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CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY: THE CASE OF FIVE INTELLECTUALS

SUMMARY

Nearly two decades after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (CR) officially came to an end, there emerged in the PRC a wave of autobiographical memoirs of the period written by Chinese intellectuals. This dissertation studies five such memoirs to examine how they vie for space in collective memory with the dominant state narrative.

The focus in this study is upon the underlying debate on history. Both the memoirs and the state narrative represent the period in different ways. The scope and focus of these representations is conditioned by the function they play. It is seen that the state narrative outlined in 1981 provides only a broad outline of the CR focusing on important political events. While references are made to the chaos and turmoil witnessed in the society, these are not expanded upon. This representation negates the CR as a ‘decade long catastrophe’ that brought great suffering upon the Party, people and nation. The responsibility for the CR on the other hand, is seen as lying with Mao Zedong’s misapprehensions and its exploitation by Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques. The function played by this representation is that of negating the CR and by virtue of doing so emphasizing the ability of the Party to correct itself, and by extension asserting the legitimacy of its rule.
On the other hand, coming nearly two decades after the official end of the CR and more than a decade after its negation, the memoirs allege that lessons have not been learnt from the CR. These memoirs share the negation of the CR with the state narrative. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, through detailed descriptions of personal experiences, these narratives attempt to inform collective memory of the content of the ‘catastrophe’. The memoirs point towards specific groups of individuals as responsible for the ordeal of intellectuals. Importantly, they also seem to point towards the presence of a discourse that legitimized and encouraged actions of those who carried out the CR. While not representative of the society in general, these memoirs attempt to fill the void in collective memory left behind by lack of detail in the state narrative. One function that these memoirs play is that of highlighting the victimization of intellectuals both during the CR and calling for guarantees to prevent recurrence. More importantly, the memoirs also contest the amnesia towards the CR allegedly imposed by the simplistic depiction of the state narrative. This function is achieved by making congratulatory remarks of the Party having successfully summed up lessons of the CR while avoiding references to incidents in the post-CR era that would question such a claim. Specifically, Deng Xiaoping is quoted extensively as saying that the lessons of the CR were the need for democracy and rule of law. Events such as the crackdown on the democracy wall movement in 1979 and suppression of the student’s movement in 1989, however, demonstrated the ability of the Party to continue to act arbitrarily and unilaterally.

The representation of the CR by the memoirs is problematic for the appraisal of other communities such as Red Guards and rebels and the motives behind their
actions. There is also observed a tendency in the narratives to evaluate experiences of the CR from the post-CR discourse that negated it. This conceals the discourse of the CR that validated and legitimized what came to be seen as radical actions in the post-CR scenario. However, the memoirs do bring out the discourse prevalent during the CR that legitimized radical actions. It is also observed that this discourse prevented intellectuals themselves from disbelieving the charges brought up against them. While literature since the official end of CR has tended to focus on sufferings, little is offered in terms of explaining how CR was experienced and who or what factors were responsible for the ordeals of people. Being among the few voices with access to public representation in PRC, the memoirs go some way in filling this void in collective memory.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nearly three decades after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (CR) came to its official end, it continues to be the subject of much research and debate both inside and outside China. Within China, what is at heart of the debate is the manner in which the CR is remembered and the implications thereof. In other words, the debate is about the collective memory of the Cultural Revolution. The debate is triggered by the fact that the CR involved and affected several communities differently, giving rise to the possibility of different or even mutually contradictory representations. The debate is further complicated by the presence of a dominant state narrative on the period.

After the death of Mao Zedong and arrest of the Gang of Four in late 1976, there ensued a brief period of continued allegiance to Mao and his policies, parallel to efforts to rehabilitate those who had been sent to Cadre schools or were in labour reform. However, CR itself continued to be championed by Mao’s successor Hua

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Guofeng. Following a debate between Hua’s ‘whateverist’\(^2\) stance and Deng’s ‘practice as the sole criterion of truth’,\(^3\) 1981 witnessed a transition of power into the hands of Deng Xiaoping and ascendancy of the reformist faction within the Party.

Also during this year, the Party passed the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of the Party since the Founding of the PRC” (Resolution).\(^4\) The Resolution for the first time negated the CR explicitly and termed it a ‘decade’ long catastrophe for the Party and the nation. It also carried out a revision of the Communist Party’s history whereby the purging of Peng Dehuai in 1959 and Liu Shaoqi in 1968 was overturned. Mao Zedong’s allegations regarding capitalist roaders inside the Party, the primary reason for launching the CR, were attributed to his misapprehensions and erroneous appraisal of healthy difference of opinion within the Party. The Resolution in effect marked a change of discourse\(^5\) whereby the verdict on roles played by people during the CR was reversed. Intellectuals\(^6\) and Party Cadres who had been attacked as ‘bourgeois-capitalist

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\(^2\) Referring to the policy of \textit{Liang ge Fanshi} 两个凡是 or ‘Two Whatevers’ put forward by Hua Guofeng. The concept appeared in an editorial entitled “Xue Hao Wenjian Zhua Hao Gang” 学好文件抓好纲 [Study the Documents and Grasp the Key (principle)] in the \textit{People’s Daily} (Renmin Ribao) dated 7\(^{th}\) February, 1977. It basically referred to the policy of “resolutely protecting all decisions of chairman Mao” and “unswervingly adhering to his instructions.”

\(^3\) The debate started in May, 1978 and was headed by Hu Yaobang and Deng Xiaoping. By December, 1978 when the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress was convened, “Socialist Economic Construction’ replaced “Class-Struggle as the Key.” For details see “Shijian shi Jianyan Zhenli de Weiyi Biaozhun” 实践是检验真理的唯一标准 [Practice is the Sole Criterion of Truth], \textit{Guangming Daily}, 11\(^{th}\) May, 1978.


\(^5\) The term ‘discourse’ is used here in a Foucauldian sense, essentially to refer to the set of values, assumptions and beliefs that the Chinese made sense of their world with. I borrow Mobo C. F. Gao’s argument that this also included “…an organizational apparatus and disciplinary technology.” For a detailed discussion, See Mobo C. F. Gao, “Maoist Discourse and a Critique of the Present Assessments of the Cultural Revolution,” \textit{Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars}, 26/3 (1994), 14.

\(^6\) The Chinese term for intellectuals: \textit{Zhishifenzi} 知识分子 differs in connotation from its English counterpart in that it implies a social and political responsibility by virtue of being a mental
academic authorities’ and ‘capitalist roaders’ respectively, became ‘victims’ of the movement. The flag-bearers of the revolution on the other hand became ‘perpetrators’. The presence of this overwhelming discourse in the Collective Memory precludes public representations in China that see the CR in favourable light.  

The Resolution outlined the state narrative on the CR to be adhered to by all historical narratives (including history textbooks) of the CR published in China. The main thesis of the Resolution was that the Cultural Revolution was a decade long catastrophe caused by the erroneous leadership of Mao Zedong and its subsequent exploitation by the Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques. It is important to note that the definition of what is meant by ‘Cultural Revolution’ here is not presented unambiguously. In the statement above ‘Cultural Revolution’ essentially bears a negative connotation signifying all about the campaign that is decried and negated by the Resolution. In this sense, the ‘catastrophe’ must essentially refer to the ordeal of people during the decade or the economic losses alleged. However, the connection between factors identified as responsible (Mao’s leadership and Lin Biao - Gang of Four exploitation) for the ‘CR’ and the ordeals suffered by people is not explained. The Resolution does not provide a

labourer. In the Maoist era intellectuals were considered a class apart from workers and prone to bourgeois tendencies. Repeated campaigns were directed at reforming the bourgeois outlook of intellectuals. For a detailed discussion of the term and its interpretation during the Maoist era see: Zheng Ning, “Who are Intellectuals?” Contemporary Chinese Thought 29/2 (Winter, 1997-98): 55-62; Carol Lee Hamrin & Timothy Cheek eds, China’s Establishment Intellectuals (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1986)

7 Gao Mobo in his review of memoirs on the CR demonstrates how the CPC discourse on the CR prevents people like Mao Zedong’s daughter, his nephew, Zhang Chunqiao’s family; Hua Guofeng etc are not allowed to publish their narratives. This as their portrayal of things would challenge the stance on the CR taken by the present regime. See Gao Mobo 高默波, “Wenhua Da Geming ji Shilun Fangfa: Ping Huiyilu” 文化大革命及史论方法：评回忆录 [The Chinese Cultural Revolution and Historiography: On Memoirs], Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences, No.16(Spring 2002):157.

8 See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion.
narrative of how the CR was experienced in the society at large or how it affected the two main communities that were targeted.\(^9\) It does not dwell either on factors that fuelled violence against and maltreatment of these alleged ‘class enemies’ during the CR. As will be observed in Chapter Two, CR histories in China also focus essentially on power struggle or ideological struggle between Liu Shaoqi-Deng Xiaoping on one side and Mao Zedong on the other. While offering much more detail than the Resolution, the focus of these narratives remains on political events interpreted in resonance to the Resolution.

The importance of events that took place in the political arena cannot be denied. However if mainstream historiography and textbook education are limited to only a broad narrative of events in the political arena, it leaves Collective Memory of the society uninformed about how the CR was experienced in the society. This includes not merely the manner in which the CR was received, but also the factors that motivated activism of people or the discourse under which people operated.\(^10\) A study of these issues is critical for an understanding of the complex factors that led to what has been termed a ‘decade long catastrophe’. This against the

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\(^9\) Namely alleged capitalist roaders within the Party and administration and reactionary academic authorities. Anne F. Thurston, *Enemies of the People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1987) is an example of research published outside China that provides a detailed account of intellectuals’ ordeal during the CR.

simplistic treatment provided in the Resolution that holds Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques responsible for all excesses.\textsuperscript{11}

Within China, what then fill this space in Collective Memory are writings from literary genres such as fiction, reportage, biographies and memoirs. Literary writings in China made a transition from the emotional tales of suffering of the \textit{Shanghen} (Scar) Literary Movement in the immediate aftermath of the CR, to the more reflective writings of the \textit{Wenhua Fansi Yundong} or the Cultural Self-Reflection movement that attempted to delve on what went wrong during seventeen years of socialist construction.\textsuperscript{12} There also emerged reflective writings by former \textit{Zhiqing} (short for \textit{Zhishi Qingnian} or Educated Youth, some of whom

\textsuperscript{11} Scholars in China seem to be conscious of the need for historical research to go beyond the formula provided by the Resolution. This is reflected in discussions among historians of the Research Institute for Contemporary Chinese History in Beijing on the history of the period. See Liu Zhinan 刘志男, ““Wenge” Shiqi Lishi Yanjiu Zuotanhui Gaishu” “文革”时期历史研究座谈会概述 [Summary of Discussions during the Symposium on Historiography of the “Cultural Revolution” Period] , \textit{Dangdai Zhongguoshi Yanjiu}, Vol1(1997):117-120. Liu reflects on the limitations of attributing CR’s excesses to the mistakes of an individual and calls for research into the structure of society and institutional vulnerabilities. The article also calls for the separation of national history from Party history and research into society and economy of China during the period. Notably, the article also refers to the 90s as a period of \textit{Zai Fansi} or rethinking on the history of the CR. Vera Schwarcz, “A Brimming Darkness: The Voice of Memory/The Silence of Pain in China After the Cultural Revolution” \textit{Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars}, 30/1(1998):46-54, also reflects on the after effects of suppression of CR memory in China.

It must be mentioned here that even as the Cultural Revolution unfolded there emerged a genre of writings known as \textit{Dixia Wenxue} or underground writings that reflected on social stratification and contradictions within the society as reasons for violence and factional fighting. A representative work in this genre is: Liu Guokai, “A Brief Analysis of Cultural Revolution,” \textit{Chinese Sociology & Anthropology}, vol. XIX, No.2(Winter 1986-87): 91-244. This is a translation of the article published in Chinese by Liu in 1968.

\textsuperscript{12} A representative work of this movement that merits mention here is Ba Jin’s \textit{Sui Xiang Lu} 巴金随想录 (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 1991). Comprising of essays written over a period of eight years, these were among the first attempt in the post-CR era to seriously reflect on what gave rise to the CR. Ba Jin also voiced open opposition to the simplistic notion of attributing all suffering and excesses of the CR to a few individuals or cliques. Yang Jiang’s \textit{Gan Xiao Liu Ji} 甘校六记 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1992) also contains a detailed description of the experiences of herself and her husband Qian Zhongshu during Cadre school life. It can be said that these writings marked the first effort to highlight unresolved issues pertaining to the CR. In 2000, Yang produced a longer version of her memoir that became a part of the wave of full-length memoirs by including events prior to Cadre school life. See Yang Jiang 扬杨, \textit{Cong Bingwu dao “Liuwang”} 从丙午到“流亡” (Beijing: Zhongguo Qingnian Chubanshe, 2000).
had become Red Guards during the CR) who had been sent down to the countryside after 1969.\textsuperscript{13} What concerns this study is not the narrative or thematic template adopted by these movements or the aesthetic and artistic values of the writings. Instead, it is in understanding how, if at all, they contribute to the debate on Collective Memory of the CR.

In his study of fifty pieces of contemporary fiction\textsuperscript{14} in China, Xu Zidong argues that the majority of these narratives fall into the category of *Zainan Gushi* (Stories of Suffering) or *Lishi Fanxing* (Historical Introspection).\textsuperscript{15} The former comprises narratives that simplify the CR as suffering inflicted upon good people by bad people. The key feature of this genre is the focus on immense suffering of innocent victims. The narrative traces the path from miseries to happiness where truth eventually triumphs over evil. The latter, authors of which are intellectuals or Party cadres, presents a slightly complicated picture. Xu identifies the main feature of this genre as admitting that mistakes were made by the protagonist in the past. The writings then show how the protagonist comes to recognize his/her mistakes through the painful experience of the CR. Help from the masses or a member of the opposite sex is often seen as instrumental in helping the protagonist correct his mistakes.

\textsuperscript{13} For a detailed discussion of the development of post-CR literature see Chen Sihe 陈思和, *Zhongguo Dangdai Wenxueshi Jiaocheng* 中国当代文学史教程 [History of Contemporary Chinese Literature] (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1999).

\textsuperscript{14} See Xu Zidong 许子东, *Dangdai Xiaoshuo yu Jiti Jiyi – Xushu Wenge* 当代小说与集体记忆：叙述文革 [Contemporary Fiction and Collective Memory – Narrating the Cultural Revolution] (Taipei: Maitian Chubanshe, 2000).

\textsuperscript{15} Xu’s selection of writings takes into account factors of receptions such as sales volume, recognition, subject of controversy and whether made into film. Xu’s idea of ‘representativeness’ is based on factors such as the author, readership, reviewers and ideological managers.
Xu argues that by presenting a resolved picture of the CR, these narratives aid amnesia towards the CR. This function is similar to that of the Resolution of 1981. The Resolution holds Mao Zedong’s erroneous leadership and its exploitation by Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques responsible for the CR. As such, with the death of Mao and Lin, and the arrest of the Gang of Four, the issue of the CR can be considered resolved.

There are also identified by Xu two other genres, namely *Huangdan Xiaoshuo* (Absurd Fiction) and *Wenge Jiyi* (CR Memory) that complicate the CR by presenting a non-causal, unresolved and confusing picture to provoke further thinking on the CR. Of these, protagonists of the latter are Red Guards or Educated Youth. The characteristic feature of this category of writings is that the end is not necessarily better than the beginning for the protagonists. At the same time the CR is not seen as completely insignificant. Importantly, while the protagonists are seen to have made some mistakes during CR, they refuse to repent. However, Xu notes that such writings are relatively fewer in comparison to *Zainan Gushi* or *Lishi Fanxing*. In effect, Xu’s research demonstrates how post-CR literature has tended towards aiding amnesia towards the CR.

Recent research into narratives of the 1990s also brings to light the presence of an alternate set of narratives that seek to extricate the author’s individuality and subjectivity from membership of the traumatized collective. This function is achieved by challenging the notion that the CR was a “cultural desert” and de-traumatizing the CR by presenting normal life, creativity and adventure during the

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16 See Yue Ma, “The Catastrophe Remembered by the Non-Traumatic: Counternarratives on the Cultural Revolution in Chinese Literature of the 1990s” (Ph.D. Diss. University of Texas at Austin, 2004).
period. The author argues that these narratives act as counter-narratives to the dominant narrative of trauma vis-à-vis the Cultural Revolution.

Importantly, in the late nineties there emerged a wave of full-length autobiographical memoirs of the CR that have not received scholarly attention. These narratives were written by intellectuals who were persecuted during the era. The narratives contrast with earlier writings in their effort to provide full-length accounts of experiences during the decade believed to contain the CR. A common theme observed in these writings is the allegation that the CR is slipping into amnesia and the society remains uninformed of what transpired during the years.17 The authors endeavour to re-present their personal ordeals during the decade in order to fill this gap. The memoirs also warn that ignorance towards the CR could lead to history repeating itself. If the Resolution of 1981 along with other simplistic narratives identified by Xu Zidong promote amnesia towards the CR by presenting it as a resolved case, autobiographical memoirs of persecuted intellectuals seem to stand in opposition by alleging that lessons have not been learnt.

It must then be assumed that from these narratives, there must emerge reasons to remember the CR, aspects of the CR hitherto overlooked, and lessons that need to

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17 The authors give examples of the younger generation that finds their experiences too fantastic or difficult to believe. They also lament the fact that most of the youth know little about what caused the CR beyond the Lin Biao/Gang of Four cliques. Feng Jicai 冯骥才, Yibai ge Ren de Shi Nian 一百个人的十年 [The Decade for a Hundred People] (Suzhou: Jiangsu Wenyi Chubanshe, 1997) includes a survey that seems to endorse this view. Feng attaches responses from youth aged between 12 to 20 on their knowledge about the CR. In majority of cases, the responses suggest a general disinterest towards the topic or an understanding based on the official narrative. Eminent writer/novelist Ba Jin was among the first to allege that the CR was slipping out of public memory in China. He warned that the failure to learn lessons from the CR could lead to history repeating itself. See Ba Jin 巴金, Ba Jin Suixiang Lu 巴金随想录 [Record of Ba Jin’s Random Thoughts](one-volume edition) (Hong Kong: Sanlian Shudian, 1988) 134-138.
be learnt so that the advent of a CR like situation can be prevented. **It is this function of autobiographical memoirs of the CR that appeared during the late nineties in China that this dissertation explores.** Specifically, the study explores the dialogue between five such memoirs and the dominant narrative of the CPC in the context of Collective Memory of the CR in China.

1.2 Collective Memory: A Conceptual Framework

The term ‘collective memory’ is the subject of interpretive debates that are not fully resolved. A terminological profusion has emerged suggesting alternative terms such as ‘social memory’, ‘collective remembrance’, ‘popular history making’, ‘national memory’, ‘public memory’ etc depending upon the interest, emphasis and focus of the study.\(^{18}\) It therefore becomes necessary that the definition of the term ‘collective memory’ that has been used so far be discussed before proceeding further. In this study **Collective Memory is defined as a constantly debated and dynamic form of memory that derives inputs from all remembering groups and individuals and is subject to mediation.** In the present context, the focus is upon the debate of inputs from one such group (intellectuals who were persecuted) with the dominant input (that of the State narrative) in shaping the Collective Memory of the Cultural Revolution in China.

The term ‘collective memory’ is traced to the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who used the original phrase *La Mémoire Collective* to discuss the concept. In emphasizing the role the society played in determining the

preservation and recall of memory, Halbwachs suggested that memory [recall?] depends on external stimulation. In his words, “the lock is opened by an external group or individual who shares the experience and whose questioning or assumption of questioning triggers off memory.”

This refers to the existence of social or collective frameworks for memory that individual memories need to be placed in to be capable of recollection. The example used to justify this argument is the phenomenon of individuals forgetting aspects of the past when removed from the collective (community) that experienced it. This however should not be taken to mean that memory is not stored in the individual’s mind. The argument is valid if the emphasis is instead on recall, and to what extent a past event is recalled.

The use of ‘memory’ by Halbwachs instead of ‘recall’ or ‘remembering’ raises the question as to where memory is located and who is doing the remembering. It has indeed been alleged that in highlighting the socially determined nature of memory, Halbwachs seems to have taken an anti-individualistic stance. What perhaps needs to be clarified here is that Halbwachs does acknowledge that the collective framework (used to construct an image of the past) of collective memory is the sum or combination of individual recollections of many members of the same society.

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What is of interest to the present study is what happens to collective memory when groups or communities recall an event in radically different ways. While ‘collective memories’ of each group would provide the framework for recall and preservation of the memory within the group, the interaction between individuals from different groups would inevitably be contentious. Collective memory of the society as a whole would then be perennially fractured and debated by inputs varying from each other. The situation however is further complicated if there is present a dominant input into the collective memory. An example of such an input would be the state narrative that finds its way through propaganda, textbook education and control over information.

It has been sufficiently acknowledged how important the project of writing history is for states. This as it is by a favourable interpretation of the past that the present is legitimized and the future course of the nation determined. As Harvey J. Kaye writes quoting George Orwell’s classic statement, “Subscribing to the Party’s slogan in Orwell’s 1984 - “Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past” – totalitarian and authoritarian regimes have ceaselessly sought to dominate and manipulate public and private memory.”

The manipulation is especially effective where control over information, publication and media is relatively high and state control over the public memory is obtained through propaganda and textbook education in schools.

22 It must be clarified that to ‘recall an event in radically different ways’ suggests interpretations and meanings made of the event, rather than specific occurrences or historical facts.
The function of this history, or the narrative presented as ‘history’, is then to inform the Collective Memory of the society. The narrative however is received differently by different groups of people depending on whether or not they have personal memories of the event in question. Where a subject holds no personal memory of the event whatsoever, his memory is sourced from the voices he is exposed to. Potential voices here can be history education in schools, exposure to textual or verbal narratives of first hand experience etc. The strongest voice out of these remains that presented as formal and official ‘history’ through compulsory education at an impressionable age.

In contrast, where the state narrative is at odds with personal experiences, there can be expected counter-narratives vying for space in Collective Memory. In cases where Collective Memory is monopolized by the pre-eminence of a state narrative, counter-narratives more often take the form of hidden transcripts located in literary writings, autobiographies or non-textual communication.

That these narratives are not presented as history, removes the need for critical assessment of ‘historical facts’ that they present, thus imbuing them with a similar partiality or bias that the state narrative can be accused of. However, looked at from the perspective of informing Collective Memory, it can be said that what goes on is an extended debate between the counter-narratives and the state narrative. In this debate, the state narrative enjoys the upper hand as dominant

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and pre-eminent input, while other narratives – hidden or vocal – vie for space with the official and fellow counter-narratives. A proliferation of representations is expected especially with complex events such as the Cultural Revolution that involved and affected various groups of people in different ways.

Maurice Halbwachs in his meditations on Collective Memory argued that “Collective frameworks are the instruments used by collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society.”

“Predominant thoughts” of the society can be determined in terms of socio-cultural history and present concerns. In the context of remembering the CR in China, predominant thoughts are inevitably influenced by the Resolution of 1981. Even in case of those who retain personal memories of the Cultural Revolution, the larger historical context within which their experiences are to be situated is inevitably ‘outsourced’ and thus subject to mediation.

As James Wertsch writes with reference to mediation, “…humans think, speak, and otherwise act by using the cultural tools such as textual resources that are made available by their particular socio-cultural settings.” An analysis of these forces must then be a part of any inquiry into Collective Memory. It must be

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26 In addition to written counter-narratives, it has been suggested that such narratives can be found in acts of commemoration/rituals or the body that act as sites for memory. See Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, “How Bodies Remember: Social Memory and Bodily Experience of Criticism, Resistance, and Delegitimation Following China’s Cultural Revolution”, New Literary History (25, 1994):707-723. For the concept of rituals and commemoration as the site for social memory, see Paul Conerton, How Societies Remember (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

27 Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, 40.

acknowledged that cognitive processes tend to touch up and resolve elements of memory that do not fit ‘schemas’ employed to understand experiences. As mentioned above, socio-cultural factors further act upon memory to making its representation further removed from what was actually experienced. However, in studying Collective Memory, the emphasis in not upon veracity of that which is recalled. Instead, it is on the function of Collective Memory in giving a certain meaning to the past for use in the present context. Quoting Wertsch again, “…The study of individual memory has tended to focus on issues of representation and has taken accuracy as its basic criterion. In contrast, studies of collective memory have tended to assume that remembering is a highly contested and negotiated process in the public sphere and that is driven by the need to create a usable past.”

It is within this conceptual framework that this study sets about investigating the dialogue between five autobiographical narratives of Chinese intellectuals and the State narrative outlined in the 1981 Resolution of the CPC. **The questions that the study raises are how the two sets of representations re-present the CR, what are the interests being furthered, and how concerns with the present or perceptions thereof influence their representations.**

It must be stated here that this study attempts to illuminate only a part of the much wider debate on Collective Memory of the CR—that of the debate between intellectuals who were persecuted during the CR and the state narrative. As a complex event that involved and affected several communities in different ways,

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the CR is one of the most contentious periods in PRC history. Potential narratives of the CR can also be written from the perspective of the then leftists, Red Guards, worker rebels, People’s Liberation Army (PLA) officers, people belonging to the ‘five black categories’ etc. Each of these representations on the other hand can be expected to display further variations based on background, time place and other factors. A comprehensive study of Collective Memory of the CR would have to take into account representative narratives from each of these communities and analyze how they interact with each other and with the dominant discourse supported by the state narrative. However, voices from all communities are not voiced to the same degree. As mentioned earlier, public expression depends upon acceptability under the present dominant discourse on the CR supported by the state narrative. Many narratives, especially those that see the CR in dramatically different light may indeed not find expression in published textual narratives at all. This impedes a comprehensive study of all potential representations. Conversely, with regard to the present state of collective memory, it highlights the absence or suppression of certain versions of the past.

1.3 Texts & Approach

Perhaps the most privileged narratives under the CPC discourse on the CR are those written by the generation of intellectuals who were persecuted. As mentioned previously, the Resolution of 1981 negated the CR and termed it a decade of catastrophe for the Party and the nation. This reversal of verdicts meant that those against whom the campaign was directed became ‘victims’ of the catastrophe. This includes both those accused of being capitalist roaders (like
Deng Xiaoping himself) and those accused of being bourgeois-capitalist academic authorities (that includes the intellectuals who are authors of the memoirs selected for this study). The negation of the CR by the Deng regime then brings these intellectuals and the regime into a new partnership. While the regime negates the CR and Mao in order to absolve itself of the rightist inclination Mao alleged, it also absolves intellectuals of allegations of being bourgeois-capitalist in outlook.\(^{30}\) Intellectuals writing about the CR could then be expected to decry the CR for their personal ordeals thus attesting the official negation. However, this partnership also makes them a target of suspicion and criticism.

In his critique of memoirs Mobo C. F. Gao presents two arguments.\(^{31}\) First, Memoirs written with retrospective focus tend to portray the CR from the perspective and discourse of the post-Mao era that are different from that of the Maoist era. This renders the portrayal of their experiences as gross violation of human dignity problematic, as the issue was understood differently under the Maoist discourse. The second argument is that being rooted in personal experience, Memoirs offer only a partial picture of the CR. Arguing about the inadequacy of the narratives, Gao writes that many people and groups are disallowed from publishing memoirs. Examples of such people are the daughter of Mao Zedong, his nephew Mao Yuanxin or rebels and flag bearers of the campaign who can be expected to portray the CR as a crusade against revisionists who ultimately did betray the revolution as suspected.


While Gao makes a valuable point about the change of discourse and how it influences the memoirs, his second argument betrays some assumptions. Specifically, while he is conscious that memoirs are rooted in personal experience, Gao nevertheless seems to critique their value based on their ability to be comprehensive narratives of CR history. This concern with historicity becomes apparent in the title of his Chinese article that explicitly links memoirs to CR historiography.32 Indeed, if the memoirs are taken to be works of history, they would inevitably become suspect of partiality, bias and inadequacy of information. However, if taken as inputs of one community into the collective memory of China, a different set of meaningful questions can be raised. Furthermore, in analyzing the memoirs, the narratives have to be taken as texts and not historical narratives. This opens the possibility for analysis of factors that influence them in a context that would highlight the function of informing and disputing collective memory performed by them. The function as discussed earlier is especially important in social contexts such as in the PRC where mainstream historiography is restricted in perspective and narratives from certain communities are muted.

It must also be noted here that Gao’s essay does not consider autobiographical memoirs of the late 1990s. As this research will demonstrate, these memoirs enter a debate with the state narrative with regard to representation of the CR. This important function of memoirs can be overlooked if memoirs are seen merely as inept sources of history.

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It must be acknowledged here that memories are susceptible to distortion depending upon the nature of the incident recalled and the condition of the recalling subject. Traumatic incidents tend to get suppressed, while distance from the incident causes certain experiences to be over-emphasized and others become sidelined. It is also important to note that with the past reduced to a memory held by the remembering subject, cognitive processes tend to resolve contradictions or gaps in memory by touching them up or providing a logical interpretation that is but subjective.

This nature of memory makes it a difficult source. However, the source becomes important if the study is focused on the function played by narration rather than the veracity of that which is remembered. Indeed, “If we approach self-referential writing as an inter-subjective process that occurs with the writer/reader pact, rather than as true or false story, the emphasis of reading shifts from assessing and verifying knowledge to observing processes of communicative exchange and understanding.”33 In the present context where mainstream historiography is monopolized by narratives of the CR that adhere to the Resolution, the narratives, take up the important role of informing collective memory of the society.

As mentioned previously, this dissertation considers five autobiographical memoirs published by Chinese intellectuals in the late nineties. In examining the debate between memoirs and the state narrative, we essentially focus upon the relationship as a part of the debate on collective memory within China. Memoirs or narratives published outside China or written in languages for the consumption

of non-Chinese audiences are therefore not considered. Memoirs are selected based on their ability to provide detailed full-length narratives of the author’s experiences during the CR. The five memoirs are selected also such that different settings, backgrounds and perspectives within the (persecuted) intellectual community are included.

The five memoirs selected for this study are:

3. Ma Shitu, *Cangsang Shi Nian* [Vicissitudes of a Decade] (Beijing: Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1999)

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35 English translations of the Chinese titles are tentative and only suggested. For a brief vita of each of the authors, see appendix II.
5. Yu Guangyuan, *Wenge zhong de Wo* [Myself During the CR] (Shanghai: Shanghai Yuandong Chubanshe, 1996)

Of the above, Ji Xianlin’s *Niupeng Za Yi* [Memoirs of the Cowshed] was among the first in the wave of full-length autobiographical narratives. It was widely acclaimed for the detailed description of the ordeal of intellectuals during the CR.\(^{36}\) It has even been called the ‘microcosm’ of the CR that serves to remind China of the lessons to be learnt.\(^{37}\) Ma Shitu’s *Cangsang Shì Nian* [Vicissitudes of a Decade] also provides a very detailed narrative of the author’s experience but set in Sichuan as against Beijing in the case of Ji Xianlin. Ma’s memoir, as he writes was inspired by that of Ji Xianlin, who contributed the preface to Ma’s memoir.\(^{38}\)

Yu Guangyuan’s memoir predates that of Ji Xianlin but unlike the other four memoirs is not a chronological narrative of the author’s experiences. However, it is included here as it shares many of the same concerns (amnesia towards the CR and lessons of the CR not having been learnt) identified with this genre of writings. The memoir though comprising of short essays on episodes of the author’s experiences during the CR does provide sufficient information to participate in the debate on how the CR should be remembered.

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\(^{36}\) For a discussion of the tremendous interest generated in CR memory by this memoir and responses of readers in China see Zhang Yan 张彦, “Cong *Niupeng Za Yi* Yinqi de Qianglie Fanying Shuoqi” [About the Strong Reactions Aroused by *Niupeng Za Yi*], *Yanhuang Chunqiu* 2(1999):68-69.

\(^{37}\) Li Ruiye 李锐业, “‘Niupeng Za Yi’: Liu Gei Houdai de Zui Jia Lipin” [‘Memories of the Cowshed’: The Best Gift for Future Generations], *Journal of Ankang Teachers College* Vol.II No.3 (Sep 1999), 5.

\(^{38}\) Both memoirs are acclaimed for having revived the traumatic memory of the CR and prevented it from falling into amnesia. See “Shui Dou Wu Quan Danhua “Wenge” ji Qi Jiaoxun” 谁都无权淡化“文革”及其教训 [No one Has the Right to Dilute the “Cultural Revolution” and its Lessons], *Yanhuang Chunqiu* (June 2002), 28.
The five memoirs differ in the background of the authors and setting of their CR experience. In terms of profession, at the time of the CR, Yang Jingyuan was a translator at a press but married to a husband from a property owning family, Ma Shitu was a high-ranking cadre who was an underground Party activist in pre-liberation days, Cong Weixi was a young writer from a landlord family, Yu Guangyuan was an influential cadre and researcher and finally Ji Xianlin was a University lecturer from a peasant family.

Each of the five memoirs contains a full-length description of experiences of the respective author during the Cultural Revolution. At the same time the narratives also exhibit differences in their foci. Yang Jingyuan’s narrative focuses more on her experience of labour and life in the Cadre schools she was sent to in Xianning. Ji Xianlin’s narrative focuses on life during detention under Red Guards in Beijing while Cong Weixi’s narrative spans almost two decades of labour life from the Anti-Rightist campaign till 1976. Yu Guangyuan’s memoir is not a continuous chronological narrative, but instead contains of short sections describing various episodes during the CR. Finally Ma Shitu’s memoir is a detailed narrative starting with the Socialist Education Movement and concluding with the rehabilitation of the author after the Cultural Revolution.

The narrative style adopted by each author is also different. Cong Weixi’s memoir reads almost like fiction due to the author’s attention to literary aesthetics. In some instances conversations between himself and others are even presented in dialogue form. Yu Guangyuan’s narrative reads as a light, almost humorous set of essays describing otherwise painful and difficult circumstances to bring out the
irony of the situation. Yu divides his CR experience into short episodes instead of providing a continuous chronological narrative. Ji Xianlin’s memoir is serious yet elegant in style and often emotional in tone, containing detailed descriptions of traumatic experiences and the state of the author’s mind at each stage. Ma Shitu’s memoir on the other hand focuses more on details. Ma however does not follow a chronological path steadily. Ma’s narrative is difficult to read as the author travels between past and present with Ma’s own comments interspersed with the progress of the narrative.

Despite the above differences, the narratives share the concern of the CR slipping away from public memory and contend that lessons of the CR have not been learnt. This theme is observed in contemporary writings of other genres too, but argued polemically and discursively. Specifically, these writings are unable to clarify what the ‘lessons’ refer to or why the CR is slipping into amnesia. This study will investigate whether full-length autobiographical memoirs, through their attention to detail are able to clarify what it is that needs to be remembered about the CR and why.

In studying these narratives, this research approaches them as texts. Both textual and contextual factors are considered to put into perspective the content of the memoirs and the function played by them. The former will be analyzed in contrast with the narrative of the Resolution while the latter will be understood in terms of the author’s use of the past for his or her agenda in the present.
To arrive at an understanding of the debate on collective memory, representations of both the state narrative and the memoirs are considered. While the underlying debate is on history, the emphasis here is not on ascertaining historicity or veracity of representation. It is instead on strategies of inclusion and omission that reflect interests of the author(s) and function of the narrative. As Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone write in the introduction to their collection of essays on “Contested Pasts”, “The focus of contestation, then, is very often not conflicting accounts of what actually happened in the past so much as the question of who or what is entitled to speak for the past in the present. The attempt to resolve meaning in the present is thus often a matter of conflicts over representation… 39

In case of the experiences of intellectuals during the CR that is altogether absent from the Resolution, an attempt is made to summarize the same. The content of these experiences is classified into specific themes and analyzed with reference to issues pertaining to the CR. Examples of these issues are: factors behind the ordeal of people, violence, maltreatment of alleged ‘class enemies’ etc. As mentioned previously, these form an important part of the claim that the CR was a ‘decade long catastrophe’. What is of interest here is how, if at all, experiences of intellectuals illuminate these issues and how these relate to the debate on collective memory?

1.4 Chapters

In Chapter Two, the background to the inception of CPC’s Resolution of 1981 is considered alongside the content of the Resolution itself and selected semi-official histories of the CR available in the PRC. It studies how the CPC narrative provided by the Resolution plays a political function for the CPC by negating the CR and yet asserting legitimacy for having brought it to an end. The Resolution and other histories that expand on it are seen as interested essentially in explaining the power struggle or ideological struggle, paying little attention to how the CR unfolded in the society. The state narrative provided by the Resolution fails to explain how the CR was experienced by its targets. It does not address the factors that fuelled violence, chaos and fighting witnessed in the society either. It is this gap that memoirs of intellectuals seem to attempt to fill. The narratives engage in a debate with the ‘official history’ by bringing out incongruence and inadequacies in the CPC narrative. These are discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter Three demonstrates how experiences of the five intellectuals complicate the notion that the CR was a ‘decade long’ calamity. The chapter further pursues the argument on political function of the Resolution developed in chapter two, and demonstrates how the notion of ‘decade long CR’ is not completely reconciled with the experiences of the intellectuals (ordeals of whom form an important part of the claim that the CR was a ‘decade long catastrophe’). The chapter shows how experiences of intellectuals demonstrate that 1976 as the end of the CR is problematic. The narratives point to the fact that the CR as a movement aimed at eliminating capitalist roaders and bourgeois capitalist authorities ended with the
formation of revolutionary committees and convening of the Ninth Party Congress in 1969. Mass activism that was responsible for the ordeals of intellectuals also ended by 1969. A corresponding shift in the experiences of the five intellectuals is observed that moved from detention, criticism and struggle under Red Guards or rebels to labour reform under the PLA. It is acknowledged that many were not rehabilitated till much later, including Cong Weixi whose ordeal continued even past the official end of the CR. However to argue that the CR extended till 1976 based on continued incarceration opens the gates for inclusion of previous political campaigns into the CR or to extend it further beyond 1976. The chapter also discusses the effect of the dominant discourse on authors of these memoirs themselves, who while debating the simplistic narrative of the Resolution nevertheless use the notion ‘decade-long catastrophe’ to emphasize their own victimization.

Chapter Four deals at length with what is referred to throughout this study as the CR experience of the intellectuals. It demonstrates how the narratives attempt to fill the gap left behind by the Resolution. This is done in two parts. Firstly by providing an outline of what the CR experience of intellectuals is comprised of. Secondly by explaining factors that fuelled the ordeal of intellectuals. While not substantial by themselves, these contrast with the simplistic treatment of chaos and violence provided in the Resolution. Notably, the chapter demonstrates how narratives in their attempt to revive memory of the CR bring to light the existence

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40 Revolutionary committees or Revcoms were administrative bodies to be setup at all levels. They comprised of PLA officers, Veteran Party Cadres and ‘Revolutionary’ Rebels. Establishment of revolutionary committees starting 1967 marked a retreat from the hitherto free hand that rebels and Red Guards were given in re-establishing political power. While rebels were to be included in the revolutionary committees, the balance was heavily tilted towards PLA members who favoured stability.
of a discourse that legitimized, encouraged and even necessitated violence and maltreatment of intellectuals. An analysis and understanding of these factors is not new in research outside China, but remains largely absent from narratives inside. The narratives also seek to demonstrate with specific examples how the CR unfolded, the restrictions imposed on personal speech and action by the CR discourse and factors that ameliorated or exacerbated the ordeal for the authors. This provides their audience with microcosms to understand and remember how the CR was experienced; at least as far as the intellectual community is concerned.

