

WHO HATES BUREAUCRACY?

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November, 1986

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Martin King Whyte

University of Michigan

China has one of the world's oldest traditions of bureaucratic rule, and one might suppose that over the centuries Chinese rulers would have developed some mastery over the bureaucratic form of organization. Yet, for China's rulers today, as in the past, bureaucracy is often seen as "a problem." Efforts to improve the political order in various periods since 1949 have often centered on how to overcome the "evils" of bureaucratism.<sup>1</sup> But the frequency with which anti-bureaucratic rhetoric is aired must give rise to some doubt about the seriousness of the underlying effort. Have any of the repeated efforts had any success in making Chinese society less bureaucratic? The way society is experienced by ordinary Chinese depends not upon the latest anti-bureaucratic slogans, after all, but upon whether that society is actually becoming more or less thoroughly bureaucratized. This paper will attempt to sort through some of the rhetoric involved to try to more accurately determine the extent to which bureaucratization or de-bureaucratization was being pursued in the years of Mao Zedong's rule, and to discuss the implications of the post-Mao reforms for the way in which Chinese society is organized.

To start off our examination of this question, we must note that various public figures in China are on the record with statements vigorously opposing the evils of bureaucracy. Most well known is Mao Zedong's animus toward that organizational form, as conveyed most bluntly in his 1967 listing of "Twenty Manifestations of Bureaucracy." A few excerpts convey Mao's tone:

2. They are conceited, complacent, and they aimlessly discuss politics. They do not grasp their work; they are subjective and one-sided; they are careless; they do not listen to people; they are truculent and arbitrary; they force orders; they do not care about reality; they maintain blind control. This is authoritarian bureaucracy.

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1. See the overview discussion in Harry Harding, Organizing China, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981.

....  
9. They are stupid; they are confused; they do not have a mind of their own; they are rotten sensualists; they glut themselves for days on end; they are not diligent at all, they are inconstant and they are ignorant. This is the stupid, useless bureaucracy.

....  
18. There is no organization; they employ personal friends; they engage in factionalism; they maintain feudal relationships; they form cliques to further their own private interest; they protect each other; the individual stands above everything else; these petty officials harm the masses. This is sectarian bureaucracy.<sup>2</sup>

Many analysts have argued that Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in 1965 primarily as an effort to combat bureaucratic tendencies and purge bureaucrats, so that China would not end up becoming a society like the Soviet Union. Soviet "revisionism" was, in Mao's eyes, essentially a dictatorship of entrenched bureaucrats.

But Mao was not alone in denouncing bureaucratic evils in this fashion. In fact, it now appears that Mao may have "cribbed" much of his list from Zhou Enlai, who developed his own list of twenty evils in a report he delivered in 1963, entitled "Oppose Bureaucracy." Here, for comparison purposes, are the same traits as listed by Zhou:

2.To be arrogant and conceited and swollen with pride; to be one-sided and subjective and crude and careless; to indulge in empty political talk and fail to grasp professional work; to be arbitrary and refuse to listen to others' opinions; and to command recklessly in spite of reality. This is the bureaucratism which resorts to coercion and commandism.

....  
9.To be muddleheaded and ignorant, echo the views of others, drift along, and be sated with food and remain idle; and to say "I do not know" to every question and work hard for 1 day and do nothing for 10. This is muddleheaded and useless bureaucratism.

....  
18. To disregard organizational discipline, willfully employ one's favorites, form a clique to pursue selfish interests, and shield each other; to establish feudal relationships and share interests in light of factions; and to make private interests overstep everything and let the interests of a small public encroach upon the interests of the larger public. This is sectarian bureaucratism.<sup>3</sup>

Here the style is perhaps less colorful and pithy than Mao's but the message is much the same. Not to be outdone, Deng Xiaoping has weighed in with similar sentiments on a number of

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2. Translated in JPRS, Translations on Communist China, 1970, 90:40-43.

3. People's Daily, Aug. 29, 1984, translated in FBIS, Aug. 31, 1984, pp. K-1-4.

occasions. One example would be his important August 1980 speech on the reform of the Party and state leadership systems, in which he offers a more truncated listing of bureaucratic evils:

Bureaucratism remains a major prevailing issue that tarnishes the political life of our Party and state. Its harmful manifestations consist mainly in standing high above the masses; abusing power; divorcing oneself from the reality and the masses; putting up a facade; indulging in empty talk; sticking to a rigid way of thinking; following conventions; overstaffing administrative organs; being dilatory, inefficient and irresponsible; failing to keep one's word; passing documents round without solving problems; shifting responsibility on to others; and even assuming grand airs as bureaucrats, reprimanding others all too often, attacking others in revenge, suppressing democracy, deceiving one's superiors and subordinates, being arbitrary and despotic, practising favouritism, offering bribes, participating in corrupt practices in violation of the law, and so on.<sup>4</sup>

Similar sentiments were even voiced on occasion by Liu Shaoqi, China's chief of state until he became the foremost victim of the Cultural Revolution. Liu, denounced at the time as "China's Khrushchev," has been seen by most Western analysts as the leading champion of a bureaucratic style of rule within the communist leadership.<sup>5</sup> Yet he weighed in with some statements not that different from those already quoted. In his major 1945 report, "On the Party," Liu stated,

The tendency to bureaucracy was shown by some comrades who did not work on the basis of serving the people and who lacked responsibility toward the people and the Party. Typical examples are those who loafed around all day long, doing nothing but issue orders. They did not investigate, study or learn from the masses. They rejected criticism from the masses, ignored the rights of the people, or even demanded that the people serve them. They did not scruple to sacrifice the interests of the people for their own benefit. They became corrupt and degenerate and lorded it over the people.<sup>6</sup>

Or, to quote a 1957 speech of Liu's, "Anti-bureaucracy is a long-term campaign. There will be a struggle against it so long as it exists. It will gradually vanish. If we do not fight it, it may become more and more serious until one day we will have to mount a big drive against it."<sup>7</sup>

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4. Beijing Review, no. 40, Oct. 3, 1983, p. 18. This speech was included in the Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, published in 1983, and portions of it were republished in 1986, as part of the new campaign to introduce political reforms that began in the summer of that year. See Beijing Review, no. 32, August 11, 1986, pp. 15-19.

