overall labor productivity)!

The communist orientation favors **disinterested but interesting work**, while the capitalist orientation puts **uninteresting but interested work** in the driver's seat, abstracting living work to measure it against an average social duration.

March 25. Mao: *About the technical revolution.*

*"A movement of technical revolution and **cultural revolution**, on the scale of the whole people, is currently developing **with violence** in all fields."*

In March 1960, following Lushan, the theme of a **cultural** revolution emerged.

March 29 - April 10. New session of the APN which decides on the following points.

- Concerning the GLF's salary policy:
 - o material incentives maintenance;
 - o individual cash income maintenance;
 - o adoption of time-based wages, with **piecework wages** and **bonuses** as auxiliary methods.
- Statement: *"Today, all cities are establishing **people's communes**^a, energetically managing their **neighborhood industry, suburban agriculture**^b, public welfare services and **community canteens**^c, broadly organizing the economic lives of their residents and emancipating millions of housewives from domestic chores so that they can participate in social work."*
- For the first time, we heard the slogan: *"take agriculture as the basis and industry as the leading factor"*.
- A 10-year school system that allows young people to enter the workforce between the ages of 16 and 17.

The general impression is that the socialist state is dragging its feet behind CCR.

April 1. 80th anniversary of Lenin's birth. China opens ideological hostilities by denouncing the Moscow line.

April 13th. Premiere of *The White-Haired Girl* at the Beijing Theatre Festival.

June. Shanghai Conference. Discussion of the **Anshan Charter** (see Mao in March 1960): the aim is to put politics in the driver's seat, launch mass movements, involve cadres in production work and ensure close cooperation between cadres, workers and technicians.

June 1-11. Conference: we must *"eliminate the differences between worker and peasant, town and country, manual and intellectual work"*.

June 18. Mao: *A decade in review.*

*"The great **leap** from the reign of necessity to the reign of freedom will be a **very slow process**."*

Note: we're talking about a leap (socialism→communism), not an insensible transformation, which may take a long time (though not a very distant horizon).

End of June. Enver Hodja denounces the USSR.

July 16. The USSR unilaterally decides to withdraw its thousands of technicians and cancel hundreds of contracts.

July 22nd. Congress of writers and artists: the path of **socialist** literature and art advocates an alliance between revolutionary realism and revolutionary **romanticism**.

So there's no such thing as properly communist art and literature?

Note the combination of realism and romanticism...

^a Popular urban communities!

^b Agriculture in the cities, mirroring rural industry in the countryside...

^c Extension (to cities and by UPCs) of the invention (in the countryside and by RPCs) of canteens...

August. USSR-China friendship association magazines cease publication.

September 6. Confirmation of the positive role of the many **small blast furnaces** built during the GLF. The State plan forecasts that by 1960 they will produce half the country's cast iron.

These quantitative statistics conceal profound qualitative disparities, as the steel produced by these small blast furnaces is often difficult to use.

September 14th. Meeting on **the People's Army**. Lin Biao presents his "four priorities": man over weaponry, political work over all other work, ideological work over routine work, living ideology over ideas in books.

September 27. *Renmin Ribao* editorial: "Let's explore the labor potential in the Communes." They must allocate more than 80% of their workforce to agricultural production activities at the expense of all other activities, including industry.

Necessary rectification following the famine that the Right is obviously seizing upon to undermine the RPC's communist novelties.

October 25. *Renmin Ribao* editorial: "Communists regard work as the primary necessity of life."

November 3. CC decision on "12-article" RPCs aimed at curbing famine.

First major political turning point on RPC. See the second in March 1961 (Canton, March 1-22).

November 16-30. International Conference of 81 Communist Parties in Moscow. Clashes between Khrushchev, Deng Xiaoping and Enver Hodja. The failure of the conference marked the end of the unity of the international communist movement.

1961

January 1. The *Renmin Ribao* focuses on the "extremely serious" natural disasters of 1960.

January 14-18. Report on planning to reduce the rate of investment, which had previously risen sharply.

Gross investment / NBI (%):

1958	1959	1960	1961	1961
28,8	35,9	43,7	21,6	21,3

Special mention of sabotage activities.

January 27. In 1960, the APL helped the PCs with hydraulic work, sowing and harvesting.

February. Performance in Beijing of *Dismissal of Hai Jui* (a play by Wu Han, deputy mayor of Shanghai).

At the end of 1965, criticism of this play was a precursor to the Cultural Revolution.

February 3rd. Purchase of large quantities of grain from Canada and Australia.

Cf. famine...

March 1-12. Canton Conference on RPCs (in Mao's absence!). Deng Xiaoping's report *Draft regulation of the CPR or 60 articles on agriculture*. He authorized the abolition of canteens. Various recommendations:

- 1) The brigade, rather than the commune, owns the land, animals and tools.

The further you go down commune-brigade-team, the more you unravel the CP.

- 2) Non-agricultural activities, including rural industries, will be significantly reduced. They may not exceed 3% of the workforce.

Agriculture and industry are no longer intertwined, and specialization and a strict division of labor are the order of the day.

- 3) More of the production will be distributed to members.

Greater material interest...

- 4) 5% of the cultivated land will be returned to the farmers as private plots for an indefinite period. The produce from these plots will be the sole property of the farmers concerned.

Looking back...

March 11. Reissue of Mao's "Against the Cult of the Book".

Mao's preface: "*In those days, we didn't call it **dogmatism**, we called it **book worship**."*

March 24. An article (*Beijing Review*) going in the other direction, pointing out that the boom in the steel industry is also due to small units (and could not have been achieved with only giant modern companies) and also pointing out that factories and workshops run by **rural and urban PCs** contribute 10% of industrial production!

April 14th. The country has a population of 650 million.

April 21. The urban Communes consolidate; their factories and workshops play a major role, thanks to housewives "*newly freed from their domestic chores*".

June-July. Forum on art and literature. Importance of politics in literary and artistic work.

June 12. End of a conference begun in May, during which Mao made his self-criticism, highlighting his responsibility for **the failure of the GLF**. Deng Xiaoping considered that 30% of the GLF's failure was due to natural calamities and 70% to human error.

At that point, the GLF had become a **failure**.

At the time, there were 2,500 state farms in China, owned by the "whole people" and similar to sovkhoses.

June 30. 40th anniversary of the founding of the CCP (now with 17 million members). "*A very long period is still needed to make China a great socialist country. An even longer historical period will be needed to complete the transition from socialism to communism.*"

Communism **comes after** socialism. It will be on the agenda in a very long time.

In other words, there's no question of communist shoots now!

July 31. Mao: "*China must not be a country of scholars.*"

Of course, this is not to advocate illiteracy, but to combat the domination of scribes, clerics and mandarins...

August 11. In the first half of the year, APL helped with spring sowing and summer harvesting.

November 1. The *Renmin Ribao* adopts the new phonetic alphabet.

December 1-10. Conference on industry, which suspends the recruitment of labor for industry in the countryside and restores material incentives in the form of piecework wages.

The Communist Revolution continues to be unravelled.

1960. Mao: *Poem in response to a friend*.

"I want to dream of a land without boundaries."

[1962]

January 11 - February 7. 7,000 Conference in Beijing^a. Liu Shaoqi (State) and Deng Xiaoping (Party) are now in charge. GLF re-evaluation: 30% of the 1959-1961 famine was attributed to natural disasters and 70% to human error. Mao makes his self-criticism on January 30. Rectifications and rehabilitations organized the strategic shift to the right.

This conference sealed the victory of the Right.

^a https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conf%C3%A9rence_des_7_000_cadres

January 30. Mao: *Intervention at the enlarged CC.*

"As far as the **mistakes** made by the CC are concerned, I have my share of responsibility. [...] I am primarily responsible."

"How does the proletariat exercise its leadership? Through the leadership of the CP. The CP is the vanguard of the proletariat."

His answer to the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat is a classic classist one.

"A socialist society can **breed** a new bourgeoisie."

The communist revolution in socialism differs from the socialist revolution in that it **creates** a new type of bourgeoisie: 1) its enemy is created by it, not pre-existing; 2) concomitantly, it is of a new type.

"**Intellectuals are not a class.** They can belong to the bourgeoisie as well as to the proletariat."

Gap between the social class of intellectuals and the two political classes.

Hence, membership of a political class is not determined by a social being, but by subjective decisions.

"95% of the great mass of the world's population absolutely wants revolution."

Mao didn't distinguish between types (democratic, socialist, communist) of revolution! Hence the proximity to the future Occupy Wall Street slogan (2011): "we are the 99%!".

"We must, from a **total lack of experience**, make a **leap** that brings us into the reign of freedom."

He insists on the unprecedented character of the GLF as a **leap**, not **towards** but **into** communism.

"It's true that **we don't have a long-term plan.** 1960 was the year we had the worst difficulties."

"During the period of building socialism, we will continue to **move forward blindly.**"

"I don't understand much about industry and commerce."

"As far as the productive forces are concerned, I know very little. As far as the Party as a whole is concerned, knowledge about the construction of socialism doesn't go very far [...] We need to drool over it for a while. [...] We'll have to drool over it for a while."

"Before, we were just copying the Soviet Union. [...] **From 1958 onwards, we decided to rely on our own forces.** [...] We established the PCs, we launched the GLF slogan."

"Currently the Party has 17 million members."

"Very often the opinions of the minority have proved to be right."

"We must make few arrests, few executions."

•••

LUSHAN'S MAIN PROTAGONISTS

The "military club" of four (Peng-Huang-Zhang-Zhou)

Peng Dehuai (1899-1974)

or [MC^a 1] in the following

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peng_Dehuai

Marshal, Minister of Defense, member of the CCP P.B.

Great military leader of the Long March. Leads Chinese troops in the Korean War. ^b

At first openly "skeptical"¹⁶ about the GLF and especially the PCs, he then opposed them politically, hiding behind criticism of the GLF's errors (errors that Mao would recognize in his various self-criticisms).

All in all, he's a soldier of the Democratic Revolution rather than a political leader of the Socialist and Communist Revolution: clearly, he has a warlike conception of antagonism that makes him incapable of understanding the new type of political antagonism brought about, in socialism, by the Communist Revolution.

He is obsessed with the fear of an antagonistic episode of the *Budapest riots* (November 1956) occurring in China. ¹⁷ In other words, he feared the emergence of a traditional (bourgeois) antagonism to state socialism, and believed that Chinese society was not ready to embark on a communist revolution based on new antagonisms.

All in all, it seems to me, he was less a "hypocrite" than a political leader overwhelmed by the new stage of the Chinese Revolution, and all the more so because he apparently put the military in the driver's seat.

See Liu Rui's 1982 view: *"War was his profession, his field of predilection, and his life's work was devoted to it: past events, dead people and battlefields were always present in his mind. [...] Peng was always a "man of action". [...] Peng had not read much since childhood. He felt that his theoretical knowledge was not sufficient."* ¹⁸

Huang Kecheng (1902-1986)

or [MC 2] in the following

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huang_Kecheng

General, Vice-Minister of Defense, Secretary of the Central Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee. Member of the CC.

Zhang Wentian (1900-1976)

or [MC 3] in the following

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhang_Wentian

Former General Secretary of the CCP, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to the USSR. Member of the P.B.