The chapter also addresses the issue of possible motives and agenda of intellectuals in writing these counter-narratives. The authors portray themselves as patriotic and loyal (to the Party) people who diligently worked for the development of China but were repeatedly made the target of suspicion and castigation. This notion, however, is challenged by the fact that their assertion of loyalty and victimization came after official negation of the CR that legitimized it in the first place. Confessions under duress not withstanding, it is observed that at the time of the CR, many indeed believed in some allegations brought up against them. There thus is observed an ‘anachronism’ of discourse. This as a revision is made on appraisal of the CR from the post-CR point of view. The role played by the change in CPC’s discourse is also evident in how the negation of the CR vindicated intellectuals by acknowledging them as ‘victims’, but by the same token also negated their efforts to return to the ranks of the ‘people’ through diligent labour and compliance. It is thus observed that at each stage (both during CR and after its negation) intellectuals primarily moved with the dominant discourse decided by the regime and did not react independently or critically. It
can be speculated that if the events of late 1976 such as Mao’s death and the Gang of Four had not taken place, and the CR had not been negated in 1981, intellectuals would perhaps have no claim to ‘victimization’ or legitimacy in writing memoirs of their experiences.

Intellectuals themselves are seen as conscious of this problem in their meditations regarding the CR. The search for answers as to why they could not assert their innocence or oppose the CR as it unfolded is seen to have provoked thinking among the five authors. This seems to have led them to question the notion of loyalty to the Party and embark on a new quest for freedom of thinking, democracy and other libertarian goals. These seem to form the present concerns for these intellectuals.

Chapter five explores in further detail how the authors themselves make sense of their experiences and use them to further their present concerns and agenda. It traces the aforesaid search for answers that intellectuals engage in. The authors seem to conclude that what prevented an objective assessment on their part during the CR was indoctrination, control over information and propaganda. While intellectuals appear to be partners with the present regime in negating the CR, their paths seems to diverge thereafter with intellectuals voicing the need for more freedom and liberty.
CHAPTER 2

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN OFFICIAL AND SEMI-OFFICIAL NARRATIVES

The purpose of this chapter is to understand how the official narrative of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) represents the Cultural Revolution. The chapter will also discuss Semi-official narratives published in China. \(^{41}\) ‘Semi-official narratives’ here refers to historical narratives that were published in China. They differ from memoirs or other unofficial narratives in that they are presented as results of historical research instead of reproductions of memory.

The focus of this chapter is both on textual and contextual content of the official narrative. By this is meant both the body and main thesis of the narrative on one hand and the context in which it was produced, the audience it is directed towards and the function it seeks to play on the other. These would be used to arrive at an understanding of the points of convergence and divergence between the official and autobiographic narratives. This in turn is expected to shed light on how collective memory of the CR in China is debated.

The chapter is divided into two main sections, dealing with the official and semi-official narratives of the CR respectively.

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\(^{41}\) The term ‘semi-official’ is borrowed from Gao Mobo. The prefix is added to these narratives as they are bound by requirement to adhere to the thesis of the official narrative on the CR. For a historiographical critique of these and other assessments of the CR, see Gao, “Maoist Discourse and a Critique of the Present Assessments of the Cultural Revolution,” 13-31.
2.1 The Official Narrative

The official narrative here refers to the narrative of the Party, the content of which is taken as authoritative for all publications and research on the subject in China. In the present context, the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China” (‘Resolution’ here forth) of 1981 is the official narrative. Coming nearly four years after the Gang of Four were arrested, the Resolution was a review both of the Cultural Revolution and of Party history.

Importantly, the passing of the resolution coincided with the resignation of Hua Guofeng from posts of Chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC and Central Military Commission, and the establishment of Deng Xiaoping as the paramount leader inside the Party. Earlier, since May, 1977 Deng and Hua had waged an ideological war over Hua Guofeng’s ‘two whatevers’ policy of unquestioned and indiscriminate loyalty to Mao Zedong.42 Deng Xiaoping and the reformist faction in the Party argued that ‘practice is the sole criterion of truth’ and called for ‘seeking truth from facts’ and removing the shackles on thought and questioning.43 The Resolution passed in 1981 for the first time negated the CR experiment and blamed Mao for his misapprehensions that led him to launch the CR. In effect, the passing of the resolution also marked the end of the ‘whateverist’ interregnum between the Mao and Deng eras and the beginning of

the reform and opening period. Any reading of the function performed by the Resolution must bear in mind that it contains a review of Party history of the Maoist era from the perspective of the Post-Mao reformist regime.

2.1.1 Formation of the Resolution

Before studying the body of the resolution, we first turn to understanding the context in which the resolution was drafted. Deng Xiaoping’s “Remarks on Successive Drafts of the “Resolution On Certain Questions in The History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China” provides useful information in this regard. The document contains a record of Deng’s remarks from March 1980 to June 1981. The remarks highlight the focus and purpose of the Resolution from the perspective of the Deng Xiaoping regime. In short, the Resolution was aimed at negating the CR and thus those who continued to champion its policies. At the same time, through a careful partial negation of Mao, legitimacy of the Party is re-asserted.

Three themes emerge from the remarks made by Deng Xiaoping:

1. Dealing with the CR only in broad terms
2. Partial negation of Mao Zedong
3. Affirmation of Party and its contribution


1. Dealing with the CR in broad terms:

An important feature in Deng’s comments is a sense of urgency and impatience with regard to the drafting of the resolution. In his speech to the enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee on May 19, 1981, Deng says that too much time has been spent on drafting the resolution and that further delay would be undesirable. Deng suggests that the draft be scrutinized by an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau so that it can be submitted to the 6th Plenary Session of the Central Committee and later published on the 60th anniversary of the Party. Importantly, giving reasons for the urgency, Deng says that people both inside and outside China await a statement and **unless the resolution is brought out, no unity on major issues or stability would be possible.** The statement seems to refer to the divisions among communities that experienced the CR differently. It perhaps also refers to the ongoing debate between conservatives and reformists regarding the place of Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution in history.

However, the suggested course to achieve this is not thorough investigation of Party or CR history. Instead, Deng asks that historical questions be expounded only in broad and general outline, and not too much in detail. In his talk with the drafting group on March 18, 1981, Deng repeats specifically that “The section dealing with the ‘Cultural Revolution’ should be written in broad outline.”

With regard to previous drafts of the Resolution, Deng remarks that he found them

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‘over-extended’. The writing according to Deng had to be succinct rather than detailed.\(^\text{47}\) This was apparently to avoid controversy that could arise from dealing with immediate history in specific terms. The case of the CR at this stage was especially sensitive as it was the first time that the CR was to be explicitly negated. Under Hua Guofeng, the CR along with Mao Zedong’s policies had continued to be championed. Notably, on the question of the perceived threat of “leftist elements” rallying alongside Hua Guofeng, Deng authorizes naming Hua Guofeng in the resolution to criticize the “un-Marxist policy of two whatever.”

2. Negation of Mao Zedong

Once the CR was negated and termed a catastrophe, the question arose as to who should bear responsibility for it. The most contentious issue in this regard was that of Mao Zedong and the role played by him. The CR as a campaign was launched by Mao Zedong. To negate the CR would then automatically result in a negation of Mao Zedong. However, it was Mao who had interpreted Marxism-Leninism in the context of China and led the CPC to victory.\(^\text{48}\) As Gao Mobo writes, “….to challenge Mao was to challenge the whole foundation of a cause, to challenge its very existence, in other words, to change a discourse. That could not be done until the end of an era.”\(^\text{49}\) Correspondingly, Deng in his discussion with members of the central committee on the 27\(^{\text{th}}\) of June, 1980 says that “If we don’t mention Mao Zedong Thought and don’t make an appropriate evaluation of Comrade Mao’s merits and demerits, the old workers will not feel satisfied, nor

\(^{47}\) Deng, Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982), 276.

\(^{48}\) Notably the allowance for peasants as a revolutionary force as against workers who numbered few in pre-liberation years.

\(^{49}\) Gao “Maoist Discourse and a Critique of the Present Assessments of the Cultural Revolution,” 15.
will the poor and lower-middle peasants from the period of land reform, nor the many cadres who have close ties with him. On no account can we discard the banner of Mao Zedong Thought. To do so would, in fact, be to negate the glorious history of our Party.”50

What Deng then seems to suggest is a delicate and difficult balancing act. This involved a negation of Mao’s later years while affirming his contributions in the earlier period. Deng asserts that in general terms Mao’s leadership was correct before 1957, but became increasingly erroneous since the Anti-Rightist campaign. The function of such an appraisal would imply that the CPC led by Mao Zedong made great contributions to China, which continues to be affirmed. However, Mao as an individual made mistakes during his later years. These mistakes are negated in the Resolution being drafted. Hence the Party is seen as capable of correcting itself, and therefore returns to being ‘revolutionary’ and legitimate.

With reference to Party history, while affirming campaigns to expose Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, (again without any reasons given) Deng says that others like Chen Duxiu, Qu Qiubai or Li Lisan never engaged in conspiracies. Regarding Peng Dehuai and Liu Shaoqi, Deng insists that their case cannot be considered as a struggle between two lines. However, no specific reasons are provided for these revisions in Party history. It is important to remember that with the death of Mao Zedong and removal of loyalists like Hua Guofeng, the object of appraisal – Mao and his regime – had no voice of itself. That verdicts on Peng Dehuai and Liu Shaoqi were overturned more importantly reflect Deng’s own stand on issues

50 Deng Xiaoping, Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982), 284
since 1957. It must be remembered that Deng himself was accused of being the second person in authority who took to the capitalist road along side Liu Shaoqi during the Cultural Revolution.

Interestingly, while the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution are completely negated, events like the Anti-Rightist campaign are not. It must be remembered that Deng himself played an active role in incarceration and persecution.\(^{51}\) Deng says that the campaign had to be reaffirmed and that he stood by the belief that there were indeed “some elements” in the society that wanted to topple the communist government. However, Deng admits that the campaign was “broadened excessively in scope”. In another statement, Deng says that while wrong verdicts should be reversed, those that were right should be allowed to stand. The standards for evaluation however, are not discussed. He also mentions that in case of people formerly prominent in the democratic Parties, it should be recorded in their personal history that they had made positive contributions prior to the campaign. Deng also says that the families of such people should not be discriminated against and should be looked after in their daily lives and work.

It is clear that the campaign itself is not negated based on the premise that “counter-revolutionary” activities could not be tolerated. However, Deng Xiaoping offers a concession to those persecuted for statements of a less “malignant” nature. This allows for rehabilitation of those “wrongly”

incriminated. More importantly, it gives credit to Deng Xiaoping for addressing the grievances of all involved, thus increasing his support base.  

3. Affirmation of Party

Speaking with regard to the spirit of the resolution, Deng says that it should emerge that the “Party is a great Party with the courage to face up to, and correct its own mistakes.”

In his discussion with members of the central committee on the 27th of June, 1980 Deng says that the draft is no good and it needs rewriting. This as it did not sufficiently affirm Mao Zedong and the spirit that his thought needed to be adhered to and developed. Deng asks that Mao be affirmed in detail and criticized in broad terms.

This is perhaps the most important statement of Deng Xiaoping as it lays bare the balancing act that the Resolution plays – that of the Party negating itself, yet by virtue of doing so, claiming ‘revolutionary’ character that in turns renders continued rule legitimate. An attempt is made to assert legitimacy of the Party also in the following argument.

With reference to the CR, Deng says that it was indeed a gross mistake. But, compared to the achievements of the Party and the contributions of Mao prior to it,

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52 Meisner, *Mao’s China and After*, 433. Meisner writes that “Among those rehabilitated were 100,000 political prisoners – intellectuals, Party cadres and others – who had been in detention or political disgrace since the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957.”

53 Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982)*, 282. Meisner goes to the extent of saying that “Deng Xiaoping had been the chief witch-hunter during the 1957 repression.”
it is not overwhelming. Deng goes on to list the achievements of the Party from liberation of the masses to the unification of the country (except Taiwan). Deng also says that Mao did not intend to overthrow all veteran cadres and protected people in many instances. He insists that while Mao was indeed responsible for launching the CR it was Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques who were responsible for most persecutions. Furthermore, in response to the suggestion that Twelfth Plenary session of the Eight Central Committee and the Ninth Party Congress be declared illegitimate, Deng notes that to do so “would be to pull the rug out from under our feet.” Deng asserts that important achievements were made even during the difficult times of the CR and this can be taken as evidence for the Party’s attempt to correct things.

In this complicated construct, though held responsible for the CR, Mao is exempted from complete negation acknowledging his attempts to check some of its excesses and his contributions before 1957. The Party on the other hand by negating the CR and carrying out a revision in the appraisal of events since 1957 demonstrates its own ability to ‘learn from past mistakes.’ Lastly, the Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques take most of the responsibility for excesses of the CR and are duly condemned.

In effect, what is suggested is playing down the CR as wrong but a relatively short episode in the otherwise glorious history of the Party. Responsibility for the campaigns on the other hand is placed upon people instead of political system or stratification of society. With the death or arrest of those blamed, rehabilitation of
those ‘victimized’, the issues raised by the CR would then seem to have been resolved.

As is apparent from the above, the intended function of the Resolution is to be a brief and careful statement on Party history that negates the CR and yet assures continued legitimacy of the Party’s rule. By negation of the CR, sufferings of people during the period are acknowledged. At the same time not all blame for the CR is transferred to Mao so that loyalists to Mao are not offended or legitimacy of Party questioned. Party leaders like Deng Xiaoping himself are brought in a partnership of “victims” with intellectuals and cadres who were persecuted during CR and previous campaigns, creating a base for criticism of conservatives like Hua Guofeng.

We now turn to the content of the Resolution that was actually passed in 1981. The focus here is mainly on how the resolution represents the Cultural Revolution.

2.1.2 “Guanyu Jianguo yi lai Dang de Ruogan Lishi Wenti de Jueyi” [Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China] and the representation of the CR.

Sections 19 to 24 of the Resolution are dedicated to discussing the period of Cultural Revolution. In line with Deng Xiaoping’s directives discussed above, the Resolution presents the CR essentially as a period of internal chaos caused by erroneous leadership and its subsequent exploitation by counter-revolutionary
groups. The CR is said to have brought a tremendous catastrophe upon the Party, nation and people from all ethnic groups.

The Resolution contains a brief narrative of the Cultural Revolution in section 21. The narrative divides the CR into three phases:

1. From the launch of the CR to 9th Party Congress (1969)

2. 1969 to 7th National Congress of the CPC in 1973

3. 1973 to the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976

The content of this narrative focuses mainly on political events. How society experienced the CR is not dwelt upon. Even within the realm of political events, the Resolution mainly focuses on reversing verdicts on important political personalities. All allegations against these personalities are refuted and attributed to left-leaning misapprehensions of Mao. At the same time Lin Biao, Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng and Zhang Chunqiao are denounced for having used the Cultural Revolution Small Group to foment chaos. What this chaos entailed however is again not dwelt upon. The only reference to these issues is found at the end of section 19. It states that the crimes of Lin Biao and Gang of Four have already been sufficiently exposed. Therefore, they are not listed in this Resolution. The grabbing of power (Duoquan) at Party and administrative offices all over the country is mentioned and denounced for creating disorder. However, no details

54 Including Peng Zhen, Luo Ruifeng, Yang Shangkun and Lu Dingyi, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Also included are Ye Jianying, Li Xiannian etc.
are offered as to what groups were involved in grabbing power and how they managed to grab power. The bringing in of PLA is termed inevitable to reign in chaos. It is also mentioned in passing reference that this brought along some negative results. What is meant by “negative results” is again left unclarified.

The ninth Party congress in 1969 is said to have continued and legitimized the erroneous theory and practice of the CR. The following period of the CR primarily focuses on the alleged coup attempt of Lin Biao. This is said to have marked the defeat of both the theory and practice of overturning several basic principles of the Party. In the aftermath of the coup, attempts were reportedly made by Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping to bring back stability. However their attempts were frustrated. This was allegedly because of slander and criticism by the Gang of Four during the last two campaigns of the Cultural Revolution. Mao Zedong is then said to have erroneously appraised the problem to be that of rightist inclination. As a result, Deng was purged again following the Tiananmen protests to commemorate Zhou’s death. Finally, the CR is said to have come to an end with the arrest of the Gang of Four.

55 Song Yongyi in his recent research demonstrates how the vice-head of the Capital Working Group and minister of public security Xie Fuzhi asked police officers not to interfere in the work of Red Guards who conducted house raids, killings and repatriations. The officers were asked to provide intelligence on households with bad class backgrounds. This argument seems to suggest official support for methods used in grabbing power that are being criticized by the Resolution. Song also argues that this was a continuation of Peng Zhen’s own plan to turn Beijing into a “Boli ban, Shuijing Shi” (Sheet of Glass or Crystal Rock) by ridding it of citizens with bad class backgrounds. See Song Yongyi 宋永毅, Wenge Da Tusha 文革大屠杀 [Massacres During the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Kaifang Zaizhishe, 2002), 16.

56 This perhaps refers to the violence witnessed in PLA suppression of rebel activities. See Meisner, Mao’s China and After, 334. Meisner mentions that “...most of the lives taken during the upheaval were not the work of “radical Maoists”, as conventionally assumed, but rather the work of the army, with radicals as their usual victims.”

57 The Pi Lin Pi Kong 批林批孔 (criticize Lin Biao and Confucius) campaign and the Fan Deng, Fan Youqing Fanan Feng 反邓、右倾翻案风 (anti right deviationist wind campaign).
As is apparent from the above, the narrative provided by the Resolution is narrowly focused on political events. The main function of the Resolution is demonstrating how political personalities like Deng Xiaoping himself were repeatedly and wrongly purged. It also serves to highlight their valiant efforts to correct the “mistakes” of the CR and bring back some order and stability. However, as mentioned previously, while the CR is said to have been a “decade long calamity” for the Party and nation, the narrative hardly justifies this. The justification is perhaps rendered unnecessary as the Resolution acknowledges victimization of the hundreds of thousands of people who were persecuted during the movement.

In some sections of the Resolution, references are made to the CR in the society. However these are in vague and ambiguous terms. For instance, Section 20 makes mention of people who were wrongly labelled ‘bourgeois academic authorities’. It says that this harmed many talented intellectuals and blurred the distinction between people and enemies. However, no details of what this labelling exactly involved or how people were harmed are given. The responsibility for their erroneous persecution is also simplistically attributed to Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques. The Resolution does not dwell on the issue of who participated in violence against and maltreatment of intellectuals, and why.

Section 20 mentions that many people who got involved in the revolution were motivated by their trust and faith in Mao Zedong and the Party. However, except for a “minority group” of extremists, they did not support brutal treatment of Party cadres. Through a complicated process, these people reportedly realized the
problem with the CR. Their attitude subsequently changed from that of suspicion and observation to resistance and opposition. Many of these people are said to have been themselves attacked later in the revolution. The situation reportedly provided some careerists and opportunists with opportunities that they used to gain their entry into high offices of the Party and State.

As is evident in these statements, the Resolution steers clear of any controversy that might arise by attempting to clarify who these “minority group” was constituted of. The ambiguity is perhaps in line with the instructions of Deng Xiaoping to deal with the CR only in broad terms. Accordingly, the standard line that except a “minority group” of people, all others were good or misled is provided. Naturally, anyone voicing opposition to present policies could be conveniently bracketed into the “minority” of miscreants or ultra-leftists. Alternatively, people could choose to stay outside the “minority” in bargain for political inactivism. Intellectuals and cadres on the other hand are offered rehabilitation and acknowledgement of their victimization. This reversal of verdicts along with the promise of freedom, democracy and liberties that came from Deng Xiaoping’s pronouncements brought intellectuals into a temporary alliance with the Party, providing for crucial social support against conservatives. As Meisner observes, “That Deng himself had been among the victims of the upheaval, indeed twice victimized, won him the sympathy and support of millions

58 The same formula of Shaoshu 少数 (minority) or Yi Xiao Cuo 一小撮 (a small bunch) people as mischief mongers was used during the crackdown on the Xidan Democracy Wall movement in 1979, suppression of student movement in 1986 etc. See Meisner, Mao’s China and After, 436 & 487.
who had suffered during the previous decade. All looked to Deng for a “reversal of unjust verdicts.”

Importantly, the Resolution does not clarify why the CR is said to have extended for an entire decade. By its own narrative, the CR was directed at alleged ‘capitalist-roaders’ inside the Party and administration and ‘bourgeois reactionary academic authorities’ in the society. By 1969 these people had been removed from office and detained or sent to labour reform. The ninth Party congress was in fact convened to mark the grand success of the Cultural Revolution. Lin Biao’s coup attempt or the conflict between Zhou Enlai-Deng Xiaoping and the Gang of Four therefore seem unrelated to the CR.

As for why the Cultural Revolution went on for such a long time (a decade), section 24 quotes “complicated social and historical factors” in addition to the erroneous leadership of Mao Zedong. However, these do not refer to social contradictions or issues. Instead, this refers to the “lack of mental preparedness and scientific research on the part of the Party with regard to building socialism at a national scale.”

In effect the Resolution mainly focuses on its intended function of negating the CR. By doing so it brings the reformist faction within the Party into partnership with all those persecuted during the CR. Mao Zedong’s contributions are

60 See “Zhaoqi Pengbo de Dahui, Tuanjie de Dahui, Shengli de Dahui, Quanguo Renmin Relie Qingzhu Dang de “Jiu Da” Kaimu” 舞气蓬勃的大会、团结的大会、胜利的大会、全国人民热烈庆祝党的“九大”开幕[A Vibrant Congress, A Congress of Unity and a Congress of Victory, People from All over China Warmly Celebrate the Inauguration of the Ninth Party Congress], *Renmin Ribao* 3 April 1969, 1.
sufficiently highlighted in order to play down his responsibility in launching the CR. Importantly, this prevents undermining the legitimacy of the Party that a complete negation of Mao could entail. A part of the responsibility is also taken up by the Party collective, though arguing at the same time that it had fallen prey to remnant feudal tendencies that allowed individual leadership to supplant collective leadership. Finally, Lin Biao, Gang of Four and other ‘careerists’ and ‘opportunists’ are held responsible for all sufferings inflicted upon society. As discussed previously, such an explanation of the CR essentially implies that with the death of Mao and Lin and the arrest of the Gang of Four the issue of the CR was resolved.

In effect, the resolution leaves many questions unanswered and yet others open to debate. Reasons for why the CR extended beyond 1969 are not provided. What the ‘catastrophe’ comprised of for society is not elaborated. The resolution is also unable to clarify how the Gang of Four and Lin Biao cliques can be held responsible for all that happened in China during the CR. As will become evident in the next two chapters, it is precisely this gap in the official narrative that memoirs of intellectuals attempt to fill.

It can be argued that the purpose of the resolution and lack of space for detail make brevity inevitable. In which case, sanctioned full length historical narratives of the CR published in China can be expected to complement the resolution. However, as will become evident, this is not the case. In the following, we consider semi-official histories of the CR published in China.
2.2 Cultural Revolution in Semi-Official Narratives

The semi-official narratives considered here are:


2.2.1 Wang Nianyi’s Da Dongluan de Niandai

The author Wang Nianyi is a Professor of CPC’s history at the PLA University of National Defence. Published in 1989, this narrative by Wang is by far the most exhaustive narrative of the CR freely available in China. The text basically provides an account of major political events that took place during the CR. The focus of the author throughout the narrative is upon Mao Zedong and the role played by him. The narrative does not deviate from the “spirit” of the Resolution as acknowledged by the author himself repeatedly throughout the text. This albeit dealing with the subject in more detail.61

61 Wang Nianyi 王年一, Da Dongluan de Shi Nian 大动乱的十年[The Decade of Great Chaos](Henan: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989), 646.
Wang does not dwell upon how the CR affected the Chinese society. There is little description of the ordeal of Chinese intellectuals or what factors and people were responsible for it. Wang does not discuss subjects such as contradictions in society, why people responded to Mao’s call etc either. Instead, the narrative arrives at the conclusion that Mao intended to create a new world through the CR. This as he harboured various misgivings as to the direction China was headed in. Echoing the explanation given by the Resolution, Wang states that three mistakes were made in the run up to the CR, namely: Leftist inclination on the issue of class struggle, 62 using the great leap and people’s communes in socialist construction and finally arbitrary decision making on the part of Mao who (in resonance to the Resolution) is said to have taken over all power from the collective leadership of the Party.

In sum, the narrative buttresses the ideas laid out in the Resolution and discreetly affirms the ideology of reforms and opening of the Deng Xiaoping era. There are some notable differences between the Resolution and the narrative of Wang Nianyi. Specifically, Wang does not hold Lin Biao and the Gang of Four responsible for all of the excesses of the CR. Instead, he attempts to investigate the CR as a result of circumstances brought about by apprehensions of Mao. These in turn are seen to have led to an increasingly left-leaning inclination. This inclination is then said to have been exploited by cliques such as that of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four who brought about great calamity to the Chinese people. While not deviating greatly from the Resolution, Wang’s narrative does attempt to

62 Interpreting what the Resolution calls “healthy difference of opinion” for a struggle between revolutionaries and revisionists/restorationists.
explain the connection between Lin Biao-Gang of Four cliques and Maoist discourse.

While Wang cites sources or argues some of the statements made in the narrative, yet more are put forward rather didactically. Typically, these start with statements like “Practice has proven.....” or “History proved.....” and go on to negate various aspects of the CR. The reasoning provided for the negation in turn reflects the effect of change in CPC’s ideology and discourse that permits and perhaps encourages such a treatment of the Cultural Revolution.

Wang negates the theoretical basis for the CR as neither Marxist-Leninist nor that of Mao Zedong thought. However, how the CR that is said to have been launched and led by Mao can be divorced from Mao Zedong thought is explained in simplistic terms such as Mao’s misperception in old age, and sinister activities of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing cliques. Also, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai are shown to have been victims of the CR who managed to save China from absolute disaster against great odds.

In sum, Wang Nianyi’s narrative is constructed with the Resolution as its central framework. Even the periodization according to which the narrative is structured strictly adheres to that offered in the Resolution. While some differences are observed such as the emphasis on the role of Mao over that of Lin Biao or Jiang Qing, the conclusion that the CR was a result of misapprehensions of Mao that were subsequently exploited by counter-revolutionary cliques remains untouched. The narrative is based on a power-struggle model, focusing on differences within
the Party and how they affected important leaders. The social dimension of the CR is dealt with only in passing.

2.2.2 Jin Chunming’s “Wenhua Da Geming” Shi Gao

Jin Chunming is a researcher in the Central Party School of China. Published in 1995, Jin Chunming’s narrative is broader in scope and focus. The text includes a detailed examination of factors that led to the CR, beginning with the process of farm collectivization that started after the end of the first five year plan around 1957. The text then moves on to the abortive Great Leap Forward and hastened setting up of communes all over China. The author attempts to show how contradictions that started appearing as early as 1957 (between Mao on one side and Liu Shaoqi-Deng Xiaoping on the other) gradually intensified. Jin proceeds to argue that after the Lushan Plenum of 1959 Mao was convinced of the existence of a capitalist restoration underway. The author also examines the external environment of China, notably the emergence of contradictions between the Soviet Union and China with each side accusing the other of being revisionist. Khrushchev’s policies reportedly began to be seen by Mao as a “peaceful evolution towards capitalism” and this is seen as having put Mao on heightened alert towards any such development in China.

The narrative reaches 1966 after attempting to demonstrate that by that time Mao’s misperceptions had greatly increased. It was then only a matter of time before he launched a campaign to rid the Party of perceived enemies. This supports the view of the Resolution which attributes the CR to Mao’s
apprehensions. Indeed, by providing a detailed account of the background, this text serves to buttress the argument about Mao’s apprehensions.

However, the CR itself is dealt with broadly in the same manner as the Resolution or other narratives of the movement in China. The author traces the CR through the May 16th communiqué, 16 points, rise of Red Guards, 1967 take over in Shanghai and the establishment of revolutionary committees, Liu Shaoqi’s ordeal, Lin Biao incident of 1971 and finally the campaign to criticize Lin and Confucius and that against Deng and the right-deviationist wind.63

Notably though, Jin’s narrative does not end with the arrest of the Gang of Four but goes on to examine post-CR history. This however is not presented as an alternative to the Resolution that considers the CR to have ended with the arrest of the Gang of Four. Jin explains that every movement has its own momentum, as the CR continued to affect China even after the Gang of Four were brought to book. This in turn is attributed to the ‘whateverist’ attitude of Hua Guofeng. Jin examines various pronouncements and actions of Hua Guofeng to show how despite correcting some mistakes of the CR, Hua continued championing the Cultural Revolution and its mistakes. Importantly, Hua is seen to be reluctant in liberating Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun and others. It was allegedly when pressure was brought to bear upon him that he decided to officially call the CR to an end.

63 The May 16th communiqué issued in 1966 is generally taken to be the theoretical basis for launching the Cultural Revolution. It alleged that capitalist roaders had penetrated all levels of Party and administration. The 16 points issued in August, 1966 laid out guidelines for carrying out the CR. The takeover in Shanghai refers to the establishment of the Shanghai commune by rebels. Following this development, Mao Zedong ordered Revolutionary Committees to be set up at all levels to replace the old administration.
The narrative goes on to show how after the return of Deng Xiaoping a debate on the criterion of truth was initiated. Deng reportedly liberated minds and broke the shackles restricting public opinion. The concluding chapter deals with the passing of the historic Resolution and importantly the necessity for the campaign in 1983 to unreservedly and completely negate the CR.

While the author talks about the ordeals of Chinese people during these years and also makes references to the arbitrary arrests and harsh treatment meted out to many, he does not dwell upon them in detail. Specifically, the text does not touch upon factors that fuelled the treatment. No details are offered either on how the revolution was conducted by rebels and Red Guards. The relationship between the social effects of the CR and the erroneous leadership of Mao or its subsequent exploitation by Lin and Jiang Qing cliques is not substantially justified. The left-leaning mindset of the day is generally held responsible for most of the excesses witnessed during the CR.

In sum, it is observed that in both semi-official accounts reviewed above, the focus of the narrative is on political events and important Party members rather than the social turmoil caused by the CR. This is understandable as any attempt to capture the CR in its entirety would inevitably result in an attenuation of focus. However, there is observed an attempt to avoid controversial issues. Specifically, the narratives do not dwell into issues of political structure and organization of
society that are now understood to have played an important role in fuelling violence and incarceration of perceived enemies during the CR.64

Although the CR was completely negated by 198465, the Party remains wary of calls such as those of Ba Jin to build a CR museum66 and exercises strict control over research and writings on the CR. This is evident from the censures placed on such writing and the banning of books on the subject.67

The Xinwen Chuban Shu (News & Publications Office) of the Propaganda Department of the CPC promulgated a notice on 10th December, 1988, placing strict restrictions on all publications on the CR. The regulation alleged that several unscrupulous writings on the subject were having negative effects on the society. Specifically, the notice writes how dictionaries on the CR have aroused much controversy and unrest. This, it is said violates the policy of solidarity and moving forward (Tuanjie yizhi, xiang qian kan) dealing with historical issues in broad outline and not in detail (Lishi wenti yi cu bu yi xi) and Deng Xiaoping’s instructions regarding strengthening the centralism and unity of leadership. The

64 See White, *Policies of Chaos*.
notice goes on place strict censures on any future publication on the CR. All historical narratives are asked to be avoided. Writings of “real historical value” it is stipulated, need to obtain written approval of the propaganda office of Party Committee at respective levels after rigorous examination. Finally, an approval from the News & Publications Office must be obtained before publication. The notice also mentions that biographies, memoirs, reportage literature etc are best avoided. The same procedure as described above should be used for those memoirs written seriously and earnestly. In addition, it is clearly mentioned that these writings should not violate the Resolution of 1981 or discuss political personalities of the nation. It is also ruled that only the People’s Press and Social Science Press (Central level) are allowed to publish writings on the CR after fulfilling aforesaid requirements.68

In the following we consider one prominent example of banned history texts: *Wenge Shinian Shi*. The text is one of the earliest and most detailed works of history published in China. However, it was never openly released in China.

2.3 Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi, 高皋和严家其, *Wenge Shi Nian Shi* 文化大革十年史 [History of the Decade of Cultural Revolution](Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, 1988)

Unlike the semi-official histories reviewed ahead, *Wenge Shi Nian Shi* does not limit itself with a description of political events. The authors attempt to dwell on contradictions in the society. Specifically, they attempt to dwell on how class distinctions in PRC created a privileged and an underprivileged group in the

society. The reason why rebels responded enthusiastically to Mao’s call to overthrow the existing regime is seen as rational appraisal of opportunities to reverse fortunes on part of the underprivileged.

Dwelling on the necessity for historical research of the CR, Gao Gao writes in the preface that “a nation that is unable to learn lessons from calamities is a nation that has no future….There is a necessity to strengthen socialist democracy and the building up of a legal system. Through a reform of the political system, a highly democratic socialist political system should be setup. It is only in this way that upheavals such as the Cultural Revolution can be prevented effectively.”

The need to strengthen socialist democracy and building up of a legal system was talked about by Deng Xiaoping himself who attributed the CR and the chaos witnessed during it to the lack of intra-party democracy and legal safeguards to freedom. In the narrative, the CR is seen as a campaign launched because of Mao Zedong’s misapprehensions and subsequently exploited by sinister cliques such as that of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. This is very much in line with the interpretation of the Resolution. However, the narrative also looks into factors that fuelled violence and persecution of people. This includes how radical actions were legitimizied and encouraged during the CR.

For instance, dwelling on the campaign to destroy the ‘four olds’ in 1966, the author quotes a speech by Lin Biao on the 18th of August, 1966 where he appeals to Red Guards to ‘wreck old thinking, old culture, old customs and old habits of

\footnote{Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi, 
Wenge Shi Nian Shi [History of the Decade of Cultural Revolution] (Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, 1988) 2}
the exploiting classes.'\textsuperscript{70} This is said to have triggered off the movement across China that witnessed large scale attack on anything that was deemed old or feudal.

With respect to the house raids that were conducted by the Red Guards, the authors again quote Lin Biao’s speech to an enlarged meeting of the Central Political Bureau on the 18\textsuperscript{th} of May, 1966 where Lin said that the basic issue in any revolution was power. As far as the proletariat and the working classes had power, they had everything. The Minister of Public Security, Xie Fuzhi, is also quoted to have said in a meeting of the Public Security Bureau in Beijing that “all stipulations of the past, whether they pertained to the nation or public security units, need not restrain us.” “If the masses kill someone, I do not agree, but if the people deeply abhor a bad man and we are unable to stop them by reasoning, there is no need to use force.” “The police should stand on the side of the Red Guards and make liaison with them, build up relations with them and provide them with information about the five kinds of elements (\textit{Wuleifenzi}) to them.”

In an interview with Zhang Weiguo published in the journal \textit{Minzhu Zhongguo} (Vol.34) and republished in \textit{Huaxia Wenzhai} (Vol.93, 1996)\textsuperscript{71}, the authors Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi reveal that their narrative touches upon the partial negation of the CR by Deng Xiaoping. While the authors agree with the negation at a fundamental level, they opine that simplistic negation of the CR hinders democratization of China. The author opines that further investigation of the CR could reveal that while the CR seemed like an era of unprecedented democracy, it was yet another case of masses being manipulated by the regime. The study also

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid. 51
\textsuperscript{71} Available on the world wide web: (http://www.cnd.org/HXWZ/ZK96/zk93_hz8.html)
touches upon the lack of institutionalized guarantees to freedom, checks and balances on power and civil liberties. This was perhaps the reason for the ban imposed upon the book.

2.3 Conclusion:

The resolution and other semi-official narratives of the Cultural Revolution in China focus on events of political importance. They emphasize the immense suffering experienced by the Chinese people during the decade but at the same time not make it the main focus of the narrative. The end of the CR along with the arrest of the Gang of Four is presented as a great victory of the people by which the errors of the left leaning policies were corrected. The CR itself is seen as a result of the misapprehensions of Mao and the exploitation of the left-leaning atmosphere by Lin Biao and Jiang Qing cliques. Since, Lin Biao died in a coup attempt in 1971, Mao died in 1976 and the Gang of Four was arrested shortly after, the root causes of the CR seem to have been eliminated. In this sense, the nation can put history behind itself and embark on a new chapter of unity, stability and development. Thus ‘resolution’ of the CR history allows the CR to pass onto history and into amnesia for the people who are informed about it.

For the generation that did not experience the CR, if it is assumed that they do not learn about the CR from those who experienced it, the dominant input into their memories is sourced from history education.
In the PRC, history textbooks dealing with the CR are strictly required to adhere to the Resolution of 1981. While the content and style vary, the Ministry of Education published *Kecheng Biaozhun* or Curriculum Standards to be adhered to. The Curriculum Standard for *Chuzhong* (junior middle school) “History & Society” includes a section entitled, *Neirong Biaozhun* or Content Standards. It contains the objectives of the course and suggested activities. With reference to the Cultural Revolution, under suggested activities it is mentioned that “Where possible students must be encouraged to conduct surveys, visits, interviews etc to understand the value of first-hand resources. However, with regard to major events such as the socialist transformation or “Cultural Revolution”, the teacher must provide guidance and explanation.”72

The outline of the history course for senior middle school says: “The “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” that started in 1966 was an internal chaos caused by the erroneous leadership and its exploitation by counter-revolutionary groups that brought upon a great calamity on the Party, country and people of all nationalities. The broad masses of cadres, Party members and people struggled to contain the “Cultural Revolution.” Lin Biao and Jiang Qing’s counter-revolutionary groups were smashed. The “Cultural Revolution” ended in 1976.”73

The next section dealing with reforms and opening says that the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress took the major decision of making economic development the main focus for the Party and the nation again. It marked a grand turn with far reaching effects in the history of PRC. It marked the beginning of the new era of socialist modernization. In effect, the CR is presented

72 Full text available on People’s Education Press website: (http://www.pecom.cn/200406/ca410566.htm)
73 See world wide web: (http://www.pecom.cn/200406/ca416878.htm)
as a brief aberration in the history of PRC that was caused by erroneous leadership and its exploitation by sinister cliques. As both of these factors were eliminated, the nation moved on and entered the glorious phase of reform and development.

For those who witnessed and experienced the CR, this treatment is inevitably simplistic. It is important to note that despite nearly three decades since the CR was brought to an end, there is observed a repeated insistence on the part of intellectuals like Ba Jin that another CR could take place any time. There is also observed a general call in writings on the CR to disallow the CR from fading into amnesia.