5. Lowell Dittmer, in his major study of Liu, summarizes his assessment: "In a word, Liu was a bureaucrat." See his Liu Shao-ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, p. 182.

6. Liu Shao-ch'i, Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i, 1945-1957, Kowloon: Union Research Institute, 1969, pp. 38-9.

7. Liu Shao-ch'i, op. cit., pp. 423-4. Of course, it can be admitted that the methods recommended for dealing with bureaucratic problems by Liu--predominantly moderate criticism within the Party organs--were different than those that Mao came increasingly to favor. One might also note that Zhou Enlai in the spring of 1957 made a similar statement giving an eerie premonition of the Cultural Revolution. When meeting visiting Soviet diplomats arriving at an airport in Hangzhou, Zhou turned and pointed at the two children who had come to present flowers to the Russians and stated, "If, ten years from now, there is still bureaucracy in the leadership, you should oppose it." (Cited in Roderick MacFarquhar, The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals, New York: Praeger, 1960, p. 31.)

What is going on here? One is reminded of the old television quiz show, "To Tell the Truth," in which 3 contestants all try to convince the panelists that they are the real person whose history and characteristics the moderator reads out. Upon reading such similar, vehement denunciations of the evil of bureaucracy in China, one may feel like the panelist trying to sort out who really has opposed bureaucracy in post-1949 China.<sup>8</sup> Of course a skeptic, having also perused the speeches at the 27th Party Congress of the CPSU, may be suspicious that this is all hypocritical cant, and that seeming to be opposed to bureaucracy is just one of those rituals that leaders of Leninist systems have to perform periodically. (Parallels to denunciations of big government by American presidents might also be noted.)

Still, it would be an error to dismiss this anti-bureaucratic rhetoric as unimportant, since both under Mao and in the post-Mao period fairly vigorous measures have been adopted that, unlike the Soviet Union, seem to have made a major impact on how the system operates. And in the literature on the PRC we do find an answer to our quiz show question about who is the real anti-bureaucrat within the Chinese elite. The conventional wisdom is that Mao Zedong should be accorded that recognition. Mao, it is argued, attempted to fundamentally make the Chinese system less bureaucratic. Leaders such as Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, and especially Liu Shaoqi, in this view, have been protectors of bureaucrats and restorers of the bureaucratic systems attacked by Mao, and thus we would be wrong to be misled by their anti-bureaucratic statements into picking them as genuine opponents of bureaucracy.

One influential analysis of this topic, Organizing China, by Harry Harding, develops an argument that is somewhat along these lines.<sup>9</sup> In Harding's view probably Zhou, Deng, and Liu

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8. One needs to take into account a translation problem here. In English the term bureaucracy can be used in a relatively neutral sense to refer to a particular organizational form, as we will discuss shortly. As such it can be distinguished from a less-widely used term, "bureaucratism," which refers to the specifically negative aspects of this organizational form. In Chinese, however, the term normally translated as bureaucracy, *guanliao zhuyi*, always entails a strong negative sense, and might therefore be better translated as "bureaucratism." The term came into frequent use in the 1930s and 1940s to refer to the harmful aspects of imperial bureaucratic traditions that had carried over into the Republican period. See, for instance, Wang Yanan, Zhongguo Guanliao Zhengzhi Yanjiu, (Research on Chinese Bureaucratic Politics), Shanghai: Contemporary Culture Publishers, 1948. More recently some scholars in China have advocated the use of a different term, *kecengzhi* (literally "section-level-system"), as a way of conveying the neutral, analytical sense of the term bureaucracy. See Han Mingmo, "Cong *guanliao zhuyi* dao *kecengzhi*," (From bureaucratism to bureaucracy), Shehui Kexue, no. 6, 1964, pp. 36-41. So far, however, this new term has not come into general usage.

9. *op. cit.*

as well as Mao could be counted as having genuine concern for the problems of bureaucracy. However, people such as Zhou and Deng and Liu advocated moderate means for improving the functioning of China's bureaucracy--what Harding terms rationalization and remedialism. Mao, in contrast, was in favor of more drastic solutions--"radicalism," in Harding's terms--that involved tearing down bureaucratic structures in order to rebuild them on a new, non-bureaucratic basis.

An earlier argument along similar lines was advanced by Richard Solomon in his book, Mao's Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture.<sup>10</sup> Although Solomon is not so exclusively concerned with organizational problems as Harding, he sees most Chinese Communist leaders as imbued with a long-standing Chinese cultural fear of *luan*, or chaos, if strict authoritarian structures of rule are not used to control the population. Mao was distinctive within this elite, in Solomon's view, in having a very non-Chinese view of the virtues of disorder, and of being willing to foster disorder as a way of constructing a new kind of less bureaucratic social order.

In the pages that follow I wish to reject this conventional argument and offer instead what may appear to be almost the opposite view--that in certain respects Mao should be seen not as the true opponent of bureaucratization, but instead as its most vigorous champion. On the other hand the post-Mao regime under Deng Xiaoping, in spite of being composed mainly of rehabilitated bureaucrats, appears in my view to be countering some of the trends toward bureaucratization that Mao set in motion. In the end I shall not wish to argue in a simple-minded fashion that the "prize" for opposing bureaucracy be taken away from Mao and given instead to Deng, but in order to make clear just what my revisionist argument is, I need to introduce some important conceptual distinctions.