Zhou Xiaozhou (1912-1966)

or [MC 4] in the following

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhou_Xiaozhou_\(politician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhou_Xiaozhou_(politician))

First secretary of the CPC for Henan province.

^a MC for "Military Club"

^b War broke out in June 1950. China intervened militarily from October 1950. The final armistice was signed in July 1953.

And a few left-wing figures...

except Mao...

Lin Biao (1907-1971)

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lin_Biao

Member of the P.B.

His interventions at Lushan focus on the argument: "*you oppose Mao*" more than he discusses the precise political content of the objections.

See, for example, his speech on August 1, 1959 in Lushan: "*Peng Dehuai is an ambitious man, a conspirator, a hypocrite. Only Chairman Mao is a great hero in China, and no one should try to be a hero.*"¹⁹

Note that Lushan led to the promotion of Lin Biao, who was appointed to replace Peng Dehuai and thus promoted until his definitive rise in 1969 (IXth Congress), rapidly followed by his fall in September 1971.

In short, Lushan leads to a **Lin Biao 1959-1971 sequence**, problematic in many ways for the CCR...

As if, between the Right (empiricist and pragmatic) and the Ultra-Left (dogmatic and brutal), the road proved to be very narrow, leaving only a few rare comrades with Mao...

Chen Boda (1904-1989)

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chen_Boda

Member of the P.B. Editor-in-chief of *Hongqi* (The Red Flag).

Headed the Central Group of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. From 1972, he was criticized as being associated with Lin Biao.

Kang Sheng (1898-1975)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kang_Sheng

Plays an important role in the 4th group of Lushan I²⁰ which proves to be Peng's most critical.²¹

Ke Qingshi (1902-1965)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ke_Qingshi

Member of the P.B. Mayor of Shanghai.²²

Xiao Hua (1916-1985)

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xiao_Hua

General (since 1955, when he was the youngest general in the PLA). Member of the C.C.

Director of APL's General Management Department.

Vice-chairman of the 4th group formed in Lushan on July 16.^a

After Lushan, he became the PLA's number 2 alongside Lin Biao.

In 1965, for the 30th anniversary of the Long Walk, he composed a suite of twelve poems set to music to make up the *Suite Long Walk*.^b

^a See his interesting contributions: August 4 (LR 215) on ghosts: "*Some people are afraid of ghosts. But what are you afraid of? If there's a ghost, we have to catch it*"; and on August 9 (LR 225) on the main danger as seen by Peng Dehuai (for Peng, it's the Right before the takeover, then the ultra-Left after the takeover).

^b <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQ9ZyGMfCv8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwWe2-Tsf0I>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Long-March-Song-Sycle-Chinese/dp/7530575090>

DETAILED CHRONOLOGY OF LUSHAN (JULY-AUGUST 1959)

In a nutshell...

<p>July 2-29: LUSHAN I (Enlarged Political Bureau)</p> <p>July 14: Peng Dehuai's letter to Mao</p> <p>July 23: Mao's speech</p> <p>August 1: Mao's speech</p> <p>August 2-16: LUSHAN II (Central Committee plenary session)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p>August 17: dismissal of Peng and the other three members of the "Military Club".²³</p> <p>September 16: official dismissal of Peng (replaced by Lin Biao) and the other right-wingers.</p>

Origin

At the root of the conference, then, were the political problems posed by the GLF and the CP ("*people's communalization movement*"²⁴), the latter's defining characteristic being the slogan "*no money for food*".^a

Before Lushan, there were initial corrections against "left-wing" practices^b :

- November 1958: first Zhengzhou conference
- April 1959: Shanghai Conference

Initially, Lushan's aim was to continue correcting this left-handed deviation of the GLF and PCs.

Note that, according to the law of the pendulum's alternation, this correction reversed that of 1957, which was fighting against a right-wing deviation from the general line decided at the VIII° congress at the end of 1956.

Board meetings

Plenary sessions of the C.C. of the VIII° congress 1956-1969

12 plenary sessions of the CCP (VIII National Congress of the CCP : September 1956 - April 1969)

		(location)	n°	(content)	[Review de la Droite]
1956	September 15-27	Beijing	1°	New CCP statutes Proposals for the 2nd five-year plan	
	November 10-15		2°		

^a It seems [LR 102] that this slogan was formulated at the end of 1958 by Ke Qingshi, mayor of Shanghai, during the movement to extend rural PCs to urban PCs...

^b It seems to be a question of "rhythm": going too fast and too far without thinking through the economic consequences?

1957	September - October		3°		*
1958	May 5-23	Beijing	4°-5°	GLF	
	November 28 - December 10	Wuchang	6°	Mao withdraws from the Presidency of the Republic Resolution on PC	*
1959	April 2-5	Shanghai	7°	2nd plan	
	August 2-16	LUSHAN	8°	Review by Peng Dehuai	*
1961	January 14-18	Beijing	9°	Division with Moscow Rectifying the plan in favor of agriculture	
1962	September 24-27	Beijing	10°	Resolution on PC	
1966	August 8-12		11°	GPCR Resolution	*
1968	October 18-31		12°	Liu Shaochi's dismissal	

Other (non-plenary) C.C. conference sessions

- Chengdu: March 1958
 - Beijing: May 5-23 (Plenary session)→ GLF
- **Beidahe**: August 1958→ **PC decision**
- Zhengzhou (I): November 1958
 - Wuchang: November 28-December 10, 19258 (Plenary session)
- Shanghai: April 1959→ GLF and PC rectifications ²⁵
- Zhengzhou (II): May 1959

Before Lushan

June 30: conference **convened** ²⁶

July 1: travel to Lushan ²⁷

Lushan I (extended B.P.): July 2-29

July 2: Standing Committee sets out **18 issues** for discussion ²⁸

1. Reading the *Political Economics Manual*
2. The situation: GLF problems
3. The tasks of the II° five-year plan
4. Institutions; decentralization/unification
5. Public canteens
6. [Daily ways of life]. ²⁹
7. Production and taxes
8. Rural markets
9. The overall balance in the GLF, particularly between industry and agriculture
10. Production brigades

- | |
|--|
| <p>11. The role of the Party in rural areas</p> <p>12. Propaganda
<i>"The transition to communism is not a distant dream."</i> ³⁰</p> <p>13. Quality in industrial production</p> <p>14. Estimates for the past year (1958)
<i>"Telling the truth, not lies"</i> ³¹</p> <p>15. The ground line</p> <p>16. National cooperation between the various regions</p> <p>17. Unity among Party cadres</p> <p>18. International issues</p> |
|--|

Note the interweaving of very different political issues. In particular, state issues are dealt with directly by the CCP P.B.

July 3: division into 6 regional groups (Liu Rui is assigned to the Centre-South group) ³²

Northwest^a / North / Northeast / Southwest / South Central / East

Discussions in the Centre-Sud group (Liu Rui's group)

July 4 :

- Zhou Xiaozhou [MC 4] criticizes GLF, PCs and public canteens ³³

"The communes were too quick and too big."

"Agriculture can't grow by 30%."

Opposition to canteens for six reasons: ³⁴

1. *No food savings*
2. *Not suitable for pig farming*
3. *Not conducive to reforestation*
4. *Not conducive to fertilizer accumulation*
5. *Waste of manpower*
6. *Unpalatable food.*

- GLF discussion: big leap *forward or backward*³⁵

Wu Zhipu^b : *"The GLF is just a big step backwards!"*

- The problem of natural disasters (floods **and** droughts)! ^c

July 6-9 :

- Discussions on canteens and agriculture ³⁶
- Discussions on the accumulation/consumption split ³⁷
- The problem of false statistics⇒ wrong plans! ³⁸
- On July 6, Zhu De^d pleads for the private enrichment of peasants³⁹ :

"Consumption suffers from the way public canteens operate."

^a Peng Dehuai is in the North-West group [LR 40].

^b Henan Governor and PCC Secretary: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_Zhipu

^c Situation worse than 1954 floods. Very lean diet... [LR 31].

^d Marshal. Vice-president of the PC and the Republic. Right-wing, close to Peng **Dehuai**.
https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhu_De

"Are the peasants so willing to be communists?"

"Some farmers want to go to the city."

"We should let farmers get richer instead of letting them get 'poorer'."

July 10: Mao's intervention ⁴⁰

"Some people say that the General Line [GL] is nothing more than the slogan: 'quantity, speed, quality and economy'. This principle is by no means wrong." ^a

"In terms of building socialism, we don't yet have any experience; we need at least another ten years." ⁴¹

"Agricultural production has been overestimated. There was waste. There were too many industrial construction projects and the industrial production targets were too high. The biggest problem with the GLF is that it was exaggerated." ^b

"The people's commune hasn't collapsed. There's no problem with the PC." ^c

"Total food is still not enough." ^d

"It's not good to lead communism to egalitarianism, nor to emphasize material stimulation. Talking about material stimulation every day will paralyze people's minds. We must cultivate a communist style, whatever the salary." ⁴²

July 12: Zhou Enlai's speech ⁴³

July 14: Peng Dehuai's letter to Mao

Contents ⁴⁴

I. Criticism of the GLF: gains and losses ^e

II. Criticism of working methods: disproportionality and imbalance. "The fanaticism of the petty-bourgeoisie, always wanting to take a step towards communism and jump ahead of the others, has led to "leftist" mistakes. Political mobilization cannot replace economic laws." Even if effective measures were taken, it would take at least two years to return to the normal situation of 1957.

July 15: incident of Zhang Kaifan^f (secretary of the Anhui provincial Party committee" ordering the dismantling of the Wufei canteen" ⁴⁵

July 16: Peng's letter is circulated. Mao reorganized the six groups (no longer on a regional basis) for collective discussion of the letter. ⁴⁶

Group	Chairman	among the members :
1	Lin Tie	
2	Ke Qingshi	Zhang Wentian ^{g47} Zhou Xiaozhou ^{h48}

^a Sycamore II 17. It should be noted that the GL (1956-1957) placed the emphasis on better development of the productive forces (FPs) rather than an explicit revolution in the social relations of production (SRPs). The GLF (early 1958) dialecticized this point, but it was above all the PC (spring-summer 1958) that emphasized the SRP revolution.

^b (LR 52...) Cf. in particular the problem of the four indicators (steel, coal, cereals, cotton)

^c (LR 53) Note the difference now made by Mao between the political assessments of the GLF and the PCs.

^d (LR 54) In public canteens, is food pooling still a communism of scarcity rather than a communism of abundance?

^e The whole political debate will revolve around the balance between the two: Peng puts losses first.

^f "Zhang Kaifan, Secretary of the Anhui Provincial Party Committee, went to Wuwei to inspect the work on July 4, 1959. On July 9, he announces to the cadres and masses of the Wangfu Brigade in Xinmin Commune that there are "three reductions": reduction of meals, reduction of housing and reduction of small plots. That same evening, the county Party secretary decided to implement these measures. By July 15, over 6,000 canteens in the county are dispersed, and a few canteens are dissolved by a thunderclap. This is the famous 'Zhang Kaifan incident'" (LR 43).

^g 4° member of the "Military Club" [MC 4].

3	Tao Cui	Chen Boda ⁴⁹
4	Li Jingquan	Peng Dehuai ⁵⁰
5	Zhang Desheng	Huang ^a
6	Ouyang Qin	

July 17: Mao meets with various officials. ⁵¹

"In the past, I didn't understand the complexity of managing the economy."

