整风运动的心灵史

A Xinling History of the Rectification Campaign*

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Abstract

In the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Rectification movement occupies an exceptional place. The values of rectification are of course embodied in political principle, organizational discipline, and ideology, but if we pursue them carefully, they may reveal more lasting and universal significance for the creation of the CCP’s new political culture. Rectification, in the form of a movement, through instruction and regulation, urged Party members to consciously make personal choices and arrange their personal lives according to the expectations and standards of the Party — to forge themselves into “transparent people” completely devoted to this Party. Such disciplinary practice was rare even among communist parties. Rectification’s critique of liberalism and individual heroism are not as well-known as that against dogmatism and empiricism, but carry a significance that should not be overlooked.

Translator’s Introduction¹

For the Chinese Communist Party, there are plenty of origin stories to choose from. 2021 marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Party, the Long March of 1934-5 whittled down its ranks to a few thousand, and of course the defeat of the Nationalists and founding of the People’s Republic in 1949 is celebrated each year on the first of October. But for Party members and historians, a special status is reserved for the Rectification Campaign (整风运动) that took place in Yan’an from 1942 to 1944. For while its founding gave the Party a name, and the Long March evidence of its determination, it was through Rectification that the Party forged a distinct culture, or “Party style” (党风). It did so, as with so many other origin stories, through sacrifice

by a portion of its founding members.

In China today, interpretations of this sacrifice and debates over whether it was a justified process or an excessively violent power grab remain polarized. Rectification at Yan’an established a mode of mass campaign that was to be repeated throughout the Mao years and retains currency as historical precedent into the current era. It did so through a staged campaign, in which first senior cadres and then their junior counterparts were transformed through acts of introspection, confession, criticism, and struggle. Prominent among critical interpretations and widely read in both English and Chinese is Gao Hua’s *How the Red Sun Rose*, which highlights attempts to centralize power around the person of Mao and the excesses of coercive and suppressive means (torture, sleep and food deprivation) by which Party goals were brought about.²

But within the Party culture created during Rectification, that lived on through the Mao years and survives to a degree today, the campaign is held up as a collective rite of passage. To have lived through it was not tragedy or torture, but a mark of having earned one’s place in society and in even the annals of Party history. 15 years later, for example, in the first stages of the Anti-Rightist campaign, Sichuan party secretary, Chang Sumin (常蘇民 1910–1993) counselled the young poet and reluctant dissident Liu Shahe (流沙河 1931-2019) that he should be glad that he was only going through a mild version of what Chang himself had endured at Yan’an.³ For Chang, making it through Rectification was a point of pride – a long walk through snow to school with which younger (softer) generations could not compete.

At the pivot-point of the tussle between these two takes on Rectification, though often left unstated, is a question of agency. Did those caught up in Rectification, those who suffered through its well documented tribulations, do so willingly? Was this a) a group of people who collectively led themselves through the suffering involved in a necessary reform of their Party’s culture? Or b) a group of individuals who were coerced or forced to suffer for the benefit of Mao and the Party leadership? To the historian of emotion William Reddy such volition determines one’s place in history as either hero or victim. As he notes, the long-distance runner who suffers physically and mentally to win gold is a hero, unless she does so because her state has threatened the well-being of her family if she fails, in which case she is a victim.⁴ To get to the crux of Rectification then, we need to explore not only Party goals for the campaign and the price paid for those goals by individuals, but what Rectification *meant* for those who lived it. In short, the final battleground over this history lies within the people
who experienced it.

Enter Huang Daoxuan, (黄道炫), with his xinling (心靈), history of Rectification. Huang Daoxuan’s article is unique in that while its subject is the plight of the individual through rectification, its focus is not on the degree of suffering which such people underwent (though he does not shy away from such suffering). Rather, Huang zeros in on the relationship between what he calls an individual’s “inner journey” (心路歷程) and the establishment and strengthening of the CCP regime in these adolescent but critical years.

This relationship has, in much research, been depicted as somewhat of a zero-sum game, in which the success of the Party has been purchased at the emotional cost of the individual, leaving behind victims and trauma. In Huang’s xinling history however, and in a growing field within the PRC that focuses on the emotional, attitudinal and spiritual eddies of the Revolution, a very different relationship between personal and national journeys is being laid out.

In this turn, feelings are brought to the fore not only as a target of mobilization, nor only to reveal the emotional cost borne by the individual during the advancement of Chinese socialism. Here the question of how feelings within and revolution without relate to one another is not a foregone conclusion. It is possible, in this approach, to see human sentiment as developing alongside, empowering, and even being empowered by, a revolution led from above. This is a step further than those such as Sheila Fitzpatrick took in pointing out the positive emotions associated with the Russian revolution, and parallels Jochen Hellbeck’s work, in which subjectivity and ideology are mutually intertwined and interactive. Huang is in fact more in line with what William Reddy has called for when he suggested that “emotional suffering” and “emotional freedom” are not in opposition.

In this essay, Huang takes us through the well-known terrain of the Rectification campaign with such questions in free play. He opens with an exploration of Party goals and targets, its pursuit of what was called the “transparent person” (透明人), and its shifting focus from subjectivism, sectarianism and formalism among leaders, to liberalism and individualism among regular cadres. Huang notes also the shift from a theoretical focus on Marx and Engels, to a concern with the bridging of theory and practice, and particularly to a focus on self-conscious voluntarism of the individual as a force behind Party culture. As Party leadership goals shifted from the overturning of another power to the consolidation of their own, this process was mirrored at
the personal level as individuals attempted to harmonize themselves with the Party. This meant a drive to “awaken one’s inner spirit” (內在的心靈覺悟) and a focus on the “movement within.”

This in turn required a “squaring up” to the “original sins” of many cadres – they came from precisely the class backgrounds that the Revolution sought to topple. Huang is far from the first to point out that the vanguard and early adopters of the proletarian revolution came themselves from outside the proletarian classes, and to CCP leaders this presented as a problem to be overcome strategically. But this original contradiction becomes more interesting as we experience the campaign along with its participants. For the individuals whose “inner journey” Huang follows here, it was the stimulus for deep introspection, soul-searching, self-expression, metamorphosis, and eventual “enlightenment” (启蒙). And Huang’s use of “enlightenment” is not a slip of the pen. This inward turn, he notes, was both an extension of, and a departure from, the contemplative tradition of self-reflection found in dynastic China and influenced by Buddhism.

The excavational journey to what one of his diarists calls the “depths of the soul” was not however the end of Rectification. Once spiritual oil had been struck, participants then returned to the surface to face peers with the messy contents of the self. In section 3, Huang details the process of sharing diaries, of offering self-criticism, of small group reviews, and the emotional stress but also the solidarity and camaraderie created as a result. The goal here, at the social surface, was a subjugation of the “lesser self” (小我) of the individual to the “greater self” (大我) of the group. Such subjugation was not easily obtained, particularly so because factors that caused an individual to be successful in the early stages of the revolution, such as worshiping and emulating one’s heroes, fell out of favor during Rectification as solidarity became valued over individual acclaim. In these shifting times, even relationship goals changed. One diarist, who had returned from study in France with a prominent cosmopolitan outlook, found herself transformed, repulsed by her previous life goals, and pining for an arranged marriage she had turned down that would have led to a simple life of manual labor.

Finally, Huang closes with a rumination on what he calls the “spiritual history” (精神史) of the intellectuals who lived through rectification. He suggests that we should see this critical campaign not only as a product of Mao, the CCP, or even of socialism, but as a manifestation of global contemporary impulses to secure one’s position in relation to a local, national, and global community.
English readers will have thus far been predominantly introduced to the strictures placed upon emotions and feelings by the Communist party, and its attempts to exploit emotion for political gain. Huang however pulls our point of view to one that looks out from within such strictures, and shows us how these interior perspectives could act upon the greater structures of feeling or what Barbara Rosenwein calls the “emotional community.” He shows us also that while ideology and theory certainly undergirded the practice and lived experience of revolutionaries in 1942, these abstractions could only find purchase by navigating the shifting terrains of individual emotion including resentment, jealousy, love, and hatred. In short, in order to exploit the emotional world within, revolution as a process and practice necessarily had to first navigate its roiling waters.

In this world it is certainly true that the ability to reconceptualize one’s life story or internal feelings according to party dictate was an essential skill. However, a prerequisite for such conceptualization was an initial awareness, perception, and description of that interior world. Which is to say that whatever the purpose of the introspection and journaling that took place in Yan’an in 1942, it both prompted genuine self-reflection and left behind remarkable records of the period. It is such descriptions and emphasis on the interior world that differentiates Party efforts to transform its vanguard with attempts to transform those such as capitalists, of which Feng Xiaocai shows that the Party valued political declaration over inner transformation. Huang exposes the importance of the latter, the fight against formalism, and the search for “living thought” (活思想).

Because of his source material, Huang is able to argue that the field of sentiment active and reactive in Yan’an in 1942, was, as he puts it, “quasi-coercive.” Huang’s text leaves the reader with the impression that while the CCP pursued its goals of revolution and national security, and Mao pursued his of hegemony over the Party, individuals pursued their own goals of personal transformation and security and found both inspiration and solace in the experience of revolution and in the leadership of the Party. To Huang, this means seeing Rectification at Yan’an not only as a campaign (運動) from above in which individuals were violently transformed, but also a movement (運動) within that had roots in dynastic China and found its fruition in 1942. In other words, to rectify (to correct or make true one’s ways) was by that time on the tip of everybody’s tongue, the party just gave it a name and harnessed it to its purposes.

In conversation, the historian and sociologist Ying Xing, whose work will also soon
appear on *Revisiting the Revolution*, held up Huang's *xinling* history as an alternative to Gao Hua's depiction of Rectification at Yan’an as an excessive and coercive campaign in which individuals suffered so that the Party might grow. Certainly, Huang’s take on Rectification is less sharply critical of the Party and Mao than Gao Hua’s. Some will take issue with either the whole approach or details such as Huang’s depiction of the majority of the campaign being beneficent towards cadres, with only the Rescue campaign (抢救运动) led by Kang Sheng a truly violent affair. But what emerges, and what we find valuable, is not an image of Yan’an in the years 1942-44 that is romanticized so much as humanized. This is a Rectification in which participants experienced a wide range of responses to the campaign, ranging from suicidal despair to love or hatred of fellow cadres, the nirvana of (momentary) escape from the self, and even the occasional wet dream.

Huang’s rendering of the campaign as a mixture of organizational coercion and individual voluntarism forced us in translation to find our own balance in specific renditions. As above, in Huang’s text the word 運動 is at once a political campaign, a social movement, and movement within the individual. 思想, which would almost always in histories of this era in English be rendered as either “ideology” or “thought,” (where “ideology” tends to be what others inflict and “thought” what the empowered individual does), we rendered in certain places as “thought,” and in others as “ideology” depending on whether the author was describing a normative goal, or individual action. But even in this one word the complexity continues, because Huang also moves between the idea of 思想 as something intellectual and explicable, and 思想 as the entire internal experience, including both explicable thoughts and nebulous affective and emotional states. Here, Huang moves us alongside developments in the history and philosophy of emotions, in which the dichotomies between feeling and thinking have been called into question. In conversation with the author, he made clear that ambiguity of the title was very important to him, and so in translation we have attempted to retain such ambiguity. Our choice to retain the pinyin for 心靈史 reflects this, but we welcome comment on this or suggestion for a better rendition.

This choice also reflects a trend across many of the translations published on this site, in which Chinese historians reach for endogenous sources of theoretical framing (see, for example Li Fangchun’s “What Is It to ‘Explain Antiquity’?”). Here, as is clear from his short discussion of how to deal with emotions and xinling in history that accompanies this translation, Huang is less interested in the global history of emotions
than in the specifics of China’s own inner journey. It is not a global emotional turn that Huang draws on, but primarily a concept of the heart-mind found in the writings of Wang Yangming (王陽明 1472-1529). As with Li Fangchun’s article, and as we will see in the work of Ying Xing, to engage critically with this scholarship requires literacy not only of contemporary Chinese source material, but a deeper canon of Chinese thought.

As we have noted, in certain places Huang seems a little too willing to compartmentalize the semi-voluntary rectification carried out by Party members that he describes in this essay from the harder and more violent edges of the campaign that have been vividly described by Gao Hua and others. This article needs to be read alongside rather than instead of those works. But Huang is making an important point. From a predominant view of Rectification at Yan’an as a ruthless remaking of the Party, Huang presents it as also a rite of passage both for the Party and for individuals who endured it. This is hard to square with Gao Hua’s depiction, but that difficulty in reconciling formative personal experiences with dark histories is not unique to CCP history. Joan Didion, in Where I Was From, questions the popular celebration of frontier families who made the crossing to California in the mid 19th century. The “redemptive power of the crossing,” she notes, seems hard to reconcile with memories that include the abandonment of the weak and maimed members of a train, left to die in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The history of that crossing, of course, must include both the rites of passage for those who made it, and the terrible costs for those who did not. What Huang argues for in this article is a similar balancing of historical experiences in this crucible moment of CCP history.

In 1942, the Chinese Communist Party launched a rectification campaign, and this became an iconic event in the history of the CCP, with multiple other rectifications following in its wake. Over the years the campaign has remained well known and frequently discussed in books and articles, which have sketched out its many facets. This article does not attempt a panorama of the campaign, though this remains an urgent task for historical research, nor does it try to explore the campaign through the complicated considerations of elite politics. It aims, rather, through analysis of the self-reflection reports and diaries of individuals, to record this campaign that brought about enormous inner turmoil and touched the souls of those involved, from the perspective of what I call xinling shi 心灵史. Up to today, few forces have paid as much
attention to, directed as much effort towards, or achieved so much within the inner world, as has the CCP toward the members of its revolutionary camp. The investigation of this historical process is of unquestionable significance, whether attempting to understand the Party as a political force, the transmission of human thought, or the contortion and transformation of the spirit and the tensions created in the process. No-one doubts the complexity and diversity of our inner worlds. The CCP was of course also aware of this, but still it bent to the task and attempted to render the complex simple, not only organizationally in the creation of a highly disciplined political party, but also in demanding that members, deep within their hearts, were at one with their party. To open up and transform the inner world is certainly difficult; perhaps it is matched in difficulty only by the attempt to render this work as historical narrative. At the time the CCP, following this path, came close to the fulfilment of its goals. This in no way implies, however, that today, either in reality or in history, we can find this same path again.

**Pursuit of the “Transparent Person”**

No matter how one judges the Rectification campaign, one point is clear: this was a campaign in which people’s ideas and sentiments became the target of direct transformation and rectification. Rectification shook the worlds of, and brought about inner tumult for those involved to an extent that is difficult for later generations to imagine. Chen Boda made this clear:

> Across the Party, at a certain point in time, the Rectification campaign will impact every Party member’s ideas, life, and actions. The campaign is to be a harbinger of a new phase in the history of our Party’s thought, our Party’s way of life, and our Party’s operation—as to this there can be no doubt.”

Looking back on the history of Rectification, on this point there can indeed be no doubt.

Much has been written about the origin of Rectification. Scholars now agree that aside from questions of elite politics, for the CCP as a whole the goal of the campaign was the strengthening of political, organizational, and ideological leadership, and the enhancing of organization and discipline throughout the ranks of the Party. For such a conclusion there is abundant evidence. What remains a puzzle is this: The CCP has
always been a highly politicized force, one that emphasizes organizational discipline and a strong ideology. We can indeed see Rectification as the pinnacle of this aspect of the CCP’s nature, in which organization was rendered even more tight knit, discipline even more strict, and ideology more unified. But whether, and to what extent, Rectification transformed the distinctive character of the Party, is not at all self-evident.