### **Two Aspects of Bureaucratization**

In order to clarify the basis for my argument, it is necessary to sort through some of the confusions that surround terms like bureaucracy and bureaucratization. I contend that, in the

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10. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971

writings of Max Weber and many others, there are two distinct aspects of these phenomena that are mixed together. These can be considered most easily if we concentrate upon the term "bureaucratization" in reference to Weber's writings. On the one hand, bureaucratization refers to a process by which more and more of social life comes to be governed by large, hierarchical, non-kinship based organizations, and by this transformation less of social life is left to the autonomous action of individuals, families, kin groups, and local communities of various kinds. As a result of this change, more and more distribution and consumption of resources in society are carried out not through individual and community self-sufficiency or through the market mechanism, but are instead subject to hierarchical allocation and coordination. This I would refer to as bureaucratization in form or structure. This sense of the term bureaucratization does not specify what the nature of the roles and norms within such large organizations are; it simply specifies that members of the population are having an increasing share of their activities subject to management or control by such large-scale organizations. This sense of the term also does not specify how centralized or decentralized the power is within such large organizations. Both organizations in which a single manager or set of managers at the top make all the decisions and ones in which much authority is delegated to lower levels of the organization would be considered at the high end of the scale of bureaucratization, as long as there were few areas of social life that were not subject to regulation and control by these large-scale organizations.<sup>11</sup>

The other meaning of the term bureaucratization involves the extent to which an organization approximates the ideal-typical traits specified by Weber--for example, an organization based upon legal-rational authority, emphasizing formal rules and procedures and written files, with selection by appointment based upon universalistic competence criteria, with officials treating the job as a full-time occupation and given a fixed money salary, and with separation of the office from the office-holder, who enters it as a contractual obligation with specified duties and rights,

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11. Many of the post-1949 anti-bureaucratic efforts detailed in Harry Harding's book and in other works have taken the form of decentralization campaigns, in which "simpler administration" is pursued by cutting back the staffs of central ministries and delegating some powers to regional governments and even enterprise administrations. But these lower level agencies do not thereby become autonomous units and are still under hierarchical control from the center, and powers that are delegated downward can be, and often have been, taken back by the center. But in any case, the point I wish to stress here is that such shifts in the powers of different levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy do not imply any real change in the degree to which the population is subjected to bureaucratic control.

etc.<sup>12</sup> This sense of the term bureaucratization, then, refers to the extent to which various organizations in a society are coming to approximate more and more the ideal type of bureaucratic organization specified by such a trait list. The other side of this process is the extent to which organizations based upon other modes, such as charismatic or traditional types of authority, decline in importance in a society or are transformed into a more bureaucratic type. This second aspect I will refer to as bureaucratization in content or functioning, as contrasted to the bureaucratization in form or structure discussed above.

In reviewing various Western works written on the subject of bureaucracy, particularly for a popular audience, it seems apparent that many are concerned with bureaucratization in one of these senses but not the other. For example, works such as Robert Presthus's The Organizational Society<sup>13</sup> and Henry Jacoby's The Bureaucratization of the World<sup>14</sup> are mainly talking about the first, or structural, aspect of the process. In other words, they are mainly concerned with what happens when more and more of social life is governed by large-scale organizations, rather than with how similar to Weber's typology of traits the internal operation of these organizations is. The same could be said as well for George Orwell's 1984--no pretense is made that Big Brother presides over an ideal-typical legal-rational bureaucracy, only that the organizations he presides over have eliminated virtually all individual choice, market alternatives, and human freedom.

In Weber's own writings he sometimes made the distinction we are introducing here. In a statement that is particularly appropriate to our subject at hand, Weber in 1913 parted company with those who felt that socialism would introduce a new, less bureaucratic age.

Only by reversion in every field--political, religious, economic, etc.--to small-scale organization would it be possible to any considerable extent to escape [bureaucracy's] influence....socialism would, in fact, require a still higher degree of formal bureaucratization than capitalism.<sup>15</sup>

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12. See the listing offered in Max Weber, Economy and Society, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, Vol. 1, pp. 220-223.

13. New York: Knopf, 1962

14. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973

15. Max Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-5. In this same passage Weber contrasts formal bureaucratization with substantive bureaucratization, with the latter corresponding to what we have called bureaucratization in content or functioning.



Here Weber did not assume that large organizations in a future socialist society would necessarily approach the ideal-type of a legal-rational bureaucracy, but only that even more of social life would be subject to control by large-scale organizations under socialism than is the case under capitalism, given the preference in the former type of society for planning rather than market distribution. Weber did assume that in practice in modern societies these two aspects of bureaucratization would tend to develop together, with both more and more large scale organizations and an increasing dominance of the legal-rational form of functioning within those organizations. Still, we can maintain the conceptual distinction and consider the possibility that these processes could occur separately. There could be only a very few large-scale organizations in a society otherwise organized in some non-bureaucratic way, but these few could be constructed upon a strictly legal-rational basis. Or there could instead be an increasing dominance of large-scale organizations in all of social life, but these could be based upon some other principles, such as charismatic or traditional authority, or perhaps simply coercion and fear.<sup>16</sup>

What does all of this abstraction have to do with China? By now the reader can probably see that I intend to use this distinction to cope with our "To Tell the Truth" puzzle. I would argue that Mao Zedong's opposition to bureaucratization was primarily concerned with its content or functioning, rather than with its structure. He did, it seems clear, want to avoid developing organizations that would be based upon legal-rational principles.<sup>17</sup> But at the same time he was a fervent advocate of structural bureaucratization. He abhorred private choice, market distribution, private enterprise, and other manifestations of individual and group autonomy, and he wanted to subject an increasing share of all human activity in China to state regulation and allocation. His "creative chaos" and attempts to attack organizational forms in the name of his "uninterrupted revolution" were not designed to produce a society in which the hand of large-scale organizations

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16. In some earlier sociological writings others advanced a similar argument--that Weber "mixed together" two distinct aspects of bureaucracy. See, for instance, Helen Constan, "Max Weber's Two Conceptions of Bureaucracy," *American Journal of Sociology*, 52(1958), pp. 400-09; Stanley H. Udy, Jr., "'Bureaucracy' and 'Rationality' in Weber's Organizational Theory: An Empirical Study," *American Sociological Review*, 24(1959), pp. 761-65. Udy presents empirical data from a sample of work organizations in preindustrial societies that indicate, in fact, that organizational traits involving bureaucracy (in the structural sense) and those involving bureaucracy in the content sense (which he refers to as "rationality") tend to be negatively correlated.

