

身份、仪式与政治：1956年后中共对资本家的思想改造

Status, Ritual, and Politics: The Chinese Communist Party's Ideological Remoulding of Capitalists after 1956¹

Feng Xiaocai 冯筱才

Translation by Sean James and Weng Wenjie

Abstract

In 1956, joint state-private enterprises were established in all industries nationwide. This certainly did not mean, however, that the “socialist transformation” of industrialists and merchants had been completed. In fact, they were still labeled “capitalists (*zibenjia*)” and forced to undergo continuous ideological remoulding. During this remoulding, the status of capitalist became a kind of political tool. Through the definition and redefinition of this status those being remoulded found themselves in a state of insecurity, while the process of remoulding itself attained continued legitimacy. To accomplish the task of remoulding, people from industrial and commercial circles were drawn into frequent campaigns of political study. However, such study most often took the form of a ritualized process, in which the authorities valued political declaration over inner acceptance, and during which the enforced recognition of legitimacy was established. This kind of pragmatic political culture not only reflects the internal contradiction within the policies of ideological remoulding, but is also closely associated with the later turbulent period.

Keywords: Ideological remoulding; socialism; status; ritual; political culture

Translators' Introduction

In “Status, Ritual, and Politics: The Chinese Communist Party's Ideological Remoulding of Capitalists after 1956,” Feng Xiaocai asks an arresting question: “Why, even after the transition to joint state-private enterprise had been completed in 1956, did the CCP still insist on carrying out its policy to remould private industrialists and merchants?” His answer is that it was politically expedient for the Party and for Mao to keep “capi-

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talists” as an object to struggle against, despite their property having been mostly expropriated. In the process, Feng sets out to give a picture of the “everyday life of ideological remoulding,” showing the different approaches to ideological remoulding in Central directives and local practice. He distinguishes the experience of capitalists and intellectuals, noting that the ideological remoulding of former capitalists, unlike that of intellectuals, was “a ritualized process—the authorities were less concerned with their inner commitments than with their public political declarations.” CCP cadres were not concerned with changing the former capitalists’ minds so much as with ensuring their submission to state authority and cooperation in economic management and development. This marks a departure from earlier remoulding with a focus on “journeys of the heart,” as detailed in Huang Daoxuan’s essay on Rectification in Yan’an (translation forthcoming)

Feng documents these points by drawing on contemporary publications and archival records. The “bourgeois elements” who underwent remoulding understood that “their performance during remoulding was directly related to their future destinies.” What mattered was not the sincerity of their performance, but extent of their willingness to publicly humiliate themselves and defer to authority. However, even the most contrite confessions could not easily lead to a change in status from former capitalist to socialist intelligentsia or proletarian. Further, in 1958, Mao Zedong quashed attempts to bring the ideological remoulding of bourgeois elements to a close through the rewarding of the repentant with proletarian status. Those, like Li Weihai (the director of the United Front Work Department) who failed to pick up on Mao’s changed goals soon lost their jobs. Feng asks, “Why was Mao Zedong so interested in preserving a capitalist class?” surmising, “It is likely directly related to his thinking on inner-party power struggles.” If the bourgeoisie were eliminated, then all talk of ‘inner-party capitalist-roaders’ would be out of the question.” As Li Fangchun’s article does for land reform (translation forthcoming), Feng here emphasizes the instrumental over the purely ideological purposes of “remoulding,” providing a new and compelling interpretation of this phenomenon. In contrast to Li, however, Feng here has a more critical reading of the pragmatist face of CCP politics.

Professor Feng Xiaocai (1970-) is a professor in the History Department at East China Normal University in Shanghai. His research focus is twentieth century Chinese history, with a particular emphasis on integrating political, social and economic history. His interests include the interaction of politics and business, nationalism, political

mobilization and mass movement, native identities and voluntary associations.

The year 1956 marked a comprehensive transformation of property rights in China's private industrial and commercial sectors. In January, Beijing municipality took the lead in declaring the establishment of industry-wide joint state-private enterprise management, after which other regions followed in succession. By the end of the year, the "socialization" of private enterprises had essentially been completed nationwide. After all industries were placed under joint state-private management, the original owners received fixed monthly interest payments but forfeited all managerial control. Paradoxically, however, although the enterprises had been socialized, millions of previous owners continued to be labeled "capitalists" and were forced to undergo continuous ideological remoulding.