If Rectification played a critical role in shaping the Party, then the campaign must also have brought about a certain atmosphere and a generation of a certain kind of people. These people not only complied with the Party’s guidance in organizational and ideological principle, but also consciously made demands on themselves in accordance with the Party’s expectations and standards when it came to individual choices and personal lives. They sought to forge themselves into “transparent people” completely loyal to the Party. For the CCP and its emphasis on ideology, such compliance was a basic requirement, while transparency remained an aspirational goal. Few communist regimes attempted to carry out such transparency politically and organizationally, and even fewer launched large scale political and ideological campaigns toward this end. Rectification, carried out comprehensively across the political, the ideological, and the organizational, put this goal into practice and aimed at a complete internal metamorphosis of each Party member, an approach with few precedents in the history of communist movements.  

A commentary made by Hu Gongmian (胡公冕) sometime in 1943, soon after his trip to Yan’an at the request of Hu Zongnan (胡宗南), makes this plain:

In recent years young men and women have flocked to Shaanbei. Mao Zedong has capitalized on this trend, selecting the most promising among them for the most advanced training against sectarianism, dogmatism, party formalism, petty bourgeois thought, individual heroism etc., and formed them into core cadres without a sense of self or the individual, who at heart have only the Party and its ideology. 

To train such cadre was perhaps the more enduring and characteristic goal of the Rectification campaign.

Of course, the leaders of the campaign were not unchanging in their goals for rectification, and they adapted to changing circumstances. Most scholars note criticism during Rectification against dogmatism, subjectivism, sectarianism, empiricism, and formalism (党八股 dang bagu). They note also the rectification of Party styles of work,
writing, and studying, as well as the campaign’s enormous influence upon elite politics. Without a doubt these issues were a core part of Rectification and are reflected in all categories of Rectification documents issued by the Party Center and also in the actual playing out of the campaign. However, this kind of politico-ideological movement that targeted the entire Party in fact made quite different demands at each level of the organization. To many ordinary Party members, Rectification meant an examination of their history, an attempt to resolve problems of thought, an attack on individualism, a strengthening of the concept of Party spirit (党性 dang xing), and the establishment of a political culture of collectivism.

In 1942, the Propaganda Department of the CCP Central Committee (hereafter Central Committee) issued the following statement: “Comrade Mao Zedong’s recent report against subjectivism, sectarianism, and formalism represents a revolution in the Party’s thought, it is a keen weapon with which to correct the thinking of Party cadres and members, and with which to transform work style.” The department demanded that the entire Party carry out a large-scale movement of study and discussion. “Subjectivism, sectarianism, and formalism” corresponded to problems with styles of study, work, and writing. However, while Mao and the Central Committee consistently emphasized that Rectification was directed against the entire Party, the above three issues were most likely to occur among the ranks of middle and upper-level cadres. Precisely because of this, Mao made very clear in his July telegram to Nie Rongzhen that in Rectification “the first and most important are the senior and middle cadres, the seniors in particular. If they can be educated, the juniors will make faster progress,” and that:

In a base area, first of all, we should mainly concentrate on educating cadres at the Border Region Government and Party district committee levels and next at the county levels. If these cadres have a correct orientation, it will be easy to correct the shortcomings of cadres in the local areas and at the village levels.

In early 1943, Mao further clarified the sequence for Rectification:

The most important task of Rectification is to rectify high-level cadres (those who are most stubborn in ideological defects are among these cadres) and to clarify their thoughts. Each base area has 100 to 200 such people (including all central bureau and branch bureau committee members). Next in importance are the middle-level cadres, of which each base area has from several hundred
to several thousand. Only afterward is it the turn for the low-level cadres. Some base areas have reversed this order.\textsuperscript{19}

Nevertheless, the early stages of Rectification did indeed take upper and middle level cadres as targets. And in honing in on subjectivism, sectarianism, and the Party's own formalistic writing style, there was one thread that was ever present, either explicitly or implicitly, from beginning to end - that is, a critique of liberalism and individualism. In his report on rectification of the three “styles” (of study, work, and writing), Mao Zedong had already touched on the problem of liberalism when condemning factionalism, though opposition to liberalism was still not a priority. On April 10, 1942, Mao Zedong's “Combat Liberalism,” which had been drafted in September 1937, came out in the \textit{Liberation Daily} and substantively communicated what Mao regarded as basic Rectification requirements for rank-and-file cadres. Here Mao defined the essence of what he considered liberalism:

Liberalism stems from petty-bourgeois selfishness. It places personal interests first and the interests of the revolution second, and this gives rise to ideological, political, and organizational liberalism.\textsuperscript{20}

From this we can see that what Mao considered liberalism was a departure from the liberal tradition of Western thought, and indicated instead a sort of self-centered individualism. As Mao stressed:

A Communist should be openhearted and aboveboard, staunch and active, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and sacrificing his personal interests; always and everywhere he should adhere to correct principles and wage a tireless struggle against all incorrect ideas and actions, so as to consolidate the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses; he should be more concerned about the Party and the masses than about any private person, and more concerned about others than about himself. Only thus can he be considered a Communist. All loyal, honest, active, and upright Communists must unite to oppose the liberal tendencies shown by certain people among us, and set them on the right path. This is one of the tasks on our ideological front.\textsuperscript{21}

Because the primary targets in the early stages of Rectification were middle and upper-level cadres and the primary goal was the establishment of Mao Zedong's position of leadership, the task of opposing liberalism amongst ordinary cadres did not at first become central in the campaign. The initial goals fundamentally accomplished,
an expansion of the movement to include the wider community of ordinary cadres, and thus to achieve a wider and deeper realization of the will of the Party, became the next goal of the campaign. This continuous push to deepen Rectification meant also an advancement in its implementation. Indeed, it was this later stage that would form the most profound memories of Rectification for most ordinary Party members and cadres.

On April 3, 1943, the Central Committee issued a resolution to continue the Rectification campaign. This resolution made clear:

The primary goals of the Rectification struggle are to correct non-proletarian thought (feudalistic, bourgeois, and petty-bourgeois thought) among cadres and to eliminate hidden counterrevolutionaries within the Party. The first is a struggle between proletarian and non-proletarian thought within revolutionary ranks; the second is struggle between revolution and counter-revolution.

On April 13, the Central Committee drew up drafts no. 2 and no. 3 of a directive on the Rectification campaign. Draft no. 3 made specific mention of the problem of combating liberalism:

Liberalism is currently the primary harmful trend for intra-party struggle. During Rectification this trend must be overcome, only then can the goals of a thorough rectification be achieved...Rectification is a great ideological struggle for the Party, the weapon by which this struggle is carried out is self-criticism. Those with liberalist tendencies, however, are unwilling to wield this weapon. Middle and upper-ranking cadres are especially afraid of such self-criticism. This phenomenon must be corrected during this round of rectification.

Mao Zedong maintained a rather cautious attitude. In a letter to Kai Feng (also known He Kequan), then acting head of the CCP’s Propaganda Department, Mao stated that:

It is not yet suitable to raise the question of petty-bourgeois liberalism on May 5 of this year. As far as the whole Party is concerned, now is still the time to allow liberalism to expose itself; it is not yet suitable to come to a general conclusion.

However, Mao’s anti-liberalist standpoint was already extremely clear. In June, Mao offered a clear explanation in a telegram sent to Peng Dehuai:
It was correct to attend to the style of study in the first stage of the Rectification Campaign, but in the later stage we should attend to the style of the Party. Study style is a matter of thought and method, while Party style is a matter of practice. Only if we concentrate on Party style in the later stage (the second half of this year) can we actually apply these thoughts and methods to the practice of Party spirit, and overcome impurities in this Party spirit.

Mao emphasized that during the study of Party style, the error of liberalism should be stressed, and that liberalism within the Party should be corrected from an ideological standpoint. Mao Zedong's hope was that “if we can truly carry out rectification in this year, and cadre inspection next year, that will be a momentous achievement, one that paves the way for the Party's future.”

From Mao's formulation, we can see that as Rectification both deepened and spread, it was combating liberalism that gradually became the primary goal. At the end of 1943, the Long Dong prefectural Party committee drew up a list of six key study materials. These were: Kang Sheng's “Rescuing Those Who Stumble” (抢救失足者) (1943) Chen Boda's “A Critique of ‘China’s Destiny’” (评中国之命运) (1943); Liu Shaoqi's “On the Cultivation of Communist Party Members” (论共产党员修养) (1939); Mao Zedong's “Combat Liberalism” (反对自由主义) (1937); and the Central Committee's “Decisions on Investigation and Research” (调查研究决定) (1941) and “Decisions on Leadership Methods” (领导方法的决定) (1943). Of these, four texts focus on current trends and concrete issues, while only “On the Cultivation of Communist Party Members” and “Combat Liberalism” are foundational documents. What was called “liberalism” in the context of Rectification, in practice referred to “selfishness” (自私自利), as noted by Zhu De in his marginal comments on Mao Zedong's “Combat Liberalism.” In self-reflection documents of Party members, we can find expressions such as, “individualist thought (liberalism).” At a time when the Party was demanding a unified ideological authority, a collective lifestyle, and a pure party spirit, individualism in any sense was likely to be seen as an obstacle on the path to progress. Absolute loyalty to the Party had to be embodied not only in the political and organizational, but also in daily life, and was to be internalized into the depths of one's thought.

To a degree, politics and life were to become inseparable and party members were to become screws in the revolutionary machine. Shen Xia (沈霞), the daughter of Mao Dun, exclaimed during the Rectification movement: “On sleepless nights, when it
dawns on me that I myself have become a useful screw (even if only a very, very small one), a genuine smile, so rare in the daytime, dawns on my face.”31 It was this kind of Party member that Rectification sought to mold. One person who lived through the campaign recalls:

Through the light winds and fine rain of Rectification, and the tempest of the “Rescue Campaign” the intellectual - from head to tail, from thought to habit, from ancestors to friend and family, extending to all social relations - was dissected and cleansed again and again, had all grime washed away from spirit and body, even everyone’s private secrets were exposed. In today's language, they achieved an extremely high level of transparency. Not only did one’s own life become transparent, so did the lives of others.32

That the Party sought to foster transparent people, who hid nothing and could be read at a glance, might at first seem obvious, but on closer inspection has profound implications. It is difficult to know oneself and even harder to know others, but still Rectification sought to render revolutionaries transparent. This kind of transparency was only an ideal state, unattainable in reality, and not without some inherent incompatibility with human nature. But that a political power even expressed this desire is already sufficient to display this power’s extraordinary thirst for control and ability to dominate. Human capacity is often depleted through mutual misunderstanding. The creation of “transparent people” was supposed to reduce much of what the Party saw as meaningless conflict, and in a state of mutual understanding allow the power of the revolutionary community to develop to its greatest potential. To a political party that prioritized efficiency, this goal alone was highly attractive.

Of course, even for the CCP, the creation of “transparent people” was no easy task. Political, intellectual, and organizational purges were needed to create such transparency. In the history of the international communist movement, political purges were not exceptional. They served to eliminate opposing forces, but their great destructive power could also turn inward, as the CCP had learned through experience in the Jiangxi Soviet era. It was on the foundation of this experience that Rectification placed greater emphasis on the transformation of minds (思想改造). Building on a basic affirmation of the existing revolutionary community, it then pressed for the unification of ideology and life as a means of strengthening cohesion, and in doing so it stressed self-awareness (自觉) over compulsion. In a later address, Mao Zedong discussed the reforming of intellectuals:
Intellectuals of petty-bourgeois origin either inside or outside the Party have their wavering nature, and they have their revolutionary nature. Wavering is their bad side, but generally speaking, this can be overcome through education. As far as the situation within the Party is concerned, the Yan’an Rectification movement is proof of this...our Party provided them with guidelines and educated them. It was not commandism but an effort to gradually bring them around to self-awareness, and this has been very effective.\(^3^3\)

We can see that Mao remained confident in the path of ideological self-awakening of Rectification at Yan’an. Of course, this kind of transformation of thought and life, was not to be played out in the light winds and fine rain of introspection (反省) and self-discipline. Rather, it was carried out through the external pressure of a mass campaign, assisted by the repeatedly stimulated internal consciousnesses of each member of the revolutionary community to achieve a reconstructed world view, and through this to have everyone, without reservation, give their heart to the Party.

As Mao Zedong summarized, the first step to the Rectification was to offer criticism and self-criticism. This largely remained true throughout the campaign, either in Yan’an or in other base areas behind-enemy-lines:

All party branches must promote democracy to the greatest extent, openly call up all comrades engaging in Rectification to speak out and criticize each other, and encourage study units to produce wall newspapers and write articles to comment critically on their leaders and their work. In most cases—apart from special circumstances—such criticism should not be repressed. During this stage, all party branches ought to place emphasis on the democracy-related requirements listed in the April 3\(^{rd}\) Decision and temporarily put off those stressing close supervision. The reasons for this approach are: First, to afford an opportunity for voices below (下情) to be heard from above, to reveal every correct opinion, to develop the healthy atmosphere and to correct shortcomings. Second, to let those with mistaken opinions express these to their heart’s content so that specific and clear correction, based on this expression, may be offered. Third, to let those traitors within our ranks make use of our democratic policy, think they can exploit it, reveal their anti-Party nature, and allow both leadership and the rank and file to gradually distinguish them.\(^3^4\)

After the first stage (exposure, criticism, correction and reform) was complete, there then followed, striking while the iron was hot, cadre examination (审干) and the elimination of counterrevolutionaries (肃反). These methods were mutually complementary with rectification, as internal self-awareness and external pressure worked in tandem. This reciprocal interplay was the panacea that deeply provoked those who
experienced Rectification and brought about the transformation hoped for by the CCP. In fact, looking across the Party's history, whether as a discursive system or put into practice, the two prongs of encouragement and control were ever present and mutually supportive - neither one could be neglected.

**Self-reflection**

The social environment into which the CCP launched its revolution was vastly different from the large-scale industrial context of the communist revolution as found in Marxist theory. Today most people are aware that the manifestation of revolutionary ideology in an individual is not entirely determined by that person’s role in society. The social foundation and environment are only single elements in the playing out of revolution, they are not absolute factors, nor are they the only factors. However, such an understanding is itself formed through the experience of long-term revolutionary history. Or we could say that this understanding is itself a product of the revolution. At the time however, the views expounded by the authors of the Marxist classics held a decisive influence. This was reflected in the importance attached to a revolutionary’s class status, family background, and personal experience. It was also reflected in an extreme sensitivity of party members towards the environment of a person’s upbringing. According to Marxist principles of large-scale industry, the logic of collectivism became a weapon which CCP members turned against their own backgrounds in a rural economy dominated by small-scale farming. Such a pursuit corresponded well with the CCP emphasis on discipline. During the War of Resistance against Japan, most CCP cadres came from an intellectual background and from propertied families. From their understanding of the world abroad they chose communism, but the propertied status that lay behind this intellectual background became, in the revolution, their original sin. To overcome one’s non-proletarian sentiments became a challenging and persistent task set by CCP members for themselves.

Before the Rectification campaign, the primary way that the CCP carried out ideological work was through Marxist ideological education. In China, the twentieth century was an era of great faith in the power of ideology to establish a nation. Sun Yatsen’s Three People’s Principles, liberalism, and communism were all seen by their adherents as a panacea by which the nation and people could be saved. The emergence and forceful advance of the New Culture Movement if nothing else reflects the direction
and choice of the time - a recreation of China through culture. The transformation of the nation was seen as bound up first and foremost with the transformation of thought and culture. Of course, this line of reasoning had an enormous influence. A new China, utterly different from dynastic China, was born under precisely this banner of new culture.