17. I have analyzed Mao's differences from the Weberian ideal-type in my article, "Bureaucracy and Modernization in China: The Maoist Critique," *American Sociological Review*, 1973, 38:149-63.

was less dominant; rather, he wanted to destroy organizational routines and construct new organizational forms that were even more bureaucratic in the structural sense, but perhaps more charismatic in terms of their internal functioning.

Since Mao's efforts to combat bureaucratization in the second, or content sense, are well known and widely commented upon, let me concentrate here on substantiating my more controversial claim that Mao was a fervent champion of bureaucratization in the first, or structural, sense. First, it should be noted that the period 1949-66 witnessed a major advance of bureaucratization, as Weber would have predicted. There was a massive expansion of the state bureaucracy, and socialist transformation made the entire economy and much the the rest of society (e.g. the educational system, health care, the mass media, culture and the arts, etc.) subject to bureaucratic control. Resources that had been distributed by the market predominantly before 1949--jobs, housing, medical care, schooling, and so forth--began to be allocated instead primarily by bureaucratic agencies. And individual producers found themselves swallowed up by larger and larger organizations. For example, peasant families became members of mutual aid teams of 5-8 families, but these gave way to agricultural producers' cooperatives (in two versions, with the "lower stage" form rapidly giving way in 1956 to a larger, "higher stage" form), and the latter were finally amalgamated in 1958 into rural people's communes that were designed to regulate the activities of several thousand families. I have discussed these trends toward bureaucratization prior to 1966 in more detail elsewhere.<sup>18</sup>

To be sure, China in the years before 1966 was guided by a form of collective leadership, and it might be argued that Mao even as *primus inter pares* should not be held responsible for organizational trends over which Liu Shaoqi or other leaders may have had more influence. However, it is at least worth noting that prior to 1966 the periods in which Mao's personal vision was most predominant were characterized by novel changes in the direction of structural bureaucratization. It was during the Great Leap Forward (1958-60) that major efforts were made

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18. See my article "Bureaucracy and Anti-bureaucracy in the People's Republic of China," in G.M. Britan and R. Cohen, eds., Hierarchy and Society, Philadelphia: ISHI Press, 1980.

to eliminate the remaining vestiges of private enterprise activity and market exchanges and thus to subject social life more uniformly to bureaucratic regulation. This was also the period in which China, although setting out to pursue its own road to socialism, seemed most infected by the Soviet penchant for "gigantism." This was particularly visible in the early communes, which in a few cases were made so large that they embraced an entire county!<sup>19</sup> The Great Leap was also a period in which the central leadership made vigorous efforts to eliminate local autonomy and traditional customs in realms such as religious and festival behavior, to advocate cremation and simple and secular "memorial meetings" in place of traditional funerals, and to promote the round of new patriotic holidays. I would argue, then, that a major push toward further structural bureaucratization of Chinese society was launched during the period of Mao's ascendancy during the Great Leap Forward. By the same token, the collapse of the Great Leap, which placed Mao on the defensive for a period, led to a partial retreat in the level of structural bureaucratization. During the period 1961-3, for example, restrictions on private enterprise and marketing activity were lifted and experiments were even carried out with restoring the peasant family farm--experiments which presaged the dramatic shift in this direction after 1978. During the same years attempts to have the state regulate all cultural, leisure, and other realms of social life were relaxed.

It might be argued that in the years 1958-60 China's break with the Soviet Union was only just beginning and Mao's ideas on what China should be doing differently were still in the process of formation. Perhaps it was only during the Cultural Revolution years that we can see Mao's anti-bureaucratic impulses fully unleashed. I would argue, however, that it was precisely during this latter period, a time most observers have seen as representing the pinnacle of Maoist attacks on bureaucracy, that structural bureaucratization reached its fullest extension. So in order to

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19. Ezra Vogel details the creation of a county-commune in Guangdong Province that had a population of more than 275,000. See his Canton under Communism, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 248. Even in much smaller communes, the shift from peasants making their own decisions about farming and marketing through small cooperatives and finally to a central commune leadership trying to direct everything created severe problems, as can be seen in the account of this period provided in William Hinton, Shenfan, New York: Random House, 1983, Part 3.

substantiate my revisionist argument, I need to deal with the developments of the Cultural Revolution era in somewhat greater detail.

### The Cultural Revolution Reforms

The initial consequence of China's Cultural Revolution was to immobilize and damage the existing state and party machinery. Large numbers of bureaucrats were purged, and many segments of China's Leninist apparatus (such as trade unions, women's federations, etc.) essentially disappeared. For those involved in the Red Guard movement, and even for many bystanders, it became a period not only of considerable chaos, but of unprecedented freedom. Local rules and rulers were rejected, required political indoctrination meetings were no more, and young activists were free for a period to travel around the country, publish their own unofficial newspapers, search and raid homes and temples, and do battle with authority figures and factional enemies. Some would argue that the sudden change from having rigidly controlled lives to near-total autonomy was a major ingredient in the frenetic energy and violence displayed by the Red Guards.<sup>20</sup> In any case, I would acknowledge that the initial stages of the Cultural Revolution produced a dramatic reduction in bureaucratization in the structural sense.

At the time it appeared that Mao Zedong was presiding over the demise of the Leninist party/state structure that his regime had constructed, and there were some intriguing hints of ideas for developing different and less bureaucratic organizational forms. This involved, in particular, the wide-ranging study and discussion of the Paris Commune model as an alternative to Soviet-style bureaucratic rule, and the attempt in Shanghai to rebuild authority in early 1967 on the basis of a "Shanghai Commune."<sup>21</sup> But Mao squelched this effort by pointing out that the Paris Commune had been too weak to defeat its enemies and that with the commune form there would be no place for the Party. And as organizations were reconstructed after the Cultural

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20. See, for example, the analysis in Ronald Montaperto, "From Revolutionary Successors to Revolutionaries: Chinese Students in the Early Stages of the Cultural Revolution," in R. Scalapino, ed, Elites in the People's Republic of China, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972.