It is this amnesia towards issues of concern to themselves that intellectuals attempt to engage in their memoirs. In the following chapter, we consider the specific issue of periodization and attempt to reconcile the framework provided by the Resolution with experiences of authors of the five narratives selected. It must be noted that the Resolution presents the CR as a ‘decade long catastrophe’ or calamity for the nation. It can thus be expected that the experiences of the authors who present themselves as victims of the CR would attest this claim to a decade of collective suffering.
CHAPTER 3

PERIODIZATION OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

As observed in Chapter Two, the Resolution of 1981 contains a brief and general statement on the CR that offers an appraisal of events from the standpoint of the CPC in 1981. It is this version of events that informs history textbooks in PRC today and other historical narratives. The brief narrative provided on the CR essentially focuses on political events, the locus of power and political consequences.

In contrast, the CR as depicted in the autobiographical narratives of intellectuals is sourced from individual experiences during the period. Being rooted in personal experience, these memoirs offer us a glimpse of the effects the CR had on Chinese society in general and the intellectual community in particular. As narratives of first-hand experiences freely available in China, these narratives constitute an important input informing the Collective Memory of the society.

This chapter attempts to compare and contrast the periodization of the CR as given in the Resolution of 1981 and that as emerges through a study of the autobiographical narratives of intellectuals. Periodization here refers primarily to the classification of the CR into various phases according to events therein. What is of interest to this study is the beginning and end of the CR.
In this chapter, we shall see how the CR experience of intellectuals points out to unresolved issues in the periodization of the CR offered by the Resolution. Specifically, the CR experience of intellectuals opens up a debate as to why the CR is deemed to have continued beyond 1969. It must be noted that in 1969 the 9th Party Congress of CCP declared that the tasks the CR set out to achieve, namely eliminating alleged capitalist-roaders and bourgeois academic authorities, eradicating capitalist and bourgeois ways of thinking from the superstructure, had been completed. By this time, student Red Guards and rebels in work units all over China who had spearheaded the ‘cultural’ revolution had also been demobilized.

In order to understand the issues involved, we shall attempt to reconcile the periodization offered by the Resolution with the experiences of the intellectuals studied. It will be seen that the CR experience of intellectuals in fact began moving towards conclusion after 1969. Indeed, many intellectuals were already re-employed or reinstated to former positions by 1973.

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74 See Xi Dong 喜东, “‘Shi Nian Wenge’, Haishi Liang Nian Wenge” “十年文革”，还是两年文革 [“Decade long CR” or Two years of CR?] Si Da Guangchang, Vol.6, for a detailed discussion as to why the CR cannot be deemed to have extended beyond 1969. The author debates the issue based upon the argument that the tasks set out by the 5.16 communiqué had been achieved by 1969.

3.1 Periodization according to the official narrative of the CPC:76

As seen in the previous chapter, the Resolution is a Party document that reviews Party history from the standpoint of the regime in 1981. The Resolution divides the CR into three main phases:

a. From the launch of the CR to Ninth Party Congress (1969)
b. 1969 to 10th National Congress of the CPC in 1973
c. 1973 to the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976

It must be noted here that during the 11th Party Congress in 1977, Hua Guofeng had declared that the 11-year Cultural Revolution had come to a victorious end. The Resolution of 1981 made important revisions on this appraisal. First, it negated the CR completely and termed it a calamity. Secondly, it revised the end-point of the CR to the arrest of Gang of Four on 6th October, 1976. This is essentially the source of the belief that the CR lasted for ten years.

As for the reason why the CR is said to have continued beyond 1969, the Resolution states that the ninth Party Congress only endorsed and continued the mistakes of the CR. It thus increased the authority of Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng at the centre. There is however, no reference made to the tasks set out by the 5.16 communiqué or the 16 points, and whether or not they had been achieved.77

76 See Appendix I for a brief summary
77 For full text see "Tongzhi (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui)(1966 Nian 5 Yue 16 Ri) 通知（中国共产党中央委员会）（一九六六年五月十六日）[Communiqué(Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party)(16 May, 1966 )], Renmin Ribao 17 May 1967, 1 and
The intent of the Resolution is ostensibly to offer a review and appraisal of Party history from 1949-1981. However, the resolution also performs the function of contextualizing and legitimizing the ideological leanings of the Deng Xiaoping era. It dwells much on Deng Xiaoping and the role played by him during the final phase (1973-1976) of the CR. Deng is seen as an experienced and dedicated communist who took charge of administration as Zhou Enlai’s health deteriorated. The Resolution mentions that this was with Mao Zedong’s support. However, Mao’s misgivings regarding revival of bourgeois tendencies allegedly led him to launch criticism against Deng. The Tiananmen incident of 1976 is also seen in the context of support for the Party led by Deng Xiaoping.

As discussed in chapter two, by placing Deng Xiaoping in the Cultural Revolution and portraying him as both a victim of the decade, and also someone who worked to check its excesses, the Resolution attempts to manage the difficult balance of negating the CR and yet claiming ideological continuity for the regime in 1981. While Hua Guofeng’s role in ‘smashing’ the ‘Gang of Four’ is acknowledged, his ‘whateverism’ is negated and his affirmation of the CR overturned. In this manner, the regime in 1981 is not only accredited with ending a tumultuous era, it is also seen to have brought about much sought stability and order to the Chinese society.

“Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui Guanyu Wuchanjieji Wenhua Da Geming de Jueding” [Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution], Renmin Ribao 9 August 1966, 1. The objectives were basically to remove Capitalist Roaders inside the Party and Reactionary Academic Authorities in cultural and literary circles. The CR was against revisionism and capitalist restoration. 78 Liang ge Fanshi, literally, ‘Two Whatevers’. See footnote 2.
We now turn to the autobiographical narratives of five Chinese intellectuals studied in this dissertation to study how they challenge the master-narrative of the CPC in terms of periodization of CR.

3.2 Periodization of the CR according to experiences of intellectuals:

If the ‘Cultural’ revolution was aimed at eliminating alleged capitalist roaders and bourgeois reactionary academic authorities, it is observed that these tasks were completed by the time revolutionary committees were setup and the Ninth Party Congress convened in 1969. Events that followed 1969, such as Lin Biao's alleged coup attempt, campaigns criticizing Lin and Confucius and Deng Xiaoping etc cannot be linked in policy to either document 79 identified by the Resolution as the manifesto of the CR. In what follows, we consider the experiences of five Chinese intellectuals during the CR. Our attempt here is to understand the origin, course and conclusion of their CR experiences. We shall also examine whether or not the CR experience of intellectuals provides us with a basis to consider the CR to have extended beyond 1969.

79 5.16 communiqué and the 16 points
3.2.1 The CR as part of a continuous experience:

First of all, it must be noted here that for many intellectuals the CR was not an isolated event. Instead, it was experienced as yet another of the series of political campaigns that targeted them since the founding of the PRC. Cong Weixi for instance, experienced the Cultural Revolution as a part of what he calls his twenty year ordeal (Cong, 251). Immediately before the Cultural Revolution, Cong seemed to be just coming towards the end of his reform program (that had started with the Anti-Rightist campaign). However, Mao’s call to “never forget class struggle” in 1962 reportedly made the slightly relaxed atmosphere heat up all over again. The CR that followed inaugurated a renewed cycle of hardships.

In fact, Cong Weixi’s narrative (that comprises of three parts) begins with the Anti-rightist Campaign and not the CR itself. While the Anti-rightist Campaign, the Socialist Education Movement and the Cultural Revolution were separate events in history, the author experienced them as part of a continuous ordeal that spanned over two decades. Yang Jingyuan too reports having experienced criticism and struggle ten times from 1958 to 1973. Yang’s ordeal started as a result of her criticism of policies during the Great Leap Forward. As her family background was also not what was considered ‘good’ or ‘red’, both criticism and punishment meted out to her were heavy (Yang, 33). Yang’s ordeal began as early as 1958 when the Anti-Rightist campaign started. Ma Shitu also writes that his ordeal started with the Socialist Education Movement.
Ji Xianlin and Yu Guangyuan do not mention previous campaigns against intellectuals, though Yu states that he was a target of dictatorship for 12 years. Ji Xianlin explains that his apolitical attitude kept him from being affected during previous campaigns. However, his narrative does not start with the CR, but the Socialist Education Movement, when he and others from Beijing University were sent down to the countryside to direct the “four cleanups” (*Si Qing Yundong*).

To speak of the CR experience as an isolated event thus becomes problematic. This, at least as far as experiences of the intellectual community in China is concerned. The experience of being ostracized, criticized, struggle-against for bourgeois outlook or lack of class-consciousness was very much a part of previous campaigns. Therefore, it can be said that in essence, the CR experience was not completely different from preceding political campaigns. Indeed, the 5.16 communique explicitly states that it is precisely because previous campaigns were unable to roots out the problem of restorationist and revisionist tendencies that the CR had to be launched.

It remains true that the CR was a distinct event in concept and policy. However, what the memoirs of intellectuals reveal is that in the memories of these people, the CR was not entirely separated from previous campaigns. While the resolution treats the CR as an event that began in 1966 and was put to end in 1976, for many, the ordeal started much earlier. The CR simply prolonged the ordeal. Importantly, while the CR is negated by the Resolution, previous campaigns are not negated.

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fully. This leads to considerable confusion as intellectuals are labelled victims for one part of their ordeal but not the other.

That the CR was similar to other campaigns in the way it affected intellectuals does not challenge the fact that the CR as a unique campaign was launched in 1966. Instead, it points towards the existence of a political discourse - and practice thereof in PRC- that the CR was a part of. We refer to this discourse throughout this dissertation as the Maoist discourse. In what follows, it becomes apparent that by the same token, events after 1969, such as Lin Biao's coup attempt, criticize Lin and Confucius campaign and the campaign against Deng Xiaoping and the right-deviationist wind were part of the Maoist discourse and not the CR itself.

3.2.2 The CR Experience:

For all five intellectuals, the beginning of hardships during CR was marked by the experience of house raids. These started during the movement to ‘Smash Four Olds’ around June, 1966. This is with the exception of Ji Xianlin who experienced it only in 1967. House raids typically involved destruction or deprivation of possessions deemed to be among ‘four olds’, restriction on movement and reduction of living space. These raids were generally carried out

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81 ‘Maoist Discourse’ here is used in a similar context as in Gao, “Maoist Discourse and a Critique of the Present Assessments of the Cultural Revolution,” 26.
82 破‘四旧’, 破“四旧”, The four olds being old culture, old habits, old customs and old thinking.
83 The delay in Ji’s case is attributed to his neutral stand towards rival faction in Beijing University to begin with. After Ji joined the Jinggangshan faction, raids started being conducted by the New Beijing University Commune at his house.
by Red Guards and rebels. The period gains importance in authors’ memories as it led to considerable trauma, loss of living space and the beginning of hardships.

In all cases, raids followed implicit criticism within the place of work in the form of big-character posters or references in public speeches. The period of criticism was painful as it also involved ostracism by peers and uncertainty as to one’s fate. Raids were carried out both to destroy four olds, and to collect incriminating evidence in the form of dossiers, personal letters, diaries etc. This was then followed by open criticism and struggle sessions.

The period falling between late 1966 and 1968-69 is central to the CR experience of intellectuals. For those affected by CR, this period includes experiences of criticism, struggle-sessions, detention and finally deportation to Cadre schools. This was the period of heightened Red Guard and rebel activism and includes what is generally seen as one of the most violent and chaotic periods in PRC history. Though intellectuals were not directly involved in factional fighting that contributed to much of the violence, they were often fought over by factions. This was especially the case with those who were eminent. As will be seen in the next chapter, the need for factions to display superiority in revolutionary fervour over each other often translated into torture, beatings and heightened maltreatment of intellectuals. Struggle sessions involved long hours of standing in the ‘Jet Plane’ position and listening to accusations and intimidating slogans. This

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85 Ji Xianlin, Ma Shitu and Yu Guangyuan report this in their memoirs. For a detailed discussion regarding violence against intellectuals, see Chapter 4.
86 Standing with the torso bent at right angles to the feet and both hands raised up in the air, giving the image of a jet plane.
exerted much physical and mental pressure. Corporal violence was often used to extract confessions or against what was deemed an unremorseful attitude. Detention and isolation generally took place in what came to be known as cowsheds.\textsuperscript{87} These were makeshift rooms in the place of work where several people were cramped into a small space. Strict restrictions were placed on movement and other activities. Intellectuals were often taken out for struggle sessions by those detaining them and rebels from other units.

All memoirs studied report humiliation, detention, isolation, corporal violence and inhuman conditions of living during this period leading to the establishment of the new tripartite Revolutionary Committees when custody of intellectuals was transferred to the PLA.

Around 1968-69 when revolutionary committees began to be setup, intellectuals (again with the exception of Ji Xianlin\textsuperscript{88}) were sent to May Seventh Cadre schools to be re-educated.\textsuperscript{89} Red Guards were disbanded and sent to be re-educated and mass activism gradually came to an end. In cases such as that of Yang Jingyuan, intellectuals were exonerated before deportation to Cadre schools.

However, life at the cadre schools was harsh and involved living and labouring under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions. Cadre schools were...

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Niu Peng}, 牛棚, Makeshift detention centers setup by rebels in the unit of work or university campus.

\textsuperscript{88} Ji accompanied student rebels who were sent to the outskirts of Beijing for re-education. It was later revealed that the purpose of doing so was to use Ji as a specimen for learning criticism and struggle methods.

\textsuperscript{89} These schools were setup to reform disgraced intellectuals and cadres during the Cultural Revolution. May Seventh refers to a letter written by Mao Zedong to Lin Biao on the 7th May, 1966 entitled “Gei Lin Biao Tongzhi de Yi Feng Xin” [A letter to comrade Lin Biao] in which Mao Zedong first presented his ideas on the PLA as a great school of learning. During the CR Cadre schools were accordingly set up under PLA supervision.
generally setup in far flung regions, hence proximity to family and friends greatly decreased. The isolation added to the mental and emotional pressure faced by intellectuals. Life in the Cadre school occupies an important position in narratives as the experience was vindicating to many intellectuals like Yang Jingyuan who managed to convert themselves from mental workers to manual workers.

3.2.3 The Lin Biao Incident of 1971:

The Lin Biao incident of 1971 resulted in great disillusionment for intellectuals. However, it also led to an overall relaxation in the atmosphere. In reality, from this point onwards, the ordeal for intellectuals started moving towards an end.

In the two years that followed, a relaxation in policy made the atmosphere around the cadre schools relatively easier. For instance, wards of cadres in the school were allowed to return to Beijing to continue their studies. Previously during the war scare of 1969 (Sino-Russian border rift) Lin Biao had ordered families of cadres who had been sent down to evacuate Beijing and leave for the respective cadre schools. With respect to life in the Yang Jingyuan’s cadre school at Xianning, apart from the usual labour and participation in political movements, hitherto prohibited activities such as reading books and participation in cultural programs were allowed. In addition, alleged May 16th elements who were under interrogation at the time witnessed a relaxation in treatment.90 While verdicts were not completely reversed, it was declared that owing to lack of evidence, proceedings of the cases would not be recorded on personal dossiers.

90 This referred to members of an alleged sinister gang that was involved in destructive activities during CR.
Starting 1972, the press where Yang Jingyuan previously worked in, started taking people back into the unit for translation work. By the end of the year, units from other provinces came up to absorb cadres left in the school. This meant that these people could never return to Beijing. This caused considerable desperation among people like the author herself who wanted to return to their former unit in Beijing (Yang, 129-133). Her comments expressing the desperation during a ‘learning’ session set off a minor cycle of criticism and self-criticism for her. This as Lin Biao had earlier expressed reservations regarding the Cadre school experiment, calling it disguised unemployment. After 1971, any criticism of the Cadre schools was taken to be an expression of support for Lin Biao. The author thus had to write self-examination reports and criticize herself for the wrong line of thinking.

Since the fall of Lin Biao, rebels like Liu and Zhang who had risen to power in the provincial revcom in Sichuan were removed. Red guards had already been sent down to villages and far-flung mountainous regions and the remaining rebels and PLA members were inexperienced. According to Ma Shitu, it therefore became necessary to ‘liberate’ veteran cadres to carry out the work of Party and administration. Ma himself was assigned to the propaganda department. He was to be the vice-minister of the department, incharge of literature and arts. (Ma, 416)

In the case of Yu Guangyuan who was at a cadre school since 1969, the verdict was given out in 1972. He was termed a ‘counter-revolutionary revisionist’, ‘a person in power who took to the capitalist road’ and a ‘bourgeois reactionary intellectual.’ However, no action was taken against him and Yu returned to
Beijing on his own accord by October 1972 (Yu, 86). Ji Xianlin was sent back to Beijing by 1970 and assigned the work of a messenger in a building on Beijing University campus. Previously, around early 1969, he had already been allowed to return home, ending the period of detention in the cowshed and incessant struggle sessions.

Although Cong Weixi continued to be away from his home, he too writes that by 1969, CR had more or less done away with the bloody character it had acquired. People who had their families in Beijing were allowed to return home to visit (Cong, 324)

It is apparent from the above that in the case of these intellectuals, the CR experience had started moving towards conclusion. However, as mentioned above, the Resolution of 1981 considers the CR to have continued right up until 1976. In the following, we look at reference in the narratives to events after 1969 to see how they affected these intellectuals.

3.2.4 The campaign to criticize Lin and Confucius:

By the time the campaign to criticize Lin and Confucius (1974) was underway; many intellectuals had already resumed work in some or other form. Though verdicts were not completely reversed, ‘liberation’ on a case-by-case basis had been put into process. The campaign to criticize Lin and Confucius affected intellectuals only in a minor way. In the case of those like Ma Shitu, some
criticism emerged. However, effects of the criticism were limited to exerting mental pressure.

At the time, Ma Shitu was working in the propaganda department of the provincial revcom of Sichuan. As the movement began, posters criticizing Ma once more started making appearance. As a house raid seemed imminent, Ma and his second wife had to burn or destroy many documents (as before the house raids of 1966). A parallel campaign against the ‘restorationist wind’ (Fan Fubi Huichao) also saw a revival in posters criticizing Ma for his actions - such as revival of opera troupes, publications and literary associations - that were seen as revisionist. However, the tilt of veteran cadres and PLA representatives in the provincial revolutionary committee towards order and stability prevented rebels from seizing power once again (Ma, 410).

According to Cong Weixi, a group of cultural workers was used for writing wall newspapers, cartoons and special commentaries at his labour camp during the campaign. The author, his wife and about seven or eight other intellectuals were used for similar purposes. This provided much sought relief from labour and an opportunity to engage in writing (Cong, 439).

Yu Guangyuan and Yang Jingyuan remained largely unaffected by the campaign while reference to the campaign is altogether absent from Ji Xianlin's narrative.
3.2.5 Final years:

By 1973-74, Ji Xianlin, Yu Guangyuan, Ma Shitu and Yang Jingyuan had already been recalled for work or given more freedom at their place of detention/labour as in the case of Cong Weixi. The campaign against Deng Xiaoping in 1975 affected Yu Guangyuan, Cong Weixi and Ma Shitu, but only in a very minor way. In the case of Yu Guangyuan, rights to review Party documents that were returned to him after his reemployment in 1975 were once again withdrawn. Both Yu and Ma also faced some criticism of the work that they had done since resumption of work. This as Deng Xiaoping, under whose charge the work had been done had by then been purged of all positions.

Interestingly, the memoirs provide yet another point of contradiction with the Resolution of 1981 with respect to when the CR ended. While the Resolution terms the arrest of the Gang of Four as the end of the CR, most narratives go further, extending effects of the CR unto the defeat of Hua Guofeng's whateverism. Some effects however took much more time to disappear. It must be noted that the narratives present these ideas not in challenge to the Resolution, but as a tribute to reformists and Deng Xiaoping. However, the notion does complicate the issue of periodization further by arguing that in terms of effects, CR could be deemed to have extended past 1976.

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91 The campaign to Criticize Deng and Oppose the Right-Deviationist Wind in 1976 after the Tiananmen incident when Deng Xiaoping was once again removed from all posts in Party and administration. Previously, with the support of Zhou Enlai, Deng had taken steps to restore the economy. However, these steps came to be seen as revisionist in nature.
Ma Shitu terms the death of Mao Zedong as the point where the CR met its end. This is unlike the official version of events that traces the CR right up till 6th October, 1976 when the Gang of Four were arrested. The reasons for this variation as Ma puts it, is that it was Mao’s death that made events that followed it, like ‘smashing’ of the Gang of Four possible and “led China on the path of glorious development through reforms and opening” (Ma, 442).

According to Ma, even the ‘smashing’ of the Gang of Four did not result in a full withdrawal of the CR process. As Ma describes in the final chapter, after the Gang of Four were arrested, yet another CR-style movement to root out (Qing Cha) agents of Gang of Four across China was initiated. Ma himself came to be questioned (though not formally charged with allegations) regarding the making of a film against capitalist roaders and the part played by him in it (Ma, 453). Even after Hua Guofeng took office, many policies from the Maoist era remained unchanged. Many cadres and intellectuals remained without work and their cases hanged in abeyance. According to Ma, these problems were solved only after the 3rd Plenary Session of the 13th Party Congress when the CR was completely negated and an evaluation of Mao’s role and contribution to Chinese history made. Ma himself was formally cleared of all charges on the 25th of January, 1979, more than 2 years after the CR officially came to an end (Ma, 457).

Similarly, in a short note at the end of the narrative, Yu mentions that while he stops his narrative with the arrest of the Gang of Four, he personally feels that the CR did not really stop with the arrest. This as erroneous policies of the CR took a while to correct. Yu mentions that the CR was officially brought an end in August,
1977 when 11th Party Congress was convened. However, Hua Guofeng, who came to replace Mao, continued talking about allegiance to Mao\(^{92}\) and the CR and also continued to criticize Deng Xiaoping. Yu mentions that he had many experiences in the struggle to correct the CR that could have been included in the chapter dealing with experiences during the later period of the CR. Importantly, Yu decided not to do so because he felt he couldn’t stop if he embarked upon writing those experiences (Yu, 132).

In the case of Cong Weixi, though restrictions were progressively removed since the fall of Lin Biao, Cong continued to live and work in labour camps. It was finally in October, 1976 after much running about that Cong managed to get himself transferred to Linfen literary association in Shanxi. Mao Zedong’s death in September reportedly delayed this transfer. By 1977, Cong had resumed writing and publishing. He published a long poem commemorating Zhou Enlai on the first anniversary of his death. Following this, he finished writing a novella, *Daqiang Xia de Hong Yulan* 《大墙下的红玉兰》. However, as the novella touched upon the issue of whether Mao was a human being or a God, Cong was asked not to publish it (Cong, 488). This was the time when Hua Guofeng’s whateverist policies were still in vogue and Mao had not been explicitly criticized for the CR. The novel was finally published by *Shouhuo* 《收获》, a journal in Shanghai, in February 1979.

According to Cong, even as late as 1979, the political discourse propagated during the CR had not lost all of its vigour. The public security office of a certain

\(^{92}\) His unqualified allegiance to Mao’s policies and instructions came to be known as ‘two whatevers’ and Hua was branded a ‘whateverist.’
province (not named) criticized his fiction as a “reversal of the dictatorship of proletariat.” In the letter it sent to the ministry of public security in Beijing, it named Cong Weixi as “convict Cong.” This led to considerable pressure on Cong who was faced with the potential of another ordeal in coming. Cong writes, “Fortunately, Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang had already negated ‘whateverism’, otherwise another tragedy was not necessarily impossible!” (Cong, 489)

Finally in June, 1979 Cong Weixi was asked to return to Beijing. Cong had returned to his post after 22 years of absence from the literary scene in the capital (Cong, 490).

In pages 168-174 of her memoir, Yang Jingyuan provides a detailed account of the painstaking struggle the author had to go through to get back the room that was separated from the rest of her house in 1966. After much paperwork, running about, repeated requests to people in authority and mental torture, the room was returned to the author on 21st of January, 1989, some 22 years after it was separated. Yang also writes that it was only in 1998 during the 100th anniversary of Liu Shaoqi’s birth when the verdict on her big-character poster was reversed. The poster was put up in defence of Liu during the CR and was the primary cause for the author’s ordeal. Yu Guangyuan describes a similar struggle to get back all portions of his house after the CR officially ended.

In sum, experiences of the five intellectuals demonstrate that the period of detention, struggle-sessions, labour and maltreatment ended in 1969. Red Guards and rebels who were responsible for persecution and incarceration of intellectuals
had been demobilized. After 1969, intellectuals were under the supervision of the PLA that sent them to cadre schools or kept them in labour reform. This however was different from beatings, isolation, forced confessions etc that were experienced from 1966-1969. In the aftermath of Lin Biao’s coup attempt and increased contact with the outside world in 1971, intellectuals were gradually returned to work. This challenges the notion that CR is said to have extended till 1976. At the same time, narratives of intellectuals also demonstrate how some effects of the CR continued beyond 1976. This in turn is attributed to the whateverism of Hua Guofeng. Deng Xiaoping and his reformist regime is thus accredited for correcting the mistakes.

3.2.6 Note on Cong Weixi’s CR experience:

It is observed that Cong Weixi’s CR experience is markedly different from that of the other four intellectuals studied in this dissertation. The difference primarily stems from Cong’s background of having been labelled a rightist during the Anti-Rightist campaign. As such, his CR experience provides us with an example of how the CR affected people who were already undergoing the process of criticism and labour reform.

By 1966, Cong’s political status was what was referred to as a ‘liberated rightist’.\footnote{Zhai Mao You Pai 摘帽右派, literally a rightist whose hat had been lifted off. This referred to people who had been struggled against thoroughly and were deemed reformed and ready to return to work.} He was then labouring at Tuanhe farm in the outskirts of Beijing. Cong writes
that by 1964 the entire stratum of Chinese intellectuals had been branded ‘bourgeois.’ As such, the fate of people like himself seemed increasingly bleak.

Unlike the other four who were working at their units at the time, Cong was not directly affected by the Red Guard movement in 1966. However, families of ‘rightists’ began being attacked in Beijing. Cong’s mother suffered attack and humiliation during these raids. In addition, Cong was asked to escort her to the countryside. These caused much panic and anxiety for Cong. Though indirect, this was one instance of the CR affecting Cong’s life.

Importantly, Cong seems to have been spared the severe round of criticism, struggle and detention in cowsheds that others faced between late 1966 and 1968-69. This was because rebels were not allowed to enter Tuanhe that was under police supervision (Cong, 271). In November 1968, around the time when revolutionary committees began being set up, Cong and other intellectuals at Tuanhe farm were sent to Chadian farm near Tianjin where they had laboured earlier. Labour under harsh conditions continued and the only change in 1969 was that Cong and other ‘class enemies’ were deported to Quwo in Shanxi province. This was because they were considered too close to Beijing. The positive development was that as per the new rule, married couples were to be sent to Quwo together. Cong was reunited with his wife Zhang Hu after nearly a decade of separation. In 1970, they were moved to Jinpushan mines.

The Lin Biao incident seems to have had little effect on Cong Weixi and his ordeal. On page 406, Cong informs readers, that in 1973 he and his wife Zhang...
Hu were moved from Nanping village (where they lived at blacksmith Wang’s house) to the cave-houses built near Jinpushan mine for couples. A reference to the incident along with establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan and the US (1972) on page 407 however suggests that Cong had knowledge of the same at least by 1973.

In resonance to the experiences of other intellectuals, Cong reports some increase in freedom around the time of the criticize Lin and Confucius campaign in 1973. At this time, Cong was in Daxingzhuang outside Changzhi city. He and other intellectuals were spared of labour and asked to write wallpapers and commentaries for the campaign. Unlike other intellectuals, Cong could not return to his place of work by 1973. However, in 1975 when Cong and others were again moved to Jinnan Wuxinghu, there were no cadres escorting them. It was only after much effort that Cong finally managed to get himself invited by Linfen literary association in Shanxi.

In sum, though Cong’s experiences were markedly different from others, the overall political climate did affect his experiences through the years. This is observed in his reunion with his wife after 1969, and his newfound freedom in the wake of the campaign to criticize Lin and Confucius in 1973 and later in 1975.

Cong’s experiences depart from the Resolution in more ways than others do. Firstly, the Resolution does not explain the ordeal of people like Cong who were under ‘reform’ for almost two decades. Regarding the Anti-Rightist campaign, the Resolution affirms that the campaign was necessary. There is only an
ambiguous admittance that the scale of the movement was expanded erroneously. At the same time, Cong’s experiences did not follow the same course as the other four intellectuals either. The exception here is that of indirect experiences of house-raids and the campaign against Lin Biao after 1971. Therefore, experiences of Cong and others like him form a potentially different input into the Collective Memory of the years. The experiences of these people have to be understood in the context of a continuous ordeal that started since the Anti-Rightist campaign.
3.3 Conclusion:

It is apparent from the above that the period between 1966 and 1969 affected intellectuals the most. While criticism against some came up again in various forms after 1969, the effect it had is not comparable to the first two years that were marked by Red Guard and rebel activism.

The periodization provided in the Resolution however makes no mention of the way in which society in general and intellectuals in particular were affected by the CR. The period between 1966 and 1969 is merely seen as the phase where power shifted from the hands of the erstwhile administration to the rebels and finally to the tripartite revolutionary committees.

The memories of intellectuals contest the framework of the Resolution by revealing how their experiences are not reconciled with the periodization provided in the Resolution. In clear deviation from the Resolution, Yu Guangyuan divides his CR experiences into three phases: 1. From May 1966 up to spring 1969 when he was being struggled against in Beijing. 2. From 1969 up to September, 1972 when he was labouring, being investigated and finally waiting for verdict in the Cadre school, and finally the period when he returned to Beijing and resumed work, but again became a target of criticism during the ‘criticize Deng and right deviationist wind’ campaign. The arrest of the ‘Gang of Four’ in 1976 is said to have brought about an end to his ordeal (Yu, 43). While Yu’s periodization does extend the CR till 1976, it is important to note that by the end of the second phase between 1969 and 1972, Yu had returned to work.
3.3.1 Ideological struggle or a revolution of culture?

If the release of 5.16 communiqué and the 16 points is taken as the launch of the CR, the tasks set out therein, i.e. retrieval of power from capitalist roaders in Party and administration and removal of bourgeois-reactionary academic authorities, all were completed by 1969. This was confirmed in the work report of the centre read by Lin Biao during the Ninth Party Congress. The congress also declared that the CR had achieved great success, the old administration had been uprooted and tripartite revolutionary committees had been set up at all levels of administration. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were no longer in power and agents of the revolution - Red Guards and rebels - were demobilized and sent down to the countryside or mountainous regions to be re-educated. Intellectuals, as in the case of intellectuals studied in this thesis, had mostly been sent to the May 7th Cadre schools or were being re-educated under supervision. Lin Biao also declared that the Cultural Revolution had achieved grand success and that China had now entered the phase of struggle, criticism and transformation. This involved cleaning class ranks, rectifying the Party, reforming irrational laws and systems, and sending down of administrative officers to lower levels.

As mass participation and mobilization - the kind witnessed during Red Guard activism and worker rebel activism - had ended, it can be said that the ‘Cultural Revolution’ more or less concluded after 1969. Events after 1969 (such as the Lin Biao incident of 1971, the campaign to criticize Lin and Confucius or the campaign against Deng and the right deviationist wind) affected intellectuals only
in minor ways and had an objective and course of their own. To allow for their inclusion in the Cultural Revolution on grounds that the CR style criticism resurfaced during the period would open the gates for inclusion of events like the Socialist Education Movement or even the Anti-Rightist campaign into the Cultural Revolution. The Ninth Party Congress indeed emphasized that the revolution of the proletariat had to go on; however, it also confirmed that the Cultural Revolution had achieved the tasks that had been set out in 1966.

Since the arrest of the Gang of Four happened only after the death of Mao Zedong, it would perhaps be more useful to treat the events after the Ninth Party Congress as the last phase of the Maoist era rather than the end of the Cultural Revolution. This way, events following 1969 can be put into perspective.

3.3.2 Periodization according to the CR experience of intellectuals:

The CR experience of intellectuals can be broadly divided into two phases:

1. 1966-1968: This was the period when intellectuals were pulled out, criticized, struggled against and subjected to various forms of physical and mental torture.

2. 1968/69 – 1971/72: After tripartite revcoms began to be established, individual cases were studied by PLA or Worker Propaganda Teams, and a verdict was delivered. As is observed in the case of the five intellectuals studied here, this was followed by deportation to cadre schools. Intellectuals spent their time at cadre school doing manual labour and living in harsh conditions. This continued
until around the time of the Lin Biao incident. Following this cadre schools slowly started being disbanded and intellectuals were either sent back to their units or absorbed by other units.

The Cultural Revolution affected intellectuals in varied ways depending on the place, nature of allegations and subjectivity of persons in charge. Therefore, any generalization regarding the CR experience is difficult. What the above provides is an idea of the time when and how events that are considered important to the CR experience of intellectuals unfolded. Indeed, many intellectuals were not ‘liberated’ or reinstated until much later. This however does not negate the fact that the period of Red Guard and rebel activism ended with 1969. Intellectuals became a target of the CR in the first place was because of the argument that they had acquired a capitalist outlook and were bourgeois academic authorities spearheading a restoration of capitalist values. The removal of intellectuals from leading posts, criticism, struggle and punishment was the corrective action mandated by the CR. This action came to an end after rebel groups were disbanded and tripartite revcoms formed.

The period of labour reform in cadre schools took place after worker and the PLA propaganda teams examined allegations and gave out verdicts. In this sense, it can be said that the revolutionary phase of Cultural Revolution had already ended. However, it must be noted that in memoirs like that of Yang Jingyuan that cadre school life forms an integral part of the CR experience of intellectuals. This as the end of life in detention did not result in a full return to the pre-CR situation. It
was only after cadre schools were disbanded that intellectuals started returning to work.

3.3.3 Maoist discourse as an explanation for events after 1969:

From the five memoirs studied in this chapter, it becomes apparent that intellectuals were either returned to work out of necessity (as in the case of Ma Shitu, Yu Guangyuan and Yang Jingyuan) or given relatively more freedom at the place of detention (as was the case with Ji Xianlin and Cong Weixi). However, no negation of the CR or the treatment meted out to intellectuals took place at this point of time. It was only in 1981 that a negation of the CR in its totality took place. This helps us put into perspective what can be called ‘reserved liberation’ of intellectuals around 1972-73.

By ‘reserved liberation’ is meant liberation or repatriation based not on a negation of the CR experiment, but on considerations such as successful completion of reform program, lack of evidence or socialist humanitarianism, all of which derive legitimacy from what the regime decides.

Even if the CR experience is extended to include cadre school life, the experiences drew close to an end by 1973. This does not match the idea presented in the Resolution that the CR ended only after the arrest of the Gang of Four. If it is argued that some cases remained unresolved or the ordeal for some people continued past 1973, it can also be shown that there were some cases that remained unresolved even as late as 1979 (as was the case with Cong Weixi),
three years after the ‘official’ end or later. This renders the argument for 1976 as the end of the CR rather weak.

If on the other hand, the demise of Mao Zedong is taken as the end of the Maoist era and the negation of ‘whateverism’ of Hua Guofeng is taken as an end of the Maoist Discourse, we get a different explanation:

The Maoist discourse that embodied a set of beliefs and practises gave birth to events such as three antis, five antis, Anti-Rightist campaign, socialist education movement and finally the CR. The practise of criticizing intellectuals for bourgeois thought and sending people to labour camps to acquire proletarian world outlook was a part of this discourse. Experiences of intellectuals after cadre school can be understood in this context and not as a perpetuation of Cultural Revolution. Cultural Revolution as a unique event was aimed at removing capitalist roaders in the Party and administration and all bourgeois academic authorities. It was also aimed at destroying elements of capitalist culture in the society. Credibility of actions take to achieve these goals not withstanding, these objectives were indeed attained by the time the ninth Party congress was convened.

It is true that a complete reversal of fortunes (for intellectuals) did not take place before Deng Xiaoping’s ascendancy. However, what this change also reflected was a change in discourse. Whilst the return to work around 1973 was upon completion of reform or conclusion of the phase of criticism, it did not negate the methods adopted to criticize and reform intellectuals. 1976 marked this change in
discourse alongside a change in ideology that was completed by 1981. By extending the CR until 1976, the Resolution blurs the line between end of the CR and end of Maoist discourse. **What the disparity in periodization between intellectuals’ narratives and the Resolution brings out is precisely this delineation.**

The main events during post-1969 CR identified in the Resolution are Lin Biao’s coup attempt, indirect criticism of Zhou Enlai during the “Criticize Lin and Confucius campaign” and finally that of “Deng and the right-deviationist wind.” What these incidents reflect is a jostling for power between the revolutionaries (including Gang of Four and supported by Mao) and the pragmatists (Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai). The Resolution indeed acknowledges that Mao authorized criticism of Deng because he could not tolerate the steps taken by Deng to stabilize the situation and revive the economy. However, these events had little to do with the ‘catastrophe’ or ‘calamity’ at least as far as intellectuals were concerned.

What the experiences of the five intellectuals uncover is the intertwined and unresolved connections between end of the CR, end of Maoist discourse and change of ideology. While not substantial by themselves, the experiences of the intellectuals point towards discrepancies in the idea that the CR came to an end with the arrest of the Gang of Four. The memoirs of intellectuals demonstrate that personal ordeals started moving towards an end (as during previous campaigns) even within the Maoist discourse. Rehabilitation of intellectuals and cadres and withdrawal of charges started with Hua Guofeng, but it did not offer a negation of
the traumatic period. Deng Xiaoping’s reformist regime offered this negation, winning favour with intellectuals. This is observed in the memoirs that consider effects of the CR to have continued till whateverism was criticized.

It remains true that still other voices are absent from this debate between the official narrative and that of intellectuals. For instance, while the ordeal for intellectuals ended in 1969, it marked the beginning of hardships for many Educated Youth (and former Red Guards) who were sent down to the far-flung regions to be ‘re-educated by poor peasants.’

Many of these youth returned to their homes only after 1978. Much of the time between the years was spent in hard labour and living in difficult conditions separated from family and friends. In this sense, from the perspective of these youth the CR could be said to have extended beyond 1978.

However, the problem remains with treating the CR as a period instead of a campaign with a set of objectives to be attained. This treatment of the CR allows for everything that happened between 1966 and 1976 to contend for inclusion within the history of the period. The notion of ‘decade long CR’ or a ‘decade of calamity’ also serves to attest and amplify the trauma experienced by people. The five memoirs considered in this study also use the term repeatedly to emphasize sufferings of the authors. However, as mentioned before, it remains true that the CR was a campaign launched by Mao Zedong to eliminate capitalist roaders and bourgeois capitalist academic authorities. The agents employed for the work were

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94 Educated Youth in fact began to be sent down to the countryside as early as late 1967. See “Jianchi Zhishi Qingnian Shang Shan Xia Xiang de Zhengque Fangxiang” 坚持知识青年上山下乡的正确方向 [Adhere to the Right Direction of Educated Youth Going up to Mountains and Going down to the Countryside], editorial in Renmin Ribao [People’s Daily] 9 July 1967, 2.
masses who were allowed to denounce and criticize Party cadres and intellectuals. With both targets of the campaign in detention and the agents demobilized, the CR as a campaign can be said to have come to an end. Events that followed this must be treated in the context of residual effects, struggle for succession and end of Maoist discourse.