If we allow that the transformation of thought and culture had, in early twentieth century China, become widely accepted, then the Communists’ path of intellectual remolding placed them well ahead of other political forces in this regard. The communist revolution carries within it a revolution of thought. Communism, as it moves from study to social practice, admittedly cannot shake off the needs of the times, but it does reflect a revolution led by thought. Marx says:

> The weapon of criticism certainly cannot replace the criticism of weapons; material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory, too, becomes a material force once it seizes the masses. Theory is capable of seizing the masses once it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem once it becomes radical.  

In the Communist revolution, the significance of theory is as a guide. The CCP spared no effort in their study of theory, and in the revolutionary camp a dense atmosphere of political study took hold which other political parties in China were unable to match. During Rectification, one CCP cadre described the situation:

> I got to Yan’an in 1937, and was excited by the dense political atmosphere, thinking to myself “I’m too backward; how can a Communist Party member not understand Marxist-Leninism?” At the time, whenever discussing a problem, those around me were falling over each other to cite some adage from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Many went so far as to use such recitation as a measure of the depth of one’s revolutionary cultivation.

This account comes from the time of Rectification; it was not given in order to praise the studious atmosphere of Yan’an during the War of Resistance against Japan but in order to satirize the study of original works of Marx and Engels as the memorizing of dogma. Thus, the depiction of the studious atmosphere at Yan’an should be even more reliable. Prior to Rectification, ideological education emphasized close study of key works by Marx and Engels. After Rectification, while the works of Marx and Engels remained as educational content, a heavier emphasis was placed on bridging theory and prac-
tice - what was called “rectifying study” (整顿学风). More importantly, the process of transforming thoughts and feelings evolved from the external practices of ideological inculcation, to an awakening of one’s inner spirit. Wang Yangming (王阳明 1472-1529) tells us that, “to defeat the bandits in the hills is easy, to defeat those of the heart-mind is difficult.” Rectification was just such an attempt to defeat these bandits of the heart-mind. Earlier ideological education had the goal of using Marxist thought and theory to crowd out non-proletarian notions from the minds of party members. Rectification, on the other hand, applied the form of a large-scale campaign to both squeeze the internal and pressure the external in order to clear away selfish and distracting thoughts. While the former method was one of ideological permeation, the latter was a complete purge with no objections permitted. The goal and difficulties of the latter are far greater than that of the former, as are the effort expended and degree of intensity.

Disciplinary methods such as “cadre examination” and “elimination” of counter-revolutionaries” were essential components of Rectification, but it was not a campaign of simple indoctrination or coercion. Rather, the campaign was more an attempt to achieve inner unity through the cultivation of sixiang (思想). CCP documents state that Rectification:

must be regarded as movement of enlightenment (启蒙). The main thing is to awaken the movement inside one’s self, and thus bring about self-awareness. Force from without is required at times, but external force alone is of no use. It will either fail to penetrate or will utterly crush the person. So external force must work through the movement within a person, and it is best applied when conditions for such movement reside in their heart (内心). In practice, only when external force is applied in this way is it of assistance to them - the right medicine for their illness. Otherwise it is futile, only provoking antipathy, or even leaving them confused and lost. Naturally, rectification cannot proceed without the assistance of external force. Pressure from without is indispensable for inducing an individual’s awakening (个体自觉). But more crucial in rectification was self-transformation. External pressure had to be internalized as self-aware voluntarism (自觉自愿). This was the crux of CCP political culture, and of rectification. The process of rectification is the process of exposing yourself, purging the lesser-self (小我), and establishing the greater-self (大我). Rectification demanded first the laying bare of one’s self, an act of self-reflection. Peng Xuefeng (彭雪枫 1907-1944) wrote the following on Rectification in the border
According to experience in the Shaanbei border region, the path from an individual's self-examination to comprehensive reflection within the Party consists of three steps: First, begin from an individual's writing of a self-reflective autobiography or oral self-reflection, through discussion in small group meetings and larger branch meetings, and then advance toward a conclusion. Second, begin inspection from current serious issues, and from the examination of serious issues conduct self-reflection. Third, launch a movement of confession within the Party, bringing about a confessional atmosphere, and then from this advance to ideological examination.  

From Peng Xuefeng’s account of the Shaanbei experience, we can see that from the outset, general rectification centered around self-reflection, and that this self-reflection was not the simple action of an individual, but involved constant interaction between the individual and the collective, and between lower and upper ranks, to gradually have the effect of dredging the depths of the soul (深挖灵魂深处).

While the self-reflection of Party members and the self-reflection stressed in Chinese traditional thought are somewhat similar in theory, in practical application they are very different. The act of self-reflection in traditional China was influenced by Buddhism, and tended towards introspection, deep contemplation (冥思), and meditation (禅静一路). CCP self-reflection, on the other hand, was not a campaign of self-cultivation through “attending to one’s virtue in solitude” (独善其身), but a “collective revolution of sixiang.” Self-reflection demanded a complete dissection of one’s personal history, thought and behavior. It could not be limited to the oral, but was to take on a written form. Throughout Chinese history, there is perhaps no precedent for this rectification in which such an importance was attached to the practice of writing. As Mao Zedong repeatedly emphasized in his report to mobilize Rectification:

The decision of the Propaganda Department stipulates that one must keep a journal (写笔记). Party members have a duty to obey Party decisions, and now that this decision provides that you must keep a journal, you must write in that journal. You say that you won’t. That won’t do. Iron discipline has to be observed by Party members.... Regardless of whether you are a man of letters, a warrior, a man, a woman, a new cadre, an old cadre, and regardless of whether it is a school or an agency, you must write a journal. First, leaders need to keep a journal, and class leaders and leaders of small groups all need to keep journals. They must write, and they must also examine these journals.... Now some comrades who have made errors are writing journals, that’s an excellent phenomenon. It won’t do if you make a mistake and pretend that you are still some Honorable Grandfather.
Those who went through Rectification all independently recall that the writing of personal autobiography, day and night, draft after draft, was a process full of both pressure and contemplation:

Rectification took all of my thoughts and tied them together. From that day forward I stopped thinking of other trivial concerns. Day and night all my thoughts were consumed only with sincere self-reflection, to the extent that for a performance at a meeting of female cadres (妇干会), there was a role for me but I was completely unwilling to concern myself with it. I hadn’t copied out my lines, and at times if no one reminded me it was like I was dead to the world. Truly, each day I wrote ceaselessly. Each minute I would fill with thoughts. It was like I could never write enough or think enough. But the more I wrote, the more convoluted my thoughts became.46

What could never be fully written, or fully thought through, was a personal autobiography, a journal of self-reflection. Of course, the act of writing is more stimulating than contemplation alone, and the written record of self-reflection also served as a basis for the organization to track each individual, understand changes in thought, and determine the veracity of the material. At the Shandong base area it was stipulated that:

Comrades can be encouraged to take study notes, everyone should take part. But in the first stage, to avoid restricting democracy, examination should not necessarily be emphasized. The fear of examination will hinder genuine reflection or lead to mere wordplay and self-deception. But comrades who voluntarily send their notes to other comrades or their leaders for review should be rewarded.47

The 129th division of the Eighth Route Army required that after being written self-reflection notes “must be passed around, critiqued, marked, and the best and worst examples chosen for publication or criticism.”48 To promote the spread of self-reflection and give full play to the power of public opinion, newspapers were used to publish self-reflection reports, exchange experiences, uncover problems, and guide the progress of self-reflection:

Every area can autonomously release their own study-guides (either lithograph or mimeograph), but in general all should publish (anonymized to avoid exposing individuals) models for self-reflection, study experiences, as well as the criticism of organizational and thought leadership. Theoretical disputes that have not been summed up or concluded should not be casually published. Further, for the exchange of self-reflection experiences, the Party Committee of each area may publish antholo-
gies of ideological self-reflection, omitting names, for the reference of all and to serve as supplementary study materials.49

The CCP always took care to raise the effectiveness of implementation by discovering activists and establishing model examples. During the self-reflection movement they also discovered and drew conclusions from experience. Central Party School secretary Zhang Zizhen (张子珍 1918-1967), was ordered to collate the study note (心得) and experience of a party member named Qin Zhen (秦振 dates unknown). After submitting this report up the line, his superiors replied and emphasized the following points:

Integrating reading, thinking, writing, and acting within the process of studying; in reflecting on documents, this was done in a very natural process of self-reflection to make sense of the documents; after repeatedly thinking over the question and discovering problems, these were then raised with others and carefully discussed–teaching themselves to be good, while still turning to others for help; and this was not simply a formal writing of notes for the sake of writing notes.50

This kind of self-reflection - earnest, thorough, and probing of problems - was likely the mode that the CCP hoped for.

Through constant self-criticism and earnest advice, CCP members gradually worked their way towards the “taking off pants, and cutting off tails” advocated by the Party.51

The summary from Second Division of the Central Party School, states:

One comrade spent their summer vacation pondering just how to summarize their experience, repeatedly thinking it over, and exchanging their opinions widely with others.... After much back and forth and no conclusion, they picked up Chairman Mao’s “Preface to Rural Surveys” (农村调查-序言)52 to study, thinking it was, after all, best to start with an ideal model. But what was it that could serve as a model? Where does one find one's model? Again, they thought on this. First, they thought of how they got angry when debating with others. Why get angry? What kind of thought was anger? A series of “whys?” followed... He revised his summary eight times before it was complete. He used his mind so much that at night he could not sleep, and had wet dreams during his daytime naps.53

To write a summary eight times was not exceptional; the writing of journals and introspection notes became an unforgettable experience during Rectification that was both highly ritualized and had an enormous impact on the feelings of those who took part. Liu Baiyu (刘白羽 1916-2005) recorded the process of his repeated writing, and...
the repeated rejection, of his journal:

I bent myself to the task, picked up the sharp scalpel, and carefully dissected myself. I wrote whatever came to mind. I thought of a time sitting in the courtyard, when I struck the washer maid’s hair bun so that it fell loose. I took this as an evil of the exploiting classes and wrote it out as such, but Zhang Ruxin (张如心 1908-1976) did not approve. At this time, my internal struggle reached its peak. It was because I was conscientious that I suffered so, I held back feelings of self-pity, and dug out, leaving nothing hidden, the abscess and decay that lurked in my soul (灵魂)... this was a bloody struggle between life and death. In order to wash away my sins, I even dug into the cracks in my bones, but it was still not enough. What could I do?... Under the black paint of the night sky, wandering that zigzagging and precipitous mountain path, as I reached the summit a kind of grim feeling worked its way into my heart. Before my eyes all was scorched and black, and my despair was suddenly overwhelming. To live like this had no meaning whatsoever, it was better to be dead. And it was from this high cliff that I considered casting myself....

Luckily, Liu Baiyu did not in fact literally jump, and the fifth draft of his intellectual autobiography was approved.

As Liu Baiyu writes in his recollection, Zhang Ruxin by no means deliberately stopped Liu from passing, and in fact it was not set in stone that Liu’s very first draft would not meet the required standard. The crucial point is that the writing of these journals constituted a key link in the chain of the campaign. It necessarily became a tool to squeeze and extract thought, to make each person excavate, to the greatest possible extent, their self - to lay bare, without exception, their inner world. However, a person’s instinct for self-defense will of course always either overtly or covertly resist such a demand, so in the face of this, the repeated denial of a passing grade became an irresistible external pressure. This can be seen from the requirement on superiors to evaluate these writings:

Evaluate the notes, highlight with a colored pen those words which touch on problems of thought, be they explicit, implicit, positive, negative, or even tangential. Use simple language to annotate between the lines of characters, and at the end of the document write a summarizing critique, just as a Mandarin teacher marks students’ papers. This can assist those comrades who write only of appearances to gradually grasp the central thread of their thoughts, and to meld together the act of self-reflection and the spirit of the documents being studied so that they become inseparable.55

According to the goals of Rectification, the process by which personal reports were produced, required not judgment, not an expression of one’s position, but living
thought. At the time, some self-reflections that appeared to be in order were seen instead as specimens of formalist language due to a failure to present the living inner world of an individual. The CCP was very clear: it was easy to transmit politically correct language, but the inner world would always be more complicated than any spouted theory. Only when an instantaneous response was in accord with the Party’s demands could it be said that the goals of rectification had been met. Fan Yuanzhen (范元甄 1921-2008), in her letter to Li Rui (李锐 1917-2019), wrote: “I have more or less finished the first draft of the intellectual side of my autobiography, what’s left is the part relating to our life together. Have a think: what is there that is incorrect? What has been wrong from your side and from mine (including hopes, demands, or fantasies)?” So hopes, demands, and even fantasies became the target of introspection. Fan Yuanzhen, it could be said, had realized the essence of self-reflection.

The pressure created in the process of producing these reports is beyond imagination. Not everyone could weather such a storm within, and more than one felt that: “at the outset of Rectification, I found myself with nothing to contribute, a body plagued by infirmity, my old self-satisfaction left me, and was replaced by pessimism, it felt impossible to carry on, that there was no need for me to exist.” During rectification in the Shandong base area at Lunan (鲁南), regional council secretary for Fei county (费县), Jiang Lin (江林 dates unknown) at a county level general assembly for campaign activists, reacted to the rejection of the contents of his introspection and criticism from Party members within his organization by shooting himself. In his suicide note, he wrote:

My comrades rectify with their thoughts, I must rectify with my life... My Party comrades have already lost faith in me. I myself have lost faith. Whether correct or not, it must be accepted, this is the difficulty of proving what lies in my heart. But this is a secondary question. More important is the damage I have done to the Party, for which I can never make amends. I came to join the revolution, who could imagine I would become its enemy? How can I now call on these revolutionaries to kill me?

Generally, suicide has its roots in extreme despair. Jiang Lin’s death clearly follows this pattern but in his case despair stemmed from the belief that the Party did not understand him. The path of suicide, to some degree, was the decision that it was better to cut short one’s own life, than trouble the Party to kill him. We might say that Jiang Lin misunderstood the real meaning of Rectification. Rectification indeed involved
organizational measures, and crack-downs similar to those of the Rescue Campaign, but behind the storm front of Rectification, there was no lack of good intent and patience toward the revolutionary community on the part of the CCP. As Chen Boda (陈伯达 1904-1989) said:

The Party treats us as would a strict father, or caring mother. Excepting those anti-revolutionary elements who “sin without repentance,” the Party forgives those comrades who have already confessed their errors. Our Party inspects all comrades comprehensively and historically, and will not carelessly destroy any comrade on the basis of one-sided facts.

Even turning to the Rescue Campaign, the personal harm caused still cannot be compared to that of the Elimination of Counterrevolutionaries (肃反) during the Soviet period. Compared with the political campaigns after 1949, Rectification seems more mild. It appears as a ferocious campaign, and yet embodies the CCP’s love, protection, and expectations for the cadre community as a whole. What is called the “preservation and education of cadres” is something that those involved at the time were not necessarily able to grasp. Because of the atmosphere mentioned above, there were cases such as Jiang Lin’s suicide and a large number of cadres were “rescued.” But there were also cases like that of Yang Guoyu (杨国宇 1914-2000), who survived more scared than scathed, to be born again through a cold sweat.

Yang Guoyu joined the Red Army at 17, his background was straightforward, and should have been free from any serious issues, but as he wrote in his diary:

The Party branch told me to write a journal, which I have written and handed over to them. Without looking at the contents they said that it was too simple. Now they want to examine my history (representatives to the Seventh Party Congress from the front must be all inspected). I am from the outset very simple and innocent, but now even my heart races unconsciously.