21. See Victor Nee, "Revolution and Bureaucracy: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution," in V. Nee and J. Peck, eds., China's Uninterrupted Revolution, New York: Pantheon, 1973.

Revolution, they took a form that was not only largely familiar but even, in important respects, more bureaucratic (in a structural sense) than before the Cultural Revolution. Mao was thus able to do for China's bureaucratic Humpty Dumpty what all the king's horses and men had not been able to do in the nursery rhyme--to put it back together again, and then some.

In what sense did China emerge from the Cultural Revolution more bureaucratized than before? Several elements were involved. First, both in the cities and in the countryside, new attempts were made to eliminate the remaining vestiges of private enterprise activities. For example, private craftsmen and pedlars were suppressed, peasants were no longer allowed to come and market extra produce in urban "free markets," attempts were made to eliminate private plots in the countryside, and the remaining owners of private housing in cities were forced to turn over their deeds and begin paying rent on their premises (if they were able to remain living there, that is). The limited amount of personal choice that had been allowed earlier in matters such as job assignments and university enrollments--based on lists of preferences filled out by applicants--was eliminated, with all expected to serve at the pleasure of the state. In the countryside attempts were made to shift the unit of farming and remuneration from the production team (of 20-50 households) up to the brigade (of 200-500 households) and to dictate what sorts of crops could be grown locally, changes that eliminated much of the relative autonomy that the teams were supposed to enjoy within the commune structure. In cities these changes coincided with a tightening of the ration system, with many items formerly available for sale (such as pork and sugar) becoming available only to those who had the necessary ration coupons.

In general the Cultural Revolution reforms discussed here seem to display intolerance for the complexity and impurities of Chinese society, and a desire to hasten the transition to a unified form of state socialism in which planners would dictate production, education, employment, consumption and other goals and paternalistically allocate goods and services to citizens without relying upon markets and personal choice. In this image the countryside would merge with the city, as collective forms of ownership would be raised up from team to brigade and then to the

commune level, and finally commune collective ownership would be transformed into state ownership, the dominant form in urban China.

How Mao and those around him came to this vision is unclear. In many respects the formula for how you get to a fuller form of socialism seems to come right out of Stalin, as manifested particularly in the latter's Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, published in 1952, where a future was envisioned which included the gradual raising of collective ownership in the kolkhozy to state ownership and the eventual elimination of commodity production and market exchanges for money. In the wake of the Great Leap Forward Mao, in commenting upon Stalin's work, displayed a preference for similar changes, but a recognition that they could not occur until the distant future.<sup>22</sup> Somehow over the next decade or so Mao lost his patience, and tried to bring these changes into being. The changes considered involved not only ones that extended state allocation and control over more areas of social life, but also ones that attempted to begin the elimination of the money economy. For instance, in 1974 Mao revived the idea that Zhang Chunqiao had advocated during the Great Leap Forward of eliminating the state wage rank system and reverting to the supply system used before the revolution (in which cadres did not have salaries that became discretionary income, but received such supplies as the authorities felt they needed), and he was reportedly angry when the Ministry of Finance told him that this scheme was not feasible.<sup>23</sup>

The Cultural Revolution decade was also the period in which bureaucratic regulation of private lives of citizens reached its highest point. Large numbers of customs and leisure pursuits, including ones as innocuous as raising crickets or goldfish, were suppressed or driven

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22. See his A Critique of Soviet Economics, New York: Monthly Review, 1977. It should be noted, though, that Mao differed from Stalin in arguing against the "full consolidation" of collective ownership. He feared that such consolidation would become permanent and wanted to begin small steps right away toward the distant goal of unified public property. It could be argued that the vision of socialism as one internally coordinated bureaucratic machine goes back much further than Stalin. In 1917 in State and Revolution, Lenin portrayed the future communist society in the following terms: "All citizens are here transformed into hired employees of the state...All citizens become employees and workers of one national state 'syndicate'....The whole of society will have become one office and one factory, with equal work and equal pay." (V. I. Lenin, State and Revolution, New York: International Publishers, 1932, pp. 83-4.) Radoslav Selucky argues that Lenin here was following Marx, who in his fascination with the efficiency of modern industry and his distaste for the "chaos" of the market, envisioned the future communist society as a factory writ large. See his book Marxism, Socialism, Freedom; Toward a General Democratic Theory of Labour-Managed Systems, London: Macmillan, 1979.

23. See Liao Gailong, "Historical Experiences and Our Road to Development," translated in Issues and Studies, November 1981, pp. 89-90.

underground, as were a wide range of religious activities, forms of cultural expression, and styles of dress. Pictures of Mao became obligatory on the walls of every home and office, and for a time work units organized their employees for ritualized sessions of reciting Mao's quotations and taking part in "loyalty dances" to Mao. This was also the period during which the attempt to directly regulate reproduction as well as production began. From 1970 onward new regulations decreed the maximum number of children families could have (at the time, generally two in the cities and three in the countryside), and work organizations and communes began to make decisions about which members could be granted places in their quota of birth rights for that year.<sup>24</sup>

As a result of all of these changes, individuals throughout Chinese society found themselves more totally dependent upon bureaucratic gatekeepers and superiors at the time of Mao's death in 1976 than they had been in 1966. There was less room for personal choice, market selection, or reliance on their own efforts, and there was also a much smaller "zone of indifference" within which to engage in behavior that higher authorities would ignore. The result was thus intriguingly dialectical--an anti-bureaucratic mass movement, the Cultural Revolution, resulted in China becoming an even more Orwellian society, in terms of a further extension of bureaucratization in the structural sense.