Mao often repeats this astonishing self-criticism, ten years after his appointment as President of the Republic...

"The canteen often ate sparse rice, and there wasn't the slightest trace of oil or meat in the food."

So there was indeed a problem with the quality of food in public canteens...

"During the Shanghai conference [April 1959], Tian Jiaying^b told me he was starving in his hometown."

The question of the great famine was already clear...

July 17-22: discussion of Peng's letter by the six new groups

July 19: 5th group discussions ⁵²

Huang Kecheng

What exactly are the "many problems" mentioned by Peng?

For him, there are three flaws: 1) overestimation of results; 2) disproportionality (of development); 3) excessive objectives?

Last year, food was scarcer than at any time since the Liberation. The Party's relations with the masses and its prestige were affected.

Other participants say they "feel sympathy for Peng's letter". ⁵³

July 20: discussion of twelve-point draft minutes ⁵⁴

At this point, therefore, it seems that the political measure of the issues involved in Peng's letter had not yet been exactly taken. We'll have to wait for Mao's speech on July 23 for this to change.

1. On the situation

Socialism can be built faster and with better results. Industry and agriculture can grow by more than 10% a year: for the duration of the II° Plan, 25% for industry and 10 to 15% for agriculture.

The people's communalization movement accelerated the development of the rural economy by facilitating the integrated development of agriculture, forestry, livestock, fisheries, industry, commerce, the university and the army. He has provided valuable experience in transforming collective ownership in the countryside into universal ownership.

2. Reading the *Manual of Political Economy*

3. Planning issues

Check figures for total production of cereals and cotton.

^h 3rd member of the "Military Club" [MC 3].

^a 2° member of the "Military Club" [MC 2] (LR 144)

^b Mao's personal secretary. <https://en>.

4. Balanced development
Globally balancing means of production (accumulation) and consumption
5. Ground line question
Oppose the practice of forced orders. Dare to reflect the real situation. Travel to the countryside in groups every year.
6. Business management and product quality
Watch out for a drop in product quality and an increase in accidents.
7. Institutional issues (government...)
8. Collaboration issues
9. Trade in rural bazaars
10. Future
11. Canteen problems
Communal canteens, wherever the conditions for their operation exist, should continue to function and strive to do a good job. If conditions are poor and difficulties numerous, they can be scaled down and become canteens frequented by a small number of people; they can turn their permanent canteens into temporary ones; or they can be left to fend for themselves for the time being.
12. The Party's role in rural areas

July 21: long talk (3 hours⁵⁵) by Zhang Wentian [MC 3]. ^a

The disproportion is the result of overly ambitious goals and too much haste.

"Steel for all"^b meant that 90 million people^c went blindly into the mountains, resulting in a loss of agricultural production.

Most people wanted to protect canteens as a sign of socialism or even communism. But "No money for food" should be abolished and replaced by social insurance for the few who have lost their jobs.

We must always distribute according to the job. ^d

The concepts of poor and rich need to be modified slowly. People are rich because they work well. Such wealth is good for the individual and better for the country. It is deserved and honorable.

Exaggerating the role of the subjective to the point of neglecting real possibilities becomes subjectivism. ^e

We have to comply with objective economic laws.

Every product must be quantified and accounted for. Socialism cannot be built without accounting. In fact, the "political account" and the "economic account" are one and the same.

There are many things we lack common sense about.

Later, Z.W. summed up the line he was defending at the time in six points⁵⁶

1. *Emphasis on the development of productive forces.*

^a LR 115. Liu Rui returns to this speech at length in the appendix to his book: pp. 349-359.

^b A reminder of one of the two watchwords of the time: "steel for all" and "poetry for all".

^c This figure, taken up by Mao, is truly staggering, given that the rural working population at the time was in the region of 200 million! Who exactly were we talking about, and what exactly does "going to the mountains" mean?

^d Reminder of the opposition between two principles for distributing the products of labor: that of socialism ("to each according to his work") and that of communism ("to each according to his needs").

^e Assessing the active role of the "subjective factor" is at the heart of the ideological-political battle of the time.

2. *Need to collaborate with capitalist countries on goods and services.*
3. *Emphasis on material incentives.*
4. *Emphasis on the law of value: production plans must be subordinated to economic laws.*
5. *In production management, emphasis on centralized management by plant managers, engineers and experts. Need to learn from the bourgeoisie in production management.*
6. *All in all, refrain from mass movements and abolish the GLF! ^a*

July 22: discussions in the 6th group ⁵⁷

- Summer famine in some areas
- Although the "communist wind"^b didn't last long, it was very dangerous.
- Long-term orientation was achieved too broadly and too early.
- Scope of the "no money for food" slogan?
- Self-satisfaction and arrogance in thinking it was easy to overtake Great Britain and catch up with the United States.
- Cast iron from small blast furnaces turns out to be too rich in sulfur.
- We only have 300 different types of steel when there are 3,000 worldwide.

Further discussions in the 3^{°58}, 4^{°59} and 2^{°60} groups.

- Discussions about the slogan "eat without money".
- The food situation is not tense in most regions, but only in a small part of the country.
- Why do you say "loss and gain"? The word "loss" is placed in front of the word "gain"!
- Gains and losses should not be equated.
- It's only a minority who are unhappy with the canteens.
- There's no such thing as petty bourgeois madness or mistakes that are hard to overcome.
- It cannot be said that "the prestige of the Party has suffered a major loss".
- The transition from the small collective property of the team to the large collective property of the commune was a major step forward.
- Importance of the **"five-in-one" principle of workers, peasants, shopkeepers, academics and soldiers.** ^c
- The development of agriculture depends mainly on mechanization, and the gradual improvement of peasant life does not require egalitarianism.
- Between realizations and gaps, the relationship is 9 fingers to 1.
- Plan inaccuracy is not a "left" or "right" issue.
- It is possible and necessary to achieve the "no money for food" goal after a few years of hard work.
- The principle of voluntary participation in canteens must be respected.

^a LR states (p. 359) that he was then in favor of his speech: *"I think he spoke more clearly than Peng Dehuai's letter."* Indeed!!! His subsequent six-point program (presented here) neatly sums up the whole right-wing line of socialism as state capitalism!

^b Note that Mao himself criticized this expression on July 23.

^c An essential revolution in social relations at RPCs.

- The advantage of canteens is that they save labor.
- The GLF cannot leave the law of proportional planned development.
- Criticism of always wanting to do more; criticism of the feverish mind
- Lack of verification of the figures put forward by the bureaucracy
- Mistakes 1) to confuse socialism with communism, 2) to confuse collective property with universal property, 3) to control individuals too much in terms of working hours, secondary production and collective life.
- "I think Peng's spirit and attitude are very good."
- You always want to do more. It seems impossible to stop.
- Economic accounting should be strengthened.
- "There's a personal history between Peng and Mao."

July 23: 's decisive speech ⁶¹

Sycamore II (19-33)

The problem is the PCs. *The people who took the initiative applied communism. How should we judge such enthusiasm? "Petty-bourgeois fanaticism? I don't think we should think that way. If you think about it, it's just a question of having gone a little too far.*

The "communist wind" *was stirred up above all by Communist cadres extorting property from brigades and production teams. ^a This was wrong, and the masses didn't accept it. The formula "first equalize, second pool, third take" wasn't worth much. Things have to be given back. You can't just say "what's yours belongs to me too", help yourself and walk away. Everything that was taken from the peasants has to be given back. It would be wrong of us to hog the property of production brigades and work teams.*

The managers didn't understand the law of value, nor did they understand equal exchange and reward for work done. If managers don't understand a little political economy, they're in big trouble. ^b

I've learned to stand my ground and not waver in critical moments.

There are 700,000 production brigades. Let's say every one of them makes a mistake. How would you manage to publicize these 700,000 errors in one year? Publishing 700,000 articles that bring nothing but bad news is not a proletarian attitude. Of course, no one in the audience supports such ideas. I'm exaggerating on purpose.

Canteens are a good thing and should not be condemned too harshly. In my opinion, they are based on free participation. If we manage to maintain one canteen in three throughout the country, I'll be completely satisfied. ^c

We didn't invent canteens; the masses did.

Can CP collapse? We expected the majority to collapse, and even if 70% did, there would still be 30% left. If they're going to collapse, let them collapse!

*Many things have happened without being foreseen. At present, **the planning bodies no longer control planning, and this has been the case for some time now.** The Planning Commission and the central ministries have been in place for ten years, and suddenly, after the Beidahe conference [August 1958], they let go of control. They call it planning by directives; in other words, planning is no longer necessary. They've stopped making any calculations. ^d But coal and steel don't move by*

^a Mao's view is that the so-called "communist wind" is nothing more than a pompous argument put forward in the PCR's by bureaucrats to better exploit peasant labor...

^b The economic laws of labor-value and equal-value exchange still prevail in socialism. Mao confirms that the PCR's communist inventions operate within the maintained economic framework of socialist construction.

^c Mao clearly advocates the experimental nature of canteens. The idea is not to systematize it too quickly.

^d The collapse of centralized planning! Imagine the chaotic consequences in a socialist economy. All this foreshadowed the unprecedented halt to all planning from 1963 to 1965!

themselves; they need vehicles to move. **I hadn't anticipated this.** Neither I nor the Prime Minister were concerned with this problem. ^a You could say we didn't know about it. I'm not trying to evade the issue. **I'm totally incompetent when it comes to economic construction,** and I understand absolutely nothing about industrial planning. ^b

Who designed large-scale steel production? I admit it was me. In June, I put forward the figure of 10.7 million tonnes, and then we launched into the realization of this project. From then on, **we rushed into disaster.** We built small blast furnaces...

It was I who launched the 10.7 million tonne proposal and made the decision. As a result, 90 million people were involved in the battle. ^c

As far as PC is concerned, I proposed it, but **I didn't invent it.**

I made the mistake of launching the target of 10.7 million tonnes of refined steel. Since you approved this proposal, you had to share the responsibility with me.

I said that the PCs were a system of collective ownership, and that, in order to move from the system of collective ownership to the stage of communist ownership by the whole people, two five-year plans were too short a timeframe. It may take twenty five-year plans. ^d

I'm responsible for the 10 million tons of steel and 90 million people thrown into the battle. **This chaos has reached gigantic proportions,** and I'm responsible for it. It's when you've had a good shit and a good fart that you feel relieved. ^e

Stunning self-criticism: how was all this possible?

Liu Rui: "Thunderclap from a clear sky; choking blow to the head. With heavy hearts, no one speaks. We are speechless. This speech is a '180-degree turn'." ⁶²

July 23-27: discussions in the 6 groups

- July 23 and 25: (Group 1) Zhu De criticizes Peng. ⁶³

"Peng exaggerated the shortcomings and mistakes."

- July 24: (Group 4) Kang Sheng ⁶⁴

"The President's remarks about the two major 'sins' of the steel industry and CP were made from the opposite, right-wing side. From the point of view of the Party as a whole and the nation as a whole, not only are they not 'sins' but they are two great achievements."

A one-sided assessment following Mao's speech!

"The letter [from Peng] is incoherent and illogical: it affirms on the front and denies on the back; it says 'yes' on the front and 'no' on the back."

- July 24 and 26: (Group 4) **Peng** [MC 1] is self-critical. ⁶⁵

"This letter was written to the President alone for him to see."