Unexpectedly, Yan Guoyu's examination encountered problems. In discussing the circumstances of his own family, Yang Guoyu’s statement that they had a three-legged water buffalo met with serious questioning:

A case in point is that student from Shaanxi, he is a group leader. Tell me, how long can an ox live? From your grandfather's time there was a water buffalo, and you say it is the same water buffalo that was passed down into your hands. Moreover, oxen all have four legs, why does your family's only have three?
Yang Guoyu had left home at an early age and was reporting only what his parents had told him—he didn’t have any explanation of his own about the ox’s lifespan and number of legs.

Interestingly, Yang Guoyu took some words heard from his parents, words he did not understand the significance of, and wrote them into his own historical account. Maybe some people would see this as unnecessary and even troublesome. But at the time, things were not so simple. Yang Guoyu’s approach is one that many took at the time.

During rectification, there were strict requirements for the writing of one’s personal history:

Search for the root in one’s personal history. The method of search is to investigate a wide range of issues, ranging from three generations of patrilineal ancestors, the economic situation of the household, relations with friends and relatives, life in your hometown, life at school, social activities, right up until ideological transformation, your motivations for joining the Party, work within the Party, solidarity with cadres etc. Adopting a critical attitude, narrate your entire personal history, while others listen and raise questions/problems.

The explanation of one’s family situation was of utmost importance, because according to the theory of class analysis of the CCP, the family into which one was born would deeply shape one’s worldview. This was a problem that had to be addressed earnestly. Each individual had a duty to provide genuine material to the Party organization, so that the Party organization could provide focused education and transformation. To conceal one’s family background was to be disloyal to the Party, and would result in serious questioning and censure. In order to prevent individuals from engaging in such concealment from the Party, the Party organization would carry out targeted investigations, and seize first-hand materials relating to a cadre’s personal information. “Sometimes dozens of people, from all sides, would be drawn in – such as comrades, classmates, relatives, friends, those from the hometown – the more detailed the investigation the better.” Such measures drew into play a great power of intimidation, as Ma Qianli’s (马千里, 1902-1992) diary records: “At the general assembly in the afternoon, after director of education Guo and director Huang offered circumstantial evidence of the activities of XX in Nantong (Jiangsu), Nanjing, and other areas, XX felt both deeply shocked and afraid.

And it was in a similar state that Yang Guoyu, despite knowing little of the story of
the three-legged water buffalo, reported its existence truthfully to the organization. A water buffalo, after all, was a key item of rural production and thus a key point of reference in determining the economic background of a household.

The three-legged water buffalo controversy became an obstacle for the passing of Yang Guoyu’s report. His failure to explain its existence resulted in suspicion over his account, and this then called into question the veracity of his entire historical narrative. Without other options, Yang Guoyu sought out Liu Bocheng (刘伯承 1892-1996), who in turn recommended consulting the old comrade Wu Yunfu (伍云甫 1904-1969). Wu Yunfu, after hearing the situation, analyzed it thus:

In the South we have this kind of situation, why does a water buffalo live so long? For instance, if a water buffalo gets old, you can take it to the market and with a little money exchange it for a young water buffalo. So, in this way there will be water buffaloes that survive handed down from your grandfather. We have the same practice in Sichuan.

Then he went on to say:

Now why would a water buffalo have three legs, or two legs? Your family was short one leg’s worth of money, and so spent three legs’ worth of money, joining with another family that spent less, only one leg’s worth. The two families pooled together to buy a water buffalo and your family paid three quarters of the price, so of course you have three legs.

The three-legged water buffalo suddenly made sense, and Yang Guoyu was “so happy that he did not know how to thank the gentle old cadre.” Only if one understands the historical setting of rectification, can one grasp how a person’s life story could influence one’s fate in the campaign, and understand Yang Guoyu’s emotional state at the time as well as the extreme caution of those involved in his case: “I dredged my soul, trying to work out if there were any other details in my personal story. I added the history of my elder brother that I had previously omitted. You must not hide even a hair from the Party. After writing up this additional material, I found myself relaxed and happy.”

**Collective Introspection**

Laying bare one’s self was just the first step. The next crucial step in the self-reformation of individualism was to empty (清空) one’s self.
What am I? I am a person. What kind of person? A good person. How can I prove that I am a good person? If I were the only person on earth, I would definitely not have asked this question. But as long as there is at least one other person besides me, that I say I am a good person must be certified by him. How then? Through words or deeds? If I can somehow do that man a favor, he will, deep down, consider me a good person even if I do not speak. Moreover, how shall I do him a favor? According to his will? Or my own? Obviously, I shall act according to his will and needs. Is this pure nonsense? Of course not! This illustrates the basic subject-object dialectic: I myself cannot determine whether or not I am a good person.

One could not judge for themself as to whether or not they were a good person, nor whether the path they walk is correct. Only in relation to others could an individual position him or herself. Rectification of ordinary cadres took liberalism or individualism as its primary target and individualism was regarded as a major obstacle to the exercise of Party power. Kang Sheng made this clear:

The organizational principles and iron discipline of the Party together constitute a sort of “magic headband” against individualism and liberalism. The headband is, moreover, made of steel. Without such a “magic headband” the hundreds of thousands of our party members would all have become Monkey Kings, clamoring for individualism and unrestrained independence, and every local party organization would have turned into a “Mount of Blossoms and Fruits,” a “kingdom of freedom”—if that were the case, the Communist Party would wither away immediately. This explains why the “magic headband” is necessary and why every party member, from every Central Committee member to every member of local branches, must keep wearing this tight-fitting headband.

To cleanse the Party of individualism it was first necessary to get everyone to see and then to face up to their individualism—that is, to lay bare their selves. After everyone exposed his or her self, the next step was to eliminate individualist inclinations, deemed to be not of the revolutionary camp and detrimental to the free reign of revolutionary power. The CCP’s weapon for eliminating individualism was its antithesis - collectivism.

After Party members wrote their autobiographies and introspection journals they then exchanged their writings for “mutual reading and the raising of suggestions” in preparation for further collective rectification. As a way to really “dig” deep into the soul, writing reports on one’s own thought was only one part of ideological tempering. Only through face-to-face mutual criticism and self-criticism could collisions between correct and incorrect thoughts evolve to a higher plane. Such collective strength cer-
tainly surpassed the efficiency of either personal rumination or any written feedback from one's leaders. In the charged collective atmosphere, participants listened for others' opinions, articulated their own views, made self-criticisms, and criticized one another. Everyone spoke with emotion to spur their thinking and to take their introspection to a deeper level.

There are many ways to bring about introspection, but the most important method is to rely on the collectivist method. Small-group introspection meetings should be organized three or four times per week to go over each member's situation one by one. The general procedure of introspection should be as follows: Each subject ought to report first and then people in the group should ask questions to which the subject should respond. They should then debate until all problems are resolved.\(^7^4\)

One participant offers an account of how his thought changed over the course of a rectification meeting:

At the meetings, at first I just listened, which inevitably had some good effect. I hadn't yet corrected my consciousness, so on the first day I just listened without much discipline. But as I prepared to speak up, and after having done so, my attitude changed. At the same time, the words of others were enlightening... I felt like I learned much more from participation in these meetings than other comrades, like it was the best education I'd received since joining the Party.\(^7^5\)

Rectification required a thorough self-reformation, which meant that each party cadre had to uncover their true self through writing, face up to their self through speaking, and expose their own mistakes through their engagement with and denunciation of each other at meetings.

Introspection amounts to consciously standing with the Communist “I” to drive out the non-Communist “I;” only through such ideological struggle can we bring ourselves into line with the Rectification Documents. Put differently, the Rectification Documents are the weapons with which the Communist “I” is armed and with which, through the process of introspection, the non-communist “I” is expunged. The final result is to transform oneself into a robust and true Communist Party Member.\(^7^6\)

Over the course of the Chinese communist revolution, meetings have carried particular weight, with strict organization and a collectivist ideology the two cornerstones of this organizational form. Throughout the Rectification campaign, the processes of exposing one's self and purging the lesser-self (小我) was largely developed and carried
out in such meetings. At the heart of these meetings was criticism and self-criticism: The goals of criticizing, rectifying, and transcending the self were achieved through a back and forth of mutual revelation and critique between close companions. For CCP revolutionaries, mutual criticism was simultaneously a right, an obligation, and a way to help others progress and prevent mistakes. Beginning with one’s desire to make progress while helping others, adding the requirements of Party organization and the constraints of Party discipline, the meetings frequently became trials (过关会) in which close companions became the harshest critics and judges. In the face of such peer pressure most people chose to follow the general opinion and did their best to dig out their own faults so as to safely pass the test. After attending a rectification meeting, Liu Yanjin\textsuperscript{77} wrote:

\begin{quote}
At the meeting, others attacked my words, accusing me of offering only superficial self-criticism. Aiya! The directness of the attack pained me, made me tremble. I no longer dared look others in the eye; the shame turned my face and ears red. All I felt was regret. Why did I fail to make a sharp self-criticism and thus have to bear this attack? How stupid I am! What a dummy! I am really too foolish. How could I try to conceal my true self even at such a meeting? The masses have thin eyelids and sharp eyes; I will keep at this painful excavation!\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

Rectification meetings took place according to a specific sequence: progressing from small group, to party branch, to large assembly - spreading slowly from the small to the large. In the early years of the CCP, the most basic organization was called a small group (小组). According to the party constitution promulgated during the second party congress in 1922, “whenever there are three to five Party members a group (组) should be established and a group head should be chosen from among its members; this group will belong to the local branch (地方支部).”\textsuperscript{79} As stated in the revised constitution passed at the fourth party congress in 1925, “in each village, factory, railway or mine, and at military barracks and schools, and in any places adjacent to these, whenever there are at least three party members a party branch (支部) shall be established.” Since then, the party branch in theory replaced the small group as the basic unit of organization.\textsuperscript{80} According to Chen Yun: “The party branch constitutes the lowest level of the Party and the most fundamental organizations of the Party. Only by the hand of party branches can all the slogans, statements, and policies of the Party find specific purchase with the masses.”\textsuperscript{81}

In operational practice, however, and according to the demands of its work, the
CCP frequently established small groups. Such small groups were not a formal link in the organizational chain, but rather an ad hoc grouping for daily work and life. This kind of highly flexible organizational style meant that the CCP could put down roots at any place or time. What was referred to during Rectification as “small groups” were precisely such informal clusters. For instance, within the Taihang column during Rectification:

Senior officers at all levels, ministers, division chiefs, and section heads established central small groups; other cadres who were capable of self-driven study were grouped into “A” group; and those who were unable to undertake self-study made up “B” group; on top of this, every administrative unit established one study small group (学习小组).  

Both the small group and the party branch were fundamental organizational units. Often, a small group or a party branch turned out to be a circle of acquaintances in which group members had both the fewest and at the same time the most secrets. Least, because group members were so familiar with one another that mutual divulgence was common. Most, because group members often became aware of each other’s secrets by chance, and these then became unspoken but known secrets. Within such circles of close acquaintances, introspection and divulgence usually had clear, concrete targets. At small group meetings, “participants had to pass the test one by one, under close scrutiny.” Whether directed inward or towards others, criticism was paramount. As one participant put it:

Stitch by stitch, everything came out. I chastised myself for my sloppiness, my vanity, my lack of humility, my shallow ambition and my arrogance. All were dragged into the open leaving me with a sense of joy.

The primary function of establishing these circles was to push participants to disclose both their own secrets and those of others. As the CCP emphasized:

Do not either prematurely discourage fellow cadres, impose labels on them, or force them to articulate their standpoints too early. Try to encourage them to dig out and lay bare their authentic thoughts instead. Methods can include free discussion among the small groups, “mutual help,” wall posters, and role models to enlighten other people at mass rallies. An alternative way is to organize several rounds of symposia (given that too few people could get a chance to speak up at an enlarged meeting). Of course, this cannot simply be a “showing of tails,” but should include a little criticism.
to arouse debate. It is only after such exposure that problems can be solved at the level of *sixiang*.\(^86\)

To let comrades thoroughly expose their thoughts, do not immediately argue back, let them finish and then make criticisms. Once exposed, then you criticize, and only after that comes unity. This exposure is to help everyone transform their thinking; it is not some sort of conspiracy...What is “ideological leadership”? It is solving problems not through organization or directive, but through thought itself.\(^87\)

Each individual had to pass through the stages of self-criticism and criticism to expose themselves entirely.

To create an atmosphere of criticism and self-criticism, each party branch meeting and especially each small-group meeting was to be well prepared, and was to encourage the mobilization of activists who would push the meeting to a deeper state:

> In a planned way mobilize activists first to offer their own self-criticism (taking care not to jab at others). This is in order to encourage everyone to carry out self-criticism and thereby to create a mass criticism movement that promotes in-depth debate, distinguishes between right and wrong, and overcomes harmful influences by engaging the righteousness of the masses.\(^88\)

The heads of small-groups and the party branch secretaries were in charge of these meetings. A small-group head was required to do at least the following things:

> First, before each meeting, help those cadres who will speak up get prepared in advance (guide them, do not prepare for them). Second, during meetings pay attention to supervision, if a person’s good points are not mentioned, prompt them with a question (one’s attitude toward study); weak points should be raised in the same fashion. At all times pay attention to and keep control of emotions of the meeting. Third, after each meeting, aside from prompting informal discussions, investigate and supplement information, such as concrete numbers that are of relevance, to give to the comrade keeping a record.\(^89\)

A competent party branch secretary, when coordinating a meeting, was to:

> Carry out careful research into the thoughts of each individual. Think of ways to solve problems (helping the comrade), for example push them to chat with role models and suggest them as speakers at meetings. If some with a hero-complex are not willing to speak up, subtly push them to do so. To solve problems in this way is to “treat the illness and save the patient.” For example, in the case of Wang Yanggang, there was a lot of material on his erroneous thought, but to help him solve his problem issues were raised and solved one at a time rather than all at once. In this way not only
did Wang not feel attacked, but those helping him avoided the feeling of becoming his assailant...⁹⁰

The rectification report from Jinsui (Shanxi-Suiyuan) area offers a case illustrating how the holding of small-group meetings might lead cadres to dig step-by-step into their inner selves. A cadre in Jinsui had always served the Party faithfully and rarely made mistakes before Rectification, so in the early stage of the campaign, he failed to find a focus for self-criticism. Through inspiration drawn from small-group meetings, that cadre:

...was awakened to the fact that his arrogance had led him to stick obstinately to his own mistaken ideas ahead of Party principle. He then tearfully faced up to his mistakes, but his confession was primarily due to Party discipline, and a fear that the Party had lost trust in him, or that he may even be expelled.

This realization prompted him to contemplate the true motivation behind his activeness at work. The only possible conclusion was this:

The motivating force that brought about his willingness and courage to carry out difficult and dangerous work for the Party had been the fear of losing the respect of others and being expelled from the Party. Such expulsion would mean a betrayal of those who had introduced him into Party ranks.