At this point it might be objected that I am oversimplifying things by ignoring how Mao and his radical followers tried to alter structures in ways that worked against, rather than fostered, bureaucratization. In particular, what about his regular stress on decentralization, mobilization, and mass participation? It might seem that decentralizing certain kinds of decisions to lower levels than before and allowing or even requiring "the masses" to criticize and supervise their superiors would promote debureaucratization in the structural sense. However, I would argue that these changes are part of Mao's attempt to change the internal functioning of organizations,

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24. It might be noted that the regulating of these areas of social life was not predominantly carried out through secret police terror, but through the normal grass roots organizational network in work organizations and neighborhoods. However, the fact that this regulation of social life was carried out by a different part of the bureaucratic machinery, and with more organizational finesse, than in Stalinist Russia, does not alter the fact that a heightened degree of structural bureaucratization was involved.

and not to reduce the structural dominance of large scale organizations. As Tannenbaum and others have argued, participatory schemes may, in fact, increase the control that bosses have over their subordinates, rather than increasing subordinate power or autonomy, and Walder argues that in the case of Chinese factories this is exactly what occurred in the Cultural Revolution decade.<sup>25</sup> Decentralization schemes within organizations do not reduce structural bureaucratization when those organizations are gaining an increasing hold over all corners of social life.

I might also note here how my argument differs from that advanced in a recent and thought-provoking collection of essays edited by Dorothy Solinger, Three Visions of Chinese Socialism.<sup>26</sup> Solinger and her co-authors are presenting their own revisionist argument to the effect that there has not been a "two line struggle" in Chinese politics between radicals and conservatives/revisionists, but rather a three line struggle, between advocates of mass mobilization (particularly Mao Zedong), bureaucratic rule (particularly Liu Shaoqi, but also perhaps Deng Xiaoping in earlier times), and market distribution (no top leader in a pure sense, but Deng Xiaoping and others around him recently in a partial sense). Edward Friedman, one of the contributors to the volume, refers to these as the Maoist, Stalinist, and Titoist paths to socialism. I think that the distinctions this work introduces are useful, particularly in calling attention to the fact that criticisms of Mao and Maoism can come from both a pro-market and from a pro-rational bureaucracy direction. However, I think that the typology is misleading in terms of how it characterizes Mao and his preferences. In stressing mass mobilization and class struggle the typology ignores the fact that Maoism in practice produced a further bureaucratization in the structural sense. In this regard Mao was never a pure "Maoist," but as much a Stalinist as a Maoist, and for him these were parts of a unified conception of rule, rather

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25. See A. Tannenbaum, Control in Organizations, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968; A. Walder, "Organized Dependency and Cultures of Authority in Chinese Industry," Journal of Asian Studies, 1983, 43:51-76; and A. Walder, Communist Neotraditionalism, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

26. Boulder: Westview, 1984



than two competing tendencies.<sup>27</sup> The organizational scope and power of the state should be extended, but the potential problems of "bureaucratism" that this might lead to should be combatted with various mechanisms designed to make state organs less bureaucratic in how they functioned, and more charismatic--through political study rituals, decentralization measures, stimulated class struggle, and other favored devices of Maoism.<sup>28</sup>

### The Post-Mao Reforms

In retrospect it would appear that, however things may have looked in Mao's dialectical mind, in reality the combination of structural bureaucratization with content de-bureaucratization didn't work. In the increasingly totally state-dominated China of Mao's last years the organizational problems Mao feared most--e.g., elite arrogance, abuses of power, pursuit of personal and family advantage, currying favor, aversion to making decisions and taking risks--only got worse. Mao's various mobilizational techniques were not able to offset the behavioral tendencies generated by this sort of structure. Indeed, it might be argued that these techniques even made matters worse, since they undermined the rules and regulations that had placed some limits on bureaucratic power and made it even more necessary to seek patronage and protection from superiors.<sup>29</sup> So Mao's cure for the problem of bureaucracy in many ways made the disease even worse.

If we utilize this conceptual framework, what are we to make of the policies and preferences of Deng Xiaoping and others in his post-Mao reform group? It seems that the reforms pursued under Deng are designed to move away from Mao's preferences in both aspects of bureaucratization. On the one hand, bureaucratization in the content or functioning sense is being

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27. Another contributor to the volume, Carl Riskin, points out that Maoism, unlike Stalinism and Titoism, did not embody any clear mechanism for distributing goods and services in society. In practice under Mao the Stalinist solution, i.e. relying on direct bureaucratic allocation instead of markets insofar as possible, ended up triumphant. See his "Introduction" in Solinger's volume.

28. Images of Maoist China in the literature have altered dramatically in recent years--from a view of a highly participatory, mass-oriented system described in many works in the early 1970s to a more or less totalitarian dictatorship portrayed in writings in the 1980s. I would argue that this is not simply a case of the field overcoming its delusions and recognizing the truth. Rather, both pictures are in some sense "real," as they represent the two sides of the effort in the Maoist years to deal with the problems of bureaucracy.

29. This sort of argument is advanced by Andrew Walder, *op. cit.* See also Frederick Teiwes, Leadership, Legitimacy, and Conflict in China, Armonk: M.E.Sharpe, 1984; and Zheng Yefu, "An Exploration into Relying on Connections," (Shilun Guanxixue), Shehuixue yu Shehui Diaocha, nos. 2-3, 1984:52-6.

advocated in place of the more charismatic forms pushed under Mao.<sup>30</sup> At the same time some limited but dramatic steps have been taken which reduce the level of structural bureaucratization of Chinese society. If successful these reforms will therefore make China both less bureaucratic (structurally) and more bureaucratic (in terms of organizational functioning).

The efforts by the reformers to promote more legal-rational modes of organizational functioning are fairly familiar. Criteria of technical competence are supposed to be increasingly stressed in appointments and promotions, rather than political attitudes, seniority in the party, or loyalty to the leader.<sup>31</sup> Offices are supposed to be increasingly separated from office-holders, and a system of regular promotions and retirements is supposed to replace the life-long tenure of the Maoist "iron rice bowl." Campaign mobilizations within organizations and officially stimulated class struggle are now denounced, and orderly procedures based upon reasonable rules and regulations are supposed to guide organizational behavior instead. A hierarchy of monetary salaries, with extra incentive payments added on, is now viewed positively as the key way to motivate members of such organizations, and "moral incentives" are less often stressed, or only noted as supplements. Managerial autonomy within Chinese organizations is also being advocated at least to some extent, with party committees directed to withdraw from active management into a supervisory position.<sup>32</sup> Of course, all of these are policy preferences, rather than reality, and the Chinese press reveals that the changes in many organizations have been marginal to date. However, the primary direction the reformers are pushing toward is fairly clear--a society in

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30. It should be noted that the current leadership argues that what Mao was creating was not so much charismatic as traditional or feudal forms of rule. This argument is advanced by pointing out the parallels between organizational life in Mao's final years and feudalism. Perhaps it could be said that the charismatic forms that Mao favored rapidly decayed and became "routinized" in quasi-traditional forms of organizational authority. Or that Mao's initiatives ended up producing the "worst of both worlds," with negative features of traditional Chinese bureaucratic institutions and centralized Leninist institutions reinforcing one another.