Current scholarly research on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) ideological remoulding policies concentrates primarily on intellectuals, specifically focusing on the ideological remoulding movement in intellectual circles during the early period of the People's Republic of China (PRC).¹ In fact, "ideological remoulding" was a political action targeted not solely at the intellectual; its targets also included, at a minimum, a broad range of "bourgeois elements." Indeed, ideological remoulding of industrialists and merchants continued throughout the period from 1956 until after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. However, this ideological remoulding was a ritualized process that was more formulaic than the remoulding of intellectuals. Scholars concerned with the transformation of private industry and commerce have paid more attention to the process of the dissolution of property rights, whereas research on subsequent changes to the fate of industrialists and merchants is lacking. Why, even after the transition to joint state-private enterprise had been completed in 1956, did the CCP still insist on carrying out its policy to remould private industrialists and merchants? I think that the reason is related to the CCP's pragmatic considerations. Most scholars contend that it was only after 1978 that Chinese politics started to present its typical quality of pragmatism.² But I think that this new political tradition can be traced back even earlier. In the 1950s, behind the upsurge of ideological propaganda, we can still discern the kernel of pragmatism. During the CCP's ideological remoulding campaigns of capitalists after 1956, such pragmatist politics, in combination with ritualized political education, constituted an everyday life of ideological remoulding that would continue

for over twenty years and influence the fate of countless individuals. By researching the actual process of this reform, this article will examine the vicissitudes of the CCP's ideological remoulding policies towards private enterprises after 1956 and further probe related features of political culture from the mid-1950s.

“Capitalist” Status and Ideological Remoulding

Marxist theory defines “capitalists” as those who, in the process of commodity production in capitalist society, employ the means of production to exploit the surplus labour of the workers.³ After 1956, the economic base of the capitalist class no longer existed, but the authorities still insisted that the capitalist label of the former owners of private industry could not be removed. The reasons were, first, because many still received “exploitive” fixed interest payments, and second, because they still carried a “negativity” that was contradictory to socialist construction. Ideological remoulding was, therefore, still urgently necessary.⁴ From the actual changes in policy, however, it can be seen that in practice the inability to abolish one's bourgeois status undoubtedly had a more complicated background.

In September 1956, responding to local policy consultations, the State Council's Private Enterprise Reform Office had pointed out that:

When bourgeois elements request that their class status be changed, in principle, it should be approved when the transformation of the capitalist ownership is completed. Transforming the class composition of the capitalists too early will not only give rise to passivity and restlessness among the capitalist class, but will also be detrimental to current education and remoulding efforts.⁵

Therefore, the issue of the identity of industrialists and merchants was, in fact, an arrangement pertaining to the political situation as a whole. At the United Front Work Conference at the end of 1958, the Provincial United Front Work Department of the Party Committee of Hubei province put forward a relatively systematic explanation for why they could not agree to removing the “bourgeois element” label from former capitalists. They believed that retaining this label had at least four advantages:

1, it is beneficial in carrying out the remoulding of them and maintaining our political initiative in order to better deprive them of their political capital; 2, it will benefit our domestic and international influence, strengthening ourselves and isolating our enemies; 3, taking care of their lives will ensure

their peaceful submission to remoulding; 4, maintaining an opponent will keep the people vigilant.⁶

From a political perspective, these four reasons were geared primarily toward the maintenance of an “opposing” class by restricting industrialists’ and merchants’ right to political equality. Following United Front thinking, the authorities also considered these so-called “bourgeois elements,” “bourgeois intellectuals,” and their relatives as a cohesive “class”: they, numbered over 30 million people, were concentrated in large and medium-sized cities, and they had a considerable impact on politics, economy, and culture. Within this structure, “bourgeois intellectuals” were regarded as the ideological and cultural representatives of their class, while members of “democratic parties” were defined as the “political spokesmen” of capitalists, and so, of course, “bourgeois elements” were naturally their social base in the economy. Therefore, the issue of ideological remoulding of industrialists and merchants related not only to the political status of this group, but was also a strategic measure to resolve the political identity, or the “secure use,” of those outside of the “worker-peasant alliance.”

