

# Maoist moments : local actors, global history, 1960s~1970s

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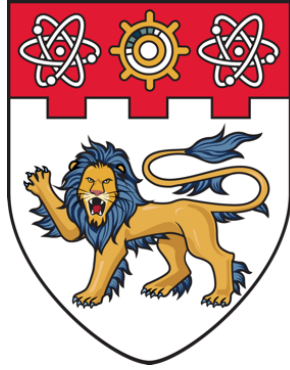
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**SINGAPORE**

**MAOIST MOMENTS:  
LOCAL ACTORS, GLOBAL HISTORY,  
1960s~1970s**

YAN BO  
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES  
2020

**Maoist Moments:  
Local Actors, Global History, 1960s~1970s**

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**School of Humanities**

**A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfilment of the  
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**2020**

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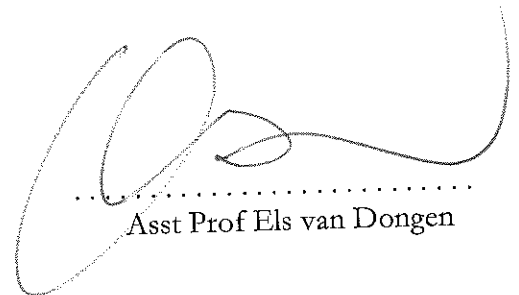
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## SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the global history of Maoism. It provides analyses of three countries: China, the birthplace as well as the exporter of Maoism; the United States, a Western, liberal, and democratic country where encounters with Maoism might not be influential in a political sphere, but nonetheless had long-lasting impact in cultural and social spheres; and Singapore, an example of how Maoism, as an alternative modernity, affected the newly independent Third World countries in their nation-building. Based on critical readings of primary, secondary sources, and engagement with academic debates over the understanding of Maoism in the context of the 1960s and 1970s, this dissertation offers a historical investigation of core actors in the three countries: the translators and those who worked on translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works in China, the protesting students and social activists who were on strike for the establishment of ethnic studies in the United States, and the Barisan Sosialis, the second largest political party of Singapore who challenged the ruling elites' blueprint for nation-building at the very early stage of the republic. This dissertation proposes the concept of "Maoist moments" to refer to the global phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s that Maoism sparked radical leftism around the world. It argues, with these three representative countries, that these "Maoist moments" were made possible by the fact that Maoism incentivized an imagined Third World against imperialism and by the worldwide radical leftists who invoked, adopted, and applied Maoism for their cultural, social, and political agendas.

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction**

The 1960s and 1970s was a remarkable time when rebellions were themes of the day, and protests constituted an important part of the postwar history. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China, which started in 1966 and reached a tumultuous climax in 1968, paralyzed China but radicalized activists in many parts of the world. In 1968, the Malayan Communist Party, whose soldiers adopted guerrilla warfare across the Thai-Malaysian border, posed a serious challenge to the government and forced the country into an insurgency, historically known as the Second Emergency. At the same time, the young Republic of Singapore saw drastic struggles between the radical leftists and the conservatives in its early stage of nation building. At the other end of the Eurasia continent, the students in Paris brought Gaullist France almost to a halt in a historic riot in May 1968. Young students in West Germany soon joined their French counterparts in their own anti-establishment protests against the university authorities and the government. In Italy, the Red Brigades emerged and would soon end as the bloodiest far-left terrorist organization in a Western liberal democratic country after the Second World War. Across the ocean, the convergence of the anti-war movement, civil rights movement, and student strikes shocked many cities across the United States.

In these events, Maoism, an ideology born out of Marxism but with Chinese characteristics, played a significant part. Originally a branch and derivative of international Communism, Maoism distinguishes itself from Marxism and other forms of socialism in its emphasis on the central position of peasants, guerrilla warfare, anti-imperialism, the leadership of the vanguard communist party, and

its rejection of any non-violent means to socialism and communism.<sup>1</sup> With the Soviet Union's proposing of "peaceful coexistence" with the United States in the 1960s, its suppression of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and China's slogan of "beating enemies with two fists", i.e., attacking U.S. imperialism and Soviet Union's revisionism at the same time, many activists, nationalists, and even officials regarded Mao's China as the more revolutionary force in the international arena and a model for alternative modernity. Students, activists, intellectuals, and the ordinary masses in different parts of the world interpreted different segments of Maoism for their own political, social, or cultural agendas. Culminating in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, people across the globe in the 1960s and 1970s invoked Maoism to oppose the establishment and to challenge the status quo, in politics, society, culture, and education. Turbulence and chaos on a global scale constituted research themes not to be missed or ignored by any scholar of post-WWII history or Cold War studies.