This kind of personal loyalty is naturally against the demands of the Party, and it was grasping this fact that led him to a realization of how he should approach his relations with fellow cadres:

It was only then that he realized that he had worshiped and blindly followed those he believed to be good cadres, and that he had been extremely frank and friendly with whoever he got along with. While his motivation was not bad, his standpoint was unstable. So why is that? Only at this point did he realize that his problem indeed dated back to his early years, when he dreamed of living a decorous life and through his upbringing in a landlord family had cultivated a sense of superiority and willfulness—those were all deep-seated roots.⁹¹

Of course, this kind of search back for the root of the problem did not necessarily jibe with the Party’s expectations. When digging away at the roots of incorrect thought, one might turn a blind eye to the diversity of those roots; when focusing on a particular root, one might neglect others and thus fail to grasp the complex dynam-
ics of thinking. Nevertheless, for the purposes of Rectification, such digging away at roots was not necessarily driven by an interest in the thoughts themselves, nor was it entirely towards any specific conclusion. Most important was the rupture that took place within the Rectified. The goal of this excavation was exposure, to peel back, layer by layer, the hidden depths that were kept secret from others and to expose them for all to see. This kind of abandonment of the ego would, to varying degrees, always be experienced as an attack on the self. This is exactly what Party instruction indicates:

In the course of Rectification, inspiration at the level of sixiang means to break through one's narrow thinking, to make one feel shocked deep down and with that shock awaken. Ideological enlightenment is meant for broadening one's intellectual horizon and elevating one's political awareness to a higher plane according to one's circumstances. Only by getting to the depths of everyone's thought can this be achieved.92

The CCP was a highly organized party. Whether persuading or coercing, the power of organization was exceptionally useful. Drawing on his own experience, Xu Guangyao 徐光耀 (1926—)93 felt that “without a strictly organized life, people fall behind or at the very least struggle to progress.”94 Many cadres entrusted themselves to the organization, claiming that:

So long as one follows the Party, any problems (in daily life or work) can be solved. If one has shortcomings, one only need entrust oneself to the Party: “Please remold me!”95

It was the power of organization that small-group meetings and Party branch meetings relied upon during Rectification to reconstruct each and every individual. Party members who were accustomed to organized life, once they had given themselves to the criticism among the collective, would often discover extraordinary results. One contemporary wrote:

I felt that in declaring my errors in front of my comrades, the errors became the enemy of the masses, and I became a member of the masses. In the process my determination and courage surged.96

For one to become the enemy of one’s own errors sounds odd, but in the context of collective criticism and the CCP member’s urgent pursuit of progress, in which the Party as a whole was quite robust, as well as against the backdrop of the “drop your
pants and cut your tail” movement, such a phenomenon becomes more congruous. Before the Rectification, the collective life of CCP members was good. As He Fang recalled,

Upon my arrival at the Kangda Anti-Japanese University, I immediately had a sense of homecoming. Apart from my own political orientation, a strong air of camaraderie was an important factor in making me feel at home. No matter which unit or class one was in, all the people were friendly with each other as if they were family. Such a spirit of mutual care and support was hardly imaginable for the younger generation.97

The individual has an innate need to be part of a community, and the comradely and intimate relations at Yan’an worked on and enhanced that need. This is clearly conveyed by Liu Yanjin:

I carried a secret anguish within me. Although I devoted myself completely to my work and study, deep down my life felt so empty and meaningless! I have to admit that the misery of loneliness had been eating away at me!... In the past, the more I felt this way the more I would pull away from others. I was even proud of my self-reliance. But today I finally realized that this was indeed the very cause of my suffering: I was on the wrong track in social relations; I had misunderstood what friendship means.... I told myself: “Within this collective, you should be working to create revolutionary heroism. If you fail to benefit from others’ fraternal affection and at the same time keep yourself isolated, then you will not be able to accomplish your goal and your future will be miserable.” The more I thought, the more anxious and afraid I felt; I felt miserable because I had no confidant, because I was alone. I made up my mind. I resolved to become a person who can share my deepest secrets with others.98

After small-groups and party branch meetings paved the way for further rectification, enlarged meetings brought ideological mobilization and struggle to a climax. Enlarged meetings were organized debates intended to inspire reflection and give all participants opportunities to air their ideas. The coordination of such debates required mastery of effective techniques for mobilization. In the No. 1 District of the Jin-Cha-Ji base area, the enlarged meeting committee divided responsibilities in the following way:

The five members of the organizing committee divided up collective responsibility for the progress of the debate. One person was in charge of deciding the focus of the debate at any given time. Another was responsible for the order of speakers, giving direct reminders to the chairman when necessary throughout the meeting. Still another person was in charge analyzing documents that reflected model thinking, reading them aloud if the debate reached a deadlock... Whenever both sides of the
debate were spent, the committee would declare a pause for side conversations among clusters of two or three for five minutes or even fifteen minutes to reinvigorate themselves for another attack at their opponents. 99

The Jin-Cha-Ji Branch of the Party School also made careful arrangements for debate meetings:

The question of who spoke at enlarged meetings was left up to voluntary registration, however the speaking order was set by the organizers. Cadres who held similar ideas were grouped together and spoke consecutively; those who opposed were required to respond after the first group. In this way, the two sides naturally crossed swords and a fiercer debate was achieved. Apart from enlarged meetings, there were also small-group meetings, informal discussions, and interpersonal exchanges. Different types of discussions combined with and complemented each other. The large-scale mass ideological debate thus became truly extensive, brewing ideological struggle everywhere. 100

The general principles of debate meetings were as follows:

The leadership ought not to try to control everyone but rather to point out which path might be the best choice and to encourage the masses to choose the most proper path themselves. It is, after all, the masses who must walk this path. 101

Most often, enlarged meetings during Rectification served as struggle sessions. Liu Baiyu recalls:

All the people crowded into one single room. In the front of the room was an earthen platform—at that time, the Central Research Institute had already been transformed into the No.3 Branch of the Central Party School. The leaders of the No.3 Branch coordinated “challenges” between people at the meeting, looking to see who would confess first. A Cantonese philosopher in front of the stage carried on waving his arms and shouting himself hoarse with zealous slogans so that the whole atmosphere suddenly came to a boil. I was standing at the back of the crowd; I watched people come onto the dais one by one, and I saw people continually passing slips to the chairpersons.

For any two of the participants, the more intimate they were, the more urgently they expressed themselves; accordingly, a husband and wife or a pair of close friends tended to yell at each other in an extraordinarily aggressive way in a great show of sincerity...Such a meeting usually lasted late into the evening, with two gaslights on either side of the platform illuminating those who were “confessing.” The penitent
blustered crazily, beating their chests and stamping their feet, and bursting out in tears. At such moments, someone would take the lead in crying out catchphrases, the whole scene roiling like great waves in the sea building upon each other.\(^\text{102}\)

The tense atmosphere at such struggle sessions had a huge impact not only on the criticized and onlookers but also on those criticizing, creating an involuntary crowd mentality. Under such circumstances any sense of resistance or contradiction naturally withered away, vanishing into thin air. After attending a Rectification meeting, Liu Yanjin (刘燕瑾 1925-2012), wrote:

> Over the two days of the meeting everyone had shed tears, everyone had discussed many problems with total sincerity. Things that happened one, two, three years ago were laid bare. Both sides made thorough confessions, opened their hearts, and offered critical suggestions to the other... For others their confession and introspection at the podium came in a stream of words mixed with tears and I too, in the corner of the room, cried. As I looked up again, I saw some had completely lowered their heads... I was truly and deeply struck by that meeting. I want to confess. I want to criticize myself. I want to dive deeper into self-reflection than those who've gone before.\(^\text{103}\)

Of course, the road to ideological assimilation was not straightforward. At times one could not say whether this assimilation was voluntary or due to external pressure, and usually it was a mix of both. He Fang records in his memoir that after Wang Shiwei’s “Wild Lilies” was published, it soon became the focus of organized debates (between students at the Russian Language School in Yan’an). As He recalls:

> At first, almost all the students agreed with Wang’s point of view. This was because we were not aware that the Party Center had planned to make a negative example of “Wild Lilies.” Every class got a copy. In each class, Wang’s article was read out loud, with discussion following the reading. Over the course of a debate, everyone said that “Yes! He writes well! What he writes is true!” They generally believed that there were shortcomings among the revolutionary ranks and that it would be helpful to point these out.\(^\text{104}\)

He Fang’s remarks are not groundless. Soon after the campaign to criticize Wang Shiwei got under way, at the Central Research Institute in Yan’an Wen Jize (温济泽) “made a survey among the research staff and found that 95 per cent more or less sympathized with Wang’s incorrect thought.” However, as soon as the leadership mobilized criticism of “Wild Lilies” the situation reversed and the article immediately became a target of public criticism. He Fang recalls with regret that:
In attempts to draw a clear line between themselves and Wang Shiwei, some criticisms of Wang were true, others were false, and still others mixed fact and fiction. As the campaign deepened, even what had been fiction took on the weight of truth, and everyone’s thought was genuinely transformed.  

This last sentence is worthy of note. At first, discrepancies between the Party’s expectation and individuals’ ideas were inevitable. However, the atmosphere that the movement created, building on trust in the organization, was able to transform fiction into fact. It was in this mental state of mingled truth and fiction that many people underwent a transformation. There is no shortage of examples of such transformation during the Rectification movement. For instance, intensive training classes flourished during Rectification and each class created a small enclosed environment in which ideological instruction, inculcation, and internal struggle brought about a subtle change in people’s thinking: “A cadre from Laiyuan said, ‘I initially didn’t think much of the training class, all day long just plodding along—never had I imagined that this plodding along could transform my heart!’”  

Establishing the Greater Self (大我)

To denounce others or even oneself, is not difficult, but to truly conquer the self in accordance with the requirements of the Party is extremely difficult. The sense of self is so stubborn that it became a source of distress for those Party members who sought to improve themselves and to imbibe completely the spirit of the Party. A report from the Central Party School noted that, “in the fourth branch there were four students living in one cave-dwelling. During the summarizing period of study, they thought constantly and often discussed their study with one another. One night, while everyone was sleeping, they talked for a long period and then fell silent, each thinking the others had nodded off while their own thoughts continued to churn. It was only after a long while that one student got up to urinate and as the three others heard him that they all realized the others were still awake and thus began their discussion anew.”  

The old Red Army comrade Dou Shangchu (窦尚初 1912-1996) confessed at a general assembly that, “unhealthy and correct tendencies met day and night in my mind to do battle, you yell at them to be gone, and they yell the same to you. This back-and-forth struggle left me extremely depressed - food tasted of nothing, sleep failed to come, even speech and movement ceased to come naturally.” Indeed that self that sits at
the center of what it means to be human is too hard to exorcize, it is a den of shelter
within that is almost entirely subconscious, as Yang Siyi (杨思— 1901-1957), a cadre
in the New Fourth Army wrote in his diary:

I don’t seek out any special kind of comfort in life, but if comfort is possible, then one settles into
it…. In my attitude to work I don’t seek out the limelight, but if others take credit for my accom-
plishments, I will still be unhappy. In self-criticism, I absolutely do not want to hide any weakness
or fault, particularly those of principle, but if I am attacked either maliciously or unfairly then I
will still be upset. In short, while I do not “emphasize” personal interest, neither can I completely
forget it, or become a person completely without individual plans…. When I pay attention, this kind
of non-proletarian consciousness is less prominent, but as soon as my awareness slips, my cloven
hoof is exposed.\textsuperscript{110}

To speak objectively, such bewilderment among Party members was not due to any
limited personal capacity, but to the fact that the Party had established an idealized
standard that it was almost impossible for the average person to reach. This meant
that those revolutionaries who strove to draw close to the Party could not help, against
such a high standard, but take note of their own pettiness. Fan Yuanzhen (范元甄 1921-
2008), wrote: “moral integrity, no matter the time, place, or situation, is absolute. Even
if the success of the Revolution calls on us in the blink of an eye to offer up our lives,
we cannot hesitate. What troubles me now is that I have no certainty about myself
on this score.”\textsuperscript{111} Yang Siyi recorded [in his diary] conversations with his colleagues
as well as his reflections on these conversations. Through these we can observe the
demands that Party members at the time placed on themselves and on others. Yang
recorded the words of a colleague named Zhou (周), who, [according to Yang] said:

There are two kinds of comrades in the Party: the first is hardworking and self-motivated, his lot
is indeed hard, and yet he can still conform to the economic system of the Party, he engages neither
in corruption nor fraud, and seeks no financial support from the Party. The second seeks comfort,
his life is easier, but often turns to the Party for financial support. It tends to be this second kind of
cadre to whom the Party provides economic assistance, while the first usually goes without support.

Yang took exception to these words of Zhou’s, and wrote in his diary:

There are two incorrect and vulgar ways of thinking on display here: First, he thinks that the Party
is often unfair and unobjective, with good cadres often been unjustly neglected, and bad cadres able
to receive the Party's support; second, he sees the Party's support as something that can be gained through graft, as a kind of benefit, and that without it one loses out. This is a clear manifestation of non-proletarian consciousness, and such thinking violates the morals and spirit of Communism.\textsuperscript{112}

We should note that Zhou's words were not groundless: so-called squeaky wheels did indeed get the grease. This is a problem that no kind of political group can avoid, and Zhou's words simply objectively state this aspect of the situation. Yang Siyi, however, adopting a stance in line with the character of the Party, believed that Zhou's thought transgressed both the spirit and the morality of Communism. Such heightened vigilance to daily conversations was of course propped up by the demands of this Party spirit. Yang was similarly critical after speaking to another colleague:

He was ambitiously attempting to create a party (the people's party 人民党), an ideology (humanism 人道主义), and even had the nerve to deny the existence of class and class struggle, instead advocating something called “human centredness” (人本位).

To this, Yang of course could not agree, and thus came the reflection:

From this real struggle I further understand the importance of the Rectification movement. So many among the Party come from petit-bourgeois backgrounds, that without a thorough transformation of thought, the consistency, unity, and purity of the Party cannot be fully realized.\textsuperscript{113}

The people's party, humanism, the human centeredness - Yang's depiction of his colleague's ideas still sound so familiar after many years, and it was just such ideas that Rectification sought to clear away. From Yang Siyi's diary, we can see that among Party members the demands of rectification had already been implemented, taken root, and germinated.

To the ordinary Party member, the most important mission of Rectification was to overcome the “lesser self” (小我) and to establish the “greater self” (大我), to replace individualism with collectivism. The collectivist orientation of Marxism with its roots in large scale industry, when applied to the Chinese revolution, paired well with the revolutionary need for discipline and China's tradition of interpersonal ethics (人伦), and became a vital source for personal transformation. “I” (我) became seen as an enemy in the pursuit of a pure Party spirit, while manifesting the collectivist “greater self” (大我) became the mark of a true Party member.
Having returned from study in France, the author Chen Xuezhao (陈学昭 1906-1991) had been deeply influenced by individualism. She described the course of her initiation into the revolutionary camp, and particularly her train of thought after going through Rectification:

I had always kept a great distance from the Party, and was intent on maintaining this distance. The education the Party provided, the collective education and collective tempering, I thought would wear away the best parts of an individual’s character and limit the development of that character, so I was afraid of such an education. During Rectification, I discovered that such ways of thinking were completely ridiculous.” 114

In the later stage of Rectification, Chen Xuezhao spent several hours each day spinning wool. As she recalls:

When I was spinning, I would think of nothing at all. I cranked the wheel with one hand, and pulled out the thin, even yarn with the other. I felt only satisfaction and happiness. At night as I lay on my bunk and thought carefully, I did indeed feel some regret at having become an intellectual. If I had worked in agriculture from my youth, then my big brother may have sent me off to marry his good friend and co-worker.” 115

Chen Xuezhao’s inner world is no doubt more complex than she describes here, however it is probable that the satisfaction and happiness she felt as she spun wool were true feelings. Such feelings were distilled to a higher level of abstraction in a letter from Peng Baishan (彭柏山 1910-1968) to his wife:

Our task in this life lies not in complete service to our self, nor in complete service to others, but in complete service to the entire class - to emancipate the self through emancipation of the class. In this way, the interests of an individual are consistent with the interests of the class. In this light, to pursue the happiness of the collective is to pursue one’s own happiness. I hope that you can deeply understand this.” 116

To recognize the coincidence of individual and class interests, and to see that the happiness of the collective is in fact the happiness of the individual is of course not easily achieved—such an understanding requires an arduous struggle. The Taihang District Party Committee summed up the step-by-step process of establishing a relationship between Party and individual during Rectification: Using the slogan “heart
to the Party, soul to the person (心肝对党·灵魂对人)” to discuss awareness of the Party:

When debate reaches its peak, draw him into further self-reflection, ask him to consider: Who is the Party for? Where have you come from? How is the Party responsible for you? How have you treated the Party? This will arouse in him a historical consciousness and a sense of ownership of the Party.