This so-called “secure use” mainly refers to the practical needs of the authorities, after the socialist transformation, to take full advantage of the professional talent and skill of the remoulded strata. In fact, this is also a fundamental backdrop to China’s “peaceful remoulding.” However, these people usually had received a certain degree of education or even had the experience of studying abroad before 1949, and were associated with the former regime or its “reactionary social base.” Therefore, how to make use of their expertise while avoiding “political risk” became a difficult problem for United Front work. In his May 1957 article, “Things are beginning to change,” Mao Zedong acknowledged that “throughout our country we have several million bourgeois elements and intellectuals who once served the old society, and we need them to work for us,” but based on security considerations, Mao indicated that it would require “a long period of time” to remould them.⁷ Consequently, at the outbreak of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, officials made a comprehensive criticism,⁸ targeting Zhang Naiqi and others who believed that there was no essential difference between bourgeois elements and workers and that both of them had a dual nature.⁹

As a matter of fact, for both those who had been remoulded and the grassroots cadres in charge of remoulding, the capitalists’ identity was not purely an ideological issue, but was closely associated with economic interests and privileges. Because “bourgeois” or “capitalist” were discriminated against as political statuses after 1956, it was

easy for cadres in grassroots work units (danwei), who faced a scarcity of resources, to set aside employees with these political “caps,” not giving the same benefits as they did others. For example, in October 1962, the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee’s United Front Work Department discovered that a phenomenon of discriminatory treatment existed in many areas towards “bourgeois industrialists and merchants,” who were given few or no state rations.¹⁰ A disparity in medical treatment was even more apparent. The authorities had stipulated that private-side personnel who were employed in joint state-private enterprises and had assets valued over 1,000 yuan were expected essentially to bear such expenses themselves.¹¹ Trade union membership was another focal issue. After the establishment of joint state-private management was completed in all industries, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions had believed that industrialists and merchants could join the unions once they forfeited their fixed interest payments. However, high-level CCP economic officials in charge were concerned that industrialists and merchants joining trade unions would be an extra burden for the government. Therefore, at the end of 1956, Chen Yun indicated that he disagreed with the suggestion that all industrialists and merchants could be absorbed into the trade unions after forfeiting their fixed interest, suggesting instead that each application should be judged individually. At the time, membership in a trade union was not merely a name on a piece of paper, but was decisive in determining concrete economic and even political benefits.¹² A union membership card at the time could even be seen as a sort of political ID, which, crucially, could often affect all family members.¹³ This grassroots reality was far different from official policy declarations.

The unchangeability of their bourgeois identity likely had a negative impact on former industrialists and merchants and certainly on the deployment of their skills and abilities. Therefore, during the subsequent ideological remoulding processes, the CCP would continue to categorize “bourgeois elements” according to their political standpoints – Left (progressive), Middle (centrist), Right (backward) – to distinguish different personnel. This ranking in fact resulted in disparities during the process of remoulding: progressive elements could gain the opportunity to change their status, whereas backward elements might suffer severe punishment. This ranking mechanism was a source of tremendous mental stress for the former industrialists and merchants who were being remoulded, as well as a form of incentive for political performance. From the sources we can see that, more often than not, the distribution

of such rankings in each work unit was generally small at the edges and great in the middle. That is, the centrists who “go with the flow” usually comprised the majority. For example, the results of the political and ideological ranking of six departments in Jinan’s industrial and commercial system in 1957 demonstrated that “progressive elements” comprised 18%, “backward elements” 22%, and centrists 60% of the total bourgeois elements.¹⁴ In fact, this ranking policy served to redefine the status of “bourgeois elements” and the authorities used proportional changes in the numbers of each section to demonstrate the effectiveness or the necessity and rationality of remoulding.