31. This last proviso is at least debatable. Loyalty to the leader of a particular organization is not being stressed. But loyalty to the reform effort, which implies at least in part loyalty to the cause being championed by Deng Xiaoping, is surely an important criterion in personnel selections.

32. Of course, some trends are visible that do not fit neatly with the Weberian trait list of legal-rational organizations. For example, in some factories experiments with elections of managerial personnel are being carried out, which departs from Weber's insistence upon appointment from above as the mode of personnel selection. However, this may be viewed as a necessary measure to advance the cause of selection according to competence, if superior officials are too "infected" with Maoist viruses to make appointments on that basis.

which large-scale organizations are at least somewhat closer to the sort of legal-rational ideal type that Weber described.<sup>33</sup>

In terms of structural, rather than content, de-bureaucratization, the most dramatic change in the post-Mao period has been the decollectivization of agriculture and the reemergence of family farming. Although peasants are still in many ways more subject to state controls than they were before the revolution, or even during the early 1950s, still the increased ability of peasant families to make their own decisions about how to farm, whether to leave farming, and how to handle their income constitutes a clear reduction in the scope of bureaucratic controls.<sup>34</sup> These changes have unleashed a tide of changed behavior in the Chinese countryside, with peasant families producing new crop mixes, making contacts in distant markets, undertaking new forms of non-agricultural activity, sending family members off to the cities to supplement family income, and engaging in a buying spree of consumer durables, such as televisions, washing machines, and in a few cases even trucks and automobiles. At the same time many traditional peasant customs seem to be reemerging, such as lavish wedding processions, elaborate funeral rituals, and even in some cases rural salvation cults and would-be emperors.<sup>35</sup> Although the changes in structural de-bureaucratization in the Chinese countryside are much more dramatic and "real" than the bureaucratization in content discussed earlier, there is at least one important realm that constitutes an exception to this pattern. That concerns birth control. The state effort to directly regulate fertility has been heightened in the post-Mao period, and it is only since 1979 that the

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33. It should be acknowledged, however, that Chinese leaders do not make reference to Weber's writings and ideas in advancing their reforms, and that they are probably unfamiliar with his views. However, some scholars in China are beginning to cite Weber's writings on bureaucracy with approval, a fact which shows that his ideas are beginning to become known in that country. See, for example, Han Mingmo, *op. cit.*; Zheng Yefu, *op. cit.*

34. I should note that one scholar has advanced a contrary interpretation of this change. Vivienne Shue argues that these reforms increase the direct controls of the state over the peasants. See Vivienne Shue, "The Ghost of Feudalism in the Machine of the State: China's Search for Adequate Forms of Local Governance," paper for conference "To Reform the Chinese Political Order," June 1984. She argues that the commune system provided a source of insulation from direct state controls that is now removed, making peasants more vulnerable to state decisions on prices and other matters. I see this argument as intriguing but misguided. The use of organizational power to control individual behavior is clearly more constraining than the setting of laws, prices, taxes, and similar items by the state, and then allowing those individuals to make choices within the framework offered by the items that have been set. After all, prices, tax quotas, and other items were set by the state even in the era of the communes, and the fact that the state was not able then to perfectly control peasant behavior does not mean that now peasants are subject to more controls than in the past. Of course, this is not to deny that competing on revived markets introduces insecurities into the lives of peasants that some would prefer to avoid, a phenomenon Erich Fromm, Karl Polanyi, and others commented upon long ago. See Fromm's Escape from Freedom, New York: Rinehart, 1941, and Polanyi's The Great Transformation, Boston: Beacon Press, 1944. Polanyi's argument that commercialization fosters state control is more plausible than Shue's, since he is dealing with stateless cultures and relatively autonomous villages that lose their autonomy due to the penetration of the world market, and not with Leninist organizational hierarchies being reformed.

35. See, for example, Elizabeth Perry, "Rural Violence in Socialist China," The China Quarterly, no. 103, 1985:414-40; Ann Anagnost, "The Beginning and End of an Emperor," Modern China, 1985:147-76.

controversial "one-child family" policy has been imposed on the population. In this realm, but not in others, the grasp of state bureaucratic agencies has been extended, rather than contracted, in the post-Mao period.

While the clearest reductions in structural bureaucratization have occurred in the Chinese countryside, more modest shifts in the same direction can be seen in urban areas. For example, there is less effort under Deng than under Mao (and Jiang Qing) to see that all leisure activities and cultural pursuits fit a narrow definition of socialist propriety, and a wide variety of proscribed activities, from raising song-birds to engaging in religious worship, adopting Western styles of dress, and listening to foreign radio broadcasts, have been allowed or even encouraged. The limited revival of private enterprise activities, proposals for cooperative building and financing of apartments, the revival of urban free markets, reductions in the scope of rationing, and experiments with allowing people to change jobs--all of such measures provide urbanites with at least somewhat greater options, and make them marginally less than totally dependent upon goods and services allocated to them by bureaucratic superiors. Most urbanites, to be sure, are still employed and housed by fairly all-encompassing work units that regulate many aspects of their lives, and for them the changes to date have been minor. But again at least the direction of the reforms seems clear--to reduce the extent to which the state attempts to directly organize and control all areas of social life, and to foster instead individual competition and ingenuity in operating in urban markets that will form an increasingly important supplement to state allocation through bureaucratic channels.