This, we could say, is the stage of emotional stimulation. Emotional stimulation is absolutely essential. As CCP cadres emphasized:

During the movement, emotions must be brought into play. Without this, confession is impossible, nor can [we] promote divulgence and stimulate positive thinking. But leadership must not settle for this, the main question is whether a connection has been made.117

Next, it was necessary to advance to consolidation through logical thinking:

Going back to read the documents, including ‘Opposing Harmful Trends,’ Chapter 2, section three of On the Cultivation of Communist Party Members,118 [on] ‘how to be a good Party member, and how to establish a good Party’ and Lenin’s “Establishing the Party,” found in [Stalin’s] 1939 History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Having undergone study of these textual weapons, one finally settles the relationship between individual and Party.119

The Taihang summary describes a universal process. Such a process recurs throughout individual experiences, but each of these displays its own characteristics. The diary of Liu Yanjin, for example, presents the psychological state of an individual:

By day we sing old dramas, by night act out new dramas, each day there is so much to do that it is impossible to finish it all. I too am busy to the point of chaos. In the past, if I encountered this kind of situation no doubt I would have stopped participating in the work, even seeing so many people would have left me fed up. I would have found a little corner of my own and read a book. But now it seems different, could it be that I’ve progressed? I still can’t be sure, but psychologically every time I reach the point of frustration, when I want to vent, or to flee, I consciously say to myself: “This is to serve the workers, the farmers, the soldiers!” And with this I find myself at peace and with an even temper, or I walk a little and then come back.120

It is worth noting that the intensely critical approach taken toward individualism during Rectification, while conjuring a selfless state among Party members, was at the same time also founded upon a vigilance against the evolving trends in the intel-
lectual world of Chinese literati since the late Qing. Traditional China, through the imperial examination system, created a close bond between scholars and power. So-called “education for power” (读书仕进), created a path of self-realization for the literati. After the reforms of the late Qing and the abolition of the imperial examination system, this path for professional development was cut off. However, the scholar’s custom of seeking political advancement, governing the nation, and pacifying the realm through study persisted. This psychological orientation of literati serving the tianxia (天下) was molded into a state of devotion to the sovereign. After the birth of the Republic, the dynasty no longer existed and scholars lost the object of this devotion, but their pride and passion remained. Facing a national crisis, they took it upon themselves to save the country and its people. In this era of political disarray, scholars’ expectations of themselves were easily magnified, and created a destructive effect on the systems of power.

During Rectification, many intellectuals, in reviewing their own personal history independently raised questions about their own willful or conceited character. Chen Xiuliang (陈修良 1907-1998), for example, wrote in her work diary (工作笔记):

Having not attended school since childhood, and instead taught by a [private] tutor at home, I was influenced by the style of a few renowned but aloof scholars, and developed a self-indulgent, narrow-minded, stubborn, and conceited character. ...individualist thoughts were pervasive, so at the time I wanted to stand out from my peers, and become an extraordinary woman.121

Indeed, under the imperial examination system, success and literary skill were tightly interrelated. This created a romantic temperament among Chinese scholars, a temperament that was itself related to individualism as defined by the CCP. The imperial examination system, intellectuals, a romantic temperament, and individualism - these can all be seen as connected by the same lineage, as was noted by those at the time:

My father taught me classical poetry at home, I myself sought out romantic novels. Such things led me to pursue fantasies, fall in love with landscapes, and forgo [what I perceived as] trivialities for transcendental thought. I became an arrogant and self-appreciating “romantic genius,” admired by the masses as a “man of letters” (文学家).122

The intellectual class was at the top of society, and its aloof character and percep-
tions, combined with the reality of disorderly authority, inevitably led it into opposition with authority. The widespread prevalence of anarchism in China at the beginning of the 20th century was closely related to this ideological and social background, which was perhaps the cornerstone of the general “leftist” tendency of Chinese intellectuals in the first half of the 20th century. It cannot be denied that the Chinese revolution was carried out to a considerable extent thanks to such an ideological background. But when the historical task of the Communist revolution was gradually transformed from one dominated by resistance to authority to one of reshaping authority, such an ideological background became a stumbling block for the revolution, and there was a sort of historical logic to the manner in which it was cleared away.

Exploring Rectification with this intellectual background in mind, it is easy to understand why, after Rectification was expanded to ordinary Party members, opposing “individualist heroism” (个人英雄主义) became another important theme. Very little research on the Rectification movement attends to this aspect. At the time however, opposing the “hero complex” became, for a period, a popular topic, and it was focused for the most part on cadres with an intellectual background. According to the words of Jing Xiaocun (景晓村 1917-1994):

Petit-bourgeois intellectual participation in the revolution is not brought about by direct oppression in their daily life, but from the idea of revolution for the workers and peasants. This is the origin of subjectivism and [individualist] heroism. Workers and peasants join the revolution for precisely the opposite reason, not due to any faith of becoming a great leader, or in realizing communism, but for the immediate improvement of their lives. This means that [individualist] heroism is unlikely to develop among workers and peasants.¹²³

Faithfully throwing themselves into the revolution, such intellectuals probably did not foresee the dangers of a hero complex. Interestingly, Jing Xiaocun was himself from an intellectual background. Regarding heroism, the CCP’s Shanxi-Chaha’r-Hebei district committee (中共晋察冀一分区地委) collected statistics on the first cohort of students for Rectification training: Among the core problems noted for 91 students, individualist heroism was listed for 42; liberalism for 35; hedonism for 12; and “warlord complex” (军阀主义) for 2.¹²⁴ Individualist heroism and liberalism thus became the two major problems to be confronted during Rectification.

Of course, the above numbers are not free from the subjective intentions of the investigator, whose act of making “individualist heroism” a category already reflects
a very clear orientation. Such an investigatory approach inevitably provides results in which the conclusion is implied in advance. However, as noted above, criticism by the CCP of any hero complex was certainly not baseless. The scope of what counted as individualist heroism was extremely broad. Those who threw themselves into revolution did so with a strong sense of “who else but I?” and of course such people were not without individualist-heroic elements. Chen Manyuan (陈漫远 1911-1986) recalls that when he participated in the work of the provincial student federation at Guangxi second middle school, he had “wanted to become a great revolutionary leader, I envied important people, learned to mimic their airs.” Individualist-heroism was indeed one factor that drew many into the revolutionary movement. In discussing the origins of their own inclination to join the revolution, [one] said:

The biggest factor is that I was studious, virtuous, principled, and envied the work of heroic patriots. Such ideas about heroic patriots, even before I had joined the revolution, were a great force that propelled me forward through darkness, corruption, and backwardness, to resist temptation, corruption, decadence, and false comfort.

During those days, the revolutionary scene that filled the minds of its participants was often: “Onward I march, in my hand a book of revolutionary theory, on my heels follow the proletarian crowd. Out in front I read incantations by the book, so that those behind will follow me to the paradise of socialism.”

From the perspective of later generations, such individualist heroism is of course not an entirely negative phenomenon, it is also a progressive impulse. However, for a Party that was at the time pursuing a unified centralism and homogenized ideology, heroism inevitably implied an excess of individual character and thus had to be weeded out. In his own self-reflection, Liu Rong (刘荣 1920-1993), wrote:

Only the Party and the proletariat can promote social progress. Individualism, idealism, and heroic outlooks are all outdated ways of thinking of the petit bourgeois. Today it finally dawned upon me that one’s spirit and essence can only develop alongside those of the Party. This is a transformation in the nature of both thought and awareness.

Individualist heroism was thus seen as a quest for fame and favor, or more crucially, as self-importance. This was a phenomenon that the CCP, which through Rectification had placed even greater importance on centralized, disciplined, and unified authority,
was particularly allergic to.

In the context of Rectification, liberalism was seen as selfishness, and individual heroics as arrogance. Both selfishness and arrogance were to be purged, with the crucial act of delivering oneself unto the Party, delivering oneself unto the organization. Liu Rong, in his diary, reprimanded himself: “that I have wasted my mind and wrecked my body on the follies of heroism and liberalism is due to nothing but my own stupidity. I must correct this immediately.”\(^{129}\) The method of correction was assimilation into the collective. Only with assimilation into the Party's collective could one become aware of one's ignorance and insignificance: “How difficult it is to become a true Communist Party member, he should possess true proletarian consciousness, thinking of the Party no matter the situation, thinking of himself as a Party member, and that all is for the good of the Party.”\(^{130}\) Liu Rong secretly made up his mind: “the only thing that should exist within the mind is the ‘Party.’ The Party becomes the mind, and the mind the Party, they fuse together. Nothing else can rule the mind.”\(^{131}\) In pursuing this goal of psychological hegemony for the Party, CCP members of the time did not necessarily suffer and struggle as much as later generations may think. Many assume that in Rectification CCP members resisted right up to the point of being tamed. More likely however, is that each attempted to summon themself from a position of conditional trust to one of unconditional devotion.

Indeed, when such a process neared completion, it often brought about feelings of complete rebirth, or “Nirvana of the Phoenix.”\(^{132}\) During Rectification, many people referred to the joy they felt having delivered their body and mind to the Party. As one Party member wrote: “thinking of oneself, pain and worry easily arise; only when facing problems from the Party standpoint can one enjoy peace, happiness, and undisturbed blessings.”\(^{133}\) Peng Boshan (彭柏山 1910 – 1968), in a letter to his wife and children, wrote: “Since beginning Rectification study, my soul has already been cleansed. In my work, study, and life, I have stepped onto a golden path. This is my innermost joy, a true joy. I wish for you a day like this.”\(^{134}\) Such giving over of oneself for the good of the Party, is not merely an act of self-sacrifice under discipline, it is also the supreme joy of merging oneself with a great undertaking. This we can see in the diary of Xu Guangyao (徐光耀 1925-2000):

Only in an organization and squad led by the Communist Party could there be such profound introspection, could one be pushed to such rapid progress. Our generation is truly blessed by the
Communist Party. Who, apart from the Communist Party, would be willing to so enthusiastically help you see your own weaknesses and urge you to improve them? Who, apart from the Communist Party, can help us by attending to and correcting, at any time and place, our mistaken perceptions, behavior, thoughts, and methods? Just to think these thoughts makes me excited. Knowing that I can soon sink into the embrace of the Party, I feel so lucky.

Perhaps the above writings will be suspected of being postured declarations of political correctness. Such a critical reading is appropriate when conducting historical research. However, upon careful examination, it is not hard to discover that the reason the CCP revolutionary camp was able to relinquish the self and consciously accept the teachings of the Party is to be found not only in the immediate impulse of Rectification, but also inner journeys (心路历程) of individual CCP members and even the intellectual path of Modern China. People in each era have their own paths, and later generations cannot define the predecessors with their own thinking. For a long period, the independent individual had no place in Chinese social thought. The New Culture enlightenment was accompanied by the rapid advance of organized power, and the urgent and existential national crisis in particular led to a need, among the Chinese people increasingly conscious of their nation, for a force of cohesion. Therefore, when later generations present this history as “national salvation suffocating enlightenment,” we should ask how many of those involved at the time actually had a choice? To defer to the organization, uphold discipline, unite and save the nation, these were seen as the natural mission of the enlightenment generation. At the time, to be an enlightened Zhongguo ren (Chinese person) meant to throw oneself into the movement to save the nation and its people - at least this was the position of the mainstream.

For the majority of that generation, to put the interests of the country and her people ahead of one's own was to act on the highest principle. Once a power emerged that both expressed the feelings and thoughts of national salvation and appeared greatly effective, it seemed perfectly justifiable for people to devote themselves to, and follow, such a power. It offered hope for the nation, and progress for the individual. Looking through contemporary reports, diaries and essays by CCP cadres, the word “progress” appears repeatedly to emerge as a shared goal among Communist Party members. Progress implies moving up, or forward, or beyond, it is a dominant line of thought born under the influence of modern evolutionary theory. Such a mentality
is again reinforced by the CCP emphasis on initiative and efficiency. In December of 1941, Eighth Route Army cadre Liu Rong wrote the following in his diary: “the truly oppressed youth and intellectual, once enlightened - once they raise their iron fist against the old dark society and commit to fight to the end for the Revolution - asks only for progress, and for an ordered and lively political life. It is this mentality that unites the youth and intellectuals.”

In such a context, the pursuit of the “greater self” and banishment of the “lesser self,” was not only a requirement of the communist, it was also the aspiration of the majority of that generation. We might rather say that the emergence of such an organization provided the people of a troubled time a place of mental and physical repose. When Rectification was carried out in the form of a quasi-coercive movement, many people were stirred, from the bottom of their hearts, to move with it. One person, during Rectification, wrote:

"Without the Party, what meaning do I have? How could I go on? Let me work for the Party! In everything I do I will think only of the interests of the Party, never of my own. When I thought of myself my work suffered and problems arose. Following this path, I feel happy, carefree, and at peace."

From this perspective, the ideal state of mind was one in which life and revolution are perfectly integrated, they are no longer divided into separate fields:

"When the revolutionary cause becomes just like housework, that arises in one's daily life, then it is hard to distinguish what is for the benefit of the self, and what for the benefit of the collective. Because in reality, the individual and the collective have melted into one another."

Such a state of mind, in a broader context, is not only a goal pursued by the CCP. Foucault has written of technologies that permit “individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.” Behind Rectification there lies a long history of the human spirit.

**Epilogue**

Over the course of the Yan’an period, the communist ethic of collectivism, the changing
mentality of the modern Chinese intellectual, and the revolutionary ethos of the day were all conducive to implementing the objective of Rectification. Under the banner of rectification, CCP members actively made their own wills assimilate with the Party’s and thereby transformed themselves into a “rectified generation.” Such an outcome of the Rectification would have a seminal impact on the spirit and disposition of the CCP. In one sense, the history of the Rectification is a history of the spiritual metamorphosis of CCP members. Many veterans of the Rectification turned out to be grateful to the campaign in their later lives, regardless of tremendous assault they encountered at the time. Setting aside the deliberately embellished aspects of these recollections, one can still sense the logic of such gratitude. Yu Min, a senior practitioner in the film industry, recounts in his memoir that:

I wrote my introspection journal and listened to suggestions and criticisms from my fellow cadres. I was happy with all the critical remarks except for two that I could not stomach: that I was “somewhat self-opinionated and self-important.” By “somewhat,” the criticizers were obviously trying to be moderate. I had always thought of myself as quite self-aware, so I asked myself: Am I really that bad? How these two “selves” made me blush and sweat! I pretended to be receptive at the time, but I was indeed resistant deep down. It was only after many more twists and turns that I was finally convinced in my heart. In fact, my shortcomings didn’t stop there. At the time I was in a relatively stable environment and I did not go through many difficulties and thus the worst of them remained concealed. Before it scratches glass, how can you tell if a diamond is real? What I gained at that time, was to stand in front of everyone (the masses) and stare into the mirror. With that I made the first acquaintance with my own face.\textsuperscript{141}

When Liu Baiyu was recording his own soul-stirring experience, he did not to forget to make clear that:

I feel that there are two reasons for recording this period of history. For one thing, in China or abroad, the proletarian revolution has never been without its defects. As Lu Xun said, revolution is a painful process and is always mixed with grime and blood...Anyone unaware of this will not be able endure revolution’s trials, nor survive its dangers. The second reason is that for a person with no proletarian background to transform into a person with both proletarian thought and emotions, they must undergo a great battering - this is a class one cannot skip, and a tempering one cannot avoid.\textsuperscript{142}

The success of the Rectification lay in not only the personal commitment of CCP members but several other factors: a rather closed environment created by the cam-
campaign itself; a human spirit of idealism that had been passed down from generation to generation; and an urgent need, beginning in the modern era, to save China. Together these factors gave Rectification an intellectual foundation that made possible its dramatic results. However, the other side of the story cannot be ignored. In the course of Rectification, human struggle of all kinds was inevitable. The clash between ego and attempts to conquer that ego played out throughout the campaign. As Liu Yanjin put it: “Talk is cheap, but when one really gets down to action, the self rears up and the individual comes to the fore... being a communist is far from simple.” According to an investigation conducted by the CCP, even after Rectification around 80% cadres were yet to establish the idea of unconditional obedience to the Party. Indeed, this failure was the most common among “incorrect ideas.” Even having established the concept of such unconditional obedience, whether it could truly be implemented in daily life and work is another question. Neither is it certain whether those who claimed to have accepted the idea of unconditional obedience really did what they said. During Rectification many cadres sincerely accepted the Party’s will, but there were also many who made a performance of such acceptance. As the CCP concluded at the time:

Many cadres took an expedient approach. Even if they had not understood, they would simply yield to others’ opinions, to the majority, the dominant, or simply those they trusted. For instance, at the Party School of our Party Bureau, initially there were 88 people (35.2% of the school faculty) who believed that even the big bourgeoisie could be considered revolutionary. In the end, that number was reduced to 3 (1.2% of the faculty). Once Rectification was over, however, some people found overlap between what was eventually concluded to be correct and the ideas they had abandoned during the campaign. They thus sought to turn back the clock, claiming that they had been correct all along. Others intentionally acted out the “leftist” persona, claiming “loyalty” to, exaggerating the power of, and excessively flattering their Party.