- July 26: (Group 2) **Zhang Wentian** [MC 3]⁶⁶; (Group 4) Li Jingquan criticizes Peng⁶⁷; (Group 5) **Huang Kechen** [MC 2]⁶⁸; Tan Zhenlin defends Peng. ⁶⁹

^a Unbelievable admission! Apparently, they've decided to produce steel in the countryside without worrying about transporting it!?!?

^b And yet he was so directly involved that he set steel production at 10.7 million tons. How is this obvious contradiction to be understood? Politics and economics merging?

^c Mao confirms the extravagant figure of 90 million displaced workers...

^d So 100 years! Clearly, Mao was gradually taking on board the ideological and political tasks involved in the CCR precipitated by the PCs.

^e Relief for him, but understandably not for others, such as Li Rui, who retain the names "disaster" and "chaos". The opaque point is that the rest of Lushan concentrates on criticizing the Right without seeming to grasp the seriousness of Mao's self-criticism: if it is indeed "disaster" and "chaos", rectification is not enough! Hence the impression that the political and economic balance sheets are not clearly dialecticized, since an economic disaster-chaos can remain associated with an overall positive political balance sheet... See, more essentially, stumbling over the objective/subjective dialectic (Mao, August 1).

"There are disproportions in our planning work. But Comrade Peng has exaggerated the difficulties."

"The reference to 'petty-bourgeois fanaticism' was very bad."

- July 27: (Group 2) **Zhou Xiaozhon** [MC 4] ⁷⁰

July 26:⁷¹ turnaround, as what had previously been seen as a series of right-wing errors was now interpreted politically as constituting a camp, in collusion with Khrushchev.

Mao's letter to Li ⁷²

For nine months now, I've been critiquing the errors and shortcomings identified during the period between last year's first CC meeting and the current Lushan meeting.

We need to criticize these mistakes, but we also need to prevent demoralization.

*Mistakes need to be critiqued in two directions: **rectification and encouragement**.*

The fight against the right breeds leftism, and from the fight against leftism come right-wing tendencies.

Chou Enlai's speech ⁷³

"Last year was a **socialist** revolution." ^a

"Peng's letter represents the Right."

July 28: government meeting convened by Chou Enlai ⇒ seven points to follow... ⁷⁴

July 29: assessment of the enlarged PB meeting held since early July. Decision to convene a plenary CC (8th of the VIII° Congress). ⁷⁵

The PB meeting did two things:

1. *Changing goals*
2. *Examine the best route to take.*
 - a. *Review indicators.*
 - b. *What to do with the CP? Dissolve it or maintain it?*

Interval

[July 30: Liu Rui writes a letter to Mao admitting his sympathy for Peng. ⁷⁶]

July 31: CCP Standing Committee (10 participants + 4 observers) .⁷⁷

Long Mao/Peng exchange that extends to the whole Committee ⁷⁸

Mao:

- "The experience of the 38 years since the founding of the Party [1921] shows that inclination to the right is linked to the bourgeoisie and **inclination to the left is linked to the petty-bourgeoisie.**"
- "Universal property and collective property, communism and socialism are two distinct lines."
- "Khrushchev didn't like the Commune. He only talked about material conditions, not political ones."

^a Cf. ambiguity and hesitation in characterizing the revolution initiated by the PCs as "communist"...

In my view, this stems from the fact that it would be necessary to clarify that "communist revolution" differs from "socialist revolution" in the political nature of what "revolution" means (the word does not designate the same type of upheaval in the two expressions: no longer destruction-reconstruction, but addition-extension). In other words, a new notion of revolution is needed if the very idea of a communist revolution within a socialist revolution is to be conceived.

- "You've never written letters for many important periods. So why this time 10,000 words?"

August 1: Continuation of the Standing Committee.

Mao's long speech ⁷⁹

"Objective existence determines subjective consciousness."

A central but, in my view, highly problematic proposition. The limits of this (mechanistic) proposition will be at the heart of the political follow-up, right up to the very idea of a **cultural** revolution. Here's how Mao develops it:

*"Dialectical materialism and historical materialism are above all worldviews and methodologies. Objective existence **determines** subjective consciousness. The objective material world **passes through** the brain and **forms** concepts, judgments, thoughts, theories and political programs. Objectivity **influences** subjectivity. Where does the human mind come from? If you don't recognize the above, you can't get out of it. The objective world has to be repeated over and over again before you can enter the subjective world. The objective world **determines** the subjective world. The objective world is primary, objectively **independent of** and **unaffected by** human consciousness. The mind is secondary."* ⁸⁰

Mao oscillates between two propositions: determination (mechanistic) and influence (dialectical). He stumbles over the proposition that the subjective - human consciousness - would not affect the objective world, which is untenable for a revolutionary! In my own review, I'll come back to this point at length.

"Political economy, I haven't read it."

*"**Empiricism** is a system hostile to Marxist philosophy."*

*"Reading and studying are two different things. **Reading is not the same as studying.**"^a*

"We believe your letter has been prepared for publication."

New Mao/Peng exchange ⁸¹

Peng: "My letter was immature".

Letter from Mao to Wang ⁸²

"This text refutes Khrushchev, who opposed three initiatives: the Hundred Flowers, the PCs and the GLF."

Lushan II (Plenary C.C.): August 2-16

August 2: opening of the 8th plenary session of the CC. 162 attendees.

Speech by :

- Mao ⁸³

"Setting goals too high is like setting up a Buddha to worship. You have to give up goals that are not achievable, such as those for steel, coal, grain, cotton..."

That's just about all the GLF's quantitative targets!

"The Party Congress is due to be held next spring."

It would not be held... until 1969, a sign that the crisis at Lushan had not really been resolved.

"Cure the disease to save the patient. [...] It takes ten years for a man to rectify his mistakes. [...] You have to trust. Those who cannot change are the exception. [...] You have to have compassion for people, not for mistakes."

Essential point: dissociate political firmness on the line and flexibility in the revolution of individual

^a An essential point for militants today!

subjectivities...

"Today, it's no longer about fighting the 'left' but the right."

Cf. the "180-degree turn"...

"This battle must go on for at least ten or twenty years. Perhaps a century or half a century. In short, until the total extermination of the classes; then the struggle will die out."

This is indeed a communist revolution. And this is the start of a very long march, the exact term of which remains a matter of fantasy.

- Lin Biao ⁸⁴

"Peng has greatly exaggerated the imbalance between urban and rural areas, between workers and peasants."

And let's not forget another aspect of the problem: the contradiction between town and country, particularly when it comes to the supply of the former by the latter.

"**Pragmatism** is another form of manifestation of empiricism in politics."

They try to orient themselves philosophically, with references from the 19th century...

- Zhou Enlai ⁸⁵

"Comrade Peng doesn't admit to personal ambition. He does not admit to being a hypocrite. He does not admit that his activities are planned, prepared, organized and determined."

Always this way of erasing the novelty of the ideological-political questions opened up in 1958 and reducing everything to the prolongation of old, more or less concealed determinations...

- Liu Shaoqi ⁸⁶

- Letter from Mao to Zhang Wentian: "Why did you get yourself into this military club! The truth is, like attracts like." ⁸⁷

From August 3, meeting in six groups⁸⁸ of which the 4th(with Peng) is the largest⁸⁹. These include:

- August 3: (Group 4) Kang Sheng compares Peng to Bukharin ⁹⁰
- August 4: (Group 1) Huang Yongsheng⁹¹: "Peng didn't mention the origin of his mistake. He withdrew **secretly** and waited for an opportunity to return."

This way of reducing the secrecy of a decision to a deliberate concealment!

(Group 4):

- Li Jingquan⁹²: "Peng's letters are full of coded messages." "Was it the influence of foreigners?" "Peng's attack was planned, prepared, organized and targeted. **There are unmentionable secrets.**"

Ditto! But if "a confessed secret remains a secret" (Jacques Lacan), then an unconfessed secret is not really a secret at all, but a hiding place or a disguise.

Rather than asking, as Mao seems to me to do: "We must understand Peng's decision by examining its consequences, not the secret nature of his deliberation" - in other words, by understanding it downstream (its consequences), not upstream (its "causes").

- Su Zhenhua⁹³: "Comrade Peng has long passed himself off as a gentleman. But his ambitious nature is not exposed and his painted skin of a **hypocrite** peeled..."
- Xiao Hua⁹⁴: "Some people are still afraid of ghosts. What are you afraid of? **If there's a ghost, you've got to catch it!**"

It seems to me a much more interesting and intelligent position: there's no need to be afraid of the secret constitution of individual decisions. A genuine decision, being by definition incalculable, advances without any declared foundation, without any guarantee, like a bet, as much as a "ghostly" proposition. A decision is caught by the materialist examination of its consequences, not by supposedly calculable "causes" of which the decision is merely the effect...

- Kang Sheng⁹⁵: *"Experience is the sum total of people's social practices, and people recognize objective existence through their senses, but objective existence is not modified by people's will."*

"Objective existence is not modified by the will of the people": a strange statement for a revolutionary who wants to transform objective existence!

This shows that he is entangled in a mechanical determination of "subjective consciousness" by "objective existence".

Peng⁹⁶ chats with the other members.

- August 5: (Group 1) Zhang Pinghua⁹⁷: *"We must not underestimate these **conspiracy molecules**".*

Every genuine subjective decision is a synthesis of innumerable unconscious molecules (i.e. intrinsically secret and not extrinsically concealed by some manipulative conscience).

- August 6: (Group 3)

- Tao Zhou⁹⁸: *"Peng has a lot of weepy words".*
- Taochu⁹⁹: *"Peng always hoped there would be a Hungarian counter-revolutionary incident in China. The Hungarian incident he hoped for only began to happen this year."*

Cf. all this takes place against the backdrop of the Budapest balance sheet (November 1956), which Peng had apparently discussed directly with Khrushchev during his recent trip to Albania (May 1959).

- Tao Cating¹⁰⁰: *"Before the President's speech, I said I had a favorable opinion of Peng. In retrospect, it was a mistake on my part not to look deeply enough into people."*

"Looking deep into people's hearts: to find out their secret?"

(Group 4) Kang Sheng asks Peng six questions.¹⁰¹

- August 7: (Group 4) Kang Sheng dialogues with Peng.¹⁰²

Peng: *"I'm unhappy with the Planning Commission's work on the overall balance." "I made a mistake in my letter, but I didn't give it much thought at the time." "I agree that the general appearance of the letter was wrong."*

Kang Sheng: *"What did you say about the CP when you were abroad?"*

Peng: *"I didn't raise the issue of PCs when I met with Khrushchev twice in Albania."*

August 5: CC intervention and Mao's remarks on PCs¹⁰³

"There's a production brigade where, in one fell swoop, several dozen canteens were closed, only to reopen some time later. The lesson to be learnt from this is not to bow your head in the face of difficulties. [...] Difficulties are there; mistakes are bound to be made, but these difficulties can be overcome; and these mistakes can be corrected."

Overcoming what must be overcome...

August 7: CC instruction that *"right-wing ideology has become the main danger in our work."*¹⁰⁴

Reorganization of the six groups into just three (of around 50 people each): II, IV (with Peng) and V.¹⁰⁵ Their political aim: to criticize Peng and the "Military Club".