China in 1986 was, to be sure, very far away from any sort of market socialism, and even if the urban reform program introduced in 1984 makes more substantial headway than it appears to be doing to date, China will still be a very different place from, say, Yugoslavia. In 1980 there were signs that Deng and some of his close followers were toying with the idea of dismantling parts of their Leninist legacy and reducing the role of the bureaucracy in more dramatic ways.<sup>36</sup>

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36. See Deng's August 1980 speech, *op. cit.*; and Liao Gailong, *op. cit.* Both documents blame the overconcentration of power in Mao's last years not simply on Mao and the "gang of four" or on China's feudal heritage, but on wholesale adoption in China of Leninist organizational forms (or Stalinist versions of them). For a particularly biting commentary along similar lines, see Liu Binyan,

But in subsequent years no direct assaults on Leninism were made in China, and it is not clear whether this is because Deng and his followers didn't dare or didn't care to pursue the matter. The former possibility is at least suggested by the fact that political reforms were put back on the agenda for discussion in 1986, with Deng's 1980 remarks prominently republished. Accompanying commentaries suggested that, whereas the time was not ripe for dealing with reforms of the political system in 1980, by 1986 the economic reforms had progressed far enough so that the obstacles posed by the unreformed political system had finally become serious and obvious, making it clear that they had to be finally confronted. But how, if at all, political reforms might be carried out was still unclear at the time this paper was written.

### Conclusion

Who can we say, then, really hates bureaucracy in China? From the evidence we have reviewed here, we would have to conclude, "Everyone, and no one." The Chinese communists created one of the most bureaucratized social systems known to man. In certain important ways it is a significantly more bureaucratized system, in the structural sense, than is the Soviet Union. In particular, from the 1950s onward the authorities endeavored to limit or eliminate entirely any labor market and also any migration into urban places (large or small), thus creating a society in which people would be assigned by bureaucratic agencies to jobs and residences and then stay put, unless those agencies decided that they needed to be reassigned somewhere else. The limitations on job changes and migration in the USSR under Stalin seem much less comprehensive and effective. Mao championed this extension of state bureaucratic power, but he tried to create new modes of organizational functioning that would not be bureaucratic. This effort failed or was counterproductive, and Mao's successors have attacked bureaucratic problems in a different way. Their solution is to both modestly restrict the structural reach of bureaucratic power and to adopt more conventional legal-rational procedures to try to get bureaucrats to act in more desirable ways.

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People or Monsters?, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983. For a related critique, see Chen Erjin, China: Crossroads Socialism, London: Verso, 1984.

Neither Mao nor Deng is consistently anti-bureaucratic, in the sense that we might judge an anarchist, syndicalist, or Milton Friedmanite laissez-faire capitalist as anti-bureaucratic. Both remain fundamentally Leninist in their orientations, and they want to maintain the centralized bureaucratic system without the evils of "bureaucratism." Where they differ is in their analysis of the source of those evils. For Mao that source was mainly in bad class influences and poor ideology affecting bureaucrats, problems that should be combatted through various normative influence and social pressure devices. In this approach Mao was less a Stalinist or Weberian than a Confucianist, since in the Confucian framework it is good ideas and good men, more than good structures, that are important.<sup>37</sup> For Deng, in contrast, bureaucratic problems are seen as at least partly due to structural factors and not simply to the defects of the individuals who staff those structures. To improve things it is necessary to allow organizations to operate closer to an ideal, legal-rational manner and to place some limits on the realms that bureaucratic authorities try to regulate. In this sense Deng Xiaoping is at least somewhat more of a Weberian than Mao Zedong, since he has a greater appreciation of the dynamics that flow from the organizational form itself.

Deng Xiaoping's Weberian inclinations can be seen particularly in the following passages from his 1980 speech on reform of the political system:

Of course, bureaucratism is also related to one's way of thinking, but this cannot be solved without first reforming the systems themselves. That is why we achieved little in spite of our repeated struggle against bureaucratism in the past....

It is true that the various errors we made in the past had something to do with the way of thinking and style of work of some leaders. But it had even more to do with the problems in our organizational and work systems. Sound systems in these respects can stop bad people from running unbridled while poor ones may hamper good people in performing good deeds to the best of their ability or, in certain cases, may even cause them to go in the opposite direction.<sup>38</sup>

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37. In his final years Mao did repeatedly move in the direction of a sort of Djilas-like "new class" argument, in which the structure itself would be seen as the problem. However, he always shied away from taking the final steps over to this sort of argument, and returned to state his faith in Leninist structures. See, for example, Harry Harding, *op. cit.*, and Richard Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

38. Deng, *op. cit.*, (1983), pp. 19,21. This contrast between Mao's "Confucian" approach and Deng's "Weberian" approach to the problem of bureaucracy parallels the differences Eric Wright sees in how Lenin and Weber explained the sources of the evils of bureaucracy. For Lenin it was "bad ideology" rooted in class origins, rather than bureaucratic concentrations of power, that led to bureaucratism. See E. Wright, *Class, Crisis, and the State*, New York: New Left Books, 1978.

I have argued that Mao's efforts to combat bureaucratism were flawed in conception and a failure in execution. What can we expect of Deng's quite different approach? On the one hand the fact that the analysis of the current leadership seems much more sociologically on the mark than Mao's might seem to indicate that the current reforms can have some success in reducing bureaucratic evils. On the other hand, the fact that Deng is only a little bit of a Weberian, and very much still a Leninist, and that much of the bureaucratic system constructed in the 1950s is still in place, point to a more pessimistic conclusion. I would argue that only if a more substantial reduction in what I have called structural bureaucratization were carried out would it be likely that the built-in problems that Mao and Deng and all the rest have inveighed against would be substantially reduced. Unless Deng Xiaoping and those who follow him are both willing and able to make fundamental changes in the Leninist organizational system they preside over, we can expect only superficial and cosmetic changes to take place. If this pessimism is borne out then we can anticipate that China's future leaders, as their predecessors, will be ardent and perhaps eloquent, but also ineffective, champions of the anti-bureaucratic cause.

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