An even more common problem was the following:

Although some cadres were reformed through a collectivist, heated, and tense atmosphere, it is worth considering whether they may relapse once disbanded and such an atmosphere had passed. Although Rectification was an ideological mass campaign and a collective, intellectual practice, when it comes to concrete matters of routine work, the real impact of the Rectification deserves further thought. Some cadres claimed in the course of the Rectification that they had been “converted in principle, but not quite in spirit.” This too, reflects a truth of Rectification.
Sometimes bitter ideological struggle can be counterproductive. As Fan Yuanzhen wrote:

The further I dig into the bad that lies within me, the more it seems that there was never any good. If Rectification is meant to strengthen what is good, and build upon that good as a foundation to overcome what is bad, well then, I find myself without such a foundation.148

As for Liu Yanjin, after an intense period of self-rejection during Rectification, she found herself full of emotion: “I felt remorse, distress, and that I had let down the Party.” She went so far as to give herself a rather remarkable political label:

I used the unique seductive power of the opposite sex to bewitch some simple and enthusiastic youths, rendering them self-obsessed, unconscious, and emotionally unstable. This in turn led to contradictions, jealousy, and struggle among them. This was very nearly a matter of life and death. In fact, I was like an enemy saboteur. What I have done is reminiscent of the enemy’s honeytraps. 149

Despite the vividness of the description, such sorrow is not necessarily an exhaustive picture of Liu Yanjin’s emotional state. After cooling down, and facing an even harsher rectification, Liu wrote in her diary:

In the past, I tended to think of everyone as good and kind, but how could I be so sure? What is “passion” anyway? What use is it? It’s just a poison that encourages one’s self-deception! How many friendships have been ruined for the sake of “Advancement,” “position,” and “honor!”150

Perhaps even more shocking was the Rescue campaign, in which a great many cadres were “rescued” as if they had been “spies” and “double agents.” In her diary, Ding Ling would write:

I have already confessed to the Party that I am a spy for the Rejuvenation (复兴) Society. I have been forthright in my words to the Party. I have admitted all that I should admit... I have stated my crimes against the Party and made an open accounting of them. I have dissected myself into pieces of a deliberate plot against the Party. I have offered up all the people I know, and rendered all my relations with these people as threads in an espionage network.

As Ding Ling went on to lament:
It has been two months! How terrifying these two months have been; alas, that nightmare has not yet come to an end!\textsuperscript{151}

Despite its manifold problems, we have to admit that Rectification’s logic of collectivism did forge the spiritual world of a generation, a world that was both logically coherent and self-contained. Although an internal struggle between the sacred and secular (天人交战) plays out endlessly, Rectification created a stable system of political culture, one that was strengthened continually through interaction within the collective. The rectified generation were highly dependent on the Party leadership and organization, handing over both body and mind to the Party. They were a community that, under the discipline of the Party, consciously intended to “forever follow the Party, pursue the truth, never fall back or fall behind, and forever serve as the vanguard soldiers of the Revolution.”\textsuperscript{152} The formation of such a community was highly effective at reducing strain and drag on the Party apparatus, it was a central and powerful component of the CCP’s revolutionary political system.

It is thus little wonder that even many years after Rectification — against the background of the Reform and Opening Up — the defense of the campaign by Liu Baiyu was one made sincerely. And Liu was not alone; many people who underwent Rectification have done quite the same thing. This is a unique generation, the existence of which stands as a reminder of the potential impact of a campaign such as Rectification. On the other hand, although the spirit of Rectification has proved relatively resilient, it is not immortal. Following the success of the revolution and the inevitable permeation of secular society, the spirit of this generation has been significantly fragmented. With the passing of time, those who lived through Rectification are leaving us, and finally it is the uniqueness of that generation that paradoxically speaks to the limits of its legacy.
Endnotes

1 Many thanks to those who have offered comments on and improvements for this translation, especially Zhang Man, Mark Czellér, Timothy Cheek, Nathan Gan, and members of the Freiburg chapter of *Revisiting the Revolution*. As well as improving the translation I learned a great deal from discussions over this text. Thanks also to Mark Czellér and Puck Engman for thoughts on the introduction.


5 After much discussion and one or two heated arguments, we could still not settle on a translation for 心靈史. It is not quite “emotional history” (and in fact Huang himself sets his work in contrast to that field), while terms such as “spiritual history” or “a history of souls” are either inaccurate or misleading.


When it comes to the Rectification, oft-mentioned works include: Hong taiyang shi zenyang shenqi de [How the Red Sun Rose] (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2000) by Gao Hua 高华; Dangshi biji: Cong Zunyi huiyi dao Yan’an zhengfeng 党史笔记——从遵义会议到延安整风 [Notes on the Party History: From the Zunyi Conference to the Yan’an Rectification] (Hong Kong: Liwen Press, 2008) by He Fang 何方; “Yan’an zhengfeng de taiqian muhou 毛泽东发动延安整风的台前幕后 [On the Mounting of the Yan’an Rectification]” (Modern Chinese History Studies, no.4 (1998)) by Yang Kuisong 杨奎松.

Chen Boda 陈伯达, “Huida Yu Bingran Tongzhi 回答于炳然同志 [A Reply to Comrade Yu Bingran],” Jiefang ribao 解放日报 [Liberation Daily], July 23, 1942. Of course, in any given time and in any given context, the personal response to external stimulus is varied. No matter how compelling the Rectification turned out to be, escapism and passive resistance still existed. Historical studies should pay attention to individuals, but it is just impossible to take into consideration every single individual or every single kind of response. What this paper concerns is the groups and individuals who did engage in the Rectification; the xinling history of those who escaped the Rectification is a different topic. In fact, those who chose to escape did not necessarily do so directly as a response to Rectification. In other words, their choices were not necessarily directly connected to this particular campaign.

Trans.: Huang here, with a focus on the Chinese revolution, somewhat downplays similar attempts at psychological transformation, particularly in the Soviet Union, which have been studied through a Foucauldian lens by scholars such as Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck. See, for example, Chapter 3, “Laboratories of the Soul,” in Hellbeck, Revolution on My Mind, in which the act of writing a diary is described as an attempt to render its author “transparent,” 53-114, 108.


Yu Guangyuan (於光遠) believes that: “The Rectification campaign was in fact two rectification campaigns carried out simultaneously. The goal of the first was the opposition of the Wang Ming line and a purge of its influence; the goal of the second was to target and educate those intellectuals within the Party who were newcomers to the Revolution.” Wo de bian nian gushi (1939-1945) 我的編年故事 (1939—1945) [My chronicle] (Daxiang chubanshe, 2005), 142. He Fang (何方) has also pointed out that “Both at the time and for a long time after the fact, nobody realized that Rectification at Yan’an was divided into two levels. ... At the top a line struggle was carried out, and the two factions [dogmatism and empiricism] opposed; the popular Rectification was a transformation of thought, an opposing of traitors, and an examination of cadres.” Cong Yan’an yi lu zoulai—— He Fang zizhuan 从延安一路走来———何方自述 [The way from Yan’an], (Renminribao chubanshe, 2015), 76.

Entry for April 13, 1943, Mao Zedong nianpu, 433.

Trans.: Mao mentions May 5th specifically in reference to Marx’ s birthday.

Entry for June 6, 1943, Mao Zedong nianpu, 2: 444.

Translated in Timothy Cheek, Mao Zedong and China’s Revolutions: A Brief History With Documents, Bedford Series in History and Culture (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 117-119

“Diwei guanyu zhengfeng xunlian ban baogao caogao ji tanbai ren mingdan 地委关于整风训练班报告草稿及坦白人名单 [The Regional Committee’s draft of report on the Rectification training class with an appendant list of confessors].” November 10, 1943, files on the Eastern Gansu Committee of the CCP (1943–1944), Qingyang Municipal Archives, the Province of Gansu. My special thanks goes to Sheng Caicai (盛差偲)for providing a copy of the document.
31 Shen Xia 沈霞, Yan’an si nian 延安四年 [Four Years in Yan’an] (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chu-banshe, 2009), 71.
34 “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jixu kaizhan zhengfeng yundong de jueding,” 276.
35 Marx and Engels, in The German Ideology, state very clearly: “The transformation, through the division of labour, of personal powers (relationships) into material pow- ers, cannot be dispelled by dismissing the general idea of it from one’s mind, but can only be abolished by the individuals again subjecting these material powers to them-selves and abolishing the division of labour. This is not possible without the commu-nity. Only in community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 83.
36 Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right,’ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 137. Trans.: Huang here uses a standard Chinese translation of Marx, in which “ad hominem” in the original is translated as “説服人” (persuades people). We have translated in line with Huang’s text in order to give the English reader an experience as close as possible to that of the Chinese reader. We note that the translation used by Huang is in wide use in the PRC. It is Karl Marx 马克思, 黑格尔法哲学批判 [Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy Of Right’], in 马克思恩格斯文集 [The Collected works of Marx and Engels], Vol. 1, (Beijing, Renmin Chubanshe, 2009), 11.
37 Yu Wen 郁文, “Wo yu lilun xuexi 我与理论学习 [Theoretical study and me],” Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 4, April 15, 1943, 8
38 Trans.: Huang here quotes a letter from Wang Yangming to Yang Shite and Xue Shangqian, the longer passage is: “I once wrote to you, Shite, saying: ‘It is easy to defeat the bandits in the mountains, but difficult to defeat the bandits in our minds.’ That I am able to eliminate a few petty thieves is no cause for surprise. But for you, my worthy friends, to sweep your hearts clean of the bandits inside, and to succeed in restoring inner clarity and peace and calm, would certainly be an epoch-making accomplishment of great men.” This translation from The Philosophical Letters of Wang Yangming, trans., Julia Ching, (ANU Press, 1972), 45. Wang Yangming, the most famous Confucian scholar of the Ming period credited with a meditative and psychological approach to Confucian self-cultivation was also a successful imperial administrator and military leader.

39 Trans.: Huang, like the CCP, uses the term 思想 to indicate several concepts that we thought were worth delineating: a) A normative set of ideas that the Party sought to propagate and inculcate (ideology); b) the particular and actual thinking and ideas of individuals (thought or ideas); c) An interior state that includes both thoughts and feelings (sentiment). In cases such as this in which Huang uses the term to refer to a broader cluster of ideas that includes both prescriptive and descriptive elements, as well as a mixture of intellectual and emotional states we toss our glossaries off the balcony and go with sixiang.

40 “Cong zhengfeng lai kan ganbu sixiang yu jinhou de ganbu jiaoyu wenti——Taihang qu dang wei xuanchuan buzhang Panshi tongzhi zai 1944 nian 8 yue huiyi shang de baogao从整风来看干部思想与今后的干部教育问题——太行区党委宣传部长磐石同志在 1944年8月会议上的报告 [On questions of cadre thought and future cadre education from the perspective of Rectification — Report by Zhang Panshi of the Taihang region propaganda department at a meeting in August 1944]” in Yi er jiu shi ji Ji Lu Yu junqu kangri zhanzheng shi fujian zhi er ziliao xuanbian. 一二九师暨冀鲁豫军区抗日战争战史附件之二.资料选编 [A military history of the 129th division’s arrival to Hebei, Shandong and Henan military areas during the war of resistance with Japan; appendix 2, collected materials] Vol. 3 (1943-1945), (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun di er ye zhan jun shi bianji shi, 1962), 702.


42 Peng Xuefeng 彭雪枫: “Guanyu zhongyang zhengfeng xin zhishi ji huazhong ju bu-chong zhishi de chuanda 关于中央整风新指示及华中局补充指示的传达 [Communication on new Instructions for rectification from the Central Committee and supplementary instructions from the Central China Bureau]” June 20, 1943, in Huabei kangri genju di shiliao xuanji 淮北抗日根据地史料选辑 [Huabei anti-japanese base area historical ma-
Trans.: As we note in our introduction, Huang is somewhat innovative in his use of the words such as 灵魂 (soul), 精神 (spirit), or 心靈 (spirit, original internal state, thoughts and feelings). For discussion of linghun 靈魂 in this historical context, see: Daji Lù, Xuezeng Gong, and Chi Zhen, Marxism and Religion, (Brill, 2014), 68.


Mao Zedong, 毛泽东. “Guanyu zhengdun sanfeng 关于整顿三风 [On the rectification of the Three Styles,]” (April 20, 1942), in Mao Zedong wenji vol.2 (Renmin chubanshe, 1993), 416-418. This English translation is adapted slightly from Stuart Schram and Timothy Cheek, eds., Mao’s Road to Power Vol. 8, (Routledge, 2015), 85-86. 《毛泽东文集》第2卷, 人民出版社1993 年版, 第416—418 页。

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“Ye er jiu zhengzhi bu guanyu zhengdun san feng xuexi yundong de di san hao zhishi 一二九师政治部关于整顿三风学习运动的第三号指示 [The 129th division political department’s third directive on the study campaign for the rectification of the three styles,]” August 23, 1942, in Yi er jiu shi ji Ji Lu Yu junqu kangri zhanzheng shi fujian zhi er. ziliao xuanbian 一二九师暨冀鲁豫军区抗日战争战史附件之二,资料选编 [a military history of the 129th division’s arrival to Hebei, Shandong and Henan military areas during the war of resistance with Japan; appendix 2, collected materials] Vol. 3 (1943-1945), (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun di er ye zhan jun shi bianji shi, 1962), 593.

Zhang Zizhen 张子珍. Diary entry for December 6, 1943, in Shenghuo riji 生活日记 [Life diary], (Zhonggong Yanbei diwei dangshi bangongshi, Yingxian dangshi ziliao zhengji bangongshi, 1984), 8. 中共雁北地委党史办公室、应县党史资料征集办公室1984 年编印, 第8页。
Trans.: Huang here is alluding to an essay, “Dogma and Pants” (教条与裤子) by Hu Qiaomu, published in the Liberation Daily on March 9, 1942. In this essay, Hu presented the idea of exposing oneself to the Party and to the masses through the metaphor of a literal exposure - of dropping one’s pants. Hu wrote that: “Dogma lives in your pants - there is an organic relationship between dogmatism and pants. Whoever sincerely wants to oppose dogmatism, the first thing he must have is the determination and courage to take off his pants. This is the crux of the matter today.” Hu Qiaomu “Jiaotiao yu kuzi 教条与裤子 [Dogma and Pants], Jiefang ribao, March 9, 1942.