August 8: G II discussions¹⁰⁶

August 9: discussion at G II¹⁰⁷, GIV¹⁰⁸ and G V¹⁰⁹

August 10: G II¹¹⁰ and G IV discussions¹¹¹

Peng: *"The question of whether the President was 'Stalin in his later years' was raised by Zhang Wentian."*¹¹²

August 10: Statement that there is right-wing opposition in the C.C. - the "military club"¹¹³ - which operates in direct liaison with Khrushchev.¹¹⁴

Khrushchev's view of the PCs ¹¹⁵

"Right from the end of the civil war [1920s in the USSR], the argument was, "Since we're fighting for communism, let's build Communes." At the time, many people didn't really understand what communism was or how to build it. ^a The Commune was created, although the material and political conditions - by which I mean the consciousness of the peasantry - did not exist at the time. The result is that everyone wants to live well by spending less labor on public services. As the saying goes, 'do what you can and take what you need'."

So Khrushchev interprets the Communist principle of "from each according to his abilities to each according to his needs" as "do what you can and take what you need"!

He bars the Chinese experience in the name of the Soviet experience thirty years before...

Right-wing campaign update, comparing today's Mao to "Stalin's last years" .¹¹⁶

See Hu Quiamu's contribution to G IV¹¹⁷ :

Mao did not make the same six serious mistakes as Stalin "in the twilight of his life":

1. *Detachment from the masses and reality.*
2. *No democracy within the Party.*
3. *Promoting personal superstition.*
4. *A serious error on the question of purges.*
5. *A tendency to stagnate in both theory and practice.*
6. *The error of chauvinism*

Mao's speech "Cure the disease to save the patient" .¹¹⁸

*"The comrades who formed a 'Military Club' were psychologically **unprepared** for the Socialist Revolution."*

The challenge is always to understand why some comrades don't commit to the new stage of the Revolution, and how to get them to do so.

Note that the fact that the CCR **takes place during** the socialist revolution and not **afterwards** still maintains political confusion about the GL-GLF-PC triplet.

"After just a few years, first-graders will do just fine."

August 11: Mao's twenty-point speech on Peng and his club ¹¹⁹

*"Right-wingers were mentally **unprepared** for the proletarian revolution and resisted it as soon as it arrived."*

"Among the Party's ten million members, many joined because they were anti-imperialist and anti-feudal."

And that doesn't necessarily make them Communists, let alone CCR members...

*"When CP arrived, there was **a rupture**." "Communalization is very good."*

"The criticisms the Righties have made are all trivial matters."

"The negation of the commodity economy, of the law of value, of equal exchange caused tensions between urban and rural classes."

Let's not forget that the issue is also how the countryside feeds the cities!

"Politics must come first. Politics is the superstructure."

A militant axiom that contradicts the mechanistic version of historical materialism...

^a See this constructivist axiom: like socialism, communism must be *built*.

"I'm not in favor of expelling all Right-wingers from the PB, let alone the CC. There are a few opposition members on the PB, which I see as beneficial." ^a

"You have to evaluate both sides of these comrades."

"We've been in session for forty days."

August 13-15: CC AGM ¹²⁰

August 13 morning: review of Zhang Wentian [MC 4] - self-criticism¹²¹ and discussions ¹²²

August 13 afternoon: Peng exam [MC 1] - self-criticism¹²³ and discussions ¹²⁴

August 14 morning: review of Huang Wentian [MC 2] - self-criticism and discussion ¹²⁵

August 14 afternoon: PC review ¹²⁶

"Production was overestimated. As a result, there was a shortage of cereals, foodstuffs and certain materials."

August 14: Lin Biao's speech ¹²⁷

"What is more intolerable is the defamation of the great leader of the Party."

What emerges from this book is a rather mediocre portrait of Lin Biao which, for the most part, simply outbids the Right in its criticism and Mao in its personal praise...

August 15

- *"Empiricism or Marxism-Leninism"* speech by Mao ¹²⁸

"On the theoretical level, we have in the past criticized dogmatism, but we have not criticized empiricism. Now it's empiricism that's the main danger."

"As far as the ideological front is concerned, i.e. the theoretical aspect, I recommend starting by studying economics and philosophy, then moving on to other disciplines."

It was clearly time for a revolution in revolutionary culture, with the concomitant need to study various intellectual resources, primarily economics and philosophy...

- Mao's speech *"What is the correct attitude of a Marxist?"* ¹²⁹

"You refuse to listen to me. So I would have already reached the "evening of Stalin's life" and would exercise "immense arbitrariness", I would grant you neither "freedom" nor "democracy". "I'd love glory" and "appreciate skill"; I'd be "biased in my judgments". And again, "only when I've come to the end of my errors would I agree to rectify them", and then "it would be to take a 180-degree turn"; I would have "deceived you", I would have "shod you like big fish" and moreover I would have "something of Tito"."

"The GLF's assets would not balance its liabilities; the PCs would have screwed up."

Here, Mao takes up all the criticisms made by the Right during Lushan: political and personal.

August 16: Closing of Lushan

- Mao's speech ¹³⁰

"It seems that this Lushan meeting resolved a major problem. ^b It was only after its first part that the antagonism became apparent."

*"Some comrades, who were Party members at the time of the democratic revolution, were not mentally **prepared** for the socialist revolution."*

*"There was no mental **preparation** for socialist revolution and this is the fundamental cause of the mistakes made by anti-party groups."*

Always this non-perception that it's rather the socialist revolution that's splitting in two!

^a Mao's essential point: opposition to the Right is dialectically driving. So we mustn't suppress it and confuse adversaries with enemies.

^b It's hard to believe that anything has really been resolved in Lushan...

Note the theme of "**mental preparation**" for a new kind of revolution. This was to be Mao's main conclusion: the GPCR as a mental preparation for a truly communist revolution in socialism.

"The proletariat cannot solve [this type of problem] by force; it can only use the method of persuasion."

In this sense, "the dictatorship of the proletariat" cannot guide the resolution of contradictions within the Party, and cannot serve as a compass for a truly communist revolution, unless we confuse dictatorship with discussion...

"After a detailed calculation, there are four people in total [with Peng], plus Li Rui who is not counted in the Resolution because he is not part of the C.C."

"We should not consider these people as useless, but as our comrades. We don't want to say goodbye to them. We have to do everything we can to convince them."

Mao doesn't seem to appreciate the political consistency of the divisions... Or he can't (cf. his relationship with Teng until 1976!).

Perhaps he is also wary of his old comrades being replaced by exalted youngsters with no guarantee of political consistency (cf. Lin Biao?)...

"China has a population of 600 million, with annual growth of 13 million."

"How many right-handers? 450,000!"

- A final announcement^a and 4 resolutions:
 - on the five-year plan^b ;
 - on the General Line and Right-wing opportunism^c ;
 - on Peng and the Military Club^d ;
 - on the organization¹³¹ ;
- Four Mao interventions ¹³²

After Lushan

August 17: Ordinary C.C. (after the end of the plenary session)

Decision to initiate the dismissals of Peng and the other members of the "Military Club". ¹³³

- Mao's first speech ¹³⁴
- Liu Shaoqi's speech ^e
- Mao's second speech ¹³⁵

"To disprove the attacks, slanders and suspicions levelled at CP, we need to conduct Marxist surveys and studies of CP, choosing five typical, particularly well-run communes in each province."

August 19: Important writings by Hu Qiamu and Chen Boda on PCs ¹³⁶

^a LR 301-302. The Announcement indicates the existence of right-wing opportunism without mentioning proper names.

- "After checking the statistics, in 1958 compared with 1957, the increase in cereals was 35% and in cotton 28%."
 - The Announcement indicates that the goal of catching up with Great Britain could be achieved in around ten years (rather than 15).

^b LR 302-303: "complete the main objectives of the II° Five-Year Plan ahead of schedule".

^c LR 303-304: "Our country is in the transition period from capitalism to socialism. The transformation of the old social and economic system has been fundamentally completed, but it is not yet complete."

^d LR 304-305: "The more victorious the socialist cause, the more acute the class struggle."

^e LR 309-311: "the most important part of Liu Shaoqi's speech was to praise Mao Zedong." !!!

Hu Qiamu:

- 1) Peng "vilified the GLF" and asserted that "*petty bourgeois fanaticism makes us prone to making 'leftist' mistakes*".
- 2) This description of the GLF and the 1958 CP movement is absurd and an insult.
- 3) For Peng, "*if the Chinese workers and peasants hadn't been so good, the Hungarian incident would have happened a long time ago and the troops would have had to intervene.*"

It's striking that Peng, in charge of the Red Army, was driven by the fear of a Chinese Budapest.

- 4) Peng argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat was subject to bureaucracy.

The notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat encumbers and sows political confusion rather than clarity, because it envelops and overhangs both the socialist and communist revolutions. *Dictatorship of the proletariat* does not mean the same thing in both cases. What's more, *dictatorship of the proletariat* tends to obscure the essential difference between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, between political relations to enemies and adversaries...

- 5) Peng slandered Mao as "*Stalin in his old age*".

Chen Boda: the aim is to criticize Comrade Peng Dehuai's political appearance, based on his personal history.

Hence Peng's review of the mistakes he made during the democratic revolution and his observation that he was "repeating his old ideas".

A problematic method: to look to the past for the roots of new divergences is to deny that anything new has happened; it is to pretend to base the decisions required by the event on entirely calculable prior determinations, on constructivist deliberation...

September: impeachments decided and publicly announced.



APPENDICES

THE GREAT FAMINE (1959-1961)

Natural disasters

Floods and droughts affect :

- in 1959, 43 million hectares,
- in 1960, 60 million hectares,
- in 1961, over 60 million hectares.

By way of background, in 1980, cultivated land in China represented less than 150 million hectares. The hectares affected by drought represented 29% (1959) and over 40% (1960-1961) of all cultivated land respectively.

Agricultural production

According to Zhang Wentian^a (confirmed by Mao himself), since the end of 1958, 90 million peasants have moved "blindly" to produce steel. The result was a loss of agricultural production, late planting¹³⁷ and harvests that were too late and too badly done.

According to the State Planning Commission¹³⁸, agricultural production fell sharply in 1959 and again in 1960, by 12.6%. Oilseed production fell by 52.7% and pig production by 32%. Similarly, in 1960, production in light industry (consumer goods) fell by 9.8%, while that in heavy industry (capital goods) rose by 25.9%. Thus, the GLF's emphasis on heavy industry created a clear imbalance to the detriment of agriculture and light industry.

According to Li Rui¹³⁹, "*from the second quarter of 1960, many major cities were emptied of their grain stocks, and there was a general shortage of food and clothing in all parts of the country; the whole country was forced to lower the level of food rations, implement "low level" and "vegetable replacement" programs, and reduce the quantities of cotton supplied for civilian purposes. All major foodstuffs were supplied in limited quantities on the basis of tickets and vouchers. The entire population suffered malnutrition and deteriorating health, resulting in **the unnatural deaths of tens of millions.**"*

Dead

Li Rui¹⁴⁰: "*according to statistics from the Chinese Population Yearbook, in 1959, the national population increased by 11.13 million; in 1960, the population decreased by 11 million; and in 1961, it continued to decrease by 3.48 million.*"

All in all, if we take into account the fact that China's population was growing at a rate of 13 million a year at the time^b, the population deficit over the three years 1959-1961 would have been **over 40 million!**

Of course, we're not talking about that many deaths (what birth deficit?). And all this is the result of an interplay between 1) exceptional natural disasters (floods and droughts) for three years in a row (1959-1961), 2) sabotage organized by the USSR (departure of its advisors and the end of its aid in 1960) and by the Right, and 3) the contrasting effects of the GLF. Finally, the problem was more than

^a July 21 speech at Lushan... (cf. LR 117, 352)

^b Mao (Lushan, August 16, 1959): "*China has a population of 600 million, with an annual increase of 13 million.*" [LR 299]

severe, even on the scale of a China of over 600 million people at the time.