In sum, the narratives of intellectuals enter into both a complementary and contradictory relationship with the official narrative with regard to periodization of the CR. While the negation of the CR by the reformist regime is affirmed and the ‘decade long CR’ definition supported, experiences of intellectuals reveal a problematic with 1) extending the CR beyond 1969 and 2) ending the CR in 1976.

This chapter discussed how memoirs of five Chinese intellectuals challenge the official narrative by offering a periodization based upon experiences of the authors. The following chapter will explore how memoirs complement the official narrative provided by the Resolution. This function of the narratives is achieved by attention to detail pertaining to the CR experience that is absent from the Resolution.
CHAPTER 4

THE CR EXPERIENCE: VIOLENCE, MALTREATMENT & ITS CAUSES

As mentioned in chapter one, in the absence of histories of the Cultural Revolution written from the perspective of the intellectual community in China, memoirs by Chinese intellectuals take up the role of informing Collective Memory of society. This chapter studies how these narratives that are rooted in individual experience of intellectuals portray the CR and how, if at all, they challenge the master narrative on the CR presented by the Resolution of 1981.

It will be seen in this chapter that the narratives present a relatively complex relationship between the treatment meted out to intellectuals and the dominant discourse during the CR. This contrasts with the simplistic explanation of the Resolution that holds Mao’s misgivings about class struggle and Lin Biao or Gang of Four cliques responsible for the excesses of the CR.

As discussed in chapter two, mainstream historiography in China essentially focuses on political developments during the CR. As such, events given importance are the rise and fall of important political personalities and the shift in locus of power. Later events such as Lin Biao’s alleged coup attempt, anti-Lin and anti-Confucius campaign and finally the anti-Deng and right deviationist wind and the arrest of the Gang of Four are also included following the argument of the
Resolution that the CR lasted for an entire decade. The Resolution and other histories do touch upon the effects of the CR on society but in much brevity.

In contrast, events of importance to the CR experience of intellectuals (as seen in the memoirs) are the campaign to destroy four olds, house raids, criticism and struggle sessions, detention and labour in cowsheds, intervention by PLA and Worker propaganda teams and finally Cadre school life. Centred as they are on individual experiences, the five autobiographical narratives studied in this chapter contain detailed descriptions of each of the above phases. In addition to providing a narrative on how the CR was experienced, these descriptions also contain clues as to factors responsible for the ordeal of intellectuals. Specifically, the narratives bring to light the role played by a discourse during the CR that favoured and created incentives for maltreatment of intellectuals. They also demonstrate the role played by individuals in alleviating or exacerbating the ordeal of intellectuals.

This chapter focuses on sketching a picture of the CR experience of intellectuals as reflected through the narratives under study. The chapter also attempts to bring out the alleged reasons or factors that affected this experience and how these contrast with the explanation provided by the master narrative of the CPC. The chapter is divided into five sections that deal with different phases of the CR experience. The content of the memoirs is arranged and analyzed under common themes pertaining to each phase.
4.1 Beginning of the CR experience:

In this section we examine the reasons why each of the five intellectuals were implicated during the CR and how they were affected during the initial phase of the CR.

The Cultural Revolution as a campaign can be taken to have begun after the release of the 5.16 communiqué and the Sixteen Points. The CR experience of intellectuals narrated in the memoirs on the other hand begins with the start of Red Guard and worker rebel activism, notably during the campaign to ‘destroy four olds’. It is this experience that this section focuses upon.

4.1.1 Process of incrimination:

The 5.16 communiqué and Sixteen Points reportedly made all intellectuals natural targets of the revolution. Ji Xianlin writes in his memoir that the fact that he had been the head of the Department of East Asian Languages made him a natural target for the Red Guards. This as all persons in authority were automatically taken to be capitalist roaders (Ji, 15). In each of the narratives it is observed that implication was based upon presupposed guilt. Any attempt to explain or deny charges was essentially treated as an attempt to reverse verdicts and dealt with severely. Any event or materials that could remotely suggest wrong doing was

95 The beginning of the CR experience must not be confused with the beginning of the narrative in each memoir. As mentioned in chapter three, most narratives begin with the Socialist Education Movement or earlier. By CR experience is meant events in the author’s narrative after CR was officially launched.
sufficient to pull intellectuals out. As seen in the case of the five intellectuals, bad class background or history of political mistakes made one all the more prone to suspicion and often resulted in exacerbation of maltreatment. Importantly, what the narratives highlight is the highly arbitrary and discriminatory manner in which the authors were targeted. The absence of surprise towards these methods on the other hand underscores the fact that such practices were commonplace in political campaigns in Maoist China. Both Yu Guangyuan and Ma Shitu write about how they were not daunted by the attack of rebels, as they knew the standard formulae used in campaigns, some of which they had themselves employed previously.

Yang Jingyuan and Cong Weixi were vulnerable even to begin with because of their family backgrounds. Both Yang and Cong bore the class label of landlords. Yang’s husband Gu Geng had inherited property from his father, while Cong was born to a family of landlords. Despite the fact that Cong’s father died in a Nationalist government prison, his class background reportedly never left him (Cong, 256). Cong Weixi also writes at length about the dangers faced by his mother and family when they were leaving Beijing for the countryside because of their bad class background. Cong reports having witnessed a person from a bad class backgrounds being stoned to death by Red Guards. According to him, there were no questions asked if rebels even killed someone from the bad classes (Cong, 268).

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96 After the Chinese expression *Jiu chulai* 捕出来 – literally to pull someone out. This expression was used during the CR to refer to naming and charging of people with various crimes. It was invariably followed by criticism and struggle sessions.
In addition to the above, both Yang and Cong also had a history of having been labelled ‘rightist’ during the Anti-Rightist campaign. This made them natural targets for Red Guards and rebels. Another factor that worked against Yang during the CR was her defence of the then President Liu Shaoqi in the debate in her work unit. Once Liu was denounced in 1968, Yang was charged with having supported a revisionist.

Although his rightist ‘hat’ had been lifted by the time of the CR Cong continued to be in labour reform throughout the period. Cong writes that starting 1964 when Mao Zedong declared that the majority of intellectuals were bourgeois-capitalist, the community became extremely tense. As for those like himself who were at the very bottom of the community (as former ‘rightists’), this meant an end to the hope of liberation (Cong, 255).

Ma Shitu was summoned back from the Socialist Education Movement (SEM) by his unit (the South-western Bureau of the CPC) when the Cultural Revolution began. This, according to Ma, was on instructions of the head of the bureau who disliked people like Ma who had been a part of the underground Party during pre-liberation times. Allegations against Ma were based on his actions during SEM that prioritized scientific farming over class struggle, and his essay that highlighted why areas of Sichuan were not fit for cultivation of cotton (Ma, 54-60). While not disputing Ma’s arguments in his essay, the allegations placed Ma on the side of ‘expert’ in the debate of ‘Red versus Expert’.  

97 According to this ideal set out during the Yanan days, a leading Cadre had to be both technically competent (Expert) and ideologically sound (Red). Mao Zedong summed up the ideal as a cadre who is both “the teacher and the pupil of the masses.” For details see, Meisner, Mao’s China and After, 118.
atmosphere of the CR, the debate had tilted greatly in favour of the ‘Red.’ Ma continued to be criticized with the same allegations even after the existing regime was overthrown by rebels during the CR. In addition, Ma writes that he had been acquainted with some U.S. army personnel during pre-liberation days. Upon approval from the Yunnan provincial work committee, Ma and Party workers talked to the Americans about Japanese army bases. This was in order to put up a united front against Japanese forces. These men reportedly also met Mao Zedong in the autumn of 1945 in Chongqing and were implicated during the phase of McCarthyism in the United States. Though Ma did not maintain any contact with these people, when under detention with Red Guards, this history brought allegations of Ma being a spy for the United States (Ma, 33).

Ji Xianlin was also accused of prioritizing work over politics by Red Guards in Beijing University. He was labelled a bourgeois reactionary academic authority and revisionist (Ji, 30). An essay by Ji Xianlin entitled “Chun Man Yan Yuan” 《春满燕园》 that described coming of the spring to Beijing University campus was criticized as revisionist by Red Guards. According to them ‘spring’ was a symbol of capitalism and to sing its praise was tantamount to praising capitalism (Ji, 18).

Yu Guangyuan was similarly ‘pulled out’ by rebels of his unit for his remarks on various subjects that were construed as bourgeois capitalist in outlook. Yu’s work reportedly extended over several fields such as politics, economy,

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philosophy, sociology etc. Therefore he was implicated for allegedly counter-revolutionary-revisionist remarks and statements in many fields (Yu, 27). As an eminent intellectual and high-ranking cadre, Yu became an important target for rebels. So much so that a liaison office with several branches was setup to struggle against him.

The memoirs also reveal that during the CR, once a person was disgraced, his family had to suffer his fate automatically. The house-raids and harassment experienced by Yang Jingyuan were caused by the ‘landlord-class’ label that her husband bore. After the raids, her daughter in middle school who had become a Red Guard cried because once her parents fell from grace, she automatically became a member of the Sixth Black Category (Hei Liu Lei) of Gouzaizi (Literally offspring of a dog) (Yang, 156). Cong Weixi’s house was raided and his mother harassed despite Cong’s absence just because his mother was the ‘family of a counter-revolutionary’. Red guards reportedly hung a heavy wooden board bearing this title by a thin metal cord on her neck that she was required to keep on (Cong, 256). In addition, Cong’s mother and son were ordered to leave Beijing and return to her native place in the countryside. During the CR, families of disgraced intellectuals were often asked to disown them or face the same fate for lack of class consciousness. This was known as ‘drawing lines’. Ji Xianlin writes how his wife and aunt were pressurized by their neighbours to disown him. Ma Shitu on the other hand wrote to his eldest daughter asking her to disown him lest she too came under criticism (Ma, 18).

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99 Hua Qing Jiexian 划清界限.
In sum, the narratives reveal that during the Cultural Revolution, a person could be implicated for the following reasons:

1. Family Background: Belonging to a family categorized as one of the five black elements). This affected Cong Weixi and Yang Jingyuan.

2. Association with disgraced person: The implication of next to kin, spouse or in some cases even distant relations could result in an ordeal for the person concerned. Yang was affected by the verdict on her husband Gu Geng, Cong Weixi’s mother had to suffer physical and mental hardships because of being the ‘family of a counter-revolutionary’ while Ma had to persuade his daughter to disown him and his sons were discriminated against (Ma, 128). Ji Xianlin’s wife and aunt also came under pressure by neighbours to disown him.

3. Personal history: Any history of having been branded a Rightist during the anti-Rightist campaign attracted criticism and suspicion even if the person concerned had completed the labour reform program and had his Rightist ‘hat’ lifted. This was evidently the case with respect to Cong Weixi and Yang Jingyuan.

4. Foreign Connections: Any foreign connections, viz. acquaintance with foreigners, history of studying abroad etc could be taken as proof of spying or carrying out anti-national activities. Persons who came under suspicion were often subjected to interrogation and pressure to extract confessions. Ma Shitu was subjected to such a treatment during the CR for past association with Americans during the anti-Japanese resistance, albeit at the behest of the Party.
5. Occupying a leading position: A leading position in the Party or Administration almost automatically made a person culpable. The revolution was explicitly against ‘people in authority who had taken to the capitalist road’ in the Party and ‘bourgeois capitalist academic authorities’ with respect to intellectuals. As such, all secretaries of Party committees, heads of administration or institutions became potential capitalist roaders or reactionary authorities. This seems to have been the case with Ji Xianlin, Yu Guangyuan and to some extent Ma Shitu.

All five narratives reflect the helplessness felt by the authors when faced with arbitrary and baseless allegations drawn up by rebels or Red Guards. However, no recourse was available as the conduct of the revolution had been left to the ‘revolutionary masses.’ The memoirs also point out to the fact that intellectuals in China had been repeatedly targeted in a similar fashion. CR-like methods of criticism and struggle were used as early as during the Yanan days and had become commonplace through the thought reform movement of 1951, Sanfan (three antis), Wufan (five antis) also of the early 50s, Sufan “Campaign to Wipe Out Hidden Counterrevolutionaries” in 1955, Anti-rightist Campaign in 1957, Four-Cleanups of 1963 etc.

Arbitrariness of evidence and the impossibility of disputing them are dwelt upon repeatedly by all five intellectuals in their memoirs. For those without a history of

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100 Directed primarily at intellectuals and aimed at “reformation of intellectuals.” The movement emphasized learning Mao’s works and elevated Mao’s Yanan talks on literature and art to the status of guiding doctrines for all cultural activity. See, Meisner, Mao’s China and after: a History of the People’s Republic, 85-86.
political implication, one way to save oneself seems to have been neutrality or inaction. However, the politically charged atmosphere of the CR seems to have held a strong disincentive for people who failed to display revolutionary enthusiasm. In Ji Xianlin’s case, this caused him to take sides among factions in Beijing University. This reportedly triggered off attacks against him. Yang Jingyuan also writes that she had the courage to defend Liu Shaoqi openly because of what had seemed an unprecedented phase of democracy in China. In the absence of which, she realized that her political credentials were not favourable for such action.

Intellectuals like Ma Shitu, Yu Guangyuan and Ji Xianlin who directed previous campaigns as Cadres of the Party also make a reference to the fact that political campaigns in China had a cyclical pattern. If you are criticized in this campaign by others, others will come to be criticized by you in the next. Ma satirically refers to this as a philosophy of struggle with no real aim, the aim being the struggle itself (Ma, 117). Ji Xianlin on the other hand writes that the political status of a person was constantly in flux during these campaign and teams were constantly being divided and reconstituted. Those being criticized could turn into critics themselves and critics could in turn become those criticized. Ji writes that there was no definite pattern to these things, it was always confusing (Ji, 34). What this confusion also reflects is the fact that intellectuals were themselves a part of the discriminating discourse that victimized them during the CR. This as they had taken part in criticism and struggle of others during previous campaigns, we return to this subject in the next chapter.
Importantly, through a detailed description of how their ordeals began, the memoirs try to inform collective memory about the basis on which intellectuals were targeted/attacked during the CR. This information is altogether missing from the official narrative. The descriptions highlight the arbitrary nature of pretexts under which intellectuals were attacked. However, it remains true that the Maoist discourse of serving the masses, working for workers, peasants and the PLA and reforming the bourgeois outlook had been embraced by intellectuals themselves. The main criticism against intellectuals during the CR was that they placed emphasis on expertise instead of political consciousness. The paradigm of open criticism by masses was but a part of the exercise to reform their allegedly bourgeois outlook. As will be seen in the following, some intellectuals themselves felt guilty for their hitherto bourgeois outlook and voluntarily offered self-criticism. While it can be argued that this was a result of indoctrination, it remains true that viewing the CR from the perspective of the post-Mao era in 1990s is problematic. This especially as the Maoist discourse ceased to be operative then. Events during the CR would therefore appear absurd and without any rational justification.

4.1.2 House raids

The real ordeal of intellectuals commenced with house raids that began around May-June, 1966 with house raids. These ran parallel to the iconoclastic movement to ‘destroy four olds’ that was spearheaded by Red Guards. Raids are also reported later during the CR. All five memoirs devote part of the narrative to
discuss the house raids. The raids as seen in the memoirs were unannounced and shocking.

Typically the raids involved destruction or confiscation of articles considered feudal, bourgeois or revisionist. It is observed that these raids were often also used to collect incriminating evidence against individuals. In addition to loss of property, Intellectuals also experienced a loss of dwelling space after the raids. Some like Yu Guangyuan (Yu, 39-41) and Ji Xianlin (Ji, 67) report being moved to smaller houses while others like Yang Jingyuan (Yang, 155) had to share their houses with families of ‘revolutionary proletariat’. This was reportedly in line with the policy that required intellectuals dwelling in the cities to give up additional space to the revolutionary masses. Cong Weixi’s mother and son were ordered out of their house in Beijing and asked to return to their native place in the countryside and Cong was asked to make arrangements for the same (Cong, 266).

The narratives dwell on how there seemed to have been no clear definition of what constituted ‘four olds.’ Red Guards who conducted the raids are seen as indiscriminate in destruction of property in the name of destroying four olds. Intellectuals report having had to destroy all photographs and correspondence before the raids. The former was then considered a bourgeois habit while the latter could potentially endanger family and friends. Implication for association with a disgraced person is reported as rampant during the CR.

In Yang Jingyuan’s case, raiders took away items such as piano, bookshelves, sewing machine, radio and music records while items such as flower pots and
aquarium were smashed. Yang also had to tear off all photographs and ‘flush away’ two St. Mary badges given to her by the father of a Catholic church for her marital engagement. This as religious belief was considered superstitious and therefore one among the four olds. The scene of house raids was nothing new for the author who had been mentally preparing herself for the raid. Yang writes that it had happened with neighbours and it was only a question of time before she would have to face the same. Yang even reports having voluntarily tied up stacks of books to be taken away. However, the sight of a looted house and smashed possessions was very disturbing for her. In the end, all that Yang was allowed to retain were ‘red’ books (primarily Mao’s works and communist classics) and some dictionaries. Rebels of the neighbourhood also ruled that families such as that of the author occupying houses larger than required would have to hand over extra rooms to the neighbourhood for allotment to others (Yang, p154-55). This caused loss of privacy for the author and her family. It also resulted in friction between the two families living in the house as they had to use a common kitchen and bathroom to use. However, the author had no recourse, as any talk of privacy at that time would have been seen as bourgeois capitalist.

Yu Guangyuan was initially spared house raids that had become commonplace in Beijing and elsewhere. His house was raided for the first time in November, 1966. After that there were several raids of various kinds. As Yu had expected the raids to come by the time, he deposited all important documents with the Central Archives of China. He also reports having destroyed any items that could be seen as feudal, bourgeois or revisionist. This included personal letters and correspondence, photographs etc. During the raids, Red Guards confiscated some
items and sealed all books in Yu’s possession (Yu, 39). Yu especially mentions a diary in which he had meticulously noted the development of his child. Yu intended to further his understanding of infant pedagogy through the notes. However, one Red Guard who saw the diary commented that it was “Wuliao” (foolish/menial) and confiscated it. The incident demonstrates how indiscriminate some Red Guards were during the campaign. Despite it having no political content whatsoever, Yu was deprived of three years of meticulously compiled notes (Yu, 16).

Like Yang Jingyuan, Yu Guangyuan was also moved out of his house in the Propaganda Department campus. This as all big houses had to be given to the proletariat or leading revolutionaries. Yu was moved into a very small space. The house had previously served as the residence of a high-ranking cadre, but six families including that of Yu were put up there during the CR. Toilets were shared and there was no kitchen or central heating. A corner of the room given to each family was used to burn charcoal for cooking or heating. As there was hardly any space available, Yu had to dispose off most of his precious books (Yu, 41).

In 1966 after Ma Shitu started being criticized by name in major newspapers, three strongmen were sent to his home to keep an eye on him and it was announced that Ma was under isolated investigation. Ma was moved to his office room inside the house while the three men had their beds near the entrance effectively blocking the way. All items in his office including documents, notes,

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101 *Geli Shencha* 隔离审查, Investigation under isolation and supervision.
letters and tags were confiscated. As in other cases, all of Ma’s books were sealed. Works by Marx, Lenin and Mao were the only books available apart from newspapers.

Ji Xianlin’s house was also raided several times. During the first such raid, Red Guards smashed or confiscated decorative items. Another raid took place after Ji Xianlin had taken sides among the factions in Beijing University. This raid happened at mid-night when Ji was about to retire. A large group of students from the Eastern Languages Department and who supported the New Beijing University Commune (NBC) that Ji had criticized came to carry out the raid. During the raid, many precious antiques and artefacts that Ji had collected through the years were smashed to bits. In Ji’s description acquiring these things had required a lot of frugality on his part and they were a result of years of blood and sweat. The students also destroyed a number of books that were kept in a store downstairs (that was a cycle garage formerly). Ji writes that though he could not see what was happening at the time, his heart was bleeding. It was the longest night of his life (Ji, 60-62).

Red Guards at the NBC also took three items found in Ji’s house as incriminating evidence. A lithograph of Chiang Kai-Shek in his house was taken to mean that Ji had connections with the Nationalist Party of Taiwan. Half-burnt letters found in his house on the other hand were seen as attempts to destroy evidence. A knife under the pillow of Ji’s aunt was taken to be reflective of his intention to kill Red Guards.
Ji explains in his memoir that the lithograph was a gift given to Ji by a friend in Germany, while the letters had been left half burnt because a Red Guard stopped Ji from burning them. Ji was burning them to make room following the loss of dwelling space. As for the knife, Ji Xianlin’s aunt was reportedly scared by rumours that rebels often used knives to threaten people. She therefore made it a practice to hide the knife under her pillow at night (Ji, 67).

As for Cong Weixi who was in a labour farm outside Beijing, his mother and son in Beijing faced house raids by Red Guards. At the end of the raids Red Guards hung the wooden board bearing the title “Family of a Counter-Revolution” on his mother’s neck.

The house raids were the foremost episode in the ordeal for intellectuals. The responsibility for actions during this phase is seen to be residing with young Red Guards. The narratives portray how these Red Guards acted in an arbitrary and high-handed way. Intellectuals seem to have been deprived of precious possessions and living space based solely on the criterion established subjectively by the Red Guards. Intellectuals report the fear and anxiety felt by them because of this unpredictability. The anxiety in turn made them burn away correspondence, much cherished family photographs and other items that could be seen by Red Guards as one of the ‘four olds’ in advance. One incident reported by Ji Xianlin typically reflects the anxiety and unpredictability faced by intellectuals. Ji mentions a raid on his house during which a Red Guard alleged that a portrait of Mao Zedong that hung by the wall of his house had been hung just before the raid. This implied dishonesty and an attempt to portray oneself as
revolutionary. The evidence of guilt was that there was no dust on the portrait. To this Ji pleaded that it was precisely because of his reverence for the great leader that he made it a point to dust and clean the portrait everyday.

In effect, the phase of house raids that were a part of the campaign to destroy four olds is portrayed as destructive and arbitrary. Detailed descriptions of unscrupulous and arbitrary actions on the part of Red Guards portray the young revolutionaries as responsible for much of the ordeal faced by intellectuals. This supplements the Resolution both in providing a description of how the ordeal began and who were responsible for the same. At the same time, it is observed once again that the arbitrariness and absurdity of events are greatly enhanced by writing from a perspective that considers such actions to be violations of basic human rights and dignity. Written from the perspective of victims, narratives decry the loss of property and lack of respect for personal space. They however fail to address the fact that it was Mao Zedong’s call to “Bombard the Headquarters”, the Tiananmen Square rally on August 18, 1966 when Mao received Red Guards and finally the Sixteen Points, that called for a destruction of four olds that encouraged actions by Red Guards. At the same time, what exactly constituted four olds was left to the Red Guards to decide. This led to them choosing a conservative and therefore safe stance during the campaign. While memoirs provide information about how the ordeal for intellectuals began, the absence of this context makes the former Red Guards solely responsible for all actions. In this sense, it can be said that memoirs enter a complementary role.

102 Meisner, Mao’s China and after: a History of the People’s Republic, 321. See also Hong Yung Lee, Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Berkely: University of California Press, 1978), 86. Also see Lee, 342 for a discussion of Red Guards’ participation in the campaign. For a discussion of the confusion faced by some Red Guards in decided what constituted good and what could be deemed bad during the CR, see Thurston, Enemies of the People, 96.
relationship with the official narrative with regard to this phase of the CR. They offer more detail on how the CR began and who were responsible for their ordeal. However, they do not challenge the core thesis of the Resolution or bring to light the specific role played by Mao and the Party as discussed above.

4.2 Criticism, Struggle and Detention

The phase of criticism, struggle and detention forms the core of the CR experience for the five intellectuals considered in this study. The phase was the harshest by far and includes much of what forms the intellectuals’ claim to victimization during the Cultural Revolution.

After allegations were made, all five intellectuals were subjected to criticism that varied in intensity and methods used. At one end of the spectrum were introspection reports (Jiancha Baogao) and ‘learning classes’ (Xuexi Ban) while at the other end were struggle sessions (Pidou Hui). Struggle sessions involved long hours of standing in difficult positions, humiliation, intimidation, abuse and beatings. They are a feature of all narratives aimed at describing the ordeal of people during the CR. The five Intellectuals studied here also report having been subjected to numerous such sessions. At the end of the phase, intellectuals were subjected to labour reform and isolated detention.

103 This is with the exception of Cong Weixi who was spared of the struggle session because the labour farm where Cong worked was under the Police Department. The administration of the farm disallowed Red Guards from entering the farm and struggling against detainees as they had threatened to do so. However, this also resulted in arduous labour at various sites that went on right until resumption of work in 1976.
Importantly, detailed descriptions of detention, criticism, struggle and labour attempt to provide readers with an understanding of how these sessions were conducted and who or what factors were responsible for maltreatment of intellectuals. In contrast to the Resolution of 1981 that provides only passing references to these, the narratives contain detailed descriptions of the experiences of intellectuals during the phase. The narratives reflect the presence of a discourse that legitimized attack and criticism of intellectuals. They also point towards the role played by cadres, rebels, colleagues and other individuals in determining the fate of those under criticism and the possible reasons behind their actions.

4.2.1 Violence against intellectuals:

During the phase of criticism and struggle intellectuals faced corporal violence on several occasions. In the narratives, instances of violence are observed primarily during struggle sessions and during sessions of interrogation (Waidiao)\textsuperscript{104}. Correspondingly, the persons behind much of the violence were Red Guards or rebels of the work unit and interrogators.

In addition to these, the ‘revolutionary masses’ who attended struggle sessions reportedly also gave vent to their “class hatred” through slogans, punches, kicks and at times by hurling stones. ‘Revolutionary masses’ here refers to people who were still considered ‘revolutionary’ or those who had not come under criticism. These people were required to participate in criticism and struggle actively. This

\textsuperscript{104} Waidiao 外调, this referred to practice of sending people to interrogate detainees in other units. The purpose was to gather evidence pertaining to a person under their detention. Prime targets of investigation were family, friends or colleagues.
participation essentially involved shouting slogans, delivering verdicts, and castigating offenders.

Of the above, the motive of the Red Guards and rebels is seen as directed by the discourse of ‘class hatred’ or to prove their revolutionary zeal. Factions of rebels are also seen to have vied with each other for custody of intellectuals to unearth a hitherto undiscovered plot or treachery on the part of intellectuals. This was expected to bolster their claims of being the truly revolutionary group. Finally, investigators who were sent to investigate the case of someone in their unit were anxious to secure incriminating evidence. When such evidence was not forthcoming, they resorted to violence and coercion. In the following brief descriptions of violence and maltreatment in each of the five memoirs is provided. These are followed by an analysis of factors responsible for the ordeal as it emerges from the memoirs. The descriptions are important as they are an indispensable part of the intellectuals’ claim to victimization. Vivid descriptions of struggle and torture scenes can be expected to have a powerful effect on readers evoking sympathy for the victims and condemnation of perpetrators.

4.2.2 Descriptions of Violence:

a. Struggle Sessions:

Though the existing leadership of the South-eastern Bureau in Sichuan was overthrown by rebels, Ma Shitu continued to be seen as reactionary. Rebels from the Science division soon announced that Ma was a target of dictatorship. This
was followed by reinstation supervision and criticism. Ironically, the rebels did not have any new evidence against Ma. They simply continued to use the documents compiled under the direction of the head of bureau who was deposed by them. Ma reports that the criticism meetings\textsuperscript{105} were rather mild and most of those in attendance seemed uninterested.

The situation reportedly changed under the instigation of rebels from the China Academy of Sciences and Science and Technology Universities who criticized local rebels for being too gentle. As an example to be followed by locals the rebels instituted a system of admonitory talks\textsuperscript{106} to Ma. During admonition Ma was required to stand with his head bowed down and listen sincerely and attentively. The slightest movement or delay in obedience attracted verbal and often physical abuse. They also assigned to Ma the duty of cleaning toilets as a part of corrective labour. The rebels from the CAS even carried out a model struggle session against Ma to provide those of the Sichuan branch with an example to follow.

Ma writes that the emphasis during the model struggle session was more on format and manner rather than content. While allegations and evidence remain unchanged, Ma was no longer allowed to be seated while listening to criticism. The procedure of struggle involved reading from Mao’s quotations, shouting intimidating slogans against Ma, and finally calling for him to be brought up on stage. Two strong men then marched Ma up on the stage facing the audience. Ma

\textsuperscript{105} Pipanhui 批判会, Different in scale and style from struggle sessions that were more intense and often violent.
\textsuperscript{106} Xunhua, 训话.
had to kneel down and one of the rebels held him by the hair on his head to expose his ‘evil countenance’. Any sense of non-compliance perceived by the rebels immediately translated into punches and kicks. This was considered the proper way to make revolution (Ma, 104). This format is identical to that described by other intellectuals.107

Later during the phase, the rebels from Beijing once again mobilized all rebel factions to struggle against Ma. There were liaison offices set up for this purpose and Ma was struggled against by various groups and people. According to Ma, the process of struggle and criticism continued intensively for about one or two months. Ma writes that after this it was perhaps decided that Ma had been criticized deeply and thoroughly and was given the title of ‘un-reformable counter-revolutionary revisionist’108 who had been pushed to the floor and could never rise again.109 In his words quoting the appellation used by Red Guards, Ma was deemed to have become ‘a shameless heap of canine excreta amidst humanity’.110 Following this, Ma was ordered into a small room of about ten square metres and placed under supervision (Ma, 106).

During the period of detention, Ma describes how the belt around Red Guards’ waists was an effective weapon. The Red Guards would often barge into his detention room and with some or the other excuse use the belt against him. The reason for the punishment could be something like Ma did not stand straight, did not lower his head sufficiently, showed an unhappy face or pretended to be too

107 See Ji Xianlin 21 for a detailed description of a typical struggle session.
108 Si bu gaihui, fangeming xiuzhengzhuyi fenzi 死不改悔，发革命修正主义分子
109 Da dao zai di, yongshi bu de fanshen 打倒在地，永世不得翻身
110 Bu chi yu renlei de goushi dui 不耻于人类的狗屎堆
happy. Ma writes that “Some whose class consciousness was especially high or had great class hatred would use the copper head of the belt against his target.” (Ma, 192)

Describing a struggle session Ji Xianlin writes how two strong Red Guards arrived at his house to march him to a struggle meeting. The guards told him that his attitude was very bad and that he had to be taught a lesson. During the meeting, Ji received slaps on the face, punches on his back and kicks on his feet repeatedly. As the call to bring Ji Xianlin up on stage came, two Red Guards pressed his head down with their hands and took him to the stage. Upon reaching there he was asked to lower his head repeatedly once again accompanied by kicks and punches. Finally, he was made to stand in the ‘Jet Plane’ position with his back fully bent and arms in the air. The position was both painful and difficult to maintain. But as moving would have attracted more beatings, Ji had to try and maintain the position somehow. During the meeting, someone even spat on Ji’s face. But Ji could neither wipe his face nor move to see who it was. He did not know who the organizers of the meeting were; neither did he know how many people were being struggled against. But as he listened to what was being said, he learnt that he was not the main target during that meeting.

In another example for action by ‘revolutionary masses’ Ji Xianlin writes that when he was taken out to be paraded publicly after the meeting, several stones and pebbles were hurled at him, some of which seriously injured him. Ji writes that at this time, he was in a state of shock and confusion, not realizing what was happening. Finally, after a long drive on the back of a truck, Ji was kicked out
and dismissed with a tight slap on his face that instantly induced bleeding from his nose and mouth (Ji, 84).

After a few days the Eastern Languages Department where Ji once held the post of Chairperson held its struggle meeting. This time Ji Xianlin was the main target. The procedure was similar to other meetings with the exception was that Ji received more beatings than during the first struggle meeting as he was the main target. After a long session of reading quotes from Mao’s little red book when Ji had to remain bowed down in the ‘Jet Plane’ position, his crimes were read out. These included attempting to kill Red Guards, conniving with Nationalists and attempting to destroy evidence. This was followed by severe beatings by “indignant” revolutionary masses. After Ji fell to the ground, he was dragged down the stage where yet another round of beatings commenced. This reportedly went on till Ji managed to get to the Democracy Building opposite to the venue. Ji then managed to return home, once again with a swollen face and sores all over the body (Ji, 93).

Ji writes that this was reportedly followed by a high-tide of struggle sessions (Ji, 95). During this period various groups and institutions sent people to bring Ji Xianlin to their struggle sessions. Ji especially mentions the workers of Beijing University as the sessions instituted by them were by far the harshest and most trying. Ji had previously served as the head of the workers union. As all Party cadres and intellectuals had been branded capitalist roaders and bourgeois academic authorities respectively, Ji reportedly became a natural target for the workers.
Describing the method used by workers to struggle against him, Ji writes that their method was that of struggling against him even as they were moving towards the venue. As Ji was paraded through the streets people shouted slogans and some even hurled objects at him. As per Ji’s observation, unlike Red Guards, the workers talked very little about theory. In comparison, their punches were much harder, stones hurled were more, and the slogans shouted were louder. However, they did not have Ji stand in the ‘Jet Plane’ position (Ji, 98).

On 4th of May, 1968 in order to commemorate the May Fourth movement, all persons like Ji Xianlin were taken to a coal factory. Similar to Cong Weixi’s description, a heavy wooden board that bore their names hung from their necks by a thin metal wire. After a while a long and trying struggle session started. Ji writes that all his exercise and practice gave way this time as the session went on for a long time and the wooden board hanging from his neck made the ‘Jet Position’ almost impossible to sustain. As the people organizing the session were workers, their manners were much harsher than students or teachers. By the time Ji and others (that included Lu Ping and Peng Peiyun who had been criticized in Mao’s first Big Character Poster) were discharged, Ji was reportedly in a state of semi-consciousness. But the process did not end before they were dragged out amidst a shower of stones and punches and finally thrown outside the door of the factory. Ji writes that his toes were bleeding by this time but he was so overwhelmed by fatigue that he could not even get up. He was later helped up by two fellow ‘reactionaries’ who helped him get home (Ji, 114).
Describing a struggle session at the worker’s stadium in Beijing, Yu Guangyuan writes that he was subjected to strict and harsh criticism. Yu writes sarcastically that by his own appraisal, this was among the best organized session that he was ever subjected to. All targets including himself were made to bow in the ‘Jet position.’ Punishment was meted out was in accordance to the crimes and targets of criticism were lined according to rank and post. Unlike the earlier session, this time, after standing in the ‘Jet Plane’ position for a long time, Yu was not even able to get on his bicycle by himself.

What is conveyed in the descriptions above is that the focus during so called ‘struggle sessions’ was less on helping intellectuals reform or understand their mistakes and more on frenzied demonstrations of revolutionary fervour. Unreasonable requirements such as standing in the ‘Jet Plane’ position were imposed on intellectuals during the session. Many of these requirements were physically demanding or even impossible. Failure to comply on the other hand provided the reason for beatings and manhandling. It is also observed that the sessions took place in an intimidating atmosphere with all in attendance shouting slogans against the ‘incriminated’ or even taking action in the form of insults, beatings etc. No opportunity to explain or defend oneself was provided.

b. Interrogation:

The memoirs show how interrogators who came from other work units to enquire about people detained by them were anxious to obtain incriminating information.
When such information was not forthcoming, many resorted to force and violence as is seen in the case of Yu Guangyuan, Ji Xianlin and Ma Shitu.

Ma Shitu also describes how he was required to provide information about others like one ‘old Li’ who had been a fellow underground Party worker during the civil war period. The information provided by Ma did not confirm of the allegations that had been brought against Li. This led to what Ma describes as the ‘carrot and stick’ approach. The investigating team would threaten Ma that his stubborn attitude will only lead to disaster. When this would not work, they would try to encourage Ma to wash away his sins by aiding the investigators, hinting at possible relief for his contribution. Ma however stuck to his position on Li and was vindicated in the end. As in a number of other cases where he was required to expose others, Ma refused to do so, displaying as he writes, integrity and honesty.

While choosing to file false reports as required by investigators could have meant relief from his ordeal, Ma reportedly resisted such temptations all along (Ma, 311). Importantly, Ma also adds that false testimonies by people under duress often made cases difficult to close later. This experience in previous campaigns made Ma remain resolute not to provide false testimonies.

Violence out of frustration for being unable to extract the information required is observed in Yu Guangyuan’s case. Yu recalls receiving punches and violent kicks during many struggle sessions, but for him the worst case of violence ever was a session of external investigation. Yu could not come up with the testimony that the person being enquired about was a spy. Angry and dissatisfied with this, the interrogator used a washing brush made out of wood to hit Yu on the forehead.
Yu’s forehead and eyes became swollen and he reportedly had to make repeated visits to the hospital before complete recovery (Yu, 36).

Ji Xianlin too had to submit written or oral reports regarding others of his acquaintance or kinship. Many people from all over China came to Ji Xianlin to learn about his acquaintance or relative in their unit of work. Ji recalls that among these people, there were those who would just want a written report and those who would ask to speak in person. These people would generally be satisfied with what they were told. But there were some, like a group from Shandong that Ji mentions particularly, wanted evidence to frame someone. In such cases, the examiners were extremely rude and high handed. Ji recalls that on that occasion, he was threatened, abused and manhandled by the people from Shandong for nearly two hours. So much so that Red Guards themselves intervened to stop the session (Ji, 153).

These descriptions add interrogators to the list of people responsible for violence and maltreatment of intellectuals. As seen in the cases above, violence often came out of frustration for being unable to extract information required. One important feature of the descriptions above is the repeated reference to similar practices during previous campaigns. As Ma Shitu writes in his memoir, false testimonies given by people in the hope of relief from their ordeals often made it difficult to close cases at a later date. As seen in the previous chapter, this suggests that the Cultural Revolution in its practices was not a completely isolated event. This in turn points towards the larger discourse that such practices emerged from.
4.2.3 Other factors that fuelled violence:

As seen in the section above, intellectuals were subjected to violence as a form of punishment during struggle sessions. Not coming forth with the evidence or the confession as required by interrogators also resulted in maltreatment. In the following, we examine other important causes for maltreatment of intellectuals.

a. Fighting among rival rebel factions

Fighting among rival factions of rebels emerges as a factor that often worsened the ordeal of intellectuals in the memoirs. This as rival factions contended for custody of those considered important targets. This is seen through the struggle in Chengdu for Ma Shitu and in Beijing for Ji Xianlin and Yu Guangyuan. Ma, Yu and Ji all recall their fear of being sandwiched between the rival factions. Ma’s ordeal was especially notable as it involved a dangerous escape from detention of one faction: The Hong Cheng group, which wanted to extract a confession from Ma that he was involved in espionage for foreign powers. The revelation was expected to help them gain favour with the emerging regime of rebels.