Of course, the entire series of measures implemented to deal with the bourgeoisie, whether remoulding or ranking, was closely related to broader developments. After 1956, “underground factories” and self-operated industries appeared one after another in several regions, and after the Anti-Rightist Campaign the CCP attributed this development to the continuing spread of bourgeois ideology, and thus reemphasized the necessity of remoulding capitalists.¹⁵ With the “Four Cleanups Campaign” in the early 1960s, the CCP launched a socialist education campaign of bourgeois cadres and core elements. Several representative figures from industry and commerce became the movement’s targets.¹⁶ Criticism of “representative personages” also indicated a major turning point in the CCP’s United Front policies: it was no longer protecting “representative personages” but rather putting them on stage for criticism and subjecting them to “ruthless struggle.” From early 1965, the authorities began to spread anti-bourgeois propaganda through various media, exposing the “criminal history of the bourgeoisie.”¹⁷ In fact, this was also a harbinger of the later massive confiscations and large-scale struggle sessions against capitalists.

Ritual: How was the Ideological Remoulding of the Bourgeois Conducted?

To conduct ideological remoulding, first of all one must convene a meeting. Meetings, for a polity whose political legitimacy is established on the foundation of the popular will, are, of course, an extremely important form of political participation. One can see from 20th century Chinese political history, however, that meetings frequently became a ritualized political process.¹⁸ This can be clearly seen in the ideological remoulding of capitalists.

When the CCP had just begun the ideological remoulding of industrialists and merchants, it particularly stressed the need to follow the principle of voluntary participation. On March 27, 1956, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) issued the "Resolution on Organizing All Democratic Personages, Industrialists, and Merchants to Conduct Political and Theoretical Study." The resolution emphasized that "participation or non-participation in study must follow the voluntary principle" and "must be implemented in accordance with the pedagogical method of freedom of thought and freedom of debate."¹⁹ Yet the implementation of this policy in various localities did not completely follow the resolutions of the CCP Central Committee. In October, the CPPCC discovered that some coercive practices had emerged when various localities organized study classes, such as "rigid inspection of thought, which could even serve as cover for undisclosed examinations of personal histories." Some emphasized training models and organized model speeches, creating among those undergoing remoulding an atmosphere in which only through self-criticism could they pass the test. Some adopted the method of "study pacts" and "making public pledges" which created a tense atmosphere. There were also some localities that held competitions for and public selection of role models. For local authorities, to rapidly accomplish the task of political study assigned by their superiors, especially to meet quotas, was a crucial way to gain political credit and to reduce workload at the same time. Thus, the problems of the excessive and overly-hasty requirements and "accomplishing ideological remoulding in a single stroke" that the United Front Work Department had criticized were not able to be solved at a fundamental level.²⁰

As a matter of fact, the CCP's United Front policy itself always changed in tandem with changing conditions. For instance, after the Anti-Rightist Campaign began in 1957, almost no one raised the aforementioned conscious, voluntary principle anymore, and in the subsequent industrial and commercial rectification movement, the style of "the Great Leap Forward" was applied mechanically, consisting mainly of exaggerated forms of exposure and criticism, baring one's heart to the Party, and formulating self-reform plans. At the grassroots level, the Rectification and Anti-Rightist campaigns were carried out as coercive mass movements. Some localities "went at it ten days and ten nights" without a break. The number of big-character posters became a crucial measure of the efficacy of the movement. But in fact, the rightists had long since been selected internally. Thus, this ostensibly vigorous movement was more a process of "legitimately producing" predetermined rightists from among industrialists

and merchants – it was purely political ritual.²¹ This process was most clearly evident in political study classes.

On March 12th, 1957, at the CCP National Propaganda Work Conference, Mao Zedong declared that “ideological remoulding is long-term, patient, and meticulous work, do not expect to transform ideology accumulated through decades of living in just a few classes and meetings.”²² Yet this requirement was difficult for grassroots cadres to fulfill, especially under changing conditions. Grassroots work units could not afford the enormous cost of long-term ideological remoulding work. Therefore, to meet the requirements of their superiors, they would necessarily adopt solutions to get results in the short-term according to the political needs of different periods. Holding political study classes became just such a shortcut. It is reported that from 1956 to 1957, over 50,000 industrialists and merchants participated in short-term instruction and training sessions and received lessons enlightening them on the subject of “smashing capitalism and building socialism.” More than 1.2 million people took part in various spare-time political theory classes.²³ Political study classes became the most crucial way for the CCP to implement ideological remoulding at the grassroots level.