Population

Evolution démographique (1949-1984)

Années	Population totale (en millions)	% de population rurale	Taux de croissance		Population active rurale
			urbaine	rurale	
1949	541,67	89,4			165,49
1952	574,82	87,5	27,9	19,1	182,43
1957	646,53	84,6	36	21,7	205,66
1959	672,07	81,6	18,5	9,2	207,84
1962	672,95	82,7	27,6	27,1	213,73
1965	725,38	82	21,7	29,5	235,34
1971	852,29	82,7	16,4	24,3	287,52
1975	924,20	82,7	9,6	16,6	299,46
1979	975,42	81	8,8	12,1	305,82
1984	1 050 (évaluation)				

So in 1962, there were 673 million Chinese, 556 million of whom lived in the countryside (214 million of whom were working, i.e. only 42% of the rural population).

HAI RUI

Reading this book, one becomes aware of the omnipresent reference to Hai Rui, the historical figure who gave rise in early 1961 to Wu Han's play aimed at rehabilitating Peng Dehuai.

This reference to Hai Rui seems to have been introduced by Mao himself, as a positive example likely to inspire critical thinking against the Right's Stalinist path, as early as April 1959 at the Shanghai Conference.¹⁴¹

Thus, in the 1961-1962 turn to the right, the critical figure of Hai Rui was turned against Mao, just as his criticism of Stalin had been turned against him at Lushan.



SUMMARY

Issues

Method reminder

This work is not the work of a historian: it does not aim to tell the story of the Lushan conference, to put it "into narrative". It is a militant investigation aimed at identifying, for us communists of the 21st century, a possible political legacy of this episode. Hence the following hypotheses to guide this investigation.

Survey logic

My investigation is guided by the general question posed to Chinese communists of the time: how to **determine** what happens in an unforeseen (event-driven) way from the summer of 1958 onwards (the PCs and their canteens, internal tensions within the CCP, Peng Dehuai's intervention, the exact type of Right being formed, etc.) and the communist way of orienting oneself politically in these determinations?

"Determine"?

Why this problem of "determining"? Because the whole conference seems to me to pivot, in its middle (August 1, 1959, between the previous meeting of the B.P. and the subsequent meeting of the C.C.) on the "materialist" bases then recalled by Mao in the following terms:

*"Dialectical materialism and historical materialism are above all worldviews and methodologies. Objective existence **determines** subjective consciousness. The objective material world passes through the brain and forms concepts, judgments, thoughts, theories and political programs. Objectivity influences subjectivity. Where does the human mind come from? If you don't recognize the above, you can't get out of it. The objective world has to be repeated over and over again before you can enter the subjective world. The objective world **determines** the subjective world. The objective world is primary, objectively independent of and unaffected by human consciousness. The mind is secondary." ¹⁴²*

In my opinion, this "historical materialism" (*objective existence determines subjective consciousness*), particularly in its "classist" version (let's put it this way: *the historical struggle of social classes determines the struggle of two political classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat*), is going to **obstruct** a proper political understanding of what was at stake in China at the time, i.e., the 1958 event-driven launch of a new type of communist revolution within a socialist revolution that had been underway since 1953.

Understanding this **obstruction**, understanding how Mao attempted to subsume it politically in those years, is the challenge of this review, which, as we shall see, involves distinguishing several meanings of the equivocal word "determine", whose linguistic ambiguity circulates from objective characterizations to subjective specifications (from *engendering & causing* to *circumscribing & deciding*).

Obstruction of indeterminate points

The Lushan investigation illustrates this difficulty: while a whole series of political points **can be determined**, one in particular (*how to determine the personal reasons that led old comrade Peng Dehuai to oppose the CP event?*) will prove **indeterminable** according to the classist axioms of historical materialism.

The whole point of Mao's leadership of the Lushan conference seems to me to be to uncover a communist way of politically subsuming this **classist obstruction**: by circumscribing classist indeterminacy in such a way as to escape its saturating overlay, according to the clearing of a displacement, a displacement that will take the form of a political pincer: on the one hand, **the points of a communist policy** attached to socialism (which will then be determined [*grasped*] by the discipline

of their consequences rather than by the explanation of their genesis); on the other, **the regions of a communist culture** (proving capable of determining [*conditioning, preparing, disposing*] a terrain favorable to the emergence of the preceding political points).

Indeed, if communist novelties emerge^a event-driven from the socialist "soil", there's no point in trying to determine why they have so emerged; rather, we need to relate to them according to two coupled relationships: one, internal to the politically emergent "canopy", takes seriously its autonomous logic in order to draw any consequences from militant loyalty to these novelties; the other, internal to the socialist "terrain" on which the emergence took place, cultivates it in order to favor its possibilities of communist emergence, thus consolidating the ek-sistence of a political canopy and fertilizing its retroactive capacities for social revolution.

A plan

Hence a general process of political "determination", which we will go through in six stages. In the pivotal moment that is Lushan, it is a matter of "determining":

- A. the ek-sistence of a communist event;
- B. the range of political positions adopted in response to this event;
- C. who adopts this or that position;
- D. personal reasons for adopting one's own position;
- E. obstruction due to a "classist" way of determining all this;
- F. and finally, how to subsume this obstruction politically.

A pivotal moment

First pivotal moment of CCR I (1958-1965)

The Lushan Conference was the first pivotal moment of CCR I (1958-1965) - the second pivotal moment of this first part of the CCR was the 7,000 Conference in early 1962, which entrusted political leadership to the Right on a long-term basis (until the GRCP = CCR II).

Lushan was to reveal the existence, within the CCP leadership (P.B. and C.C.), of a **new type of Right**, which discovered itself to be *anti-communist*: in fact, it was its resolute opposition to the CP (to their communist innovations themselves, and not just to the methods and pace of their implementation) that was to constitute the political opposition between the *Stalinist*^b **construction** of socialism and the *Maoist*^c development - or better: **cultivation** - of socialism.

My hypothesis is as follows: gradually, the ideological-political opposition to the CCR **is taking shape in the face of communist advances**, giving shape to an alternative political path, a reactionary socialist path **of a new type** that will openly assume its anti-communism (something that the previous *Stalinist path* did not do - did not need to do - which **depoliticized the construction of socialism** rather than opposing an active communist orientation here and now^d).

^a For an intellectual consolidation of the idea of **emergence**, see my article (Mathematical resources) in issue 3 of *Long Walks Review*.

^b Or "Bolshevik" (in the vocabulary of the time, which I prefer to avoid here as it tends today to confuse pre- and post-1928 Bolshevism).

^c In other words, socialism as fertilizable land that can be irrigated by communist springs and canals - this theme of "culture" (in its various senses) is going to take on ever greater political importance.

^d During the democratic revolution, the CPC had already had to combat an internal Stalinist (so-called "Bolshevik") orientation (in 1927, in 1935). By contrast, China's socialist revolution (from 1952: preparation of the first Plan 1953-1957) was based on the Stalinist model. But its essentially depoliticizing (i.e., decommunizing) tendency did not begin to emerge until 1956. Hence Mao's ideological-political work in 1956-1957 to prepare for the **communist emergence into socialism** that would begin in 1958.

In other words, the CCR would create a new type of bourgeoisie within the CCP, **inventing itself as a new political class**, the bearer "for all" of the project of **authoritarian socialist state capitalism** - a project that would triumph in China from the late 1970s onwards, ensuring that it would not collapse, as Russian socialism did in the early 1990s, and return to the **neo-liberal parliamentary state capitalism** of the West.

The political difficulty with Lushan is that all this appears for the first time in a situation where the novelties of the CCR are gradually emerging, where a new type of communist/socialist political articulation is being invented, where the old political units are cracking by surprise, where the new political groupings operate within a generally unchanged organizational framework (the same CCP), which inevitably gives these new political divisions the initial form of a classic political plot, "prepared" and "organized" by "hypocrites" ("the military club" of Peng, Huang, Zheng, Zhou).

When the GLF splits in two...

Before Lushan, explicit political debates were still largely concerned with assessing the right "pace" for the transformations undertaken by the General Line, the GLF and the PCs. This assessment depended directly on the political conception of the issues at stake for the GLF and the PCs. Two avenues then became clearer (inventing themselves rather than revealing previous orientations that had remained deliberately concealed):

- **GLF in socialism** (essentially by accelerating the development of the productive forces, with priority given to heavy industry: cf. respective growth rates for steel, coal, cotton and cereals) with the Stalinist argument that this would speed up progress towards the next stage, that of communism; in which case, the pace (first "*catching up with Great Britain in fifteen years*"^a then "*catching up with the UK in seven years and the USA in fifteen*" and finally "*in three and ten years respectively*"¹⁴³) is measured economically, according to the maintenance of a general economic "balance" (between investment and consumption, between industry and agriculture...).
- **GLF into communism**^b (and no longer **towards** it), of which the PCs were then the main vector^c. We can then measure the rhythm of the policy of communist "shoots" planted in socialism, especially the pace of development of the canteens populaires and the implementation of their principle: **for the peasants of the PCs, "to each according to his needs" in terms of food**^d. For the communist orientation, it's a matter of dialecticizing two different political rhythms: that of building socialism (state planning) and that of communist fertilization of socialism (mass political movements).

The challenge for Lushan is to clarify this new split^e.

Its **tactical** resolution (the dismissal of Peng and his "military club") did not amount to a **strategic** resolution since, on the contrary, it was Liu and Teng's Right which, informed by the new antagonism, took political advantage of the GLF's serious political errors to dismantle step by step the Communist inventions of the PCs.

A. Communist event?

First determination to be made: determine [*identify, dis/circle, circumscribe*] the communist novelties (the "shoots"), which came about unexpectedly, at the heart of the political tangle

General Line (1956...) ⊗ GLF (1957...) ⊗ CP (1958...).

^a See October 1957, the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution, celebrated in Moscow in Mao's presence, where Khrushchev launched the slogan: "*Catch up with and overtake the United States in 15 years*", followed by Mao's slogan: "*Catch up with and overtake Great Britain in 15 years*" (cf. LR 10).

^b A communism that irrigates socialism and thus intervenes *in* socialism rather than *against* it...

^c However, let's not forget the "communist shoots" operating within the GLF itself: reducing the contradictions between industry and agriculture, town and country...

^d The question of extending this principle to urban PC remains to be studied, based on Fabio Lanza's book.

^e The first split in the CPC since 1949...

Then determine [*decide*] whether these communist novelties constitute a political event as such: are they merely local inventions internal to the GLF's logic, or do they engage a new, properly communist logic (for example, by bringing into existence for the first time the communist principle of "to each according to his needs", even in a context of relative scarcity rather than abundance).

Mao, clearly, declares on numerous occasions that this is indeed an event, even if its political qualification (its designation as a specifically "communist" event) remains relatively erratic.