In pages 237-240 of his memoir Ma provides readers with a detailed description of his plan to escape from the headquarters of the Hong Cheng. The reason for wanting to escape, as Ma puts it, was to avoid falling victim to the feud between Hong Cheng and the 8.16 group that had escalated into full fledged conflict by then. Ma feared that in the conflict it was possible that he would be killed in the tug of war between the two groups. Alternatively, the Hong Cheng could execute
him just to put the blame on 8.16 group or 8.16 group could capture him once
Hong Cheng retreated. In either situation, there was great danger to his life.
Therefore, the only way out was to escape.

At the time labour reform started, there was fierce armed struggle going on
between the two factions of rebels in Beijing University.\textsuperscript{111} This often involved
bloodshed and serious damage to life and property. As Ji Xianlin was considered
an enemy by both sides, he feared that he would be harmed if found in a situation
where both factions were embroiled in a fight. Thus, Ji consciously avoided all
such occasions (Ji, 108).

Rival groups of Red Guards and rebels also seemed to be anxious to establish
supremacy over each other. One way of doing so was unearthing a hitherto
concealed plot, treachery or case of counter-revolution. They thus turned to
intellectuals in their detention. Ma Shitu (Ma, 212), Ji Xianlin (Ji, 89) and Yu
Guangyuan (Yu, 27) all report having been subjected to long hours of
interrogation and torture to extract a confession that could be of merit to the rebels.

Ma Shitu writes that fighting between the rival factions of Red Guards and rebels
in Chengdu became increasingly fierce and resulted in serious incidents of
violence and bloodshed. Ma was then asked not to leave his room under any
circumstances or with anyone from outside. This as the Hong Cheng group who
held custody of Ma feared that rivals from 8.16 group were planning to take Ma
away for struggle.

\textsuperscript{111} Xin Beida Gongshe and Jinggangshan, the former was headed by Nie Yuanzi, author of the first
big-character poster while the latter came up in opposition to her.
Later Ma Shitu was tricked by Hong Cheng into moving to the eastern suburb of Chengdu. The Red Guards who brought him to the institute reportedly wanted to extract a confession from Ma that he was a spy and traitor. They organized a special team of about twenty people for this purpose. The team was called *Zhua Pan Zhandoudui*\(^1\) (Battle Team for Catching Traitors). Soon proceedings were instituted and Ma was taken to a room to be tried. Upon protesting against the illegal courtroom-like setup, Ma was again subjected to beatings. Ma reports that he was thrown down from his seat, kicked and punched repeatedly. The persons who meted out the punishment also repeated what Ma calls a ‘CR Sutra’, “people like you must be thrown on the floor and stamped upon.”\(^2\) (Ma, 215). Ma writes that later on the Red Guards resorted to the method of blowing hot and blow cold to make him talk. Typically one of them would be gentle in asking questions while the other would appear as though he was about to lose his temper. The main point of suspicion against Ma was why during pre-liberation days, when Ma was involved in underground Party activities, every time Nationalist Party special service agents caught workers of the Party, Ma able to escape unscathed. Ma was asked to write detailed reports of his activities and work in Ebei, Exi and Chengdu where he had worked (Ma, 215-218).

The Red Guards were unhappy with the reports Ma wrote as it did not provide them with any clues that would prove their allegation that Ma was a traitor or spy. According to Ma, since talking did not work, the Red Guards started ‘exercising dictatorship’ on him. This naturally included beatings and various other forms of

\(^1\) *抓叛战斗队.*

\(^2\) *Da fan zai di, zai ta shang yi zhi jiao* 打翻在地，再踏上一只脚.
corporal violence. However, Ma was determined not to confess to anything he had not done just to escape beatings. (Ma, 218-221).

Yu Guangyuan was also tricked into isolated detention by one group of rebels who feared losing custody of him to other groups. It is observed in the memoirs that rebel groups often refused handing over important ‘targets of dictatorship’ to rival groups. This as custody and criticism of an eminent ‘counter-revolutionary’ was used to buttress the revolutionary character of the group. In one incident, Yu was caught between two factions that supported the Institute of Geology and the Institute of Aviation respectively. Yu informs readers that the bigger the names of people in custody of a faction, the greater its power and prowess was deemed to be.

One day both factions were to convene struggle meetings. About two days prior to the meeting, Yu was notified that the Philosophy Department of Xuebu\textsuperscript{114} intended to struggle against him. By that time Xuebu of the Chinese Academy of Sciences had become a famous ‘struggle venue.’ Yu thus expected a hard time during the session. However, nothing of the sort happened. The session was short and without much zeal on the part of the conveners. This was followed by another session the next day which was even less in intensity than the previous one. However, Yu was detained after the session and asked to write self-criticism. It was only the next day that Yu realized that all the while he was actually being kept away from the other faction that wanted to take custody of him. The struggle session and writing self-criticism was but an excuse. Naturally, not much effort

\textsuperscript{114} Administrative body comprising of eminent scientists from the institute and outside.
was put into it. A hot pursuit on vehicles took place the next day that ended with the Geology faction succeeding in retaining control of Yu and others (Yu, 8).

In the descriptions above, memoirs reveal how rivalry between factions of rebels and Red Guards resulted in increased maltreatment of intellectuals. Intellectuals were fought over for custody by rival groups. Those already in the custody of a group came under considerable pressure to confess to various crimes. The group unearthing the crime could then hope to stake its revolutionary character over others for its contributions. In a sense, memoirs present to their readers a glimpse of how even rebels or Red Guards were divided internally. The rivalry between them for power created circumstances for fighting and bloodshed. A by-product of this rivalry was increased maltreatment of disgraced intellectuals in their custody. This was especially the case with those who were eminent. However, with the focus being upon personal experiences, the memoirs do not adequately explain who or what created the circumstances for the rivalry in the first place.

b. Peer pressure:

Numerous groups and organizations also instituted struggle sessions against intellectuals who had fallen from grace. This was deemed imperative as such activism was taken to be reflective of their revolutionary spirit while failure to do so could be construed as sympathizing with the enemy.

Ji Xianlin writes of how various rebel groups that from outside his department and place of work struggled against him despite having no knowledge or history of
prior interaction with him. In the attempt to be more revolutionary, many groups resorted to violence and cruelty against him. Ji Xianlin’s ordeal began because of his support for Jinggangshan, one of the rival groups in Beijing University. However, once criticism began the Jingangshan group went all out to draw lines with him by criticizing and struggling against him. Ji was also struggled against by various other departments and institutes as he had become an important target. Ji Xianlin similarly reports having been struggled against by various groups and organizations. Some groups like the Asian and African Studies Institute of Beijing University also struggled against Ji. Ji writes in his memoir that he was appointed the head of the institute by the vice-chancellor cum party secretary Lu Ping. However, it was more of an honorary title and he was not involved in any work at the institute. As a result, he had little or no interaction with workers and staff there. Despite this, the institute wanted to struggle against Ji. As per his analysis, this was perhaps due to the fear of being seen as lacking in revolutionary spirit. As everyone was struggling against him, the institute could not afford to be seen as soft on him (Ji, 98).

Ma Shitu tells readers that he was among the first people to be ‘pulled out’ and criticized in Sichuan province. He was criticized by the unit, by press, by big-character posters all over, by various units, by factories, and even primary schools. The author refers to this experience as his chance to see the world outside the confines of his unit’s second floor office. The author repeatedly uses the Chinese phrase *Pi Shen Pi Tou Pi Dao Pi Chou* meaning to be criticized deeply, thoroughly, overwhelmingly and completely, to describe the unending and

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115 *Pi shen pi tou pi dao pi chou* 批深批透批倒批臭.
strenuous sessions. The sessions were so many and so intense that in the end, people started losing interest in Ma. In CR parlance, he was then considered a ‘dead tiger’ (Ma, 178).

Yu Guangyuan’s work extended over several fields. Hence, during the CR he was implicated for ‘counter-revolutionary revisionist’ statements regarding many fields. The only exception was that of literature and arts where rebels could not find much evidence of intervention by Yu. Yu had purportedly become so important that a Liaison Office for Criticism and Struggle against Yu Guangyuan was established in Beijing, with sub-branches like rural economy branch, psychology branch, science & technology branch etc. These branches would send people by turn to struggle against Yu Guangyuan. Yu reports that he learned later that Qi Benyu of the CRSG had himself participated in two meetings of the Liaison office (Yu, 27).

c. Role played by individuals

It is observed that subjectivity of individuals (especially those in charge of leading the CR and members of rebel groups) played an important role in determining the treatment of intellectuals. The narratives demonstrate how the overall atmosphere prevalent during the CR made it extremely difficult for any favourable treatment of intellectuals. However, it is observed that there were indeed those people who chose to be sympathetic towards intellectuals and ameliorated their situation against all odds. People such as the team leader Chen Daqi for Cong Weixi (Cong, 469), Ma Shiyi for Ji Xianlin (Ji, 124), Lao Chen and Lao Gao for Ma Shitu (Ma,
131), Lao Tong and Aqing Sao for Yang Jingyuan (Yang, 142, 175) are examples that find special mention in the memoirs.

On the other hand, there were many former colleagues, neighbours and associates who resorted to ‘exposing’ (Jiefa) fellow intellectuals in the hope of gaining favour with rebels or the new regime. The unnamed colleague who tried to expose Yu Guangyuan and Mr. Wu who tried to transfer allegations against himself onto Yu are examples (Yu, 16). Han Guang, a rebel who was dissatisfied with Yu’s answers to his questions, also brought considerable pressure to bear upon Yu by writing a poster distorting Yu’s remarks about his wanting to be revolutionary (Yu, 27).

The memoirs mention various individuals whose actions reportedly worsened the treatment meted out to the author of his/her colleagues. Some of these are noted as follows:

Ji Xianlin suffered violence at the hand of students whom he had taught and reportedly helped come up. Some of these students were even members of Jinggangshan, the rebel group in Beijing University that Ji Xianlin had supported. Once Ji came under criticism, not only did Jinggangshan not support him, they went all out to disown him and show their hatred towards him (Ji, 72). Ji noted at the time that those interrogating him were either students of the department or teachers whom he had himself brought in. Ji was reportedly able to excuse most of their actions as he understood that they were victims of factional mentality. However, he mentions some people, like a teacher of the Korean language and
one of Bahasa Indonesia, who were extraordinarily active during the sessions. Ji alleges that many of their actions were motivated by a desire to gain favour with the NBC or its head Nie Yuanzi. Others, like the teacher of Indonesian language, had a history of opposing leftist activities during the pre-liberation era and wanted to cover up their past by being a zealot during the CR. Ji adds that when exposed later, the teacher committed suicide (Ji, 110). Ji also writes about the Socialist Education Movement when an unnamed person accompanied him to Nankou to participate in the SEM there. He was from a family of poor peasants and revolutionary martyrs and acted very respectfully towards Ji. Ji reportedly took the person as his confidant and decided to make him his successor. However it was precisely this person who noted down all that Ji said about Yao Wenyuan’s article116 and the Sanjiacun117 and reported the same during the CR to expose Ji and gain favour with NBC. With a bit of exaggeration and fabrication, the story was made out such that Ji Xianlin became the ‘junior assistant to the Sanjiacun’ (Ji, 10).

Similarly, Ma Shitu writes that after rebels from Beijing mobilized everyone in Sichuan to struggle against him, many people who formerly used to be his ‘comrade in arms’ became sworn enemies. Those who used to act respectfully towards Ma on the other hand turned into people exposing his alleged crimes. (Ma, 106)

116 The article criticizing Wu Han’s play “Hairui Dismissed from Office”, Yao alleged that the play published in 1959 was an allegory criticizing Mao’s dismissal of Peng Dehua. For the text of the article see, Renmin Ribao 30 November 1965, 5.
117 Referring to Deng Tuo (Secretary of Beijing Party Committee), Wu Han (Vice-Mayor of Beijing) and Liao Mosha (Head of United Front Department in the Beijing Party Committee), the three wrote under a column Sanjiacun Zhaji in a publication named Qianxian. The three came under attack for the allegedly anti-Party and anti-social nature of their writings.
Violence also increased because of peer pressure among Red Guards as seen in Ma Shitu’s case. After Red Guards who arrived from Beijing criticized the local counterparts for being too gentle, local Red Guards became increasingly radical. Ma reports that these people who had come to ‘stir up trouble’ asked everyone to learn from Mao’s little red book of quotations that “Revolution is not entertaining guests, it is not literary composition, painting or embroidery, it cannot be that gentle, mild or elegant.” They then pasted big character posters criticizing the soft nature of the revolution in the unit. This reportedly changed the situation for worse (Ma, 102).

Ma Shitu’s case is unique because of the setting and nature of his CR experience. Ma came under criticism before rebels took hold of power in Sichuan for his allegedly capitalist outlook. However, unlike others Ma continued to be criticized by the rebels even after the old regime was deposed by rebels. Ma was reportedly advised by his family and friends to expose the head of the bureau so that he could gain favour with rebels Liu Jieting and Zhang Xiting who had risen to power in Sichuan. However, after a brief lull, newspapers published a full page front cover article by Liu Jieting (one of the rebels who had risen to power) criticizing the head. The article mentioned Ma by name as the confidant of the head and agent of the reactionary gang of Zhou Yang in Sichuan, involved promoting a black line in literature and arts (Ma, 98).

118 Shan feng dian huo 煽风点火, literally meaning to fan the wind and light the fire.
119 Wenyi Heixian 文艺黑线. This refers to the allegations against Zhou Yang made first by Jiang Qing in February 1966 during a symposium for cultural work in the army in Shanghai. It was declared that since the founding of the People’s Republic, literature and arts had not carried out the line propounded by Mao Zedong; that an anti-Party, anti-socialist black line had exercises dictatorship over China. This line was characterized by bourgeois thought, modern revisionism and the literature and arts of the 30s.
During the ‘attack one and oppose three’ movement that began in the spring of 1970, the PLA commander and incharge Yu convened a meeting in the labour camp where Cong Weixi and his wife Zhang Hu were detained. He asked people to expose each other, so that the achievements of the CR could be consolidated. As in other cases one Sun Ximin, who had travelled with Cong and Zhang along with her husband from Beijing, sent out a slip to the departing commander about Zhang trying to reverse the accusation of her being a rightist. The exchange that took place after this between Zhang and the commander caused Zhang Hu to be handcuffed and sent to solitary confinement. Later Zhang attempted to commit suicide for the second time. Fearing that Cong might do the same, he too was put under supervision (Cong, p349-352).

All memoirs describe several instances during the CR when former colleagues, subordinates or friends resorted to ‘exposing’ them. This was either to gain favour with the rebels, insulate oneself against potential criticism or simply to display one’s revolutionary fervour. While Red Guards, interrogators and rebels are seen as either prejudiced towards intellectuals or dissatisfied by their refusal to provide information, this group of people are seen as opportunists who hit a person when he was down. Ji Xianlin writes in his postscript that the CR was like a mirror that reflected back the true character of many people. At the same time, in expressing their admiration and gratitude for people in power and position who tried to help the authors, memoirs acknowledge the fact that favourable treatment of intellectuals was potentially dangerous. This as it could be taken as being sympathetic with the enemy or lacking in class consciousness.
d. Rhetoric

All narratives reflect how the discourse of violence was created and buttressed by
the rhetoric of slogans and quotations from Mao’s works and other leaders. This
discourse created and propagated thereby seems to have endorsed and even
encouraged maltreatment of those who were labelled enemies.

For instance, the conduct of struggle sessions as described in the memoirs seems
to have been like a ritual. First and foremost during the sessions, quotations from
Mao’s little red book would be read. Importantly, this often included the part
where Mao Zedong said that “Revolution is not entertaining guests, it is not
literary composition, painting or embroidery, it cannot be that gentle, mild or
elegant.” This statement that figures in almost all the memoirs seems to have
justified and encouraged the use of violence against targets of dictatorship. This
was usually followed by slogans by rebels and revolutionary masses vowing to
protect the proletarian headquarters and Mao. The person being struggled against
would then be named in intimidating slogans and asked to be brought on stage.
Two strongmen would then march the person to stage holding him by the hands
behind and pressing his head down. On the stage, the person was often required
to stand in the ‘Jet Plane’ position and listen to the allegations being read out with
righteous anger. Any faltering on the part of those struggled against or refusal to
accept the charges made a case for corrective beatings. Finally, the person was
marched out through a crowd that would express its indignation through slogans
and sometimes fists and stones. The function played by the slogans, the public
denunciation and criticism of the accused and participation of a large group of
people, though not directly dwelt upon, is evident in the memoirs. The quotation from Mao both justified and required all those wanted to be a part of the revolution to be not gentle. The allegations against those accused further provided a rationale for ‘indignation’. Finally, slogan shouting created a frenzied atmosphere. This as seen in descriptions of struggle sessions previously resulted in stone throwing, punching, beating and verbal abuse.

Intellectuals also write how loudspeakers managed by rebel factions continuously played revolutionary songs and quoted statements like “if you don’t push, they won’t fall…” to encourage revolutionary masses to take action against the enemies. This was besides naming targets of dictatorship, reading out their alleged crimes and asking the revolutionary masses to criticize them.120

Mao’s words and that of other leaders still considered revolutionary or proletarian were often quoted by rebels and Red Guards alike. It is seen that some of the words quoted supported and legitimized the maltreatment of ‘enemies’ while others like that of Jiang Qing and Lin Biao encouraged or countenanced them. Ma Shitu quotes Jiang Qing to have said that “the youth seem to like playing with guns, nothing to worry about” after serious incidents of armed violence took place in Sichuan. Lin Biao is also quoted by Ma to have said that campaigns like the CR naturally involve some deaths, even if as many as in a division (Shī, comprising 2500 men) died, it amounted to nothing (Ma, 240-249).

120 See Ma, 194; Ji, 89.
Cong Weixi notes an incident in his memoir that he witnessed on his way back from home in 1966. A group of Red Guards were struggling against an old woman who lay on the street lifelessly. It looked like the session had been going on all night. Both Red Guards and the woman wore an exhausted look. Belts and chains still poured down on the old woman, but they seemed to have less vigour than before. As Cong describes it, by then, the old woman looked like a dead dog, he could hardly make out whether or not she was breathing. Then, a male member of the struggling team called upon the females to make some contributions. He reportedly quoted Mao who said that women had to hold up half of the sky. The few female Red Guards who were standing by the side then went forward. One of them then jumped up on the belly of the woman and started stamping hard. As she stamped, she shouted, “You stubborn woman, let me see whether or not you hand out the lease agreement, if you don’t, I will stamp the capitalist out of you!” (Cong, 259).

It was observed thus far that the memoirs brought out the responsibility of Red Guards, rebels, interrogators and other individuals for the ordeal experienced by intellectuals. This complemented the official narrative in identifying who the careerists and opportunists mentioned in the Resolution were. It also pointed towards specific groups of people rather than attributing all excesses to Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques. What the above does is to delve further into factors that justified or necessitated the actions of the people identified as responsible. The memoirs point towards the existence of discourse, a set of beliefs and practices, which legitimized maltreatment of intellectuals.
4.3 The CR Discourse and maltreatment of Intellectuals

The five memoirs contain detailed descriptions of how their authors were ill-treated during the CR. All five intellectuals suffered raids, detention, separation from family and maltreatment. In addition, they were also made to perform menial tasks like cleaning toilets, sweeping etc. in the name of re-education. Harsher forms of labour included transporting heavy building equipment, mining, earth digging and taking part in other labour intensive projects. As will be seen through the descriptions given below, many of the programs instituted by the rebels were harsh, absurd and even inhuman. However, they were legitimized by invoking the authority of the people versus enemy discourse of Mao. This is referred to here as the CR discourse. By this discourse, all punitive action was seen either as righteous ‘class hatred’ or an exercise in reforming the bourgeois-capitalist outlook of intellectuals. The use of ‘dictatorship’ on ‘enemies’ was justified by the authority of its author, Mao Zedong.

4.3.1 Maltreatment:

Making people who generally occupy themselves with pen and paper perform menial work like toilet cleaning perhaps was intended as an exercise in humility and dignity of labour. However, through memoirs written by intellectuals, it is observed that the above purpose was often a thin veil disguising personal grudge, grievance or simply sadism on part of some rebels.
The main building of the propaganda department where Yu Guangyuan worked had become an important centre where revolutionaries from the whole country converged. This according to Yu resulted in increased usage of toilets that often led to clogging. Yu and others were reportedly told by the Red Guard incharge of them that they should look at the toilets to know how dirty their own minds were. This way they could be better educated (Yu, 19). Ma Shitu was also made to sweep and mop floors, clean toilets etc as a part of corrective work. This was in addition to the numerous big-character posters written to denounce him and the endless struggle sessions that he had to face. Ma writes that it was indeed very humiliating for a senior intellectual of ministerial levels in the South-western bureau and head of one of the branches of Chinese Academy of Sciences to be disgraced to such an extent (Ma, 132).

In addition to facing ostracism, insult and violence at the hand of former colleagues and juniors, intellectuals had to face violence and criticism at the hands of people younger than them and sometimes students whom they once taught as in the case of Ji Xianlin. Ji mentions two of his students who were from what then constituted very good class backgrounds. As they came from poor families, Ji took special care of them. This was in line with the ‘class line’ followed then. Ji even had one of them made his teaching assistant while he used to help the other by asking him more questions in class. When the Jinggangshan rebel group sent people to bring Ji to interrogation, it was these two people who were given the task. Ji writes that not only were they abusive, they even used punches and kicks on him at times while pinching his ears at others (Ji, 72).
In the section titled “The Story of Hair” in his memoir, Yu Guangyuan narrates a bizarre incident where a young female Red Guard came to his department to rebel. Upon noticing his well kept hair locks of Yu, she reportedly yelled “Yu Guangyuan, you are still at large.” This was followed by indiscriminate cutting Yu’s hair with a pair of scissors that were ready at hand, and yelling of some revolutionary slogans. As Yu’s hair looked messy afterwards, he went to the hair dresser of the department to have it corrected. What Yu did not expect was that the dressers who were workers made things worse allegedly out of class hatred (Yu, 7).

In an example of how even children were affected by the discriminating discourse against intellectuals, Yang Jingyuan writes that when she was working in the kindergarten, the children would call her names like a ‘Big Reactionary’121. This deeply pained the author. Likewise, Ma Shitu was also targeted by some children who would shout abuses at him. They even use catapults to pelt Ma with stones. As this was then considered ‘revolutionary action’ by indignant masses, the author could get no help from the Red Guards detaining him (Ma, 128).

The arbitrary and sometimes absurd treatment meted out to intellectuals reflects the political status of the community during the CR and attracts much sympathy. Importantly, the instances quoted above also point towards the influence and pervasiveness of the CR discourse that legitimized such treatment of intellectuals. As intellectuals write in their narratives, according to the view then, such treatment was seen as righteous class hatred. This discourse seems to have

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121 Da Heibang 大黑帮
provided space for ‘revolutionary’ actions such as cutting hair, making intellectuals clean toilets and beating intellectuals up under various pretexts.

4.3.2 Labour

Intellectuals who were ‘pulled out’ during the CR had to perform labour both during detention under rebels and after deportation to cadre schools around 1968-69. In case of those already in a labour reform program like Cong Weixi, the CR simply perpetuated the process. Labour was extracted from intellectuals under harsh and often inhuman conditions. As is observed in some cases, even medical treatment was denied to intellectuals on grounds of their political status. These experiences form an integral part of the ordeal for both intellectuals and Party Cadres who were disgraced. While the Resolution of 1981 deals with the ordeal in terms such as ‘catastrophe’ or ‘calamity’ it offers little detail of what this catastrophe comprised. It is this gap in collective memory that the detailed descriptions of personal ordeals fill. We consider a few descriptions of the same in the following.

Describing the harsh conditions of labour at Chadian, Cong Weixi recalls the winters during the CR when he had to dig up the frozen earth. While working the pickaxe by itself was not tiring, the endless whirlwinds made it extremely difficult. At times, people could not even open their eyes. This as when there would be strong wind, whitish yellow dust from the alkaline soil would cover their faces. It was not only irritating but painful. Also, the skin on the hands would often get dry and ruptured because of working in the cold (Cong, 300). Cong’s narrative
also describes how many of his mates, unable to bear humiliation and physical exertion at the farm, committed suicide. That someone had killed himself rather than suffer maltreatment in turn posed a question to the author whether he was a coward? Whether he did not have the courage to give up his life? The author also writes about a feeling of guilt that troubled him and others (Cong, 321). Ji Xianlin and Ma Shitu also report having contemplated suicide but later became determined to live on. Moreover, during the CR suicide was seen as an act of ‘fear for guilt that made the person alienate himself from the masses’ (Weizui zisha, zijue yu renmin). Persons who committed suicide were criticized and defamed even after death.

During detention Ji Xianlin was ordered to labour daily in the name of labour reform. This involved working under the supervision of a worker. Ji writes that the workers on campus had become white-collar workers of sorts. They never did anything themselves. All they had to do was to direct intellectuals and cadres like Ji and the latter would have to oblige irrespective of how tough or dirty the work was. Performing labour did not exempt Ji from struggle sessions either. Groups and units continued sending people from time to time to march Ji to struggle sessions and return him to the site of labour (Ji, 104). This greatly increased physical exertion and mental pressure for Ji. Describing an incident, Ji writes that once while working on dismantling a shed, he inadvertently stepped on a wooden board that still had some nails on it. As Ji’s shoe had a very thin sole, the nail pierced through the shoe deep into his feet. Though the supervisor let him go with a few abuses, Ji had a tough time making his way home. In addition, he could not seek medical help as members of the NBC ran the university health centre. As Ji
had to continue doing labour in the afternoon, he had to settle with some self-treatment at home (Ji, 106).

The incident reflects the conditions under which intellectuals like Ji Xianlin had to live and labour during the Cultural Revolution. Not only were terms of labour harsh, they were denied even basic health care. Ji writes that humanitarianism was criticized as a ‘bourgeois capitalist notion’. There was thus no hope for sympathy even for an ailing patient. In Ji’s words, he no longer belonged to the category of ‘people’ hence it was natural that he was not treated as a human being.

After the struggle session on 4th of May, 1968, all members of the ‘black gang’ (Hei Bang) including Ji were loaded onto a truck destined for the sub branch of Beijing University near Shisanling. The actual site of labour near Taipingzhuang where they were being taken was at a distance of two to three kilometres that had to be covered on foot. Upon reaching the labour site, Ji was accommodated in an old abandoned house with no window panes intact and a wooden bed with a thick layer of mud on it. As the site was an isolated place, rebels feared that people might try to escape. Hence, they were kept under close observation by armed men. No one was allowed to wander around in the night. Even if one had to visit the lavatory, he would have to shout “Reporting” in military style and only upon being given permission could he go ahead (Ji, 119-121). Labour at the site comprised of planting sweet potato seedlings on a hill. Ji writes that his injuries from the previous day were still hurting, but still he tried his best to work sincerely. However, he received a blow on his head by one of the supervisors.
who asked him if he wanted a beating. Thus, Ji had to work even harder, to the extent that his fingers started bleeding.

Ji reports that after a few days of labouring at the site his body was on the verge of collapsing. He was left weakened by the last struggle session – injuries sustained from which had not yet healed. Suddenly, Ji’s testes started swelling up, so much so that Ji was unable to walk with his legs close to each other. However, even upon learning about his condition, the supervisors only exempted Ji from labouring on the hill. However, Ji was not completely spared. He was instead given the task of picking bricks and pebbles from the courtyard to clean the place (Ji, 124). Ji provides an emotional description of how he would crawl on the ground with his legs separated, slowly picking stones and pebbles while everyone else would work on the hill. During the day, he would be left completely alone in the wilderness of the place that was a couple of miles away from Taipingzhuang where people lived. Physical pain coupled with mental pressure and emotional isolation completely broke him down. Finally, as his condition showed no improvement, Ji was ordered to go to the sub-branch of Beijing University to consult the military doctor.

After nearly two hours of crawling, Ji finally reached the PLA medical centre. However, upon learning that he was a reactionary, the doctor refused to attend to him. Ji was not even given a pain-killer for the problem. He had to crawl back to the labour site in pain (Ji, 125).
Labour was intended to serve as an exercise in changing the bourgeois outlook of intellectuals. In reality, it involved in addition to remoulding, facing great dangers and potential threats to life. This was all the more the case with labour during Cadre school life. This, as the schools were set up in far flung regions that were very underdeveloped. Labour during detention in work units and by rebels was also arduous, but the element of punishment or humiliation seems to have been more pronounced in comparison to reform. This is reflected both in the nature of tasks given and in the pronouncements of the rebels or Red Guards reported in the narratives. The emotional descriptions of labour and maltreatment constitute an important component of the memoirs. These inform the collective memory of the nation about what the five intellectuals in particular and much of the intellectual community in general went through during the CR. Potentially, it also raises the question as to why people could treat fellow human beings in such fashion. Ji Xianlin’s statement is illuminating in this regard. It points out to the prevalent discourse that held that those who did not fall in the ranks of ‘people’ simply did not deserve being treated like people.

4.3.3 Detention

Towards the end of 1968 and early 1969, all five intellectuals with the exception of Cong Weixi experienced some form of isolated detention. Detention took place in make shift detention rooms called the ‘black hole’ in case of Yang Jingyuan and more popularly ‘Cowshed’ as in the case of Yu Guangyuan, Ma Shitu and Ji Xianlin. Ma Shitu was first imprisoned at Zhaojue monastery following his

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122 Intellectuals were often called Niu Gui She Shen or ‘ox demons and snake spirits’; Cowsheds were thus the place where the ‘ox’ were housed.
escape from Hong Cheng Red Guards and subsequent return to Chengdu. Later, he was also moved into a cowshed. Cong Weixi and his wife Zhang Hu on the other hand were sent down to Quwo in Shanxi province to labour. This according to Cong was because of the scare of war with the Soviet Union. In event of war, it was considered dangerous to allow former rightists like Cong to stay near Beijing for fear of collusion with enemies.

As portrayed in the memoirs, life during detention was difficult. Firstly, those in detention could no longer return home or meet family members. Upon that, conditions inside the detention rooms were bad. They involved several people intentionally cramped into a little space. All five authors refer to the lack of hygiene, sanitation and basic facilities during detention. Alongside detention, intellectuals had to perform labour. They were also picked up for criticism and struggle meetings frequently. During detention, many also faced violence at the hand of the rebels besides having to conform to various arbitrary stipulations. Most important of these are descriptions of ritualistic practises that impart a sense of almost religious fanaticism with Mao as the figure head and his little red book of quotations the sacred scripture. The narratives show how Mao had come to become deified. Importantly, narratives also show how the authority of Mao and his words could be invoked by rebels to make intellectuals conform to absurd practices.

Describing life in the black hole, Yang Jingyuan writes that she had to write unending reports on introspection, self-criticism, confessions, and external investigation and participate in collective labour. The labour was intensive and
involved great physical exertion. For instance, the author had to help workers mix cement, transport bricks, demolish and construct walls etc. Apart from these, the author also had to take part in ‘apologizing’\textsuperscript{123} to Chairman Mao every morning along with others. This was like a ritual that took place every morning in a ground with military discipline.

Ma Shitu was detained in a makeshift prison in Zhaojue monastery along with other high-profile cadres of the Party. The reasons for this were that Ma was considered a \textit{Yaofan} (high-profile criminal). At Zhaojue monastery it was revealed to Ma by a PLA officer that he was now in a prison and that prison rules would apply. Ma had to stand up whenever speaking and shout ‘reporting’ every time he needed to visit the washroom or had to speak to the authorities. All items that could potentially be used for suicide were confiscated.

As in the case of Yang Jingyuan, Ma was informed that according to the rules of the prison, he had to ask for forgiveness from the supreme commander (Mao) everyday. For this purpose a portrait of Mao was hung on the wall. Inmates were also made to memorize and recite Mao’s quotations, request for Instructions in the morning and report back in the evening (\textit{Zao qingshi, wan huibao}).\textsuperscript{124} The quotations had to be recited daily and memorized by rote. Inability to remember resulted in a person being labelled ‘disloyal to chairman Mao’ or ‘refusing to reform.’ Also, while in front of Mao’s portrait, inmates were expected to bow their head ‘completely’ to show their sincerity. Inability to do so was dealt with

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Qing Zui} 请罪.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{早请示，晚汇报}.
firmly, mostly involving beatings and forced lowering of the head, which was very painful (Ma, 289).

Ma writes that it was quite normal for him to be dragged to the criticism meeting by some unit every now and then. Generally, two strongmen would march him to the venue, make him stand in the ‘Jet position’ while people would take turns in getting up on the stage and reading out their criticism (Ma, 299).

Highlighting the boredom and isolation of the prison, Ma writes how the inmates of Zhaojue monastery looked forward to chances of going out of their cells. Going out to eat or to the washroom were the only opportunities to get away from the suffocating atmosphere inside cells. Also, it was the only way to get some exercise and fresh air. The inmates including Ma thus voluntarily requested the administration to allow them to do some labour outside in the courtyard rather than wasting time inside. This was approved by the provincial revolutionary committee as it conformed to the spirit of labour reform (Ma, 359).

Labour such as clearing weeds, growing vegetables etc that would otherwise be considered arduous, especially for intellectuals, was something that the inmates of Zhaojue actually looked forward to. This gives readers an insight into the prevailing atmosphere around the detention centre and the need for inmates to get relief in some way, even if it meant hard physical labour. In Zhaojue monastery, the prison officers were fearful of the possibility of the important detainees committing suicide. Therefore, they confiscated all items that could possibly aid in such a bid. Any piece of thread or cord long enough to be wound around the
neck was disallowed. Lights were kept on all day and night and when sleeping inmates were required to face the door and keep their hands outside the sheet. As for those who required sleeping pills, a guard made sure that they swallowed their pills right in front of him.

Much to his delight, after prolonged detention at Zhaojue, Ma was informed that his case was now deemed to be that of contradiction within the ranks of the people and that he could return to his unit to participate in struggle, criticism and transformation. However, upon return to the South-western branch of the academy of sciences (the South-western Bureau had been liquidated) rebels surrounded him and without much discussion took him to the fourth floor of an independent unit and shut him inside a room. This began Ma’s life in what later came to be known as the cowshed (Ma, 380).

In 1968, Yu Guangyuan and his colleagues were shut in the cowshed in their unit. Unlike other cowsheds that were rudimentary makeshift arrangements, this detention room was actually a student’s dormitory that had been left empty. However, just in order to differentiate between ordinary people and ‘capitalist roaders’ like Yu and his colleagues, six people were squeezed into an area of about fifteen square metres. Also, ‘inmates’ were provided no cots or chairs. Tables were provided for writing self-criticisms, but no stools or chairs. This according to Yu was an act of humiliation towards intellectuals. That these basic ‘rights’ had been taken away made Yu conscious of the difference between him and those who were considered ‘revolutionary.’
In resonance to the experiences of Yang Jingyuan and Ma Shitu, Yu Guangyuan writes how besides from incessant self-criticisms and reports, all inmates were expected to participate in apologizing in the morning and reporting in the evening to a portrait of Mao Zedong that was hung on the wall of a washroom. During meal times, inmates had to form a line and march down to the common mess. This was also the only time they were let out of the cowshed (Yu, 36-39). As space was extremely limited in the cowshed, Yu suffered from passive smoking during the day and snoring of others in the night.

Before a month elapsed, Ji Xianlin and others were ordered to return to the campus from the labour camp outside Beijing. Upon returning, they were moved into the cowshed that was set up in three rudimentary houses behind the Foreign Languages Building and the Democracy Building in Beijing University. As in other cases, the cowshed was fenced on all sides to prevent inmates from wandering about in the campus. Armed personnel from the NBC kept an eye on the cowshed and its detainees. According to Ji’s description, there were about twenty people accommodated in each room that had no facilities for heating and only a thin roof and broken window panes. A shed was set up close to the cowshed for female members that doubled up as the interrogation room. Outside the Foreign Languages Building, another such shed was made to serve as the dining place for inmates (Ji, 127). The task of cleaning, repairing and building the cowshed fell upon inmates. The supervisors from NBC only gave orders and watched (Ji, 129). Describing the living conditions inside the cowsheds, Ji writes that initially there was a lot of dust and spider webs inside. The rooms were low and humid with a strong damp smell. There were rats, lizards, scorpions and all
sorts of insects and pests inside. On humanitarian considerations, inmates were provided a wooden plank to sleep on and strips of cloth dipped in poison to get rid of mosquitoes (Ji, 136).

Daily life in the cowsheds involved waking up at 6 AM sharp and going out to run in the courtyard. According to Ji this was for the sole purpose of tormenting inmates as they were already getting more than enough exercise by labouring throughout the day. After that inmates returned to wash up. Once done, they were expected to form a line and march to the mess. In the mess, inmates were allowed to buy only *Wotou* (hard cake made out of maize flour) and pickles. Also, inmates were not allowed to use tables and chairs and instead had to go out and have their food sitting under trees. Another rule around the cowshed was that no one was allowed to raise his head while walking or to be cross-legged when sitting.

As in the other cases one very important part of the daily routine in the cowshed was to memorize sections from “supreme instructions” issues by Mao Zedong. At any point of the day, inmates could be asked to repeat the instructions. The mistake of even one word in reciting attracted abuses and beatings (Ji, 139). Ji attributes the stipulation of this exercise to his ‘theory of torture’ according to which the main objective of all such exercises was to torture people. This, according to Ji, was irrespective of what was being said outwardly.

Labour at the cowshed was multifarious. It involved transporting bricks, plucking nails out of wooden boards, stacking coal etc. The easiest was plucking nails while the most tiresome and trying was stacking coal (Ji, 140). Ji also mentions a
routine of evening admonitory talks or Xunhua. A high-ranking official from the NBC would come and criticize inmates based on observations during the day or things in the reports written by each individual. According to Ji, the problems identified and criticized were quite silly and often consisted of distortion or out of context understanding (Ji, 143).

One incident that surpassed everything else in crueltyness and absurdity according to Ji was that a man of over sixty years who was bed ridden also had to take part in this exercise. He would lie in his bed while others would be standing in a row outside. When his name would be called out, people would hear a feeble voice from inside registering his presence. This reportedly saddened Ji Xianlin and made him want to cry every time he heard it.

Ji reports that the management of the cowshed knew methods to keep inmates under its control. A part of the administrative apparatus was the secret appointment of reporters who reported on others words or actions to the management. The reporters enjoyed the concession of being able to return to their homes every weekend and sometimes they were given other rewards for their loyalty. This naturally encouraged reporters to be diligent in their work (Ji, 151).

Struggle sessions continued parallel to the labour reform program of cowshed inmates. In the case of Ji, the instances of being taken for a struggle meeting were more than others. Ji attributes this to the fact that he had joined Jinggangshan and had spoken against Nie Yuanzi who had risen to power in the University. The
sessions followed more or less the same pattern and often involved beatings and abuses (Ji, 156).

In addition to supporting the claim of victimization, the descriptions above highlight the fanaticism that was prevalent during the CR. The memoirs do not explain how the deification of Mao was effected or propagated, but they demonstrate the weight of his authority during the CR. This is evident in the various ritualistic acts that intellectuals were made to perform. These acts that would otherwise seem ridiculous or fanatical became marks of respect and loyalty to the great leader under the CR discourse. In effect, while the actions of rebels or Red Guards are seen as directly responsible for the ordeal of intellectuals, these descriptions point towards a larger discourse that rationalized, justified and legitimized that which can otherwise be seen as gross violations of human dignity.