Such political study classes were organized by a variety of work units. Their targets were decided according to the needs of the situation, and naturally, their aims also varied. For instance, in the second half of 1965, in order to “highlight politics,” the Department of Administration and Taxation of Industry and Commerce of Zhabei, Luwan, Changning, and Nanshi Districts of Shanghai gathered independent merchants and peddlers to hold political study classes, reinforcing political-ideological education, even though the intention was clearly associated with the taxation of businessmen and peddlers. Using the laying out of facts, reasoning, comparing past and present, “lifting off the lid” (i.e., exposing shady business), discussing right and wrong, setting goals, etc., they on the one hand instilled in them the truths of “labor has stood up and become the master” and the “superiority of the socialist system” and on the other hand, also inspired them to understand the facts of “class struggle” and to overcome “severe spontaneous tendencies.” The education lasted about one and a half or two months and the Shanghai Municipal People’s Council declared “the results very good.” In March of the following year, the Shanghai Bureau for the Administration of Industry and Commerce and Tax Bureau proclaimed that on the basis of holding study classes, it would reinforce regular political and ideological education, especially organizing and leading industrialists and merchants to study the works of Chairman

Mao and to prompt them to use the weapon of Mao Zedong Thought to strengthen their self-education and self-reform.²⁴

For bourgeois elements who underwent remoulding, their fate was directly related to performance during remoulding. Therefore, while undergoing remoulding, many of them would make declarations that went against their own will but conformed to the requirements of remoulding. They not only conducted “in-depth” self-condemnation according to the requirements of the Party, but also criticized others from time to time to show the progress of their own thinking. Liu Guojun, a standing committee member of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, published a newspaper article to show the immense wisdom of the government’s “redemption policy” (of buying-out private businesses) through his personal experience. He even wrote, “when I encountered suffering during the remoulding, I would turn to ask myself: ‘Hey, Liu Guojun, why don’t you purify your heart and become born again?’”²⁵

The authenticity of this type of personal reflection and self-censuring is clear only to the individual concerned. Conversely, the insincerity of those who criticized others during the process of remoulding can be seen in their later remorseful actions. For instance, Zhou Lianqing at the Shanghai Transport Electrical Equipment Procurement and Supply Station thought that the tone of his big-character poster exposing the rightist Wang Zaifei was too harsh, and thus he showed Wang the draft of the poster and asked for his forgiveness. This is not an isolated case. The Industry and Commerce Association of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region leveled harsh criticism at “tender-heartedness” and “struggling openly but reconciling secretly (public criticism and private apology)” in the Anti-Rightist struggle among industrial and commercial circles.²⁶

In the 1958 rectification movement in industrial and commercial circles, the authorities required industrialists and merchants to bare their hearts to the Party. Many of the remoulded equivocated and avoided real issues during the process of “giving over their heart.” For instance, the United Front Work Department of the Shanghai First Commercial Bureau complained that a consultant of the textile station, Chen Zhongping, was passive in the process of baring his heart to the Party and just spread rumors about others in order to avoid exposing his own thinking.²⁷ Xi Shengyuan, a cadre of the Shanghai Transport Electrical Equipment Procurement and Supply Station, was criticized as “having made a lot out of baring his heart to the Party, but offered little substantive analysis or criticism in his text, some of which was even

illogical.”²⁸ From one perspective, the key point of completely “baring one’s heart” was to clarify one’s political attitude in order to show loyalty. Those who only dwelled on the facts and issues, no matter how deep the reflection, were not going to be regarded as baring their hearts completely.

For this reason, in February 1960, Chen Shutong boldly wrote a couplet for the preparatory meeting of the National Congress of the China National Democratic Construction Association and the Federation of Industry and Commerce, “One heart in which to hold our six hundred million people, two eyes to keep the nine fingers in view.”²⁹ Sheng Pihua and Xu Dixin both underscored the issue of standpoint. Sheng argued that “standpoint and cognition are inseparable; we should not only take a firm stand, but also raise our awareness.” And Xu stated, “for the industrial and commercial circles, standpoint is a decisive and fundamental issue. If the standpoint changes, ideology and the way of looking at a problem will also change.”³⁰ This is no different from turning a question of thought into one of dogmatic line.