Many managers view these new developments quite differently: either as a necessary consequence of the GLF (a favorable view, but one that erases its event-driven dimension), or as a step backwards in the socialist development of the productive forces (an unfavorable view).

B. Political positions adopted in response to this event?

Let's adopt the Maoist determination: the advent of the PCs (rural from late April 1958 on the initiative of the peasants, and urban from August 1958 on the initiative of the women of the people) constitutes a major political event, breaking new ground in the history of socialist China. How then can we determine [*discern, classify*] the range of political relationships to this event?

The "classic" way here is to distinguish four positions: those of the right, the ultra-left, the left and the center.

The disadvantage - which I think is a redhibitory one - is that this range is relevant to a specific "political line" (in this case, the "General Line" adopted from 1956 onwards to build socialism), but hardly relevant to an event which, by definition, opens up new kinds of militant questions.

In our case, this is clear from the difficulty of distinguishing between the mistakes of the Maoist left and the deviations of the ultra-left, the self-criticisms of the Maoist left and the criticisms of the right, the cautious temporizations of the Maoist left and the wait-and-see attitude of the center. ^a

Here's where the difficulty lies: if the event marks a break in the political line (in this case, the so-called "General Line"), how can we characterize the new political determinations according to the old right/left relationships to this line?

In the light of Badiou's philosophy of the event^b, let's distinguish three types of subjective relationship to the same event:

- 1) A **faithful** relationship - in this case, that of the Maoist "left" - which undertakes to produce the event's effects of truth, in other words, to implement the communist revolution thus placed on China's new political agenda: by adding communist source-points to the whole of society (according to their entanglement with the various social relations) and by extension (exemplarily extension, from the countryside to the cities, of the people's canteens but also of the new agriculture-industry-trade-education-administration entanglement).
- 2) A **reactive** relationship - in this case, that of the "right" - which takes note of the event in order to deny its relevance and repress it: see the declared opponents of the CP and "communist shoots" in the name of a "balanced" and economically enlightened construction of socialism (cf. Zhang Wentian's intervention on July 21, 1959, as an example).
- 3) An **obscure** report that considers that, in truth, nothing significant has happened - a point of view that obscures (not denies) and forclozes (not represses): see those who "drown" the PCs in a GLF itself "drowned" in a General Line (aimed at economically building socialism through the development of the productive forces).

Once the different types of political position have been determined [*discerned, classified*] in this way, the question becomes: how exactly can we determine [*identify*] the supporters of each of these different positions?

^a One could just as easily say that the Maoist position wanders between the four provisions, precisely in my view because these, while relevant in terms of relations to an established line, are no longer entirely relevant in terms of relations to an event and the new points it brings to ek-sistence.

^b See specifically *Logiques des mondes*

C. Who takes which position?

The challenge at Lushan was to get everyone to speak out on their own behalf.

As we have seen, the game was a tough one: it took more than forty days of incessant and prolific meetings.

But - let's not forget - the clarification of everyone's personal position was only very partially achieved if it's true that Peng Dehuai's dismissal was validated in Lushan by the two main leaders of the reactive orientation - Liu Shaoqi and Teng Xiaoping - who obviously learned from the naive reactionary Peng Dehuai how not to do, how best to prepare the reactive camp politically without rushing into things, and how to capitalize on the mistakes and failures of the Maoist camp faithful to communist innovations.

So far, the usual principles of political determination are operating relatively unobtrusively (but what about the reactives who, like Liu and Teng, don't declare themselves and bide their time, heaping criticism on the inexperienced^a and imprudent Peng?)

But if we push the ("materialist") demand for determinations further, then an unavoidable question remains: how do we determine [*uncover*] the reasons that led Peng and his three other colleagues in the "Military Club" to stand openly in the way of communist novelties? Why did such old comrades in battle (and what battles! the Long March, the civil war up to 1949, the Korean War, the socialist revolution...) reject the communist turning point in the socialist revolution, a turning point that was certainly unforeseen in its own content (because it was event-driven), but nevertheless foreseeable in its event-driven form for old communists (for whom it was foreseeable that unforeseeable events would happen)?

As we shall see, my hypothesis here is that this type of non-reduplication (forecasting the existence of points of unpredictability) constitutes the major intellectual operation by which different modernities subsume classical obstructions. To study this point, let's refer to the intellectual resources that modern mathematics can provide to 21st-century communists.

D. Determining personal reasons for adopting a particular position?

First and foremost, how to politically determine [*elucidate*] Peng Dehuai's "personal reasons"? Countless meetings during Lushan would debate this point with the main person concerned: why did an old comrade, for whom we had the highest regard, come to leave the long road of communism at its first major bend?

- Age issues? But why doesn't Peng simply plead legitimate fatigue and the desire to retire?
- A question of temperament? Peng is impulsive and doesn't study hard: he's a military man rather than a militant...

But none of this seems politically decisive [*clarifying*] for a Marshal, Minister of Defense and member of the Political Bureau. So where do the real political determinations [*origins*] of his personal decision lie?

This is where the "classist" imperative of historical materialism comes into play: to determine [*account for*] subjective consciousness through objective existence, and, more singularly, to determine [*identify the causes of*] political decision through class position. And this is where the obstruction comes in.

^a See Mao's question to him on July 31, 1959: "How is it that you, who never write, wrote such a long letter for the occasion?"

E. Obstruction of "classist" determination!

Mao himself made this imperative clear on August 1, 1959, just as the Lushan conference was shifting between its two main parts (BP in July, CC in August): from determining [*identifying*] a new Right to determining [*identifying*] its supporters:

*"Objective existence **determines** subjective consciousness."*

Note immediately that this principle presupposes

- 1) that **existence** is an objective matter (without taking into account that there is also an ek-sistence which is specifically a subjective matter),
- 2) that subjectivation is **consciousness** (whereas it operates in a constitutive dialectic between conscious decision and subconscious or unconscious determinations),
- 3) that the relationship between the former and the latter is one of **determination** [*fixation*], when this relationship is rather an objective condition (necessary but not sufficient) for **emergence** (a fertile land must exist for the canopy that emerges from the forest that grew on it to ek-sist),
- 4) all in all, the dialectical unity of opposites is obstructed here by the failure to take into account the **feedback** from the subjective to the objective (an essential point for any revolutionary militant!).

The implementation of this materialist orientation (more mechanistic than dialectical) then leads us to search Peng's antecedents for anything that might "determine" his position in 1959 and, when these antecedents prove inconclusive, to assume that there are others, hypocritically concealed, such as "unavowable secrets" that Peng would consciously keep quiet about, etc.

My hypothesis is that this "materialist" orientation stumbles over an impossibility: that of determining the causes that account for the decision taken by Peng in mid-July 1959.

In my view, there are two logical reasons for this impossibility: one concerns all genuine individual decisions (whatever their specific order: militant, amorous, artistic...); the other more specifically concerns decisions (individual or collective) of a political nature.

Let's take a closer look.

1. A real decision is always secret by structure.

A true^a individual decision is not the result of prior deliberation^b but the finite synthesis of an infinite number of infinitesimal^c essentially subconscious^d components. Hence, such a true decision comes in the form of a secret: a true secret, i.e. **a secret of structure**^e and not a false secret which is merely the result of deliberately concealing intentions. A genuine decision of this kind is therefore a ghostly^f appearance, since it is not built stone by stone from a foundation on which it is anchored; rather, it is a leap without guarantee into the unknown, the materiality of which will be tested downstream, not upstream: by a materialist grasp of what it commits us to, of its inescapable consequences. In which,

^a "True" decision is opposed here to "false" decision, i.e. the pseudo-decision that is in truth eminently calculable and incorporates no wager on the threshold of an irreducible unknown.

^b Sartre rightly clarified this in *L'être et le néant*: deliberation follows the decision, not precedes it, so that true deliberation concerns an evaluation of the decision (always already taken) according to the materialist regime of its consequences, and not according to an imaginary regime of its "causes". In other words, the "reasons" for a decision are explored **downstream** rather than **upstream**.

^c What Zhang Pinghua called "*molecules*" on August 5, 1959.

^d Lawvere's *synthetic differential geometry* helps us to understand this point intellectually.

^e as is the geometrical secret that lies at the tip of a cone, a secret that this tip confesses phenomenologically through its prickly character where the rest of the cone is smooth. This secret lies in the indistinguishability at this point of the two orthogonal - and therefore incompatible - components that give the cone its overall structure: a vertical cylinder and a horizontal circle that encircles it, gradually narrowing to form a dimensionless point.

^f See the "ghosts" mentioned by Xiao Hua on August 4, 1959

of course, we recognize this figure of freedom as a requirement to assume responsibility for one's actions, to hold oneself accountable for decisions taken. ^a

In the Lushan situation, the decision taken by each Communist in the face of the CCR's eventful irruption corresponds to this logic: it presents itself to him and his comrades as the conscious tip of a subconscious iceberg. And no matter how we comment on it, no matter how we detail its politico-ideological motivations, something of its intrinsic subjective determination will always elude us.

This secrecy poses few problems when the decision is to adhere. But when, on the contrary, the decision is to doubt, to withhold opinion, or even to oppose, the matter takes a more tense turn. Hence the temptation to come up with **decisive** reasons [*explaining*] the skepticism, restraint or opposition displayed, reasons that can thus "account" for the negative decision taken by this or that person.

It seems to me that the right approach to this type of situation is not to endow the negative decision with imaginary reasons, but rather to assess it in the light of the logic of its consequences.

Clearly, Mao, faced with the astonishment of the direction taken by Peng, is moving in this direction - "*cure the disease to save the patient*", "*criticism must be severe but treatment lenient*"¹⁴⁴ - when many will treat the secrecy of Peng's decision as the effect of an intentional cover-up. ^b

2. A new understanding of militant constitution.

As far as Lushan is concerned, we're talking about political decisions which, confronted with the brand-new limits of "classism", are going to come under a new mode of subjective constitution, relative to an incalculable leap into the unknown, to a political gamble on a contingent event, and no longer engaged in a programmed exploration from the already known and thereby caught up in a programmed necessity.

The properly communist revolution is of a new type in that the social forces it organizes in a new type of political antagonism are no longer strictly **classist** (i.e., directly expressive of the divisions between social classes) and are no longer strictly **determined** [*defined*] by the different **social** class positions.

During Lushan, the axiom "*objective existence determines subjective consciousness*" only engages **imaginary** determinations without touching the **real** point of novelty: the committed CCR is of a truly new type in terms of its political orientation (non-constructible), its strategic objectives (communism is not a third state of society), its own mode of revolutionization (by addition-extension), its political constitution (according to the disinterested interests of humanity as a whole), its forms of organization (reappropriation of state functions by the masses) and therefore, ultimately, its own processes of political subjectivation (no longer strictly determined [*established*] by objective social class positions).

As a result, the CCR opens up a gulf between its own **political** cause and the **social** forces likely to implement it: its political cause, no longer the direct expression of given social forces, is no longer guaranteed to have sufficient social forces to implement it! All that's left, then, is a general but rather abstract confidence, of the kind that Mao puts forward when he states that "*the masses and/or the peoples want revolution!*" without specifying either the social composition of the masses and peoples in question, or the exact type of revolution they want.