4.4 Cadre school Life:

The period roughly falling between 1969 and 1973 involved detention and labour in what came to be known as cadre schools (Ganxiao). This took place under the supervision of the People’s Liberation Army who had been called in to restore order following the high tide of rebel activism. In reality, the ordeal of intellectuals began moving towards an end from this point. Descriptions in the memoirs of this period bring out the mechanism for rehabilitation within the Maoist discourse. Rehabilitation usually happened after the high-tide of a campaign passed when verdicts on the nature of cases were decided. If categorized as ‘contradictions within the ranks of people’ (Renmin neibu de
maodun) one could hope to return to work. Those categorized as ‘contradictions between people and enemies’ (Di-wo maodun) on the other hand could be subjected to ‘dictatorship.’ Interestingly, none of the intellectuals report having questioned the legitimacy of this formula of conducting campaigns or the ambiguous and arbitrary nature of the categories. This subject is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

The PLA and Worker propaganda teams that were sent to institutions and work units in 1967 carried out an exercise in investigating all cases under detention and delivered final verdicts. Subsequently, some intellectuals and Party cadres were sent to cadre schools. Other former rightists or those deemed too dangerous were not sent to cadre schools. In cadre schools, those responsible for treatment of intellectuals were mainly PLA officers. This provides important contrast with the period when intellectuals were detained by Red Guards.

The narratives show that life in cadre schools was arduous and sometimes lacking in even basic facilities. Labour at the far flung sites was also much more dangerous than that performed under rebels. Narratives also refer to the fact that unlike previous campaigns when intellectuals were sent down to learn from workers, peasants and soldiers, there was no real learning involved at the cadre schools. Life during the period was monotonous and mainly involved labour. At the same time, though living conditions were tough and labour arduous, intellectuals do not report maltreatment or humiliation of the kind they were subjected to under the rebels. Intellectuals enjoyed relatively more freedom during this phase and were not subjected to struggle or criticism routines.
Yang Jingyuan’s memoir notes the sincere work done by the Worker Propaganda Teams in her department. This was reportedly responsible for false allegations against Yang to be discredited. Before departure for the Cadre school at Xianning, Yang was ‘liberated’ and sent down as one among revolutionary masses.

Ma Shitu was not sent to Cadre school as others in his department. Ma informs the readers that those detained at Zhaojue monastery were considered serious criminals. Other ‘capitalist roaders’ from the bureau, provincial Party Committee and government were generally sent down to Cadre schools for labour reform. Reflecting the influence of Maoist discourse, Ma writes that at the time he thought that though the conditions in the Cadre schools were arduous and life there involved hard labour, the people sent there were considered under the category of ‘contradiction within the ranks of people’ as against ‘contradiction between people and enemies.’ As this meant some hope to be able to return to ‘serve the people’ many cadres were happy when deported to Cadre schools. In contrast, those detained in places like Zhaojue monastery were those whose case was considered serious. From the very beginning Ma was branded a counter-revolutionary. This meant that he probably fell under the category of contradiction among people and enemies (Ma, 315).

In the case of Cong Weixi, the PLA commander Yu who was sent to Quwo acted in a high handed way and almost caused the death of his wife Zhang Hu (Cong, 344). Cong also mentions other instances of death in the team under Yu. Towards the end of 1969 the author and his wife were sent together to Quwo in
Shanxi province. The labour team was rearranged and there were both political and criminal offenders in the camp at Quwo. As someone whose ‘rightist hat’ had long been lifted, Cong expected to be treated as a citizen; this according to him was as written in the laws of the nation. However, at Quwo, not only was Cong not treated any differently, he and another person Liu Si had to work as assistants to a mason who was a criminal. Cong writes that despite political offenders not having committed a crime, they fell under the category of ‘contradiction between people and enemies’ whereas criminals fell under ‘contradictions within the ranks of the people.’ The only difference between the two being that the former were not required being in uniform like the latter. In China’s political discourse during the CR, the former was considered more disadvantageous (Cong, 341).

Yu Guangyuan’s case was decided upon only in 1972 when he was in the Cadre school. Before that he was sent to a Cadre school in Ningxia autonomous region that had been selected by the PLA for counter-revolutionaries and reactionaries of the propaganda department. This suggests that Yu was not ‘liberated’ like Yang Jingyuan before deportation to Cadre school (Yu, 72).

In the case of Ji Xianlin, coming of the PLA should have marked the beginning of Cadre school life. However, unlike others in Beijing University, he was sent to the outskirts of Beijing along with Red Guards. Ji writes that this was to provide Red Guards with a specimen to use for model criticism and struggle sessions.

Both during initial criticism and adjudication by the PPT and WPT, narratives highlight the importance of not being considered as a contradiction between
people and enemies. Being considered a contradiction among masses still required intellectuals to go to Cadre schools to be re-educated, but their political status was no longer that of ‘enemies’, a label that attracted, ostracism by people and more importantly ‘dictatorship’ by revolutionary masses.

Importantly, the anxiety of intellectuals to remain within the ranks of the people points towards the prevalence if not acceptance of the Maoist discourse of dividing the society into people and enemies. Indeed, even after going through the phase of criticism, struggle and detention, none of the intellectuals report having questioned the concept of ‘people’ and ‘enemies’ or the arbitrary ways of determining which category one fell into. In the narratives, intellectuals only protest the evidence used to label them enemies but not the discourse itself. In other words, despite numerous opportunities for disillusionment, intellectuals did not allow themselves to doubt the need and legitimacy of the campaign. Ji Xianlin and Ma Shitu however do write about realizing the innocence of others during previous campaign when they participated in criticism against them. We return to this in the next chapter.

Chapters one to seven of Yang Jingyuan’s memoir provide a detailed description of Yang’s life in the Cadre school. The author recalls the difficult living conditions that she had to put up with. Even basic facilities for hygiene and sanitation at the cadre school were unavailable. The author and others in the cadre school had to walk miles to fetch water, build their own dormitories and sustain themselves on a parsimonious diet. The author also narrates her tale of courage and endurance when she took part in labour to mine for lime and coal.
Having been sent down as a ‘liberated’ person, Yang no longer faced struggle meetings, nor did she have to write confessions and self-criticism during her tenure in the Cadre school. However, she had to take part in arduous labour and the struggle sessions against others. According to Yang, her failure to actively take part in these sessions would have been seen as an attitude problem. That in turn could again make her a target of criticism. Therefore, the author actively participated in writing critical posters, speaking out during sessions and displaying her revolutionary zeal by acts like voluntarily handing over her savings. Yang also mentions in her memoir that unlike earlier campaigns to re-educate intellectuals, during their tenure in Cadre schools, intellectuals hardly ever came into contact with local peasants or workers.

Notably, Yang’s descriptions bring out the frequent reversal of roles discussed earlier. While Yang was the target of criticism and struggle earlier, she now had to participate in the criticism and struggle of others. Importantly, what Yang’s description also reflects is the compulsion faced by her to participate ‘actively’ in such activities. The question then arises whether or not the actions of the ‘revolutionary masses’ during rebel activism can be understood in terms of the same compulsion?

Though going to Ningxia meant separation from family, the end to struggle-sessions and endless enquiries came as a welcome break to Yu Guanyuan. Yu also enjoyed relative freedom in the initial days of his cadre school life. For instance, unlike other intellectuals, Yu was allowed to travel with ‘revolutionary
masses’ in a hard-seater compartment on his way to Ningxia. The cadre school was a group of newly built houses in Ligang commune in Helan county of Yinchuan. During the initial few days in the Cadre school, Yu was free to move around. He was reportedly interested in exploring the extent of the wasteland that spread around the houses to find out what rendered the place a wasteland. However, his inquisitive behaviour brought upon him a session of questioning and criticism. Upon expressing his desire to study how to ‘conquer mother nature’ he was told that he needed to first ‘conquer himself.’ When asked why he visited the nearby Muslim village, Yu answered, “to visit the poor and hear their stories of hardship” (Fang pin wen ku). This brought about many taunts his way as his ‘capitalist roader’ status did not permit such activities. This was cold reminder to Yu that he was not considered ‘revolutionary’ or part of masses any longer. Yu however continued to be forgetful about his status as is portrayed throughout his memoir (Yu, 37). Fang pin wen ku was a part of the exercise that was used to re-educate intellectuals and change their world view. However, as also observed in Yang Jingyuan’s case who was ‘liberated’ unlike Yu, cadre school life did not involve any learning from workers, peasant or the PLA.

Labour in the Cadre school for Yu similarly included various activities such as cleaning toilets, hoeing weeds in fields, planting paddy seedlings, transplanting seedlings, working in the vegetable garden etc. However, unlike back in Beijing, everyone at the Cadre School worked side by side. Also, while menial tasks like cleaning toilets had to be performed Yu was not taunted for the same. There were however a few people among leaders who made things difficult for Yu through their strict and unreasonable ways (Yu, 47-54). The most arduous task according
to Yu was plucking weeds from the field. In Ningxia there was a kind of weed that had to be dug out with bare hands. The roots of this weed were very deep and they would grow back very soon, so it was the toughest task on the farm. Other problems associated with living near the farm included the presence of large blood sucking mosquitoes that took a while to get used to. As harvest time approached, Yu also had to take turns and stand guard at the farm during the night. This was no easy task considering the extremely cold weather and winds of the area.

Importantly, Yu compares the Cadre school experience with that of labour during Yanan rectification days to say that the latter was easier and more joyful because of various factors. In Yanan, Yu’s team included some female comrades who had been sent to perform ‘political and ideological work.’ These members encouraged people like Yu during field work, would help them patch up clothes if required, and compile wall magazines for them. Thus, the atmosphere around the school was not monotonous. Life in the Cadre school however was different. Firstly, Yu was much older by the time and he suffered from afflictions like piles. As facilities and sanitation at the Cadre school were very basic, getting medical attention required much effort and negotiation (Yu, 54). Upon this, there was no form of entertainment in the Cadre school. Yu writes that in three years of Cadre school life, there was no organized event except for staging model operas twice. Apart from that, occasionally non capitalist roaders could be seen playing cards. Unlike during Yanan, there were no dance parties or any other form of entertainment (Yu, 66).
In resonance to Yang Jingyuan’s experiences, Yu writes that although Cadre schools were supposed to be ‘schools’, life there hardly involved any reading. According the May 7th instructions of Mao quoted by Yu, people had to learn from workers, peasants and PLA members in the Cadre school. However, there was no place in the school for reading books or other intellectual activities. Moreover, during the CR, almost all books except Mao’s complete works, dictionaries and books considered ‘revolutionary’ were unavailable. Thus, reading had almost come to a complete stop for Yu Guangyuan (Yu, 55). Normal workers in the cadre school were allowed to take leave and go home for a reunion but ‘capitalist roaders’ had no such allowance. Visitors were allowed to come and meet them (Yu, 67).

Ji Xianlin was spared from going to a Cadre school in Jiangxi. Instead, he was sent to be re-educated by the poor peasants to Yanqinghua Xinhua camp outside the Great Wall in the outskirts of Beijing along with students of Hindi and Thai. It was only later that Ji realized that the purpose of sending him to Xinhua camp is to provide students with a ‘enemy’ to struggle against. This as they needed to learn proper methods of struggling. Living conditions at the camp were harsh and difficult. In addition to arduous labour, Ji Xianlin was subjected to struggle sessions every now and then.

Cong Weixi and Ma Shitu

Cong Weixi and Ma Shitu were not sent to Cadre schools. The reasons for this were different in each case. Cong Weixi remained in labour camps throughout as
the CR simply prolonged his reform program that continued right since the Anti-Rightist campaign. Ma Shitu on the other hand was considered a serious case, suspected of treason. Therefore he was kept in solitary confinement in Zhaojue monastery at the time others were sent to Cadre schools. Despite these differences, experiences of both Cong Weixi and Ma Shitu remained essentially the same as others. In both cases labour under harsh and sometimes dangerous conditions involved. Life on the whole was monotonous albeit with relatively more freedom than before. As in the other cases, no opportunity for re-education or reform was provided whatsoever. Detailed descriptions of life during the years are provided both by Cong Weixi and Ma Shitu. The end of detention at Zhaojue monastery also inaugurated a new cycle of raids, criticism, struggle and detention under rebels for Ma Shitu.

The period was especially trying for Cong as labouring in coal mine took a toll on his health (Cong, 408). Cong also met with an accident and sustained burns on his face. While Cong felt happy for having successfully converted himself into a manual worker from a mental worker he also faced depression for years spent away from his real profession. The accident on the other hand exposes the great dangers that intellectuals like Cong had to face in the name of labour reform. The effect of the incident upon Cong was great. This is apparent from the title given to the section that narrates the incident: roughly translated as “My moment between life and death”

1 “我的一次生死劫难”
After the accident at the Chemical factory in Hebei, Cong Weixi became increasingly pessimistic and frustrated. He could see no hope of liberation after more than a decade of time wasted in labour camps away from his profession. Added to this, the pain of separation from family, the accident that disfigured Cong etc, all contributed to an increasingly negative state of mind.

At the end of his stay at Zhaojue monastery, Ma Shitu was told that his case was now deemed to be that of contradictions within the ranks of the people. He could thus go back to his unit of work to participate in the phase of struggle, criticism and transformation. However, new raids were conducted on Ma’s belongings one night to find evidence or ‘black materials.’ He was later told that a new group had been set up by the unit’s revolutionary committee to investigate his case. This meant that the verdict of the provincial revcom that Ma had returned to the ranks of people had not been accepted by the rebels of the unit. Soon, the rebels organized a large scale struggle meet in the academy. Ma was the first to be struggled against. In addition to the usual struggle routine rebels made a huge and heavy board with Ma’s name painted on it along with the allegations against him and a red cross striking out the name. This was hung on his neck by a thin string. Then they had Ma wear a huge dunce cap that was forced onto Ma’s head by two men. The iron wire on the base of the cap was so rough that blood soon started oozing from both sides of Ma’s head. Ma’s uninterested expression during the speech session further brought upon him a barrage of cruel punches and kicks. Ma reports that he had heard that the people involved in beatings were among those who were dismissed from their jobs earlier for their lazy and insincere attitude. The rebels however had found new use for them and made an ‘assistance
team’ out of their ranks. Their main duties involved beating and torturing alleged capitalist roaders (Ma, 385).

It was later revealed to Ma that while the rest of his case had been cleared, there still was some doubt as to who was the person who introduced him to the Party. There were some conflicting reports regarding this matter. Almost three years went by without any decision on Ma’s case. Meanwhile, Ma and others in the cowshed were made to participate in forced labour. Unlike Zhaojue monastery where labour was voluntary and according the physical ability of the individual, rebels in Ma’s unit forced all detained to perform hard, dirty and trying labour. They had to sweep and mop the floors and courtyard of the academy, clear trash and garbage, unplug drainages, clean toilet bowls and gutters, transport construction materials, repair roads, move furniture etc. The task of cleaning and clearing toilet drains seems to have left Ma with many disgusting and painful memories. The narrative includes a long section on experiences related to this and is notable for its attention to details of the nasty chore. The experience of unloading cement and lime from trucks was equally arduous. With a little wind, the load would start flying around and once that happened, it caused suffocation and cough.

Ma was kept in the dark about events like the Lin Biao incident of 1971. In his new place of detention, he was once asked by the head of political wing of the unit’s revcom as to what he thought about Lin Biao. Luckily, Ma’s answer was reportedly a reserved “The same as you people, he is the successor isn’t it? It is written on the Party constitution” (Ma, 395). This statement saved Ma from being
implicated in the new anti-Lin wave that was sweeping China. Any sign of loyalty or affection for Lin would be taken as a proof of association with Lin’s crimes in the new discourse. This incident left a deep impression on Ma. He felt both saddened and distasteful to see how people went to such extents in trying to harm others. The other incident that as Ma described became unforgettable for him was when his younger daughter who came from the distant region of Ningnan to meet him was disallowed from doing so. His daughter was among the many wards of intellectuals who were sent down for volunteering to be re-educated by poor peasants. The person who stopped Ma’s daughter was again the head of the political wing mentioned above. The jolt was severe for Ma especially because he was feeling very lonely and low ever since his new and unexpected detention after the so-called ‘liberation.’

It is observed through the narratives of all five intellectuals that life in Cadre schools is described as monotonous and harsh. Intellectuals had to bear separation from family and next of kin and perform hard and dangerous labour in addition to writing self-criticism and attending interrogation and struggle meetings. The narratives also report that no real re-education took place during the period. Notably, there was a marked change in the treatment of intellectuals. They were also not subjected to insult, abuse and maltreatment as was the case during the phase of criticism, struggle and detention. This provides an important contrast between the management of the PLA and that of the rebels. Supervision of the PLA as against rebels made Cadre school life distinct from the rest of the CR experience of intellectuals. Ma Shitu’s experiences in Zhaojue monastery also form a distinct contrast from that of detention. While the former was managed by
the PLA, the latter was organized by Red Guards. Labour was involved in both cases, but humiliation and maltreatment were experienced primarily at the hand of Red Guards. It is also observed that the phase of Cadre School inaugurated the beginning of miseries for some former rebels and Red Guards. Yang Jingyuan reports how many rebels of her unit were implicated during the campaign to purify class ranks and eliminate member of the sinister 5.16 gang. Rebels were reportedly subjected to violence and torture by the PLA.

Importantly, what the descriptions also demonstrate is that the ‘catastrophe’ started moving towards an end after Red Guard/rebel activism came to an end. The memoirs indeed describe the phase of cadre school life as difficult and monotonous. However, this stands in contrast with the phase of struggle sessions, labour, abuse and detention as experienced at the hands of Red Guards or rebels. This renders the argument of ‘decade long calamity’ (that intellectuals repeatedly quote) rather weak.

4.5 Return to work

Memoirs show that in the aftermath of the Lin Biao incident and renewed contact with the west (especially the United States) there was a change in the political climate of China. This resulted in demand for intellectual work for which intellectuals were called back. In the case of each of the five intellectuals, it is observed that liberation from the Cadre school happened either out of personal efforts or was necessitated by pragmatic considerations of administrators. While the CR or the treatment meted out to intellectuals was not negated at this point,
many returned to former places of work and jobs. This contrasts with the Resolution that could be taken to suggest that the ordeal of intellectuals came to an end much earlier than 1976 when the Gang of Four were arrested. It is observed at the same time that the return to work was not smooth and easy for many. As seen earlier in Ma Shitu’s case, after the fall of Lin Biao from grace, any evidence that could suggest a connection with Lin could trigger a cycle of hardships. This in turn reflects a pattern whereby the weight of discourse turned for or against political personalities. Association with the person or his policies could be beneficial till the personal was held in esteem. However, the same association led to hardships once the personal fell from disgrace.

Yang Jingyuan writes that starting 1972, the press that the author worked in started taking people back into the unit for work. By the end of the year, units from other provinces came up to absorb cadres left in the school. This caused considerable desperation among people like the author herself who wanted to return to their former unit in Beijing (Yang, 129-133). Her comments regarding the same during a ‘learning’ session set off another cycle of criticism and self-criticism for her. This was because Lin Biao had reportedly expressed reservations regarding the cadre school experiment calling it disguised unemployment. The author thus had to write self-examination reports and criticize herself for the wrong line of thinking. However, by 1973 as more and more cadres were taken back into former units or other units, the desperation to return to work increased and the Cadre school seemed increasingly like a transit house.
In early 1973 the author returned to Beijing on a family visit. During this period she tried her best to contact her own unit and other units to request them to take her in. Finally, on 7th May, 1973, Yang Jingyuan was taken back into her unit. This was the 6th group of cadres taken back from the Cadre school at Xianning. After the 7th group, the school was disbanded and remaining cadres kept in transit. A translation group was setup by the Bureau of Publications to engage remaining cadres and meet the huge demand in translation work set off by increased foreign contact.

In Ma Shitu’s case, after he was allowed to review his mistakes\textsuperscript{126} restrictions on him were eased. Ma was informed later that he had been liberated and that he was now required to return to work. Ma was naturally hesitant to do so as he was not sure whether it was appropriate for someone like him to return to work so soon. He was reassured by the secretary whom he knew from before that the situation had now changed. Since the fall of Lin Biao, people like Liu and Zhang in the provincial revcom had been removed. The Red Guards had already gone to villages and far flung areas and the remaining rebels and the PLA members were inexperienced. It was therefore necessary to ‘liberate’ veteran cadres to carry on daily work of Party and administration. Ma was assigned to the propaganda department. He was to be the vice-minister of the dept. in charge of literature and arts (Ma, 416).

Cong Weixi’s stay in Beijing to heal from injuries proved to be a turning point in his ordeal. As per Cong’s description, a debate went on between his pessimistic

\textsuperscript{126} Jiantao, 检讨, usually the last stage of criticism and struggle.
self and his optimistic self during those days. Eventually, he managed to pull himself out of frustration and despair. The encouraging words of his mother also proved helpful in this regard. The result of the new found optimism was that Cong started meeting old friends, in a bid to do something about his own situation (Cong, 451).

Encouraging letters from friend/writer Liu Shaochang and Duan Xingmian further encouraged Cong rekindle his desire to write. Although there was no immediate relief possible, as Cong puts it, the letters brought him hope. Cong also mentions in a paragraph that counting from 1957 when he was implicated as a ‘rightist’ till 1975, he had already spent six thousand two hundred and fifteen days in labour reform. While much time had been wasted, the experience had nevertheless given Cong abundant material to draw from in writing. This perspective on things seems to have drawn Cong out of frustration and into newfound vigour to write and contribute. Following this Cong started writing on window paper (used as window screens, since Cong reportedly could not afford writing paper) in a coded language (Cong, 453).

Early in 1975, Cong and his wife were moved to Jinnan Wuxinghu labour reform farm from Changzhi. One noticeable difference in the shift this time was that there were not cadres marching them. Wuxinghu was the last stop in Cong Weixi’s history of ‘labour reform.’ The cadre in-charge of labour reform Chen Daqi was a person who sympathized with intellectuals and was instrumental in rekindling Cong Weixi’s desire to write. Chen assigned statistical work to Cong on purpose so that Cong could focus on writing. Later Chen also helped Cong
establish contact with literary associations in the province for appointment (Cong, 458).

When in late 1972, Yu Guangyuan’s case was decided upon, he was charged with three crimes: That of being a ‘counter-revolutionary revisionist’, ‘a person in power who took to the capitalist road’ and a ‘bourgeois reactionary intellectual.’ A person by the name Li Tao was sent down from the Party to investigate and decide upon cases. It was decided that all main defaulters of the department would be kept in custody in Beijing, while a special group dealt with their cases. As Yu was a deputy ministerial cadre, and also an academic, it was deemed fit to term him the main accused. As for punishment, it was announced during an open meeting that after lenient consideration it was decided that Yu’s case was that of ‘contradiction between people and enemies, but to be dealt with internally by people. No criminal charges would be attached and citizen status and government service would be continued.’ However, according to Party discipline, it was decided to expel Yu from the party and relieve him of all posts held in it. In administration, his grade was demoted to the 14th (county level cadre). Housing, wages etc were to be correspondingly adjusted. Yu writes that while all this would have come as a great blow to anyone, he maintained his calm and thought about what he could do. In the end, he wrote a letter to one Nie describing his situation and requesting him to forward the same to Premier Zhou Enlai. Though Yu received no reply for his letter, it was observed later that Li Tao’s verdict was not enforced; Yu’s letter had perhaps achieved the desired purpose (Yu, 76).
Though there was no decision taken by the PLA group in charge of the Cadre school, Yu reportedly ‘liberated’ himself by returning to Beijing on the eve of 1st October, 1972. Yu left for Beijing under the pretext of seeking medical treatment. Yu mentions that several cadres above the level of section chief returned to Beijing more or less around the same time. The ‘liberation’ as Yu explains referred to freedom of movement which was withheld from him since 1966. Later, Yu tested his freedom by travelling to Shanghai and meeting his relatives. All along, he was not stopped or detained. Even after his return to Beijing, no questions were asked (Yu, 86).

During the period when Yu had left the Cadre school, he basically had no official work. Neither did the officials at the Cadre school call him back, nor was he assigned any work in Beijing. He thus took up some compilation work by himself and upon the request of workers of the Xinhua Press in Beijing. During the course of work, a number of other people such as Wu Guanghui, Qi Xiangyan, Lin Zili, Hou Yufu, Yu Mingren, Hui Xiliang and Wang Zhilun joined Yu in his compilation work. Yu refers to the experience as ‘auto-resumption of work’ (Yu, 90-92).

Upon return from Xinhua Camp in 1970, Ji Xianlin was ordered to move into building No.35. This was in accordance with the new spirit or rule that called for department offices to be set up within student dormitories. Ji believes that this was to enable student rebels to reform older intellectuals. At this point of time, Ji was not allowed to return to the department office, instead he was given the job of gate keeper cum messenger for building no. 35. His place of work was a small
room with a window opening towards the passageway that went inside the building. His duties included being the bellman, guarding the entrance and distributing correspondence. Later under the supervision of PLA and Worker Propaganda Teams, the organization of the Party was revived. Ji Xianlin was among the last to be re-admitted into the Party. At the time, he had left building no. 35 and was participating in activities of the Hindi Teaching and Research Section. Ji was told by the PLA head of the department and Party Secretary that the Party heads had decided to pay him his full salary with retrospective effect. Ji decided to return the compensated amount in the form of Party membership fees. However, Ji was informed later that the leaders had arrived at a decision to resume his Party life but to keep him on probation for two years. This greatly angered and disappointed Ji who felt wronged. In order to avoid further trouble, he said that he ‘basically agreed’ to the proposal, hinting that ‘basically’ meant that he had reservations. The narrative ends with Ji saying that since he was on probation for two years, he had no right to give the compensated amount back to the country. Therefore, he decided to keep the money to himself (Ji, 205).

In sum, it is observed that at the end of their ordeals intellectuals resumed work in some or other form. While criticism against those returned to work resurfaced during subsequent campaigns, they did not affect the intellectuals like the period of Red Guard/rebel activism. It is seen that there was a decisive change in political atmosphere following the Lin Biao incident. Yang Jingyuan and Ma Shitu were returned to work out of necessity, while others enjoyed more freedom at their place of detention. In either case, the ordeal drew towards an end. This contrasts with the idea presented in the Resolution that it was only after the death
of Mao and arrest of Gang of Four that the excesses of the CR were checked. While this does not dispute the fact that intellectuals were not returned to their pre-CR status immediately, it points towards the process for eventual rehabilitation within the Maoist discourse.

4.6 Conclusion

The narratives studied in this chapter present a Cultural Revolution distinct from that traced in the Resolution and other mainstream histories of China. The main events of this CR in chronological order were: House raids, criticism & struggle (including maltreatment, abuse and violence), detention in cowsheds (including labour in addition to maltreatment and violence) and finally Cadre school life.

This, however, is not to suggest that the experiences narrated by the intellectuals have no connection to the events traced in the Resolution. Instead, they complement the official narrative by offering readers a narrative of how the CR was experienced by one of its main victims: the intellectuals. Rooted in individual experience, each of the five narratives provides detailed descriptions of the experiences of their respective authors. The descriptions of maltreatment, humiliation and abuse serve the function of highlighting the victimization of intellectuals. Memoirs portray the authors as sincere and patriotic intellectuals who hoped to aid development of China through their efforts. However, their efforts were frustrated by repeated attack and persecution during political campaigns. The descriptions of maltreatment at the hands of various groups also serve to decry the lack of respect for dignity and wastage of precious human
resources that could have otherwise contributed to the nation’s development. Memoirs such as that of Yu Guangyuan, Ma Shitu and Cong Weixi portray the author as concerned about China’s development in spite of the immense hardships being faced by the author.

However, the criticism of lack of guarantees to personal freedom, rule of law, institutionalization etc are inevitably influenced by the post-Mao discourse. In contrast, the discourse under which intellectuals themselves and others functioned during the CR was that of class struggle and distinction between ‘people’ and ‘enemies’ where ‘dictatorship’ of the masses against ‘enemies’ was justified. Ji Xianlin and Ma Shitu admit having made the mistake of criticizing others during previous campaigns in their memoirs. This can be understood as the influence of the same discourse. The authors themselves seem to be aware of this problem in their meditations. This becomes evident by the fact that they did not allow themselves to doubt the sanctity of the CR as it unfolded in spite of immense personal suffering. This is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The narratives also play the function of providing an understanding of the content of the ordeal experienced by the intellectuals and the factors that lay behind it. With reference to the ordeal suffered by intellectuals, the narratives show the involvement of different people and agencies. This points out to a more complex picture than the simplistic understanding that the Gang of Four and Lin Biao cliques or a ‘minority’ of careerists and opportunists were behind all the excesses.
Specifically, the narratives show that during the initial phase of the CR, Red Guards were responsible for much of the destruction of property, loss of living space, terror and anxiety faced by intellectuals. Later, it was again the Red Guards in institutions and rebels in work units who pulled intellectuals out and struggled against them. Violence was meted out to intellectuals both at the hands of the Red Guards/rebels and the ‘revolutionary masses’ who took part in the sessions. Interrogators who came to gather evidence on an associate of the intellectuals also contributed to corporal violence against the intellectuals. Red Guards and rebels were also responsible for much of the maltreatment, abuse and harsh labour that intellectuals had to endure. The exception here is that of Cong Weixi who did not face action by Red Guards directly. However, his family in Beijing was affected by the Red Guard movement. Cong was spared the phase of criticism, struggle and detention but instead had to endure frequent relocation, separation from family and arduous labour.

After Worker and PLA propaganda teams entered institutions and work units, the custody of intellectuals shifted to the People’s Liberation Army. This was followed by deportation to Cadre schools in case of Yang Jingyuan and Yu Guangyuan, imprisonment at Zhaojue monastery in case of Ma Shitu and transfer to a labour site in Quwo, Shanxi away from Beijing for Cong Weixi. Ji Xianlin was exempted from going to the Cadre school and instead sent along with Red Guards to be re-educated. Though intellectuals continued to be required to live and labour in harsh conditions and suffered separation from family and friends, narratives acknowledge the relative freedom that intellectuals enjoyed after transfer of custody to the PLA. The transfer also ended maltreatment, abuse and
humiliation. As such the phase of Cadre school life can be termed as distinct from the rest of the CR experience.

Apart from ascribing responsibility to a more specific group of people, the narratives also delve into factors that motivated these individuals or made them act the way they did. In this respect, they highlight the function played by the discourse of ‘people versus enemies’ in legitimizing maltreatment and violence against intellectuals. As Ji Xianlin writes in his memoir, that he was no longer a member of the category of ‘people’ made it unnecessary for him to be treated as a human being. This argument again contrasts with the resolution of 1981 that only mentions “complex social factors” and Mao’s misgivings about class struggle as causes responsible for the Cultural Revolution.

Under the theory of People’s Democratic Dictatorship put forward on 30th June, 1949 by Mao Zedong, the use of dictatorship over those considered ‘enemies’ was justified, whereas democracy was reserved for ‘people’. Mao Zedong also established the difference between ‘contradictions within the ranks of the people’ and ‘contradictions between people and enemies’ and indeed called for the correct handling of these contradictions. The call was reiterated in the 16 points that laid down guidelines for carrying out the Cultural Revolution.

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What the memoirs highlight is the absence of a uniform procedure/standard by which a person could be classified as a contradiction within the ranks of people or that between people and enemy. The decision was apparently left to the wisdom of the flag bearers of the revolution. This seems to have left open the space for arbitrariness and subjectivity. With the weight of discourse falling against intellectuals (who were considered bourgeois capitalist in outlook), it was safer for masses to take a belligerent stand against them. The fact that intellectuals could be pulled out and attacked inspite of the lack of substantial evidence of guilt also points towards the existence of a discourse that made such evidence unnecessary.

As factional rivalry emerged, Red Guards are further seen to have acted in arbitrary and indiscriminate ways in their anxiety to display their revolutionary fervour over rivals. This resulted in exacerbation of the intellectuals’ ordeal. Individuals such as interrogators, colleagues, and co-workers etc who tried to expose intellectuals are also seen as falling prey to the CR discourse that provided incentives for those who unearthed sinister plots while penalizing those who were associated with the disgraced in any way. The memoirs however fail to demonstrate what social contradictions led to factional rivalry in the first place. Rival factions are simply seen as groups vying for power.

The Resolution of 1981 holds Mao’s apprehensions of a capitalist restoration and his deification mainly responsible for the CR. Mao is said to have mistaken healthy cases of difference of opinion in the Party for class struggle between restorationists and the proletariat. The Resolution, however, does not negate the
formula of arbitrarily dividing people into ‘people’ and ‘enemies’ or turning one group of people against another.

Published in the late 1990s and early 2000s, all five memoirs of Chinese intellectuals touch upon the need for democracy, institutionalization and legislation to guard against the coming of another CR. They quote extensively and carefully from Deng Xiaoping’s remarks to support or perhaps legitimize their arguments. At the same time references to incidents such as the crack down on Xidan democracy wall movement in 1979, student demonstrations in 1986 or the 1989 Tiananmen square are conspicuously absent. This is perhaps in deference to the continued existence of factors that led to the formation of the CR discourse and eventually their own ordeals.

The absence of reference to these issues is potent with meaning. Each of the five memoirs emphasize the need to sum up lessons from the Cultural Revolution. This is in order to prevent a recurrence. The primary reason for writings the memoirs is indeed the fear that the CR is slipping away from public memory. What is meant by the CR slipping away from memory then is perhaps ignorance in the society towards factors that caused the CR.

As seen in this chapter, the memoirs attempt to bring to light a more complex picture of the CR. In this picture, various groups or people are seen as responsible for the ordeals suffered by the intellectuals. Importantly, these people are seen as operating under the influence of a discourse that held definite incentives and disincentives for maltreatment of intellectuals. This in turn points towards the
responsibility of a larger agency that controlled and manipulated the discourse: The Party. The function of memoirs thus seems to shift dramatically from serving as mere records of personal memories to allegories pointing towards the agency ultimately responsible for the ordeals of people during the CR. In the following chapter, we examine reflections of the five Chinese intellectuals considered in this study to explore this function of the memoirs further.
CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS ON THE CR EXPERIENCE: AMNESIA TOWARDS

THE CR AS ALLEGORY

In addition to a detailed account of the CR experience of the authors, the five narratives selected for this study also contain reflections and meditations of the authors on their experiences. Besides attempting general contextualization of individual experiences within wider historical experience of the society, these meditations also include an attempt on the part of the authors to make sense of why they were unable to oppose the Cultural Revolution even as it unfolded. The search for answers seems to have led the authors to fundamental issues in Chinese politics such as lack of civil liberties, institutional processes and checks and balances on power. In this sense the memoirs seem to function as allegories. While their explicit purpose is to narrate the CR from the perspective of a victim, the implicit function seems to be that of decrying continued denial of promised liberties.

Three themes of relevance to this subject are common to their meditations. They deal respectively with the various opportunities for disillusionment during the CR, reasons for the inability to bring oneself to decry the CR in spite of these opportunities and finally the need to bring these reasons to the fore and study them.
Indoctrination in the Maoist discourse emerges as the main reason behind the inability of intellectuals to cast doubt on the revolution or its proponents. This in turn seems to have been achieved through propaganda that greatly elevated the status of leaders and ingrained notions such as loyalty to Party and leadership. Intellectuals are even able to justify actions of rebels/Red Guards who attacked them in terms of this indoctrination. Veiled hints emerge from the meditations of the authors that suggest that these elements (propaganda, control over information etc) continue to remain in China. This brings to fore why intellectuals believe that lessons from the CR have not been learnt or fear that the CR is slipping out of collective memory. This chapter therefore explores the core function that these memoirs seem to play – that of using CR and their experiences during it to point towards continuing lack of freedom, transparency and rule of law.

In the following each of these three themes are discussed in detail.

5.1. Opportunities for Disillusionment:

As seen in the previous chapter, the attitude of intellectuals towards the Cultural Revolution was that of respect and compliance to begin with. However, their experiences through the period contained aspects that were disenchancing.

a. Factional Fighting

One such aspect was factional fighting. Chaos, disorder and violence witnessed during the CR were unprecedented in the history of PRC. After rebel
organizations sprang up, rivalry among them escalated and they jostled for power. In the memoirs intellectuals write how in their anxiety to outperform each other, these groups resorted to unscrupulous measures. These included falsification or distortion of evidence, maltreatment and torture of alleged class enemies etc. In policy, the CR was intended as a campaign through which the masses would educate themselves.\textsuperscript{129} However, in practice it seemed to involve little more than a struggle for power. Rival factions fought for custody of eminent personalities. This process that affected many intellectuals was aimed at claiming merit in contributing to exposing class enemies. Those who were pulled out were given little opportunity to prove their innocence and attempts to debate or protest allegations were seen as an unremorseful act. This was inevitably followed by corporal violence or increased maltreatment. This manner of carrying out revolution was very distasteful for the intellectuals.

b. Frequent change in status of people

The frequent change in status of people was more disillusioning for intellectuals. During the CR, those who were ‘stalwarts’ of the revolution to begin with, often became ‘plotters’ and ‘opportunists’ later. In this regard, the Lin Biao incident of 1971 seems to have been by far the most disillusioning. Prior to the incident, Lin Biao had been designated ‘comrade in arms’ and successor to Mao Zedong.\textsuperscript{130} He

\textsuperscript{129} See \textit{Sixteen Points}, footnote 124.

also represented the Central Committee of the Party in delivering the Work Report (Gongzuo Baogao) to the 9th Party Congress. Attributed with the revolutionary transformation of the PLA and compilation of the little red book of Mao’s quotations, Lin Biao was much respected and revered. However in 1971, he was pronounced a traitor who had plotted to assassinate Mao. Events around the incident were shrouded in mystery and intellectuals found it hard to come to terms with the sudden change. This sudden reversal of roles, and the rise and fall from grace of important political personalities, seems to have shaken the image of the revolution for intellectuals. The absence of sufficient rationale for the sudden changes in political status of people was all the more disillusioning. It also tarnished the credibility of the Party and its propaganda machinery that seemed to make people rise or fall from grace unpredictably. Various references to such incidents are made in the memoirs:

Yang Jingyuan writes that starting late 1968 when the campaign to root out alleged 5.16 elements began, members of the rebel group in the author’s unit (the RTC corps and its leaders) became primary suspects. This reversal of roles where the ‘revolutionaries’ of yesterday, became counter-revolutionaries of today was surprising for the author.

Reflecting the status of Mao and the effect of indoctrination, Yang writes that the fact that the campaign was carried out under the aegis of the Central Committee of the CPC and Chairman Mao, aimed at protecting the proletarian headquarters and respected premier Zhou and carried out in Yang’s words by “the absolutely

1966, 5. The article is the first instance when the phrase “Comrade in Arms” figures on the official newspaper.
trustworthy PLA Propaganda Team”, temporarily dispelled all doubts and reinforced her belief (Yang, 79). Yang tried convincing herself about culpability of the RTC corps by reminding herself they were indeed involved in falsifying evidence and maltreatment of people like herself in the Press. They had indeed gone against Chairman Mao’s directive of trying to unite the majority of people.