While some industrialists and merchants pandered to the authorities to give a “remoulding performance,” others adopted passive resistance to remoulding and study, rendering the “ritualization” even more hollow. The majority of the former private industrialists and merchants were tired of and antipathetic towards the “continuous remoulding” after joint state-private management had been implemented. But some of them also realized that there would be no end of the remoulding and were not willing to reveal such thoughts, preferring to “speak less and work more.” When participating in current affairs forums, they would prepare drafts of their speeches and then read them out.³¹ In 1964, the municipal party committee of Taiyuan held a study session at the China National Democratic Construction Association and the Federation of Industry and Commerce. Those dissatisfied with the reform said that “the Federation of Industry and Commerce is an ideological company, and the Political Consultative Conference is a remoulding shop – going there is asking for trouble.”³² In September 1962, a report about the reform of the private-side personnel at a party branch committee of the sales department of the CCP’s Shanghai Municipal advertising company discussed a variety of forms of “fake reform,” such as “being sensible,” “gathering amongst friends”, “finding the middle ground,” “know which way the wind is blowing and pander to the Party,” “survival of the fittest,” and “a wise man is he who understands the times,” all of which served to resist self-reform.³³ The attitude of “changing with the times” also reflected the private industrialists’ and merchants’ gradual

development, under pressure, of a strategy of ritualized political performance.³⁴

Even some elderly industrialists and merchants gradually learned how to adopt appropriate methods to avoid political risk in political study classes. An investigation found that many political study groups started discussing the “two jing and three dao” as soon as cadres or backbone elements were absent from the political study group, that is, the ‘classics’ (*jing*) of eating and playing and the ‘Way’ (*dao*) of nourishing life, making money (histories of accumulating family fortunes), and personal philosophies of life. They openly declared that within the small group they would not discuss major national issues, but only matters of daily life, and thereby avoid political errors.³⁵

Pragmatic Politics: Background to the ideological remoulding of capitalists

In 1956, while the completion of industry-wide joint public-private management was being proclaimed throughout the country, in fact, in many areas, the original internal property relations of enterprises had still not been completely resolved, and verification of assets, reorganization of production, arrangement of personnel, etc. had yet to be completed. In order to ensure that enterprises made as smooth and rapid a transition as possible, the cooperation of the former owners was especially important. Therefore, the Party used the promise of fixed interest payments in order to temporarily maintain the status of capitalists. However, through appropriate arrangements and care, the Party was able to make former owners work more effectively for the new enterprises while reducing resistance in production and operations management. Official propaganda also set the objective for bourgeois elements as “gradually remoulding them into self-sufficient working people.”³⁶

This kind of practical consideration remained unchanged by the Eighth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CCP in July 1959. We can see that it was at this meeting that the remoulding of capitalists required “political and ideological education in command, with enterprise or work positions as the base, and work or labour practice as the foundation.”³⁷ By this time we already see very little suggestion in official reports that they should be transformed into “socialist labourers.” However, the logic of the CCP upper ranks’ United Front work may not have been completely understood by grassroots cadres. Therefore, during the 1961 urban population downsizing process, in several areas the bourgeoisie were first among those added to the list

of personnel to be downsized. Even some “representative figures” (mainly members of the Federation of Industry and Commerce and the National Democratic Construction Association) were persuaded to retire. In response to this, the Central United Front Work Department and the State Council issued several documents requiring localities to ascertain the detailed technical and professional capacities of the industrialists and merchants, and to make use of those with professional experience and technical expertise.³⁸ At the same time, they demanded the localities “not treat democratic figures and management personnel as burdens to be downsized and forced out.”³⁹ “Work necessity” and “technical expertise” were important factors in subsequent handling of retirement policy for “representative figures.”⁴⁰