In other words, the new type of CCR brings the following point to light for the first time: communist subjectivation for a properly communist revolution is not strictly determinable by objective conditions, but **emerges in relative autonomy** from these objective conditions (which is not to say independently of them^c). It therefore comes up against a form of subjective **indeterminability** that will act as a militant **obstruction**.

^a "*Obedience to the law we have prescribed for ourselves is freedom.*" Rousseau (*Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter VIII)

^b See, for example, the internal discussions within the fourth group on August 4, 1959...

^c The auto-nomy of a domain is the capacity to determine internal laws that are its own, but which do not cancel out the external laws that surround it: autonomy is not autarky, and the autonomy of politics is not nominalistic autarky.

This emergence takes the subjective form of decisions, whether individual (such as Peng's) or collective (such as those of a particular group of farmers), which are inevitably uncertain bets by definition.

F. How can this obstruction be subsumed politically?

All in all, CCR comes up against an obstruction, which is not a simple obstacle.

Obstruction versus obstacle

An obstacle is an **external object** that impedes progress. Such an obstacle raises the extrinsic question of how to overcome it: by going around it (by the side, by digging underneath or by jumping over it) or even by destroying it.

An obstruction **has internal** causes: it is due to an **operation** which, in a given context, proves impossible on a given type of object.

An obstruction then begs the question: is the obstructed space saturated, and should it therefore be abandoned and moved elsewhere, to land that can still be fertilized, or can the identified obstruction be subsumed?

"Subsuming?"

Subsuming obstruction means transcending it by considering it as a particular case under a more general case, as a species under a broader genus.^a

Hence the question: how can we subsume the fact that material causes (social, historical, contextual, class-related...) cannot be politically determined under a genuine political decision taken by an individual (Peng Dehuai, for example) or a collective (such as the peasants who decided on April 25, 1958 to found the first CP in human history)?

Substitute classist filibustering?

My hypothesis is that, in order to do this, Mao will gradually uncover **two paths**, coupled in the form of a kind of **clamp** capable not of determining the indeterminable, but of determining the conditions of existence of points of indeterminability.

Why should we subsume obstruction? Because communist politics must be able to think about how it can gather sufficient subjective forces to implement its orientation on a sufficient scale, and thus effectively revolutionize social relations. It therefore needs an organizational strategy, in the knowledge that this can no longer be strictly a matter of construction, of guaranteed determination: neither history nor the social class struggle can guarantee that the properly communist orientation has the necessary forces to implement it, what's more in a constantly renewed antagonism.

It's at this point that communist politics is divided: if socialism is constructible, communism is not, if only because "communism" can no longer name the stage of a new social state - rather, communism names a policy that irrigates, energizes and electrifies a society that is not.

These seem to be the two arms of the pliers.

- 1) We're going to stop questioning the upstream side of political decisions taken by a given individual or collective, and grasp this decision as a compact **point** that we'll evaluate through its downstream side: through the political consequences it engenders. We're going to question the validity of a political decision as the relevance of the addition-extension of a political point to the situation in question.

It seems to me that part of Mao's stance at Lushan is along these lines: in the face of the reactive ("right-wing") decisions taken by Peng and his acolytes, stand firm in criticizing the decision they have taken (in the name of its real political **consequences** rather than

^a See Hegel's *Aufhebung* (taken up by Marx) which, in the unity of opposites, names a preserving overcoming.

imaginary **origins**), and judge what will become of the people according to the outcome of their political behavior (according to the free political responsibility they will assume).

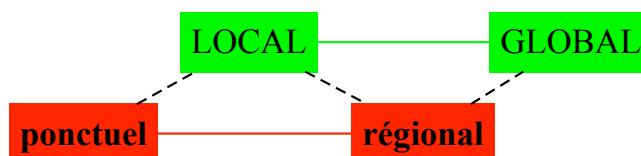
- 2) If it is not possible to determine the indeterminable, it remains possible to determine the terrain on which such indeterminability is constituted. Mao calls this terrain "culture", and considers it necessary to act on it, not strictly speaking to determine [*fix, circumscribe, ensure, guarantee*] what will emerge from it, but to favor such and such an eventuality, in other words to "prepare"^a the conditions (necessary but not sufficient) for its emergence.

So, on the one hand, we need to subject political decision points to the discipline of their consequences; on the other, we need to plough the cultural ground on which properly political decisions can emerge (in relative autonomy).

Metaphorically speaking, on the one hand, it's a question of working within the **canopy** according to the downstream consequences (and not according to the upstream indeterminable guarantees); and on the other, it's a question of working on the **soil** on which the forest (from which the canopy emerges) is built.

All in all, the political orientation likely to subsume "classist" obstruction would consist in working a **clamp** (a walk on two legs?): the clamp of **political points** and **cultural regions** (educational culture, literary and artistic culture, historical and scientific culture, philosophical culture, etc.).

Let's suggest that this pairing of points and regions could fortunately open up Communist politics to the sterilizing pairing of the *local* and the *global*...



New-style communist materialism

These orientations are part of a new type of materialism:

- **upstream** (which concerns the **reasons** for deciding this rather than that), a materialism of non-determining conditions (since there remains an irreducible margin of **freedom**, taking the conscious form of incalculable gambles) that set out to revolutionize entire regions of shared **culture**;
- **downstream** (concerning the **consequences** of one's decisions), a materializable measure of the decisions taken as **points** to be held - hence the political importance of the theme of **self-criticism** which, in its communist version, is less about the (indefinable) intentions at the outset than about holding oneself accountable for the objective consequences of the subjective decision taken.

This non-classist type of political subjectivation, which emerged at the heart of the CCR in Lushan, was to be re-seized by Mao under the general name of "culture" - hence the hypothesis, suggested by the study of Alessandro Russo's book, that **the Cultural Revolution was a communist revolution of revolutionary culture**.

● ● ●

^a See Mao's repetition of this term at the Lushan fence, particularly on August 11 and 16, 1959.

END NOTES

- ¹ LR 345
- ² LR 32
- ³ LR 162
- ⁴ LR 296
- ⁵ LR 319
- ⁶ LR 370
- ⁷ LR 372
- ⁸ LR 229-240
- ⁹ LR 320-329
- ¹⁰ LR 330-337
- ¹¹ LR 338-348
- ¹² LR 360-364
- ¹³ LR 349-359
- ¹⁴ LR 365-372
- ¹⁵ Sycamore II. 247
- ¹⁶ LR 89
- ¹⁷ LR 192, 217...
- ¹⁸ LR 330-335
- ¹⁹ LR 171
- ²⁰ LR 220
- ²¹ LR 222
- ²² LR 135
- ²³ LR 307 (detailed proposals for the dismissal of the Four and the promotion of Lin Biao); 317
- ²⁴ LR 5
- ²⁵ LR 41
- ²⁶ LR 13
- ²⁷ LR 15
- ²⁸ LR 21-27
- ²⁹ LR 24: unclear translation
- ³⁰ LR 26
- ³¹ LR 26
- ³² LR 40, 63
- ³³ LR 30
- ³⁴ LR 30, 361
- ³⁵ LR 30
- ³⁶ LR 32
- ³⁷ LR 33
- ³⁸ LR 33
- ³⁹ LR 34
- ⁴⁰ LR 52; Sycamore II 17-18: *About the General Line*
- ⁴¹ Sycamore II 18
- ⁴² LR 56
- ⁴³ LR 63
- ⁴⁴ LR 96-97
- ⁴⁵ LR 41
- ⁴⁶ LR 72
- ⁴⁷ LR 115
- ⁴⁸ LR 144
- ⁴⁹ LR 140
- ⁵⁰ LR 112, 145
- ⁵¹ LR 66
- ⁵² LR 99
- ⁵³ LR 101
- ⁵⁴ LR 80-88
- ⁵⁵ LR 351
- ⁵⁶ LR 357
- ⁵⁷ LR 102, 109
- ⁵⁸ LR 104, 112
- ⁵⁹ LR 108, 110
- ⁶⁰ LR 110, 115
- ⁶¹ LR 121... ; Sycamore II (19-33) : *Our backbone has grown stronger.*
- ⁶² LR 131-132
- ⁶³ LR 135
- ⁶⁴ LR 139
- ⁶⁵ LR 145-148
- ⁶⁶ LR 142-143
- ⁶⁷ LR 136
- ⁶⁸ LR 144
- ⁶⁹ LR 136
- ⁷⁰ LR 144
- ⁷¹ LR 149
- ⁷² Sycamore II 34-38: *We're not afraid of attacks from the Right.*
- ⁷³ LR 149...
- ⁷⁴ LR 158
- ⁷⁵ LR 159
- ⁷⁶ LR 159
- ⁷⁷ LR 164
- ⁷⁸ LR 164-170
- ⁷⁹ LR 171-178
- ⁸⁰ LR 172
- ⁸¹ 178-191
- ⁸² Sycamore II 41
- ⁸³ LR 201-203; Sycamore II 44-48: *No longer fighting the "left" but the right*
- ⁸⁴ LR 193-196
- ⁸⁵ LR 196-199
- ⁸⁶ LR 199
- ⁸⁷ Sycamore II 42-43
- ⁸⁸ LR 201-224
- ⁸⁹ LR 222
- ⁹⁰ LR 219
- ⁹¹ LR 215
- ⁹² LR 214
- ⁹³ LR 215
- ⁹⁴ LR 215
- ⁹⁵ LR 220
- ⁹⁶ LR 227-228
- ⁹⁷ LR 215-216
- ⁹⁸ LR 216
- ⁹⁹ LR 217
- ¹⁰⁰ LR 218
- ¹⁰¹ LR 220
- ¹⁰² LR 222-224
- ¹⁰³ LR 204-205; Sycamore II 49-50: *Remarks on a canteen document*
- ¹⁰⁴ LR 205
- ¹⁰⁵ LR 241
- ¹⁰⁶ LR 241-243
- ¹⁰⁷ LR 243-244
- ¹⁰⁸ LR 252
- ¹⁰⁹ LR 247-248
- ¹¹⁰ LR 244-247
- ¹¹¹ LR 252
- ¹¹² LR 252
- ¹¹³ LR 205
- ¹¹⁴ LR 207
- ¹¹⁵ (LR 202) Cf. his speech of July 18, 1959, published in Pravda on July 21.
- ¹¹⁶ LR 250
- ¹¹⁷ LR 254-255
- ¹¹⁸ Sycamore II 51-52
- ¹¹⁹ LR 257-268
- ¹²⁰ LR 255
- ¹²¹ LR 269-271
- ¹²² LR 271-277
- ¹²³ LR 277-278
- ¹²⁴ LR 278-283
- ¹²⁵ LR 283-288
- ¹²⁶ LR 288
- ¹²⁷ LR 256
- ¹²⁸ Sycamore II 54-55
- ¹²⁹ Sycamore II 56-57
- ¹³⁰ LR 294-300
- ¹³¹ LR 305
- ¹³² Sycamore II 58-68
- ¹³³ LR 307 (detailed proposals to dismiss the Four and promote Lin Biao)
- ¹³⁴ LR 308-309
- ¹³⁵ LR 311-313
- ¹³⁶ LR 313-319
- ¹³⁷ LR 362
- ¹³⁸ LR 328...
- ¹³⁹ LR 329
- ¹⁴⁰ LR 329
- ¹⁴¹ LR 37, 69, 325
- ¹⁴² LR 172
- ¹⁴³ LR 7
- ¹⁴⁴ LR 206, 218, 269, 307