However, the issue of 5.16 elements was shrouded in mystery from beginning to end. Nobody was able to come up with convincing evidence of even the existence of such a group, leave aside its leaders and members. Yang writes that it was a campaign that went on from 1969 till 1976 when the Gang of Four were arrested. But till the time that her memoir was published, there had been no elucidation of what the group was about or what happened to its members.

When the campaign started, the author (then returned to being a part of the masses) was also required to criticize and condemn the suspects during struggle meetings. However, in the absence of incriminating evidence, she and others could only parrot general allegations.

The author notes that the Party Central Committee’s document on the 5.16 clique mentioned clearly that importance must be given to personal witness, material evidence and circumstantial evidence. In practise however, the suspects (mostly former heads of rebel groups) were generally subjected to harsh interrogation, physical torture and forced to confess. The author also describes the pressure
faced by her ‘platoon’\textsuperscript{131} when the head of the PLA Propaganda Team expressed dissatisfaction with the slow progress of the campaign in their platoon. It was a difficult predicament for the author and other members of her platoon as no evidence or explicit instructions were given to them. They had also exhausted their repertoire of allegations and criticism about ‘bad attitude’ (Yang, 96). Yang reports that it was later hinted to the platoon that what the PPT head meant was that they had been too gentle during the sessions, and that they should use their hands more than their mouths. This was how other platoons had achieved “good results”. Therefore ‘organizing a class’ for the accused, which formerly meant helping him/her realize mistakes through criticism acquired a new connotation meaning extracting confessions through beatings. This manner of carrying out criticism greatly tarnished the image of the CR and the PLA for Yang.

Yang writes that the most disillusioning incident for her was the Lin Biao incident of 1971. The news of Lin Biao’s coup attempt and subsequent death was both shocking and dumbfounding. According to Yang, no one in her cadre school was mentally prepared for such a revelation. Though the author had heard rumours from friends previously, she found it unbelievable at the time. People in the cadre school reportedly felt perplexed and insecure. It was difficult for them to digest the fact that the hitherto “comrade in arms and successor of Chairman Mao” could become a traitor overnight. According to Yang, three factors contributed to the feeling of insecurity and numbness. Firstly, the entire event was shrouded in mystery: nobody could explain what had happened and why. Secondly, the status enjoyed by Lin Biao and the relentless propaganda by state media had elevated

\textsuperscript{131} The Cadre school was divided into ‘companies’ and ‘platoons’ following the organizational scheme of PLA.
Lin Biao to the status of a demigod. Therefore, the reaction to his fall was similar to that of the destruction of a sacred altar for ardent devotees. The third factor was that the incident had just occurred, and people feared that members of Lin’s alleged gang might still be at large.

The fall of Lin Biao reportedly also brought about a general relaxation in the political climate of China. With it, the campaign to root out 5.16 elements also drew nearer to conclusion. It was adjudged that none of those accused were bonafide 5.16 elements. As for problems in organizational relations, it was observed that evidence and confessions were the result of coercion. However, allegations were not summarily rolled back. Instead, it was arbitrarily decided that the issues fell into the category of ‘contradictions within the ranks of people’\textsuperscript{132}. The final conclusion and consolation was that the findings of the investigations conducted will not be recorded on the personal files of people.

Ma Shitu writes that at the time he was unable to understand why after more than ten years of building Socialism there was still talk of ‘people taking the capitalist road.’ During the Socialist Education Movement, Ma was sent to the countryside to catch capitalist roaders at the grassroots. He led various work teams, groups and bands (Zu, Tuan, Dui) in fierce campaigns. But even then, he never understood why it was alleged that these people took to the capitalist road. Once the CR began, Ma himself became an alleged capitalist roader and came under criticism at his unit. Soon, those who were struggling against Ma came under criticism by rebels. In the end, rebels starting fighting among themselves. Ma

\textsuperscript{132} Renmin Neibu Maodun 人民内部矛盾.
writes that the bottom line seemed that today you struggle against me; tomorrow it is I against you, the day after it would be someone against us and the process goes on endlessly. In the end Ma writes sarcastically that this is perhaps what is “struggle philosophy” (*Douzheng Zhexue*), struggle is everything, there was no real aim to it (Ma, 117-118). Disillusionment caused by the CR is apparent in the above statement. That political status and verdicts on people and groups were constantly changing made the CR arbitrary and unpredictable. It also led to disillusionment towards the revolution and its purpose.

Ma elaborates that the fact that leaders who struggled against the author, themselves came to be struggled against by rebels was something that made Ma both happy and at the same time wary. He felt happy because it gave him a sense of retribution. However, it seemed equally absurd as both himself and the people who struggled against him had at some point of time struggled against others and later come to be struggled against. The difference was only that of time. It also induced a sense of fear in the author because it probably meant that his time would come again soon (Ma, 121).

In the last section of the second chapter of his memoir, Yu Guangyuan discusses the transformation in this thinking from the beginning of the CR to the end. While initially he took the CR as a revolution of great significance, through the course of the campaign, he came to realize that in reality it represented little more than a struggle going on in the upper echelons of the Party. According to Yu, early during the CR, people in Beijing witnessed the destruction of ‘four olds’ that involved violence, vandalism and looting. This was followed by factional fighting,
bloodshed etc. All these had already tarnished the image of the great revolution. Then the ascendancy of the Gang of Four whom Yu did not have a good opinion of and reportedly “knew very well” was yet another disillusioning factor. Occurrences such as the fall of Lin Biao and the criticism of Chen Boda, both of whom had earlier been heralded as flag-bearers of the revolution as further disillusioning (Yu, 84).

During the Tenth Party Congress that was convened in August, 1973, several new members were inducted into the central committee and politburo of the CPC. These included Wang Hongwen (a member of the “Gang of Four”) who was appointed vice-Chairman. According to Yu, nobody including himself approved of this random and indiscriminate selection of central committee members. However, under prevailing circumstances, consequences of voicing discontent of criticism were serious. Yu mentions that the Wang’s arbitrary and sudden promotion went a long way in helping him do away with Mao worship (Yu, 97).

Ji Xianlin also writes in his memoir that in his experience with political movements, he found that groups of people took turn in hitting out at each other. While during the initial phase, the CR seemed different, soon it became clear that it would be yet another case of former ‘victims’ becoming ‘perpetrators’ or ‘revolutionaries’(Ji, 14).
c. Conduct of the revolution

Yet another factor that contributed to disillusionment was the manner in which revolution was carried out by rebels. The five memoirs studied are replete with examples from experiences of the author and others that highlight arbitrariness and absurdity in the conduct of the revolution.

Ma Shitu provides a detailed description of killings and murders in the Southwestern Bureau in his memoir. He writes how the discourse prevalent at the time legitimized something even as horrendous as murder. He also talks about the part played by high-ranking officials like Chen Boda (Chairman of the CRSG) in allegedly forcing people like the Party Secretary of Yunnan province to commit suicide. This was reportedly justified by Lin Biao who is quoted to have said that the price paid for the great mission of Cultural Revolution was little. Lin is also believed to have said that it was but natural for some loss of life to occur during great battles such as the CR. Such statements by senior and respected leaders were very disillusioning for Ma.

In his memoir, Cong Weixi narrates an incident that took place at the 582 farm in Chadian outside Beijing. The incident involved two persons who were suffering the same fate as the author: Li Jianyuan and Ruan Zuquan. One day, Li Jianyuan who brought in the mail noticed something lumpy inside an envelope for Ruan Zuquan. Joking about it, he told Ruan that there was a ghost (Gui) in his mail. Ruan felt the envelope and agreed that there indeed was a ghost in there. Upon opening the envelope, they discovered a badge with Mao’s portrait on it. As per
rules, people undergoing labour reform were not permitted to wear the badges. So, Ruan had to store it away. However, some colleagues took it upon themselves to report the incident to officials. As mentioned earlier, at the time, even a remote sign of disrespect to the great leader was not tolerated. As a consequence, struggle sessions were instituted against the two. Ironically, one among the team leaders responsible for instituting dictatorship intervened, stopping the incident from being blown out of proportions.

Cong also describes the sad fate of people in Liming production brigade (Shengchan Dadui) of Xinzhuang Commune in Daxing county. A rebel in the brigade colluded with farmers to ‘smash the old world.’ This, in his interpretation involved a systematic killing of all in the brigade who did not belong to the category of reds. According to Cong, within three days, more than a hundred people of the ‘black five’\textsuperscript{133} category were killed in Xinzhuang commune. The eldest of them was above eighty years old while the youngest was a mere three months of age (Cong, 280). The incident showed Cong as examples of how the notion of ‘class hatred’ was taken to extremes by some rebels.

d. Behaviour of rebels/Red Guards

The behaviour of rebels during the entire period added to the disillusionment of the intellectuals. Ma found the rebels who came to revolt (Zao Fan) less innocent or influenced than Red Guards. According to Ma, being relatively older, these people were not impressionable like the Red Guards. According to Ma, they were

\textsuperscript{133} The underprivileged classes in PRC. This included people from landlord, rich peasant backgrounds, alleged reactionaries, bad elements and rightists.
more often than not driven by personal interests rather than revolutionary fervour. This was evident in the fact that these people were most active in destruction, beating people and other such endeavours. Ma notes there were also a group of Red Guards who went into a frenzy destroying property, torturing capitalist roaders etc. Ma is unable to justify the actions of these people. Ma writes that these people were probably just addicted to blood (Ma, 196).

Ma also writes that the so-called New Red Regime (Xinsheng Hongse Zhengquan, referring to the Revolutionary Committee) that replaced the old regime in Chengdu had hooligans and loafers for its base and scheming opportunists at the top. Though some veteran cadres were included in the regime, their position was not such that they could do anything worthwhile. Red Guards who helped smash the old regime in the first place had been sent down to the countryside and far flung regions, and cadres/intellectuals had been sent to May Seventh cadre schools (Ma, 386). In effect, those who were heralded as flag-bearers of the revolution were sent to be re-educated, intellectuals were in Cadre schools and administration was left to people who gained ascendancy through manipulation, violent acts or other forms of what then constituted ‘revolutionary’ action. While the revolutionary committees were touted as the great success of the campaign, such laurels seemed undeserving to Ma.

Ji Xianlin writes about the experience of going to the national meteorological bureau. He and others were sent under the leadership of the PPT to convince rebels from outside Beijing to return to their native towns. One thing that struck Ji was the language used by the rebels in the posters they had pasted outside. Some
of them contained words like ‘Chop XXX to pieces’ or ‘Fry XXX in oil.’ This was an unforgettable experience for Ji who had hitherto seldom come across such violent language in public.

Ji also remembers having witnessed a struggle session of an official about the rank of an elderly bureau head. Upon reaching the venue of the session, the bureau head voluntarily picked up a dunce hat that had been prepared for him and to which all sorts of things were attached to humiliate him. These included a small frog (the sound of which word in Chinese language is identical to the expression for a ‘bastard’) (Ji, 39). Ji writes that he found the struggle meetings of the CR to be of no significance whatsoever. They seemed to be aimed more at forcing confessions or humiliating people rather than seeking the truth. The sole purpose of a meeting was to make the person being struggled against admit that he indeed was a capitalist roader or bourgeois academic authority. Ji writes that he found it funny why this should be required as the verdict seemed to have been delivered long ago through the loudspeakers, posters etc (Ji, 89).

The thoughts of Ji underline his disillusionment towards the manner in which the revolution was carried out during the CR. Also, while official instructions were to use debate and not arms, Ji writes how this was hardly the case in practice. According to Ji, once a person was labelled an enemy, it was as though he lost all rights and was at the mercy of the ‘revolutionary’ people. For instance, during the CR rebels could go to the houses of people and pick anything they wanted. They could give vent to their anger or frustration anyway they liked. So much so that they could even take lives and no questions were asked (Ji, 169).
Ji describes an incident where a student named Zhang Guoxiang from the Department of Biology came to the cowshed where Ji was being detained. Zhang was very fond of detaining people in the night after others had gone to sleep. He would ask them all sorts of questions and at times beat them for some reason or other. One such night, Ji was called over by Zhang. Even as he ran back to Zhang, he was given a slap for not responding quickly enough. This was followed by a barrage of beatings using a cycle chain (covered with rubber in order to leave no evidence). The target as reported was Ji’s head. Ji continued to stand there though his head started reeling and he felt sour all over the head and face. Ji writes that he was completely overwhelmed by shock and could not remember how long the session went on. It was only when he returned that his shed-mates told him that the beatings had continued for a very long time (Ji, 171).

The brutal and indiscriminate manner in which rebels and Red Guards acted contributed to shock, trauma and disillusionment with the sanctity of the revolution. The descriptions inform collective memory of how slogans and revolutionary rhetoric during the CR were no more than a thin veil covering personal vendetta, opportunism or simply sadism on the part of those who carried out the revolution. They also highlight the disillusionment experienced by the intellectuals during the period.
e. Treatment of eminent personalities

The treatment meted out to eminent personalities and the wastage of invaluable human resources is another recurring theme in all memoirs. The manner in which these personalities were labelled ‘enemies’ and sometimes repatriated simply based on the word of some leader also spoke of arbitrariness that contributed to disillusionment.

Ma writes in his memoir that among those detained during the CR, there were many who had made great contributions to their nation. Some of them were Communist veterans from the time of civil war between the Nationalist and Communist Party while some had been in leading roles in Party and administration. That so many of these people could become counter-revolutionaries or criminals overnight was something highly unconvincing for Ma. As he writes, he couldn’t but help think that these were cases of great injustice (Ma, 316).

Towards the end of his description of a General Deng Hua and his ordeal, Ma informs readers that one day few PLA officials came and hurriedly took Deng Hua away with them. Later, Ma learnt from the newspapers that Deng Hua had become a member of the Central Committee. He was later informed that Mao Zedong had remembered Deng Hua and asked for him to be brought to Beijing (Ma, 320).
While this was good news as far as Deng Hua was concerned, it made Ma sad to see how one word from a person could determine the fate of a man like Deng Hua. That someone who was recently being punished for his counter-revolutionary activities could become a CCP Central Committee member overnight was both surprising and disillusioning (Ma, 321). It also spoke lengths of the power wielded by certain people and arbitrariness of justice during the era.

An incident that Cong Weixi reports as unforgettable during the CR was seeing eminent writer and translator Lü Ying at the labour camp for old and disabled persons. Lü was reportedly a patriotic writer who had taken part in student movements in 1935 when he was studying in Beijing University. After liberation, he left Taiwan and came to Beijing via Hong Kong. He was fluent in German, Russian and English and had translated many important works. Naturally, he was much celebrated in literary circles. However, during a campaign against Hu Feng, he stood in Hu’s defence. During the CR, his past defence of Hu Feng caused him to be branded a destabilizing influence and he was sent to perform labour. When Cong was taken to meet him by Jiang Baochen (Lü’s long time friend) Cong was reportedly taken over by grief. He saw what he describes as a living dead body, shrunk like a midget. That a man of such stature could be treated that way filled Cong with anguish. After just a few days, Lü died and was buried carelessly in the grave hill behind the camp. Cong writes that all that was given to him was a new bulge on the mud with a red brick that had written upon it his name in chalk (Cong, 314). The disgust felt for violation of human dignity and wastage of human resources is typical and observed in all five memoirs.
Cong also devotes four pages to describe the CR experience of veteran Marxist Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi was reportedly labelled a rightist for speaking out in defence of one of his colleagues Chu Pingan. Zhu however decided to stand up to injustice and sent letters of complaint to the central government repeatedly. His attitude brought him much trouble in the form of struggle sessions, beatings, torture and finally imprisonment. After he wrote letters criticizing Lin Biao’s policies, the treatment meted out to him became worse. It was revealed after his liberation in 1979 that in 1970 he had actually been sentenced to death. Following the Lin Biao incident (that was followed by a wholesale negation of Lin) Zhu Xi’s statements no longer constituted counter-revolutionary action. After nearly four years of imprisonment, Zhu Xi was released. On page 438, Cong attaches the document signed by the revolutionary committee of South-eastern Shanxi Province that states in ambiguous terms that after investigation, it had been decided to sentence Zhu Xi to death for his counter-revolutionary actions (Cong, 434-438).

Again, while Zhu Xi’s liberation was seen by Cong as an act of justice, it also highlighted the arbitrariness of judgement and action during the CR. Had Lin Biao not fallen from grace, Zhu Xi would have probably been executed for his criticism. The manner in which the revolution was carried out thus spoke of arbitrariness for Cong Weixi.

In sum, the process of the Cultural Revolution and the experience thereof was both painful and disillusioning for intellectuals. Intellectuals experienced
disillusionment both through the arbitrary manner in which the revolution was carried out and also the frequent change in verdicts on people and rise and fall of political personalities. Detailed descriptions of these inform collective memory of the arbitrariness and unpredictability that the CR embodied.

However, it is seen that while disillusioned with the manner in which the revolution was carried out, intellectuals never doubted the sanctity of the Revolution or authority of its proponents. Indeed, they could not bring themselves to trust their instincts about the arbitrariness and absurdity of the revolution despite immense personal suffering. Indoctrination with the Maoist discourse seems to have been the main reason behind this.

5.2. Indoctrination and acceptance of the Maoist discourse:

The attitude of intellectuals vis-à-vis the CR at the time that it began was one of compliance (and even reverence) but not resistance. All five intellectuals strived hard to reform themselves (through criticism and labour) and sought to return to the ranks of the masses. Reflecting acceptance of the allegation that they had acquired a bourgeois-capitalist outlook, Yang Jingyuan and Ji Xianlin report having felt a sense of guilt for their hitherto extravagant or apolitical lifestyles. They even welcomed attacks by rebels. In their efforts to become revolutionary, they castigated themselves by voluntarily handing over monetary savings and publicly denouncing themselves through big character posters.

134 See Yang, 155 and Ji, 210.
It becomes apparent from the memoirs that intellectuals had acquiesced if not accepted the “People versus Enemy” and “Red versus Expert” dichotomy that was an integral part of political discourse in Maoist China. All five intellectuals report the mental pressure and anxiety experienced when they were branded ‘enemies’ or faced the danger of the same. Similarly, they also write of the joy and elation felt when they were ‘liberated’ or returned to the ranks of ‘people’. Although they resented false charges against them and those responsible for the same, none report having questioned or debated the validity of this discourse, or the definition and validity of the two categories. In other words, no clear indication emerges from the memoirs that the intellectuals were opposed to the arbitrary manner in which people were labelled and discriminated against. This practice had been observed through successive campaign of the CPC.\(^{135}\) Indeed, some like Ma Shitu and Yu Guangyuan even report having employed similar methods of criticism and struggle against others during previous campaigns that they led. The erroneous nature of these campaigns on the other hand was revealed to them only after their own experience of being targeted during the CR. It therefore appears that the intellectuals were themselves a part of the discourse that ultimately victimized them.

All five intellectuals write in detail about labour reform during the CR. Although living conditions were difficult, the authors’ ability to overcome them and perform arduous tasks seems to have been gratifying. It was a process through which these intellectuals sought to prove their revolutionary character and hoped to return to

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\(^{135}\) See White, *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China’s Cultural Revolution* for a discussion of how these policies contributed to violence and chaos during the CR.
the ranks of people. This perhaps as it was only through the established paradigm of self-criticism and compliance that one could hope to be ‘liberated.’

The negation of the CR in 1981 acknowledged the victimization of intellectuals. However, the negation also meant a complete negation of all their attempts to reform and return to the ranks of ‘people.’ It thus raised questions in minds of the intellectuals as to why they were unable to assert their innocence or protest the treatment meted out to them even as the CR unfolded. In their memoirs, all intellectuals dwell on this inability on their part to see through the CR before it was exposed. Some like Cong Weixi and Ji Xianlin even report feeling guilty for not having committed suicide to protest injustice.136

Veiled hints emerge from the memoirs to suggest that this failure on the part of intellectuals was due to indoctrination or influence by the Maoist interpretation of Marxism-Leninism through the Party’s propaganda machinery. The interpretation itself on the other hand was never monolithic but instead, constantly changed, adding to it unpredictability and randomness. Unquestioned faith and reverence towards Mao was therefore the only way to ensure that one stood on the right side. This seems to have been the reason why intellectuals could not bring themselves to doubt or challenge the CR. As Mobo C. F. Gao observes137, prior to the negation of the CR, the Chinese people made sense of the world and their position in it through the Maoist discourse, the ultimate authority of which was Mao himself. To oppose the Cultural Revolution or Mao would have then been tantamount to a negation of the socialist experiment of China itself. In other

136 See Cong, Zou Xiang Hundun, 321 and Ji, Niupeng Zayi, 216.
words, despite numerous opportunities for disillusionment, intellectuals could not allow themselves to doubt the need for and legitimacy of the campaign.

Reflecting on the stature of Mao during the CR, Cong Weixi writes that the prestige of Mao during the CR was powerful enough to overwhelm even high ranking officers like Peng Dehuai and the President of China Liu Shaoqi. During the CR, an invocation of Mao’s authority in any context could only be met with surrender. No debate was allowed whatsoever (Cong, 405). Indeed as seen in the last chapter, while not authorized by Mao specifically, instances of violence and maltreatment by rebels were often legitimized by quoting Mao’s statements.

Providing hints for how Mao acquired this stature, Cong writes how like for many other youth of the 1950s Mao Zedong was his idol. So much so that when he and fellow students would go to Tiananmen square to be received by Mao, tears would roll out of his eyes as he shouted ‘Wansui’ (long live) with all his heart (Cong, 8). There are several references in Cong Weixi’s chapter to the God-like image and authority of Mao Zedong.

References to the saviour-like image of Mao and unquestioned reverence towards him also find mention in memoirs of Ji Xianlin, Ma Shitu and Yu Guangyuan. For instance, Ji Xianlin writes that prior to liberation he found all politics to be dirty. However, after 1949 he realized that the Communist Party was different. He was greatly inspired by the stories of selfless sacrifice by Communist Party workers and swore to learn from them. In resonance to Cong Weixi’s description, Ji writes that although he was opposed to idol worship previously, in the euphoria
of the early days of liberation, he too learnt to shout ‘long live’ (Wansui) for the leaders (Ji, 210).

It is seen through the memoirs that rebels and Red Guards seem to have been influenced by the discourse of the CR and authority of Mao equally. Writing about his thoughts on the ‘dictatorship of masses’, Ma says that the constitution of China permitted only the Police, Disciplinary and Legal departments to carry out dictatorship against those incriminated. However, under a discourse (attributed to Mao’s big-character poster\(^{138}\) that said that all organizations have been penetrated by capitalist roaders following a reactionary path, it was only the masses that could be truly revolutionary. And so, the masses had a free hand to pick people out, carry out house raids, interrogate, torture and event hand out punishments. As the little red book of Mao’s quotations directed, “revolution is not like inviting guests over for dinner……” Ma writes that therefore apart from touching the souls of people, the revolution could also touch their bodies (Ma, 118-119). According to Ma, who repeatedly quotes these words in his memoir, this rhetoric backed by the authority of Mao seems to have encouraged and justified much of the violence witnessed during the CR.\(^{139}\) In another incident, Ma was reportedly angry with the Red Guards who tricked him to get him out of the detention room. When asked why they betrayed his trust, the answer was, “If we had not lied, how we could have brought you here?” Ma writes that he immediately recalled one of

\(^{138}\) See Mao Zedong 毛泽东, “Paoda Silingbu (Wo de Yi Zhang Dazibao)” 炮打司令部 （我的一张大字报）[Bombard the Headquarters (A Poster from My Side)], Renmin Ribao 5 August 1967, 1. The poster was put up during the Central Committee meeting on 5th of August, 1966 by Mao Zedong.

\(^{139}\) For a detailed discussion on the rhetorical practices during the CR, see Xing Lu, *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004). Also see Ji Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering: Language & Politics in Mao’s China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) for a discussion of how language was used in Maoist China to incriminate political opponents.
the famous statements of Lin Biao that said, “If you don’t lie, you cannot do big things (Ma, 207).” This seems to demonstrate the role played by the pronouncements of Mao and others held in reverence in legitimizing the discourse of violence and discrimination.

Ma Shitu dedicates an entire chapter (Ma, 189-200) of his memoir to Red Guards. Through his observations, Ma found Red Guards to be equally the victims of the Maoist discourse. Ma sees Red Guards as mostly young, naive and idealistic. They were reportedly influenced by Party propaganda that made Mao seem the ultimate saviour for them. It was thus natural for them to respond to his call to save the country from capitalists and revisionists. As regards the violence and radicalism displayed, Ma writes about the loudspeakers and big-character posters that replayed Mao’s words that “revolution is not like entertaining a guest, is not composing a piece of literature….”, it was thus only natural that violence took place (Ma, 194).

This observation is interesting because it attempts to portray the Red Guards in different light. While descriptions of personal ordeals of the intellectuals show Red Guards as a fanatic, unscrupulous lot, Ma’s analysis goes further to analyze what made them act in the way they did.

Describing the appearance of Red Guards, Ma writes that typically, they would wear an army style cap with a red star in the front centre, green PLA style shirts and trousers with an arm band that said “Hong Wei Bing” (Red Guard). Most importantly, they wore an expression of disgust and indignation towards those
incriminated and that of righteousness as they carried out the revolution. This according to Ma was a result of years of education and indoctrination. As youth of an impressionable age, these people strongly believed in class consciousness. Hatred towards class enemies was a natural and integral aspect of this. Under the CR discourse, class hatred was further required to be manifested in action. It therefore took the form of physical and/or mental torture, carried out in ‘righteous indignation.’

Ma writes about a Red Guard who unlike others tried convincing Ma through words and debate rather than forcing confessions through beatings. Ma describes how the civilized manners and sincere attitude of this Red Guard changed his notions about Red Guards. Previously, he believed actions of the Red Guards to be purely a case of instigation and indoctrination, with rational analysis or understanding playing little role in their minds. In contrast, this Red Guard, who was a University student, had a well thought-out theoretical explanation regarding the necessity and significance of the CR. He understood the CR in the concept of ‘Continuous Revolution’ (Jixu Geming, also translated as Permanent Revolution) put forward by Mao. He explained to Ma how Red Guards were doing the same thing as he did to the previous generation of people in order to further and continue the revolution. While none of these arguments convinced Ma, it did lead to new insight regarding the CR as a movement and its flag-bearers. Unlike the view Ma held earlier, now he saw Red Guards as a group that had not only accepted the rationale for the CR but had a theoretical justification for the same, allowing their faith and belief in the revolution to be integrated.

140 In variance to the Trotsky’s concept, Mao’s concept involved a series of continuous revolutions that were expected to ultimately usher in communism.
within their personality and outlook. These people ardently believed the CR to be the third great milestone in the communist revolution and a great contribution to Marxist theory (Ma, 200). Ma speculates that the change of discourse following 1981 must have been more painful for these people. This as it would have shaken the very basis of their belief system.

Ma Shitu writes that being a veteran communist and senior cadre, he was quite experienced in political campaigns. Ma reports that he had also been the target of campaigns several times before the CR (Ma, 18). During the initial phase of the CR when he was asked to attend ‘learning classes’ Ma knew that it was just to prepare ground for criticism and struggle. This knowledge came from the past experience of participating in political campaigns. However, Ma also writes that despite this, he sincerely wanted to carry out self-criticism and accept the criticism and help of others (Ma, 19). Later on, he found it strange why inspite of knowing the nature of these campaigns he actually thought people would patiently listen to his self-criticism.

While in hindsight Ma finds his expectation unfounded, it only underlines the effect of the prevalent discourse. Criticism was experienced not as a bare act of maltreatment by a group of people on him. Instead, it was alleged that Ma had been a plain expert overlooking revolutionary consideration. The definition of the ideal combination of red and expert, or a proletarian outlook was as elusive as that of a bourgeois-capitalist outlook or overemphasis on expert. Therefore, intellectuals like Ma were powerless when faced with allegations that they had by mistake crossed over to the wrong side. By the paradigm established, the only
recourse then was to carry out self-criticism and accept re-education at the hands of the revolutionary masses.¹⁴¹

Ma also describes how towards the end of his ordeal, he diligently compiled three sections of his review of past mistakes. While many of the mistakes he confessed to have made in his review were fabricated, Ma informs readers that it was necessary as all the policies and priorities of cadres and intellectuals were now seen through the prism of Expert versus Red. While pragmatic imperatives could not be ignored previously, the discourse of red then weighed overwhelmingly upon the minds of people. So in effect, Ma had to negate almost everything that he had ever done. Ma quotes the example of the wage system used in China till the end of the first five year plan to explain. According to him, the system of counting work hours and level of expertise was expected to encourage innovation and hard work through incentive. The more one worked the more returns one would get. There were also put in place tangible benefits for invention and innovation. However, all this came to be criticized subsequently as bourgeois-capitalist practices which encouraged selfishness and individualism. Material incentive in turn was taken to be tantamount to revisionism. Thus an ‘egalitarian’ system was put in place. This naturally led to a drop in efficiency and worker enthusiasm. Also, projects got frequently delayed. Despite knowing these, Ma had to criticize his thinking as aiding capitalist restoration (Ma, 398).

¹⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of the paradigm of criticism and self-criticism and how it affected personality development in PRC see Zhang Zhengsheng 张正生, “Piping yu Ziwo Piping” Yingxiang Xia de Zhongguo Dalu Renge Leixing “批评与自我批评”影响下中国大陆人格类型[Personality Types Under the Influence of “Criticism and Self-Criticism”] (Taipei: Youshi Wenhua Shiye Gongsi, 1986)
Yu Guangyuan also recalls that on several instances both during the CR and earlier, he had carried out self-criticism with regard to some belief of his, but later come to realize that his ‘self-criticism’ was incorrect. One specific example of this is provided in the memoir. On the issue of according degrees for university graduates, Yu had held the belief that a degree could reflect the academic level of competence a candidate had risen to, and also set a benchmark for reference where required. During the CR, Mao Zedong criticized the system of conferring degrees as encouraging people to seek name and fame. Mao believed that it led to a divorce from politics and reflected a bourgeois way of thinking. This reportedly caused much confusion in Yu’s mind. The overwhelming effect of a statement by Mao is reflected in the fact that Yu sincerely started believing that he had perhaps overlooked the political implications of the system, focusing purely on the academic aspects. This made him automatically stand on the ‘expert’ side of the ‘Red’ and ‘Expert’ debate. Yu mentions in his memoir specifically that in all the struggle sessions instituted against him, this matter was never the focus. Nor was he asked to self-criticize with respect to his thoughts on the matter. However, Yu voluntarily and sincerely did the same and brought himself to believe that he had indeed gone astray in terms of political consciousness. At the end of the section Yu writes that despite taking pride in his rational and independent thinking, even he fell prey to the overwhelming atmosphere of the Cultural Revolution.\footnote{Hu Ping writes about this psychology of victims during CR as an inability to resolve the paradox between personal conviction and loyalty to the leader and Party. While ‘victims’ believed strongly in their own innocence, once criticized by leaders they could no longer protest. This as reverence for leaders and loyalty to the Party was a cornerstone of their belief system. See Hu Ping 胡平, “Lun Ren de Xunhua, Taobi yu Fanpan – Cong Zhou Tuo Wo Muqin de Zisha – Yi Wen Tanqi” 论人的驯化、逃避与反叛 – 从周陀《我母亲的自杀》一文谈起[On the Domestication, Escapism and Revolt of People – Starting with Zhou Tuo’s My Mother’s Suicide ], Minzhu Zhongguo (July 1991):64.}
Ji Xianlin also confesses that all along the CR, he himself believed in the revolutionary nature of the movement. This was even though he suffered severe criticism and corporal violence without substantial evidence of wrongdoing on his part. Ji reasons that when even those who were at the receiving end did not believe in their innocence, it was all the more unrealistic to expect the revolutionaries to be soft. Ji writes that it is this realization that led him to the conclusion that those who instituted the beatings and those who received them were equally victims of the CR; what was different was the position in which they stood (Ji, 1). As is apparent in these statements, while the responsibility for personal ordeals is seen as residing with identifiable individuals, their actions on the other hand are seen as motivated by a larger discourse. This complicates if not challenges the notion that the CR was simply the result of erroneous leadership and exploitation of the same by some groups.

Ji Xianlin led a largely apolitical career prior to the CR. As such, he was spared of most political campaigns. At the time when the CR was launched, Ji was in the countryside guiding the Socialist Education Movement there. Interestingly, Ji talks about a sense of ‘original sin’\textsuperscript{143} when describing the feeling that gripped him as he pondered over things in the cowshed. Ji writes about his own internal transformation from an apolitical academic to someone who felt increasingly guilty for his individualistic pursuit and orientation. This guilt was primarily responsible for making Ji speak out in favour of one of the rebel factions in Beijing University. His comments in turn triggered off his ordeal.

\textsuperscript{143} Yuanzui 原罪.
In an essay attached to the memoir, Ji writes about his experiences and thoughts through the years of his life. With regard to the period falling after the establishment of the PRC, Ji writes that though he did not understand the communists or their ideology, the liberation of China came as a welcome break from corrupt Nationalist rule. After some years, Ji increasingly felt guilty for his bourgeois tendencies that were so divorced from the reality of China. Ji reportedly felt sinful and was prepared to conduct self-criticism anytime, anyone asked him. At that time, cadres, workers and the PLA became idols whom Ji respected. Ji writes that during the political campaigns immediately after liberation like three antis and five antis, he criticized himself repeatedly for his thinking and actively participated in the campaigns. However, Ji writes that the campaigns started getting blown out of proportion with the Anti-Rightist campaign when thousands of intellectuals were branded rightist. Many of these people were not depurged until two decades later (Ji, 246).

The effect of the Maoist discourse is evident when Ji writes about the feeling of guilt for his individualistic pursuits. Relentless propaganda about the ideal of a selfless individual serving the masses had established standards that intellectuals in China had to reach. While pragmatism required definite work to be done by intellectuals, with a swing in political climate, ‘revolutionary character’ would be emphasized and all actions out of pragmatism criticized as ‘expert’ or neglecting ‘red.’ Intellectuals were thus required for their work, yet always vulnerable for the work they had done.144

144 This argument is also offered in Chakrabarti, Mao, China’s Intellectuals and the Cultural Revolution, 55.
There is a repeated mention in Ji’s memoir of how at various points of time (like when a nationwide campaign to eliminate four pests was launched or when the communes were setup during the Great Leap Forward), Ji could have been disillusioned. However, this did not happen. At each instance, Ji Xianlin suppressed his instincts and believed in what propaganda and slogans said. Ji writes that even after the Cultural Revolution and the ordeal that he went through, he supported Mao’s saying that a Cultural Revolution was required every 7-8 years and had to go on for seven or eight years at a time. In an emotional statement, Ji writes that he had been dreaming for forty years of his life. He had worshipped idols for forty years. Ji also writes that after all these years, and now when he hears others showering praises on him, sometimes he feels a certain guilt from inside. Specifically, he feels that he should have committed suicide then. That he did not probably showed that he was of weak character. That he could not stand up against injustice by sacrificing himself while others did so seems to make Ji guilty of living (Ji, 216).

In sum, the break from civil war and stability brought about by the Communist Party was welcomed and appreciated by the intellectuals. As much of the Party’s victory was attributed to Mao, the respect for him grew rapidly in people’s minds. This coupled with years of propaganda and indoctrination rendered any criticism of Mao or his policies virtually impossible. The standards set by Mao for intellectuals eluded clear definition. There was no uniform method of determining what constituted ‘red’ and what was ‘expert.’ The judgement was largely left to the ‘masses’. The masses on the other hand were not completely free to judge but operated under the influence of the discourse mandated. Thus when Mao alleged
that capitalist roaders and bourgeois-reactionary academic authorities had
infiltrated the Party, all those in power and position became suspect. Those who
constituted revolutionary masses on the other hand responded to the call to
criticize and struggle against the class enemies.

Yang Jingyuan observes that “According to the convention observed during all
movements of the past, to start with, in order to fully mobilize the masses
[Emphasis Added], clear policies would not be enunciated. It was only when the
movement drew close to an end that lines would be demarcated. It would then be
stressed that contradictions of different nature should be treated differently” (Yang,
99).

This observation reflects a certain pattern discerned by Yang in political
campaigns of the PRC. While appalled with the manner in which the CR was
carried out, Yang was able to draw parallels with campaigns of the past and also
with the campaign against alleged 5.16 elements that took place after rebel
activism came to an end. The statement above seems to suggest that it was
general practice to issue only general (and thus ambiguous) guidelines at the
beginning of a campaign. As Yang points out, it was to “fully mobilize” the
masses. **This seems to suggest an intended turning of people against a group
of people labelled ‘enemies’**.

The paradigm of criticism and self-criticism was an integral part of political life in
China that provided the only way to liberation after allegations were brought up
against a person. Intellectuals thus carried out self-criticism, sincerely (atleast
outwardly) believing in the charges brought against them by others or their selves. Though subjected to great difficulties and maltreatment, intellectuals only blamed particular persons who carried out the revolution unscrupulously. They could not question the discourse that turned them into class enemies.

The Resolution of 1981 however marked a change in discourse whereby a revision was made in the appraisal of both the Cultural Revolution and Mao Zedong’s later years. It seems to have introduced much confusion in the minds of these intellectuals. While the negation came as a statement of consolation for the ordeal suffered by them, it also pointed out to the fact that intellectuals themselves had never considered themselves to be victims. Instead, they had seen themselves as people who strived hard to return to the ranks of the people and faced hindrance at the hands of unscrupulous people. This was in spite of the numerous opportunities they had for disillusionment. The inability to see through seems to have triggered off a search for answers that seems to have led intellectuals to stumble upon issues such as discourse, its propagation through control over information, pre-eminence of leaders and lack of institutionalization. That these answers have not been explored or studied in the public domain in China seems to instil a fear of recurrence in intellectuals. We examine these issues from the meditations of the five authors in the following section.

5.3 Inadequacy of present assessments in PRC: Lessons of the CR

In their memoirs, intellectuals repeatedly express concern at the prevalent amnesia in Chinese society towards the Cultural Revolution perceived by them. They
emphasize that amnesia towards history would mean facing the risk of history repeating itself. What is implicit here is that lessons have not been learnt from the CR.

For instance, in the preface to her memoir Yang Jingyuan writes that her purpose of writing the memoir is so that the period of Cadre school life that affected many Chinese intellectuals was not forgotten. Yang calls for an objective investigation into the history of the period as against the complete negation of the experiment in present assessments. Yang also fears that the lessons learnt through the painful experiences would be lost permanently if the era was allowed to slip into public amnesia (Yang, 3).

The reason for writing the memoir for Ma Shitu is that the younger generation in China allegedly suffers from near complete amnesia regarding this part of Chinese history. Ma tells readers that the older generation remembers its scars while the middle-aged (reference to Red Guards) remember their wasted years. The younger generation however remains uninformed about the CR. Citing reasons for this Ma writes that firstly, the CR does not figure substantially on any textbook they read. More importantly, the stories told to them by their elders seem too fantastic or absurd to believe (Ma, 474).