Mao Zedong, Nongcun diaocha - qian yan 民村调查 – 前言 [Preface to Rural surveys], available in English at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_01.htm

"Zhongyang dangxiao er bu xuefeng xuexi zongjie 中央党校二部学风学习总结 [Central party school, second division, summary of study-style learning],” September 17, 1944, in Yan’an zhongyang dangxiao de zhengfeng xuexi 延安中央党校的整风学习 [Yan'an central party school rectification study] Vol. 2, (Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chuban she, 1989), 278.《中央党校二部学风学习总结》(1944 年 9 月 17 日), 《延安中央党校的整风学习》第 2 集, 中共中央党校出版社1989 年版, 第278 页。


Fan Yuanzhen, from Wuhan, Hubei, joined the CCP in 1937, and at this time was studying at the Yan’an Marxist College.


Fei Gou 非垢. “Guanyu ‘lilun, wenyi, gongzuo’ de fanxing — zai zhengfeng zuotanhui de fanxing 关于“理论、文艺、工作”的反省 —— 在整风座谈会的反省 [Self reflections on ‘theory, arts and literature, work’ — self reflection during rectification discussion meetings,], in in Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 4.5, May 15, 1943, 70.

Shandong Southern District Party Committee, (鲁南区党委) Qu wei guanyu jianglin zai zhengfeng zhong zisha wenti chuli de jueding 区委关于江林在整风中自杀问题处理的决定 [Decisions by the district committee on handling the question of the suicide of Jiang Lin during rectification], September 1944, cited from Li Lifeng 李里峰. Geming zhengdang yu xiangcun shehui—kangzhan shiqi zhongguo gongchandang de zuzhi xingtai yanjiu 革命政党与乡村社会——抗战时期中国共产党的组织形态研究 [Revolutionary Party and village society, a study on the organizational forms of the Chinese Communist Party during the war of resistance with Japan], (Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2011), 217-218.


Mao Zedong 毛泽东. “Zai zhongyang zhengzhiju huiyi shang jianghua de yaodian 在中央政治局会议上讲话的要点 [Key points of a speech delivered at a meeting of the politburo of the central committee], March 16, 1943, in Mao Zedong wenji 毛泽东文集 [Selected works of Mao Zedong], Vol. 3, 10. English translation available in Stuart Schram and Timothy Cheek eds., Mao's Road to Power (Routledge, 2015), 344-347.


Jing Xiaocun 景晓村. Diary entry for July 13, 1943, in Jing Xiaocun riji 景晓村日记 [The diary of Jing Xiaocun], (Beijing balujun Shandong kangri genju di yanjiu hui fenhui, 2012), 145.

Ma Qianli, Diary entry for January 27, 1943, in Chongqing hong yan geming jinian guan, ed., Zheng rong sui yue——Ma Qianli kaoji zhan riji xuan 峥嵘岁月———马千里抗战日记选 [Extraordinary years: Selections from Ma Qianli’s diary during the war of resistance with Japan.] (Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 589.


Ma Qianli, Diary entry for January 9, 1943, in Chongqing hong yan geming jinian guan, ed., Zheng rong sui yue——Ma Qianli kangi zhan riji xuan 峥嵘岁月———马千里抗战日记选 [Extraordinary years: Selections from Ma Qianli's diary during the war of resistance with Japan.] (Sichuan renmin chubanshe she, 1998), 582.


Trans.: this phrase invokes the golden headband—usually written as 金箍圈 — that controlled Monkey in the traditional tale of Journey to the West, suggesting a magic spell that can control and guide a powerful force that otherwise might run amok, as Monkey did in the Mountain of Blossoms and Fruits.

Kang Sheng 康生. “Zenyang yanjiu zhong xuan bu si yue san hao jueding 怎样研究中宣
部四月三号决定 [How to study the April 3 decision of the Central Propaganda Department?]," Zhengfeng xuexi ziliao 整风学习资料 [Rectification Study Materials] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1958), 376.

73 Diary entry for May 3, 1943, Zhengrong suiyue, 644.

74 Gong Zirong 龚子荣, “Qu dangwei jiguan xuexi fangfa de yixie jingyan jiaoxun 区党委机关学习方法的一些经验教训 [Some lessons from district committee cadres’ experiences of political study],” Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 2, (March 31, 1943): 14.

75 “Junqu di X xiaozu yijian 军区第 X 小组意见 [Suggestions from Military District Group X],” Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 4 and 5, (May 15, 1943): 89.

76 Liao Jingdan 廖井丹, “Zenyang kefu fanxin de kunnan 怎样克服反省的困难 [How to overcome difficulty in confession],” Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 2, (March 31, 1943): 51.

77 Liu Yanjin (1925–2012), born in Beijing, went to the Central-Heibei Base Area in 1938 and join there the Firing-line Theatrical Troop of the Central-Heibei Military Region.

78 Liu Yanjin 刘燕瑾, Diary entry for March 29 1944, Huoxian, 224.


83 “Yezhan yiyuan xiaozu yijian 野战医院小组意见 [Suggestions from the Field Army Hospital group],” Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 4 and 5, (May 15, 1943): 82.

84 Diary Entry for August 25, 1942, in Zhengrong suiyue, 525.

85 Trans.: “tails” here likely refers to the three ills that were the primary targets of Recti-
fication: subjectivism, sectarianism, and formalism.


Zhang Zizhen, diary entry for October 6, 1944, in Shenghuo riji 生活日记 [Life diary], 79–80.

Zhang Zizhen, diary entry for June 30, 1944, in Shenghuo riji 生活日记 [Life diary], 62–3.


Ibid., 13.

徐光耀(1926—), 河北雄县人。1938 年参加八路军。曾任冀中军区警备旅政治部除奸科干事。Xu Guangyao, born in the county of Xiong, the province of Hebei, join the Eighth Route Army in 1938. He once served as a secretary to the Counter-espionage Office, the Department of Political Work, the Garrison Brigade of the Mid-Hebei Military Region.

Entry for January 26, 1948, Xu Guangyao riji 徐光耀日记 [Diary of Xu Guangyao], (Hebei jiaoyu chuban she, 2015), 2: 10.

Chen Xuezhao 陈学昭, “Yige geren zhuyi zhe zeyang renshi le gongchan dang 一个个人主义者怎样认识了共产党 [How an individualist came to know the communist party], in Wang Jucai 王巨才, ed., Yan’an wenyi dang an: Yan’an wenxue 延安文艺档案·延安文学 [Yan’an literature and art archive: literature in Yan’an] (Taibai wenyi chubanshe, 2015), 33: 343.

“Shi tongzhi laixin 石同志来信 [A letter from Comrade Shi],” Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 3 (April 15, 1943): 32.

He Fang 何方, Cong Yan’an yi lu zou lai: He Fang zishu 从延安一路走来——何方自述 [A Long Way from Yan’an: He Fang’s memoirs], 67.

Liu Yanjin, diary entry for July 4, 1944, Huoxian, 180–1.

“Zhonggong Jin Cha Ji yi fenqu de wei di yi qi zhengfeng xunlian ban zongjie baogao jielu 中共晋察冀一分区地委第一期整风训练班总结报告节录 [Excerpt from the first summary report on rectification training by the CCP Shanxi, Chahar, Hebei district prefectural party committee],” Zhong gong Jin Cha Ji fenju zhengfeng weiyuan hui, ed., Zhengfeng tongxun 整风通讯 [Rectification bulletin], no. 3 (July 20, 1944): 9.
“分局党校及直属机关四十天反法西斯论战的几点经验” [Some lessons from the forty-day anti-fascist debate at the branch Party school and directly affiliated agencies], in Zhong gong Jin Cha Ji fenju zhengfeng weiyuan hui, ed., Zhengfeng tongxun 整风通讯 [Rectification bulletin], no. 3 (July 20, 1944): 3-4.

101 Zhang Zizheng, diary entry for June 11, 1944, Shenghuo riji, 49–50.
102 Liu Baiyu, “Pingdi feng lei 平地风雷 [A bolt from the blue],” in Ren Wen ed., Wo suo qinli de Yan’an zhengfeng 我所亲历的延安整风 [The Yan’an Rectification as I experienced], 2: 73, 75.
103 Liu Yanjin, diary entry for March 23, 1945, Huoxian, 221.
104 He Fang, Cong Yan’an, 79.
105 He Fang, Cong Yan’an, 80.
107 “Zhongyang dangxiao er bu xuefeng xuexi zongjie 中央党校二部学风学习总结 [Central party school, second division, summary of study-style learning],” September 17, 1944, in Yan’an zhongyang dangxiao de zhengfeng xuexi 延安中央党校的整风学习 [Yan’an central party school rectification study] Vol. 2, (Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chuban she, 1989), 278.
108 Dou Shangchu enlisted in October 1929 and joined the Party in February 1930. He was political commissar of the 30th regiment of the 10th division of the Fourth Red Army.
109 Dou Shangchu 窦尚初. “Xuefeng xuexi chubu zongjie——1944 nian 8 yue 17 ri zai er bu dahui de fa yan 學風學習初步總結——1944年8月17日在二部大會的發言 [A summary of initial steps in Study style learning—speech at a general assembly of the second division, August 17, 1944], in Yan’an zhongyang dangxiao de zhengfeng xuexi 延安中央黨校的整風學習 [Yan’an central party school rectification study], Vol 1, 224-5
113 Entry for June 1, 1944, in Liang Shansong 梁山松 et al. eds., Fenghuo Jin Cha Ji——Liu Rong kangzhan riji xuan 烽火晋察冀——刘荣抗战日记选 [Fireline Shanxi, Chahar, Hebei—selections from Liu Rong’s diary during the war of resistance with Japan], (Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2015), 159.
114 Chen Xuezhao 陈学昭. “Yige geren zhuyi zhe zeyang renshi le gongchan dang 一个个人主义者怎样认识了共产党 [How an individualist came to know the communist party], in Wang Jucai 王巨才, ed., Yan’an wényi dang an, Yan’an wenxue 延安文艺档案-延安文学 [Yan’an literature and art archive, Yan’an literature], Vol.33, 343.
115 Chen Xuezhao 陈学昭. Tianya guike 天涯归客 [Back from the edge of the world], (Zhejiang renmin chuban she, 1980), 177-8.
116 Peng Baishan 彭柏山. Zhanhuo zhong de shujian 战火中的书简 [Letters from the fire-line], (Shanghai wenyi chuban she, 1982), 38.


118 Trans.: Liu Shaoqi's 1939 work, often translated as "How to be a good communist"
https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/liu-shaoqi/1939/how-to-be/ch03.htm

119 “Cong zhengfeng lai ganbu sixiang yu jinhou de ganbu jiaoyu wenti——Taihang qu dang wei xuanchuan buzhang Panshi tongzhi zai 1944 nian 8 yue huiyi shang de baogao 从整顿来看干部思想与今后的干部教育问题———太行区党委宣传部长磐石同志在 1944 年 8 月会议上的报告 [On questions of cadre thought and future cadre education from the perspective of Rectification — Report by Zhang Panshi of the Taihang region propaganda department at a meeting in August 1944]” in Yi er jiu shi ji Ji Lu Yu junqu kangri zhanzheng shi fujian zhi er. ziliao xuanbian [a military history of the 129th division's arrival to Hebei, Shandong and Henan military areas during the war of resistance with Japan; appendix 2, collected materials] Vol. 3 (1943-1945), (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun di er ye zhanjun shi bianji shi, 1962), 703.

120 Liu Yanjin 刘燕瑾. Diary entry for March 14, 1944, in Huoxian, 162.

121 Chen Xiuliang gongzuo biji (1945-1951 nian) 陈修良工作笔记 (1945—1951 年), (Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2015), 2-3.

122 Xiao Nong 效农. “Cong wo de chushen he shehui genyuan tan qi 从我的出身和社会根源谈起 [Let's begin with my family background and social origin], in Jinsui xue xun [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 6 May 31, 1943, 13
[My ‘heroic’ thoughts and attitude in studying theory],” in Jinsui xue xun [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 4,5 May 15, 1943, 36.

128 Entry for July 31, 1944, in Liang Shansong 梁山松 et al. eds., Fenghuo Jin Cha Ji— Liu Rong kangzhan riji xuan 烽火晋察冀———刘荣抗战日记选 [Fireline Shanxi, Chahar, Hebei—selections from Liu Rong’s diary during the war of resistance with Japan], (Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2015), 189-90.

129 Entry for August 26, 1944, in Liang Shansong 梁山松 et al. eds., Fenghuo Jin Cha Ji— Liu Rong kangzhan riji xuan 烽火晋察冀———刘荣抗战日记选 [Fireline Shanxi, Chahar, Hebei—selections from Liu Rong’s diary during the war of resistance with Japan], (Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2015), 201.

130 Liu Yanjin 刘燕瑾. Diary entry for March 18, 1943, in Huoxian, 32-3.


132 Trans.: Huang here references Guo Moruo’s 1920 poem, 凤凰涅槃, which celebrates the rapid fall of an old society and its replacement by the new.

133 Zong 宗. “Wo zai zuotanhui shang jia rule dang 我在座谈会上加入了党 [I joined the Party at a meeting],” in Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 4,5 May 15, 1943, 81.

134 Peng Baishan 彭柏山. Zhanhuo zhong de shujian 战火中的书简 [Letters from the fire-line], (Shanghai wenyi chuban she, 1982), 50-1.

135 Entry for January 24, 1948, Xu Guanyao riji, 2: 8.

136 Trans.: Huang here invokes a quote from Li Zehou 救亡压倒啟蒙.

137 Entry for December 19, 1941, in Liang Shansong 梁山松 et al. eds., Fenghuo Jin Cha Ji, 22.

138 Zong 宗. “Wo zai zuotanhui shang jia rule dang 我在座谈会上加入了党 [I joined the Party at a meeting],” in Jinsui xue xun 晋绥学讯 [Jinsui study bulletin], no. 4,5 May 15, 1943, 80-1.

139 Peng Baishan 彭柏山. Zhanhuo zhong de shujian 战火中的书简 [Letters from the fire-line], (Shanghai wenyi chuban she, 1982), 97-8.

140 Trans.: The English quote here is taken from Michel Foucault, Technologies of the Self (Tavistock, 1988, 18. The full quote relates specifically to the question of “technologies of the self.” Huang is, to a not usual degree, squeezing Foucault’s words to make his own point.

141 Yu Min, “Zhongyao de shi renshi ziji,” 195.

142 Liu, “Pingdi feng lei,” 76.

143 Liu, diary entry for March 18, 1943, Huoxian, 33.

144 “Cong zhengfeng lai kan ganbu sixiang yu jinhou de ganbu jiaoyu wenti,” 705.

145 Trans. For more on this idea of a differential between inner acceptance and outer declaration, see Feng Xiaocai, 身份、仪式与政治: 1956年后中共对资本家的思想改造. English translation available at: http://prchistory.org/feng-xiaocai-status-ritual-and-politics/

149 Liu Yanjin, diary entry for December 10, 1944, Huoxian, 144–6.
151 Ding Ling 丁玲, diary entry for September 14, 1943, “Zai zhongyang dangxiao de yi bu riji 在中央党校一部的日记 [A diary I wrote when I was at the Central Party School],” Xin wenxue shiliao 新文学史料 [New Sources related to the literary history], no. 2 (2007).
152 Diary entry for June 27, 1944, Fenghuo Jin Cha Jin, 186.