Within the international Communist camp, the peaceful buying out of private capitalism has been regarded as a great invention of the CCP. The CCP, having assimilated the lessons of the experience of the Soviet Union, adopted the method of “peaceful redemption” in dealing with private industry and commerce. This can be seen as the CCP’s attempt to create a new international communist experience and to surpass the Soviet Union in theory and practice in the post-Stalinist period. Therefore, after public-private joint management was completed throughout the country, the CCP invited several international friends to come observe its successful experience in the transformation from capitalism. According to an article by Sichuan Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Vice Chairman, Liu Wenhui, published in *People’s Daily* on March 10th, 1957, when delegations from the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, India, and other countries visited the Chongqing Political School for Industrialists and Merchants, trainees told the delegates that because they “received proper political and economic arrangements, in their current lives there were no problems and their future was bright. Therefore, they loved the Communist Party and loved their enterprises.”⁴¹ Such propaganda appeared not only in public reports: in internal speeches, officials in charge of capitalist transformation also repeatedly pointed out the benefits of the relatively long-term existence of the bourgeoisie for strengthening both national unity and the international communist movement.⁴²

In April 1957, Voroshilov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, made an official visit to China, going from Beijing to Tianjin, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou and other cities. During this time, the CCP arranged for him to meet with some “red capitalists.” These reformed capitalists made a deep impression on Voroshilov, who gave a lofty appraisal of China’s policy of peaceful redemp-

tion of private industry and commerce, calling China's transformation of capitalists "a great victory for the world socialist movement," and praising the CCP for having "ingeniously resolved one of the most difficult revolutionary tasks and enriched the treasure house of Marxism-Leninism with its own practical experience."⁴³ This type of appraisal of course became the greatest testimony to the CCP's creative development of Marxism.

Although the domestic and international environment had an important impact on the CCP's capitalist transformation policy, Mao Zedong's personal attitude played an even more critical role. From the mid-1950s on, Mao Zedong increasingly tended to issue guiding opinions on national policy based on "immediate" power-politics objectives, without much regard for the consistency of his own statements. He constantly adjusted the central themes of his speeches according to the needs of the current situation, coloured by short-term pragmatism. Mao Zedong's changes in attitude of course caused serious problems for administrative departments that implemented concrete policy. After 1953, the CCP's United Front policy towards bourgeois elements was continually adjusted in response to the shifts in Mao Zedong's opinions. The top director of United Front work administration at the time, Li Weihuan, paid more attention to the consistency of CCP United Front policy in attempting to follow the deployment of the Central Committee's plan to eliminate the bourgeoisie within a certain time period. However, according to currently available historical data, Mao Zedong in fact had no deadline for resolving this problem. Therefore, concerning the issue of "eliminating the bourgeoisie," Li Weihuan did not fully comprehend Mao Zedong's views, which led to a major reversal of United Front policy after 1962 and had a profound and lasting impact on the fortunes of millions of bourgeois elements.

In June 1958, Li Weihuan drafted an "Outline for the Reformation of Bourgeois Elements, 1958-1962 (Draft)," in which he proposed that, within five years or slightly longer, the ideological and political remoulding of approximately 1.14 million bourgeois elements would be complete. Beginning in 1959, those who had met the conditions would be permitted, in successive batches, to shed their bourgeois label and join the trade unions. However, in the process of reviewing the draft, the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee argued that the draft's estimation of the situation and timeline for the tasks was somewhat too pressed, and did not adequately estimate the duration, complexity, and arduousness of the struggle. The final document submitted to the National United Front Work Conference did not include the phrase "eliminating the

bourgeoisie,” and the content concerning industrialists and merchants shedding their bourgeois label was completely removed.⁴⁴ At the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee in September 1962, Mao Zedong put forward the slogan, “Never Forget Class Struggle,” indicating that there had been a “great bourgeois restoration.” He claimed that throughout the socialist stage the bourgeoisie would continue to exist and to attempt a restoration, and would become the root cause of revisionism within the Party. At this session, the work of the Central United Front Department was also criticized. In December 1964, Li Weihan was removed from his post as Director of the United Front Department. Li later admitted in his memoirs that although he “followed to the best of his ability” the changes in Mao Zedong’s thought, he felt he could not keep up.⁴⁵