Yu Guangyuan on the other hand writes that there are three kinds of amnesia with regard to the CR in China. One, caused by the passage of time, is natural and inevitable. Another kind involves intervention by historical research and education to slow down the process of amnesia with regard to events of crucial
importance. While yet another involves intended and imposed amnesia with regard to certain historical events. Yu calls for a distinction to be made among the above. He believes that the lessons the CR holds for the Chinese people are too great to be forgotten. Hence, an attempt should be made to systematically study and record the CR (Yu, 3).

It is interesting to note here that Yu seems to be hinting towards the presence of a force operating in favour of intended and induced amnesia. This is apparent from his reference to the third type of amnesia and the idea that there are certain forces still at work that promote amnesia. Yu by the act of writing his memoir is at once resisting the amnesia imposed by that force and also enlarging the base of materials (albeit at a micro level) for future research on the CR. The two functions performed go well with his exhortations regarding the CR research and education.

In resonance to others, Ji Xianlin fears that unless people who witnessed or experienced the CR write their experiences down, it is well possible that the lessons of the CR remain unlearnt. Then, in the future, there might again be some people who lose their mind. According to Ji, he waited for a long while hoping that CR veterans who survived the ordeal would come out with a narrative of their experiences, but he was reportedly disappointed. Ji writes that he hoped for long that someone would come up with a comprehensive narrative of experiences during the CR. However, he was disappointed. Ji expresses anxiety over the fact that many of those who had these experiences are old or have already passed away. In just two decades since the CR ended, Ji finds that people seem to have all but
forgotten what happened. Ji mentions that in his interaction with the youth of China he often found that they hardly knew much about the CR and considered experiences narrated by people to be exaggerated. This makes Ji feel extremely sad, lonely and importantly anxious (Ji, 5).

The fear of amnesia towards the CR is typical as in the case of other intellectuals who lived through and survived the CR. The recurring theme of CR lessons not having been learnt points out to hidden fears that are not explained explicitly. In a hint towards the same, Ji writes that if a factual record of this great calamity could be made, it could act as a mirror for the great Chinese nation. Looking into this mirror often would provide unlimited benefit. It would tell us, what kind of things should be done and what kind of things should not be done. It would definitely do no harm (Ji, p.5).

Eloquent pleas such as that of Ba Jin to establish a CR museum are also quoted by intellectuals as one method of preventing amnesia. For instance, referring to Ba Jin’s call for building a CR museum, Ma Shitu writes that that there is no sign of any movement to build the museum should come as good news to ‘many people’ who would like the memory of the CR to move on from loss to complete amnesia. Ma says that the Chinese people should not forget the CR as even the foreigners had not forgotten it. Ma opines that the CR, that was unprecedented in history left so many souls with deep scars, made the Chinese nation lose several years of development, destroyed numerous artefacts, wasted golden years of the youth, made China lose a number of her resourceful citizens and badly damaged the moral fabric of the nation cannot and should not be forgotten (Ma, 475).
Xianlin too writes that China somehow does not seem to be interested in studying why all ethics disappeared and barbarism returned during the CR. According to him, foreigners were studying these things.

What is implied in these statements is that present assessments of the CR in PRC that inform collective memory are insufficient for this purpose. The part about foreigners not forgetting the CR on the other hand is perhaps a reference to research into social issues and contradictions that might have fuelled violence and factionalism witnessed during the CR. That mainstream historiography in PRC is restricted to a broad narrative of important political events seems to render it insufficient for the purposes of learning lessons as far as these intellectuals are concerned. It is perhaps believed that through a resolved narrative of the CR, these assessments aid amnesia towards the movement. Specifically, all the excesses of the CR were attributed to Lin Biao and Gang of Four cliques besides Mao’s misgivings. However, this treatment of the CR would mean that the issues raised by the CR were resolved with the death of Mao and Lin Biao and the arrest of the Gang of Four. As for complex issues such as social contradictions and the role played by indoctrination, propaganda and manipulation of discourse, lack of detail in the Resolution inhibits consideration.

Memoirs of the intellectuals contest this idea of dealing with the CR in broad terms. As seen in Chapter two, this approach was suggested by Deng Xiaoping to the committee in charge of drafting the resolution of 1981. Intellectuals argue that it is only by conducting a thorough enquiry into the CR and all its aspects that its recurrence can be avoided. In an unusually direct statement, Yu Guangyuan
objects to the concept of talking broadly and not specifically about the CR. Yu finds that a lack of attention to specifics would leave crucial questions unanswered. Yu also emphasizes the importance of educating people in history so that past mistakes are not repeated (Yu, 136-137). Cong Wexi also refers to the present policy of ‘suppressing debate’ on the CR as being responsible for lack of thorough investigation into millions of cases where people were beaten to death, struggled to death, died in captivity or simply disappeared (Cong, 147). It is implicit that only by understanding the CR in minute detail can reasons for why people acted the way they did be explained.

As for what intellectuals consider the exact reason for a possible recurrence, only veiled hints emerge from the memoirs. Deng Xiaoping and his speeches during early post-CR days are carefully yet extensively quoted to point towards the lack of rule of law, democracy, and institutional guarantees to individual freedom. Cong Weixi records a saying during the CR that “whether you change a thousand times or ten-thousand times, it can never be the same as a change in policy once, whether you are good thousand times or ten-thousand times, it is never the same as one good policy.” In effect, this meant that irrespective of behaviour or attitude, a person’s fate was sealed by policy handed down by the Party (Cong, 292). The statement reflects frustration experienced by people like Cong who could not measure up to the standards of Party despite repeated efforts to ‘remould their thinking’ and shed their bourgeois-capitalist outlook. It also underlines the fact that there was no uniform procedure or definition by which to judge a case of alleged counter-revolution.

145 Yi cu bu yi xi, 宜粗不宜细 as proposed by Deng Xiaoping in his comments regarding the draft of the 1981 Resolution.
It must be kept in mind that these issues are being mentioned again at least two decades after they were first discussed by Deng Xiaoping. This coupled with the claim that lessons from the CR have not been learnt suggests perceived lack of implementation or practice. A more direct elaboration by the authors in this regard is perhaps inhibited by the fact that these memoirs were published in China. Authors thus quote Deng Xiaoping’s speeches to voice their ideas regarding the issues raised by the CR.

In his meditations regarding the reasons for violence during the CR, Ma Shitu says that the history of Chinese society must be looked into. Ma asserts that the CR cannot be attributed to one single person or a group of persons. Instead, it had deeper historical and social roots. He quotes Deng Xiaoping once again to say that “while it had a relationship with the thought and actions of some leaders, but the problems with organization and work system are more important.” (Ma, 476) Ma sums up the ills present in the Chinese political system as remnant effects of feudalism. Borrowing from the explanation of the Resolution, Ma writes that individuals (and not collective leadership) came to control organization and organization was reduced to a mere tool. This inevitably led to a swing back to the Confucian system of vertical social hierarchy with King at the top and subjects down below the position of each buttressed by his allegiance to his superior.

Ma writes that the Cultural Revolution was but inevitable considering the course of development followed by China then. The lack of socialist democracy or intra-Party democracy had to lead to some form of CR sooner or later. Ma adds that in
reality the CR was not the one that started in 1966, instead it had its roots way back during early days of liberation when the Chinese shouted *Wansui* (literally: 10,000 meaning “Long Live…”), when they sang “The East Is Red” or when they called Mao the great saviour. Ma writes that even the *Internationale* that the entire eastern block sang said that it was not by gods or angels but by the self that proletariat could be liberated. However, the Chinese proletariat sang praise of Mao. Mao became the “Red Sun”, the “saviour” and finally the “most Red Sun.” The people then shouted *Wansui Wansui Wan Wan Sui* as they used to do for the emperor during ancient days. According to Ma, the primary reason why the CR happened was that some people’s consciousness remained stuck at a particular stage of history. Importantly, Ma adds that China was unable to realize equality and democracy even of the bourgeois capitalist stage, not to talk about socialist democracy. That a CR should happen thus seems quite natural to Ma.

Ma writes that while what happened is regrettable, it has left the Chinese nation with important lessons for the future that should not be ignored. Deng Xiaoping is said to have led the Chinese people in summing up the experiences of building the nation so that they could start a glorious chapter in Chinese history. Ma also writes that Deng’s theories were a result of the experiences that came from the course of history. Had he put forward the same theories earlier, not only would they have been unacceptable, he would have been accused of counter-revolution. Thus the theory of Deng Xiaoping should be seen as the natural result of correct summarizing of experiences and lessons from the Chinese history.
The connection between immediate past history and acceptability of Deng’s policies in Ma’s meditations seems to suggest that it was because of the chaos and disorder witnessed during the CR that Deng’s policies became acceptable. In different circumstances, the same idea would have constituted revisionism. Indeed, Mao’s primary source of discontent against Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping was what he considered to be their revisionist policies. In an important statement, Ma writes that he is thankful that unlike his predecessors Hua Guofeng did not engage in a bloody struggle for power with Deng Xiaoping and gave up his position ‘obediently’ when confronted with criticism for his ‘whateverist’ attitude. Ma quotes Deng Xiaoping to say that the whateverist attitude was something passed down to the Chinese by old China and it showed that the influence of feudal authoritarianism remained. Paying tribute to the present regime, Ma ends the section by saying that his mind was finally put to rest when power passed on to the hands of Deng Xiaoping and a prosperous era in the history of China was inaugurated. References to the beginning of peace and order after ‘smashing’ or Gang of Four and beginning of the prosperous era are made in all memoirs.

However, while the memoirs carefully quote Deng Xiaoping and his statements and congratulating the CPC for having realized the importance of democracy, freedom of speech and thought and rule of law, references to the 1979 suppression of Xidan Democracy Wall movement, campaign against the ‘three kinds of people’\textsuperscript{146} in 1983 or the 1989 suppression of the students’ movement at Tiananmen Square are conspicuously absent. Considering the fact that these

\textsuperscript{146}Reference to ‘people who rose in power by rebelling alongside Lin Biao or Gang of Four cliques, people with serious factionalist state of mind and people who indulged in anti-social activities such as beating, looting and destruction of property.
memoirs were published in the late nineties, the omissions seem to have been a conscious choice. This silence, combined with praise for the ability of the CPC to ‘learn from past mistakes’ is potent with meaning. It seems to reflect a certain fear for continuing sanction to the Party to act arbitrarily and unilaterally. The Party can continue to carry out campaigns against ‘the handful’ counter-revolutionaries through propaganda and control over media. This was demonstrated during the incidents mentioned above.

Hinting that lessons have not been learnt, Ji Xianlin writes that everyone in China is in agreement that the Cultural Revolution had neither culture nor revolution in it. It was nothing but a decade long catastrophe. The experience of the CR could prove to be useful if lessons were drawn from it. However, Ji writes that China has been unable to use the experiences fully. Ji also writes that he has been thinking for long about why the CR could happen. However, he concedes that he has been unable to answer the question. He feels that there are those in China who can answer this, but they do not want to. While Ji does not clarify who these people are, he writes that if ‘they’ came out frankly and sincerely with the reasons for what had happened, the nation and people including intellectuals would thank them. They would finally be able to put their minds to rest. This can enable China to finally move forward (Ji, 219).

The statements show that intellectuals like Ji Xianlin do not consider the issue of the CR resolved. This is despite the final verdict on the CR that was delivered in 1981. The memoirs thus hint at what is missing from Chinese research on the subject: An inquiry into why society acted in the way it did? Only hints emerge
from the memoir to suggest that it is the pre-eminence of the Party, lack of rule of law and monopolization of information and media that were ultimately responsible. The continued ignoring of this problem then seems to perpetuate trauma and thus memory of the CR for the generation.

Ji’s statements also highlight the function played by memoirs as accounts of individuals who had traumatic experiences. The fear for recurrence is typical in such cases, especially when factors that led to sufferings are still perceived to exist. The function required therefore is to secure guarantees against recurrence.

Ji writes that till date most intellectuals who were victims of the revolution are full of discontent, they have been unable to give vent to the anger inside them. However, the new generation is completely unaware of this. Ji uses an anonymous quote to tell readers of the popular belief that “the CR has passed, there is no need to bother about it again.” Ji reviews the entire history of the People’s Republic and how after liberation intellectuals, especially academics were repeatedly attacked and criticized. Ji admits that even he never once doubted the necessity or purpose of the campaigns and actually participated in them actively. Though, Ji was not affected by the Anti-Rightist campaign, he nevertheless supported it and took part in it in the capacity of one among the people.

Ji opines that while the Scar Literary Movement of 1977 exposed some scars of intellectuals, the authors are all very young, they do not have the same amount of scars as the older intellectuals who for various reasons are not writing about their
experiences. Ji finds this situation potentially dangerous. At the same time, Ji quotes hearsay to say that there are still some people who consider intellectuals to be “hair on the skin of imperialism.” Ji writes that if such people were allowed to enter politics, intellectuals will perhaps go extinct.

5.4 Conclusion:

To summarize, an important function of the memoirs comes to fore in this chapter. The function is that of calling for more democracy, freedom and rule of law in China. The call is not openly voiced, but presented as equivocal subtext that readers can discern with reference to context. This is achieved by making congratulatory remarks regarding the successful summing up of lessons of the CR, while omitting references to incidents following the CR that would taint the picture of successful summing up.

Dissatisfaction with present assessments of the CR is quoted as reasons motivating the authors of these memoirs to make a record of their personal experiences. As seen in previous chapters, the content of these memoirs attempts to piece together a relatively complex picture of the CR and the ordeal of intellectuals. Detailed descriptions of maltreatment of intellectuals serve the function of highlighting the community’s victimization and calling for safeguards to prevent future attacks. At the same time, the failure of intellectuals themselves to assert their innocence or protest the treatment leads them to realize the influence of the Maoist discourse that both the victims and the perpetrators acted under.
While Mao Zedong and the Gang of Four are no longer in the scene, the control over information and media by the Party continues. This is protested by the memoirs in criticizing the suppression of debate on the CR or the notion of dealing with the CR only in broad terms. Suppression of the democracy wall movement in 1979, students’ demonstrations in 1986 and finally the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 prove the continuing ability of the Party to act arbitrarily. Each time, the suppression was followed by a campaign of propaganda that blamed a ‘handful’ of miscreants as responsible for counter-revolution, while the rest were misled or innocent.147

147 See “Shoudu Qunzhong Jianjue Yonghu (Beijing Shi Zhongji Renmin Fayuan) dui Fangemingfan Wei Jingsheng de Panjue”首都群众坚决拥护(北京市中级人民法院)对反革命犯魏京生的判决[Masses of the Capital Firmly Support the Judgement (of the Beijing Intermediate People’s Court) against Counter-Revolutionary Wei Jingsheng], Renmin Ribao 23 October 1979, 4; “Shanghai Yi Xie Daxuesheng zai Fansi: Shang Jie Youxing Gao Da Minzhu Bu Kequ”上海一些大学生反思: 上街游行搞大民主不可取[Some Students from Shanghai Reflect: Going to the Streets, Demonstrating and Making Great Democracy is Not Worth Emulating], Renmin Ribao 2 January 1987, 3; “Beida Yi Xuesheng Gei Beijing Ribao Xie Xin, Jielu Fang Lizhi, Li Shuxian Caozong Wang Dan Gao Dongluan”北大一学生给北京日报写信，揭露方励之李淑娴操纵王丹搞动乱[A University Student in Beijing Writes a Letter to Beijing Daily Exposing how Fang Xizhi and Li Shuxian Manipulated Wang Dan into Fomenting Chaos], Renmin Ribao 17 June 1989, 1. Also see Zhang, “Piping yu Ziwo Piping”Yingxiang Xia de Zhongguo Dalu Renge Leixing, 56 for a critique of critique of CCP’s mass line. The formula according to Zhang has essentially been that of dividing the masses, controlling the masses and finally exploiting the masses.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The focus of this study has been on the debate on the collective memory of the CR between five autobiographical narratives written by intellectuals and the dominant master-narrative embodied by CPC’s Resolution of 1981. The study set out by understanding the manner in which the CR is portrayed by each side, questioning the motives and interests of each party, and the function performed by their narratives.

In terms of function it was seen how the CPC narrative plays the function of negating the CR and yet asserting legitimacy for having brought it to an end. In terms of content, the Resolution and other histories that expand on it are seen as interested essentially in a narrative of power/ideological struggle, paying little attention to how the CR unfolded in the society. More specifically, this representation fails to address how the CR was experienced in the society. There is no elucidation of factors that fuelled violence, chaos and fighting either. Excesses of the CR are simplistically attributed to erroneous leadership of Mao and its exploitation by Gang of Four and Lin Biao cliques. The Resolution does mention a “minority of careerists and opportunists” as responsible for the ordeal suffered by people, but does not expand on who these people were or how they were responsible. In sum, the CR is portrayed as a great catastrophe that lasted for one full decade, but what this ‘catastrophe’ involved is not dealt with in detail.
It is this gap that memoirs of intellectuals attempt to fill. Detailed descriptions of personal ordeal of the five intellectuals bring to light the manner in which the CR was experienced and the people who were responsible for their ordeals. These included Red Guards/rebels, interrogators and the ‘revolutionary masses.’ Descriptions of maltreatment and violence buttress the victimization of the community and complement the official narrative in negating the CR as a period of suffering.

However, the narratives go further to demonstrate how the actions of both perpetrators and victims were equally influenced by the existing discourse. Intellectuals accepted the charge that they had prioritized work instead of politics while the rebels heeded to the call to participate in the class struggle and continued revolution of Mao Zedong. Radical actions of Red Guards/rebels thought condemned by intellectuals are also seen as the result of instigating remarks by Mao Zedong, Lin Biao etc. The Maoist discourse of ‘people’ versus ‘enemy’, the sanction for ‘dictatorship’ against those labelled ‘enemies’ along with repeated exhortations to ‘bombard the headquarters’ or that ‘revolution is not entertaining guests….. it cannot be gentle’ removed the need for restraint and encouraged radicalism. The CR discourse, which drew from and yet radicalized Maoist discourse thus emerges as responsible for much of the ordeal suffered by intellectuals. In this sense, the memoirs seek to enhance collective memory of the CR to a more complex understanding of people and agencies involved.
The search for answers as to why they were unable to assert their innocence or protest the treatment meted out seems to have led intellectuals to stumble upon indoctrination with the Maoist discourse that was achieved by propaganda and control over information.

The ability of the Party to create and master a discourse and invoke it arbitrarily then emerges as the root cause for the excesses of the CR. As Yang Jingyuan observes, it was convention to issue only broad guidelines in order to fully mobilize the masses. Only later would specific instructions come down. This shows intentional ambiguity in instructions that reserved the authority for final judgement and interpretation always with the Party.

It must be acknowledged that the connection between the preeminent status of the Communist Party of China and what happened during the CR does not emerge clearly from the narratives. However, statements such as that quoted above provide some clues. Cong Weixi also writes that irrespective of how one changed, it was never the same as a change in policy. This points towards the totalitarian system with arbitrary rule of Party and its leaders, instead of rule of law as responsible for what happened during the CR. Congratulatory remarks for the Party led by Deng Xiaoping having successfully summarized the lessons of the CR along with a conscious omission of reference to crackdowns on protests and spontaneous mass movements in the post-CR era form a powerful contrast. These along with the allegation that China has not learnt its lessons from the CR seem to indicate the present concerns of intellectuals.
However, there remain definite inadequacies in the representation of the memoirs. For instance, memoirs fail to provide answers as to why Red Guards and rebels responded so enthusiastically to the call of Mao to ‘bombard the headquarters.’ Apart from indoctrination and charisma of the leader that emerge as reasons in the narratives, present research points towards the stratification of society and presence of underprivileged groups at the time in China. These underprivileged groups who were discriminated against by the regime then were the most radical in their actions against the existing regime.148

Alongside complementing and challenging the official narrative, memoirs also perform the function of highlighting the victimization of the intellectual community. Detailed descriptions of traumatic experiences along with the portrayal of authors as selfless, patriotic citizens devoted to the nations development amplifies this image of victimization. The intellectuals also use the official notion of ‘decade long catastrophe’ to emphasize their own ordeals. However, as seen in chapter three, the experiences of intellectuals during the period are not completely reconciled with the idea that the catastrophe lasted for a whole decade. In this sense the official narrative and that of the intellectuals seem to be in partnership, albeit for different reasons. The official narrative extends the CR to include events beyond 1969 to blur the line between the CR and Maoist discourse. Intellectuals on the other hand borrow the concept of ‘decade long catastrophe’ to buttress their claims of victimization. Their experiences during the CR however offer a relatively complex picture.

In sum, the dominant official narrative on the CR presents a resolved image of the CR where those responsible for the CR either passed away or were brought to book. The narratives of intellectuals on the other hand complicate this image by demonstrating the roles played by specific groups of people. More importantly, the narratives bring to light the presence of a discourse that validated and justified what were otherwise blatant violations of human rights and dignity. The narratives also seem to inform collective memory of the society about the continued presence of conditions that could lead to a CR like situation. However, this function of the narratives is undermined by the extremely muted, vague and equivocal statements made in the memoirs. However, the memoirs manage to highlight the presence of a discourse under which people operated. This can be expected to trigger a search for factors that led to the creation of the discourse.

6.1 Memoirs as oppositional inputs into collective memory:

As seen in the last three chapters, through attention to detail of personal experiences, the memoirs bring to light factors that fuelled violence and maltreatment of intellectuals during the CR. The master-narrative of the CPC glosses over or neglects these altogether. Specific examples of these aspects would be the function played by Party propaganda, ability of the CPC to rally one group of people against alleged ‘class enemies’ by invoking the discourse of ‘people’ versus ‘enemy’, the creation of incentives for violence and maltreatment of alleged class enemies etc.
In this sense, the narratives perform the function of challenging the dominant discourse on the CR. It must be remembered that these memoirs were published within China. For purposes of acceptability therefore, each of the five memoirs considered in this study parrot the official negation of the CR and pay tribute to the ‘smashing of the Gang of Four’ and subsequent lessons. However, as mentioned earlier, through a subtext, they also attempt to dwell on factors responsible for the ordeal suffered by the authors, many of which remain unaddressed in mainstream historiography in China. These concerns are voiced to various degrees of clarity in each case. These include the very direct references of Yu Guangyuan and quotations of Ma Shitu on the one hand and ambiguous yet evocative statements of Yang Jingyuan and Cong Weixi on the other.

However, these narratives by themselves remain a far cry from presenting a comprehensive or representative picture of the CR memory in the Chinese society. To arrive at such an account, inputs from several other groups such as Red Guards, worker rebels, PLA officers and members of the Cultural Revolution Small Group and its offices would be required. Experiences of other intellectuals would also need to be included in such an account. Considering the fact that many did not live to tell their tale, still others might be too traumatized to come up with an oral or written narrative, the project of compiling the history of the CR from the perspective even of just the intellectual community remains difficult.

Narratives from other communities such as Red Guards and rebels can be expected to further complicate the debate on CR memory by pointing towards inadequacies and possible misrepresentation by intellectuals. With the negation of
the CR, those who were targets of the revolution became ‘victims’, while those who carried out the revolution became perpetrators. This mitigates representations by Red Guards and rebels that could portray the CR or their own roles in favorable light. Memoirs are often seen to contain subjective judgments of the authors on people around them during the CR. Especially problematic among these are judgments pertaining to motives behind actions of Red Guards/rebels that portray them as rash, unscrupulous and fanatic. Written from the perspective of ‘victims’, these narratives can be questioned for credibility of their judgment of those who were carrying out the revolution. Also, in resonance to the official narrative, the memoirs written by intellectuals discredit the CR as a revolution. Through portrayal of immense sufferings intellectuals buttress the collective memory of the society that the CR only epitomized chaos, violence and suffering. It must be noted that recent research such as that of Yue Ma has brought to light a different genre of literary writings in the 90s that portray the Cultural Revolution experience as non-traumatic, acting as counter-narratives to what the author refers to as trauma narratives of the CR. The research demonstrates the efforts of some writers to extricate their CR experience from the dominant collective of trauma narratives by demonstrating how culture and innovation thrived during the CR.

However, that there are found similarities and resonances between each of the five narratives that are otherwise set in different places and pertain to different personalities is of importance. These narratives also contain resonances in the manner in which the CR is portrayed with other episodic, partial or even fictional

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149 See footnote 15
narratives of intellectuals’ experience during the CR.\textsuperscript{150} Together these narratives attempt to piece together and rehabilitate the history of the CR in the Chinese society that they allege is slipping out of public memory. While the representation provided by memoirs can at best be only inept sources for history, they become important inputs into the collective memory of the society. Indeed, the call for preventing the CR from falling out of memory is a recurring theme in each of these narratives. Each attempt to reflect upon experiences of the author to demonstrate what really went on during the CR at the social level. In this sense these narratives are engaged in bringing to collective memory those aspects of the CR that are marginalized and ignored.

6.2 Lessons of the CR:

The negation of the CR also came as an attestation and acknowledgement of the hardships experienced by intellectuals who were attacked during the period. As such, intellectuals could be expected to negate the CR, attesting the official narrative in return. While this is indeed the case to some extent, the narratives studied in this dissertation present a more complex picture. While negation of the CR is explicit, there seems to exist disillusionment among these intellectuals towards promises of freedom and openness that were made during the immediate aftermath of the CR. While memoirs make congratulatory statements on how the Party and its enlightened leadership summed up the lessons of the CR, reference

to incidents of arbitrary actions and roll-back of freedom are conspicuously absent. Few such incidents were the crushing of the Xidan Democracy Wall movement in 1979, the campaigns against spiritual pollution during early eighties, crackdown against the students’ movement in 1989 etc. Considering the fact that these memoirs were published in the late nineties, this omission seems to have been a conscious choice. In this sense, if Hairui is dismissed from office was indeed an allegory protesting the dismissal of Peng Dehuai in 1959, it can be said that memoirs of the Cultural Revolution act as allegories protesting a replay of authoritarian and arbitrary action on the part of the Party. Memoirs such as that of Ma Shitu and Yu Guangyuan write directly about lack of intra-Party democracy, collective leadership, legal guarantees to freedom and rule of law as factors that allowed arbitrary treatment and violence towards intellectuals. The creation and control over information seems to continue to put the Party in a position to divide people into ‘people’ and ‘enemies’ and direct ‘dictatorship’ against the usually ‘handful’ miscreants. This seems to have been demonstrated repeatedly in the events mentioned above and whenever public action seemed to threaten subversion to the Party. This manner of appealing for freedom and democracy to overwhelm conservative opposition inside the Party and then rolling back the freedom alleging subversion or counter-revolution is a much repeated theme in PRC history. This is brought to light evocatively in the memoirs as lessons that have not been learnt from the CR.

With reference to collective memory, it can be said that memoirs written by the five intellectuals enter into separate relationships with narratives of three groups
informing collective memory: Fellow victims, Red Guards/rebels and finally, the Communist Party of China.

In case of the relationship with other intellectuals who were persecuted during the CR, the narratives could be seen as an effort to present the immense sufferings of the generation of intellectuals who suffered during the CR. While experiences of intellectuals as a community can exhibit variations, elements of the narratives such as descriptions of struggle sessions, detention in cowsheds, house raids etc are events that many identify with. It also buttresses the claim to ‘victimization’ of intellectuals through tales of suffering and incarceration. In this sense, the relationship that these narratives enter with other intellectuals of the generation is mutually consoling and affirming.

In case of the second group, the relationship is marked with much tension. The Red Guards and rebels (including worker rebels and fellow intellectuals) are seen by intellectuals as largely responsible for much of the ordeal suffered by them during the high tide of the revolution. As such the two groups can be expected to see the CR in very different light. Furthermore, while the weight of Party ideology lay with Red Guards and rebels during the CR, it shifted to the side of the intellectuals after 1981. This makes open opposition by former Red Guards/rebels to denigrating descriptions difficult. While some Red Guards and rebels might indeed have been unscrupulous, it can be debatable if taken as generally representative of the community. Indeed, in some published interviews
Red Guards also speak of victimization and betrayal in their own right.\footnote{See, Yarong Jiang and David Ashly, \textit{Mao’s Children in the New China} (London: Routledge, 2000); Laifong Leung, \textit{Morning Sun: Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation} (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).} Hardships faced during the rustication period by former Red Guards also form their claim to suffering. Though the memoirs selected for this study show that Red Guards/rebels were also affected by discourse then prevalent, the relationship the narratives enter in with the memories of the Red Guards/rebel community is that of potential tension and contention.

The relationship these memoirs enter in with the Communist Party or the CR narrative thereof is by far the most complex. It is also that of primary interest to this study. The relationship is complex for it contains both complementary and contradictory aspects. The negation of the CR by the CPC was accompanied by an acknowledgement of the sufferings of the intellectual community in China. As mentioned earlier, pronouncements of Deng Xiaoping during the late 1970s and early 1980s were replete with exhortations for democracy, transparency, institutionalization, rule of law and notions that promised guarantees to ward off any CR like scenario in the future. As victims of the CR decade and much of the Maoist era, intellectuals found favour with the regime that seemed both sympathetic and supportive of them. Their meditations on the CR and the last years of the Maoist era could then be expected to share the negation of the experiment with the Resolution. While this is indeed the case, as demonstrated through chapters three and four, it is not the case entirely. Intellectuals are indeed critical of the manner in which they were attacked and persecuted. They also decry the destruction of relics and public property and the time that was lost. However, they also attempt to bring out the lessons of the CR to remind their
audiences that the factors that fuelled the CR continue to be present. Specifically, the pre-eminence of the Party and continued license to the Party to act arbitrarily seem to suggest that the lessons summed up by Deng Xiaoping in the immediate aftermath of the CR have been overlooked. The relationship that memoirs enter into with the Party is that of explicit affirmation and implicit or veiled criticism.

In sum, while Xu Zidong’s analysis of contemporary fiction in China demonstrates a trend towards simplification of the CR as a calamity that came to rest with good triumphing over evil, autobiographical narratives written by intellectuals seem to complicate the CR by presenting it in relative complexity and hinting towards unresolved issues. The narratives also attract criticism as they are seen to be claiming ‘victimization’ of intellectuals to the exclusion of others. A more boisterous debate on the issue in China is precluded by the censures that disallow all communities to narrate their own version of the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, if the best way of sustaining memory is its perpetual irresolution and debate, the memoirs definitely go some way in sparking this.
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APPENDICES

Appendix I  Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China of 1981

According to the Resolution, the CR is divided into three periods:

a. From the launch of the CR to 9th Party Congress (1969)

This period basically includes the release of 5.16 communiqué and the ‘16 points’ that are said to have marked the beginning of the CR. A Cultural Revolution Small Group (CRSG) was setup during this period and vested with considerable power of the central committee. Peng Zhen, Luo Ruiqing, Lu Dingyi, Yang Shankun etc came under attack as an anti-Party clique. The resolution notes that this period also marked the beginning of the erroneous struggle against the so-called headquarters of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Mao’s personality cult is said to have grown greatly and Mao’s left oriented erroneous leadership replaced collective leadership of the Party completely. Lin Biao, Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng and Zhang Chunqiao reportedly used the CRSG and called for the destruction of everything and full-scale civil war. Veteran leaders of the political bureau and military commission gave a series of talks in February 1967 criticizing the mistakes of the CR; this was labelled the ‘February Counter-Current’ by the CRSG. Many veteran cadres including Zhu De and Chen Yun were criticized and struggled against. The resolution notes that dispatching PLA troops to stabilize
the situation became necessary and effective, but brought along some undesirable effects. The 9th Party Congress is said to have endorsed and continued the mistakes of the CR and increased the authority of Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng in the centre. The resolution states unequivocally that the guidelines of the 9th Party Congress were wrong politically, ideologically and in terms of organization.

b. 1969 to 10th National Congress of the CPC in 1973

This period includes the attempt by Lin Biao’s clique to grab supreme power in a coup. When the attempt was exposed, Lin reportedly tried to escape from China and died in a plane crash in Mongolia. The resolution states that this was the consequence of overthrowing all basic tenets of the Party, and that objectively exposed the bankruptcy of both the theory and the practice of the CR. Zhou Enlai is then said to have taken over the daily business of the centre under the support of Mao. Zhou corrected many erroneous policies and criticized the ultra-leftist tendency. However, Mao believed that the main problem was that of extreme-right, the 10th Party Congress appointed Wang Hongwen (one of the later Gang of Four) as vice-chairman of the Central Committee. Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen, are said to have formed the Gang of Four by this time
According to the resolution, during this period, Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen and others launched the “anti-Lin, anti-Confucius” campaign. Though the campaign was outwardly presented as against Lin Biao and Confucian thought, in reality it targeted Zhou Enlai. When Mao found out about this, he is said to have criticized Jiang etc and used the term ‘Gang of Four’ for the first time. Mao is also said to have pointed out that they were plotting to form a “cabinet.” By 1975, Zhou’s health deteriorated and under the support of Mao, Deng Xiaoping started taking care of administrative work. Deng reportedly convened a number of important meetings to put the economy back on track. Dissatisfied with his actions, Mao launched a campaign against Deng and the right-deviationist wind. After Zhou’s demise in January 1976, many people in Beijing assembled at the Tiananmen square in defiance to orders to express their sorrow for the death of Zhou. The resolution states that this reflected mass support for the Party led by Deng Xiaoping. Mao is said to have erroneously deemed the Tiananmen incident as a counter-revolutionary one and subsequently expelled Deng from all posts inside and outside the Party. After Mao’s death in September, the Gang of Four reportedly started working to seize supreme power, but the Central Political Bureau led by Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying and Li Xiannian managed to smash the gang and arrest its members. This reportedly marked the end of the Cultural Revolution.
Appendix II  Brief vitae of authors of the five memoirs

1. Cong Weixi (Pseudonyms: Bi Zheng and Cong Ying)

Counted among the important contemporary writers in China, Cong Weixi was born in 1933 in a small mountain village in Yutian county of Hebei province.

Cong was admitted to Beijing Normal College in 1950. He started publishing his writing starting the same year. After graduating in 1953, he taught in a primary school. In 1954, he became the literature and arts editor and reporter for Beijing Ribao (Beijing Daily). In 1957 he was labeled a rightist during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. This inaugurated 21 years of hardships for Cong. After rehabilitation in 1979, Cong returned to Beijing and became a member of China Literary Association and Chief Editor of Writers Press.

Cong Weixi published several mid-sized novels based on his experience during labour reform starting in 1979. This included Daqiang Xia de Hong Yulan. He started writing long novels since 1984. Bei Guo Cao was his first long novel, published in 1985. In 1989 he published the widely acclaimed Zou Xiang Hundun. He also published various short and long novels subsequently. He is often referred to as the father of “Wall Literature” (Daqiang Wenxue) that is characterized by a cold and depressing style of writing often having a shocking effect on readers.
2. Ji Xianlin

Ji Xianlin was born in 1911 in Qingping County Linqing City (formerly Qingping County) in Shandong Province. He is a renowned paleographer, Indologist, translator, historian, and writer,

Ji Xianlin was educated by a private tutor during childhood. Later, he studied at Sanhejie Primary School and the No.1 Middle School in Jinan City before entering Shandong University. In 1930, Ji was admitted to Tsinghua University as a major in Western literature. In 1935, he went to Germany as an exchange student to study ancient languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, Tocharian, and so on. He received his PhD in 1941.

Ji returned to China in 1946, and was appointed professor in Peking University under the recommendation of Chen Yanluo. Ji founded the Department of Eastern Languages soon after, acting as dean of the department. Two years after the Cultural Revolution, Ji was appointed vice-President of the University. He also headed the Institute of South and Southeast Asian Studies.

In 1956 became a member of the Communist Party of China. The same year he was elected commissioner of the Chinese Academy of Science's Department of Social Science. He later became a deputy of the 6th National People’s Congress and a deputy of the 2nd to 5th Political Consultative Conference.

Ji Xianlin has a long list of publications including translations of Sanskrit epics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, essays on cultural exchange between India and China, essays and research on Buddhism etc.
3. Ma Shitu

Ma Shitu (pseudonym) was born Ma Qianhe in 1915 in Zhongxian of Chongqing city. He was an active participant in student movements during mid-1930s in Shanghai and Nanjing where he attended middle school and university respectively. He became a member of the Communist Party in 1938 and acted as member of Hankou Staff Committee, Ebei Special Committee and Secretary of the Zaoyang County Party Committee. In 1939, Ma began writing for *Xinhua Ribao* (Xinhua Daily).

After liberation in 1949 Ma Shitu held various positions in Party and administration. These included vice-head of the organization department of the Party Committee for the western region of Sichuan, head of the office of development of Sichuan province and member of development committee. He was also the Party secretary of the Southwestern branch of China Academy of Sciences, vice-head of the propaganda department of the southwestern bureau of CPC etc.

Ma published a short novel entitled *Lao San Jie* in *Sichuan Wenyi* (Sichuan Literature and Art) in 1959. He published various short novels such as *Zhao Hongjun, Jie Guanxi, Xiao Jiaotongyuan* etc in *Renmin Wenzue* (People’s Literary) and *Jiefangjun Wenyi* (PLA Literature and Arts). He published his first long novel in 1966 entitled *Qing Jiang Zhuang Ge* that was banned during the CR and brought much criticism on Ma.
4. Yang Jingyuan

Known more as a translator than a writer, Yang Jingyuan was born in Changsha city of Hunan province in 1923. She graduated from the foreign languages department in Wuhan University before pursuing graduate studies at the department of English in the University of Michigan.

After liberation in 1949, Yang Jingyuan served in the Bureau of Translation and Editing of the Central Press Office. Later, she also worked as editor of People’s Press. She spent over three years at the cadre school in Xianning during the Cultural Revolution. Out of nearly 200 people who were sent to Xianning, Yang was the only one to publish a lengthy and detailed account. Yang Jingyuan is presently a member of China Writer’s Association and China Translator’s Association.

Some of the works Yang has translated include *The Bronte’s Story*, *The Letters of Charlotte Bronte*, and *Harriet Tubman* etc. She has also published various novels in Chinese such as *Xie Gei Lianren, Rang Lu Riji* and most importantly *Lian Ren Xuexiao – Wu-Qi Ganxiao Shenghuo Yi Qian Ri* later published under the title *Xianning Ganxiao Yi Qian Tian*
5. Yu Guangyuan

Eminent scientist, philosopher and educationist Yu Guangyuan was born in Shanghai in 1915. Like Ma Shitu, he participated in the 29th January student’s movement in 1935. He graduated from the Department of Physics in Tsinghua University in 1936 and became a member of the CPC in 1937. He was elected committee member of the administrative body of the Philosophy and Social Sciences division of the China Academy of Sciences in 1955.

In 1982 Yu Guangyuan held the post of vice-head of China Academy of Social Sciences and vice-head of National Committee for Science and Technology. He was also elected as committee member of the Central Advisory Committee during the 12th and 13th Congress of CPC. Yu published various academic papers and monographs throughout his career.

Starting in 1993 he began publishing essays such as *Gu Xi Shou Ji, Sui Si Lu, Wenge zhong de Wo* (Myself during the CR), *Pengyou he Pengyoumen de Shu* etc.