Why was Mao Zedong so interested in preserving a capitalist class? It is likely related directly to his thinking on inner-party power struggles. If the bourgeoisie were eliminated, then all talk of “inner-party capitalist-roaders” would be out of the question. As a result, in order to allow inner-party struggle to be “justifiably” mobilized, “class struggle” had to become one of its big magic weapons. But when inner-party struggle temporarily came to an end, Mao Zedong’s view of the bourgeoisie changed again. Therefore, we can see, in May 1969, Mao agreed to the CCP Central Committee’s nationwide distribution of policy implementation materials related to the Beijing Northern District Timber Mill’s policy towards the bourgeoisie. Part of this material’s subject matter indicated that the policy of “unity, criticism, unity” towards “the majority of capitalists” should be adhered to, while at the same time it was necessary to give the minority of reactionaries among them “a way out,” even as they were being struggled against. At the same time, the document proposed to exempt those who were “not really capitalists” from struggle.⁴⁶ This document gave many capitalists the hope of shedding their bourgeois label, and local grassroots work units also used this opportunity to carry out a re-examination of their capitalist staff members’ status, leading some of the small merchants and peddlers, or small owners, who had been “brought in” during the high-tide of the industry-wide public-private partnership, to shed their capitalist status.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Current research on the political culture of the CCP after 1949 has focused primarily on investigating its ideological coercion and utopian idealism, with some of the most recent research investigating the CCP employed cultural symbols to construct its political rule.⁴⁸ This article has intended rather to shift the focus towards its pragmatic face. Through an analysis of the ideological remoulding of capitalists, it observes the mechanisms of its political operation from the centre to the grassroots. The difference between the capitalists and intellectuals is that the former are related to the CCP's economic policies, while the latter are related to cultural and educational policies. Ideological control of the intellectuals is easy to understand, but after socialist transformation was completed and the industrialists and merchants had lost their property rights, why did they still have to endure endless "remoulding"? From this article's research it can be seen, after 1956, the CCP (or Mao Zedong) was in fact deliberately maintaining a "bourgeoisie" to fulfill their political needs. Its instrumental purpose was obvious.

In the process of capitalist ideological remoulding, the "capitalist" status became a convenient tool. Through the definition and redefinition of this status, objects of remoulding were trapped in an insecure position, forced undergo continuous remoulding. In fact, this also endowed remoulding with an important foundation of legitimacy. Precisely because of the existence of bourgeois elements and the continued existence of class conflict, continuing to implement "class struggle as the key link" after the completion of socialist transformation seemed logical. At the same time, in repeatedly defining the political position of the remoulded and determining their differential political treatment, political ranking was also a process that set the status of those being remoulded. That the results of such ranking constantly changed only served to explain the necessity and effectivity of the work of political remoulding.

In order to complete the task of ideological remoulding, figures from industrial and commercial circles were frequently drawn into political study movements. In this political study process, rituals became a mechanism to compel recognition of the legitimacy of this process. After political study and education were ritualized, whether those who were subjected to this education took its lessons to heart was ultimately no longer important; the authorities valued the attitudes expressed during the process more than mental recognition. Through these declarations, the CCP could establish

forms of coercive recognition, and further legitimize its rule and policies. Those who had experience being remoulded also understood that the authorities needed from them a ritualized performance of allegiance, not a genuine understanding and acceptance of certain theories. The result of the ritualization of political education was that the majority of people became increasingly cynical. When people's inner world conflicts with their public declarations, their own consciousness is also rent asunder. Thus, these study processes were all ritualized, and those who did not cooperate with the ritualized process were left exposed to the application of harmful political labels.

This instrumentalization of status and ritualization of politics also reflects the CCP's culture of political pragmatism, and behind it lay actual practical considerations concerning all matters, not only the carrying out of the remoulding process and making the capitalists accept certain systematized dogmatic statements. After 1956, the variations in the CCP's treatment of bourgeois elements, ranging from the policy of the United Front to the elimination of the bourgeoisie, were related to certain economic objectives and legitimacy requirements. The different and changing context of capitalist remoulding also reflected the power ambitions within the top leadership. Ultimately, whether the bourgeoisie should continue to exist was not decided by materialist economic theory alone, but became a "political question" tainted with subjective idealism. By 1964 and after, the CCP's internal United Front policy was, in fact, hastening towards collapse, and the great storm of the "Cultural Revolution" was rapidly approaching.

Endnotes

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