A series of international events since the late 1970s changed the course of communism in general, and Maoism in particular, such as Mao Tse-tung's death<sup>2</sup> in 1976, Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening-up policy, China's suspension of support to fraternal Communist parties, and the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Though it still existed in some countries, the overall influence of communism waned substantially, at least seen in the context of the early 1990s. With the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, communism seemed to lose its

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter "What is Maoism?".

<sup>2</sup> Due to different romanizations of Chinese characters, both "Mao Zedong" and "Mao Tse-tung" are used in scholarly publications. However, since "Mao Tse-tung" was more widely used in the publications, newsletters, and other documents during the time examined in this dissertation, this dissertation uses "Mao Tse-tung" except for citations where "Mao Zedong" was used in the original texts.

appeal and cede indefinitely to Western liberal democracy. It was “the end of history”, as Francis Fukuyama boldly claimed.<sup>3</sup>

However, in February 1996, a Maoist revolution in Nepal demonstrated that Maoism was all but dead. The revolution was initiated by the party titled *Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)*.<sup>4</sup> At the very early stages of the war, the only weapons for the Maoists were the *Khukris*, a traditional Nepalese weapon. The target of the war was the monarchy of Nepal. After a decade of civil war, the Maoist guerrillas surprisingly yet successfully won the victory against the monarchy, resulting not only in the abolishment of the monarchy, but also in a new federal republic by 2006. The most astonishing and deviant part, however, came two years later, when the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) won the Nepalese Constituent Assembly election and became the ruling party in this newly born parliamentary democracy. Considering the resolute rejection of any parliamentary path in Maoism, this parliamentary election was an anomaly.<sup>5</sup>

In Nepal’s neighbor India, news stories of Maoist guerrilla soldiers encountering governments have made headlines since the 1970s and well into the 1990s. Started in the early 1970s, the Maoism-inspired Naxalite movement has an enduring influence in India. Even in 2014, the former Indian Prime Minister still considered the Naxalites (the Maoists in India) to be the biggest internal security challenge facing India.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press; Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada; New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> The official name of party is Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter “What is Maoism?”.

<sup>6</sup> “Naxalism biggest threat to internal security: Manmohan”, *The Hindu*, accessed January 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Naxalism-biggest-threat-to-internal-security-Manmohan/article16302952.ece>

In China, the birthplace of Maoism, the 40 years of Deng Xiaoping's de-Maoist reform has brought tremendous economic prosperity, yet Mao still casts a shadow. In the mid-1980s, barely 60,000 undertook the journey to Mao's hometown, Shaoshan, Hunan as political pilgrimages. However, in 2015, the number of such practice skyrocketed to 17 million.<sup>7</sup> The two biggest political figures of China in the first decade of the 21st century, Bo Xilai and Xi Jinping, both display elements of Maoist influence in almost every domestic and foreign policy that they implement.

Bo conducted two main political movements when he was the Communist Party Secretary of Chongqing, the largest municipality in West China: the Red Culture Movement in which songs, dances, operas, and poem recitals of Mao's era were performed to promote Maoist morality and ideals, and the crackdown on the gang crimes in Chongqing by means of mass movements where due process was missing. Besides, Bo launched a campaign which encouraged university graduates to go down into the countryside and become village officials, a campaign that reminded people of the Down to the Countryside Movement of Mao's era. Bo even invoked Mao's quote during his talks with the university graduates engaged in this campaign.<sup>8</sup>

When Xi, who was sent into rural exile in the 1960s and spent his youth during the Cultural Revolution, took the reign of China in 2012, he was overall believed to bring Maoist memories back to China.<sup>9</sup> Under his presidency, rising anti-Western nationalist sentiments have been spreading

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<sup>7</sup> Jamil Anderlini, "The return of Mao: a new threat to China's politics", September 30, 2016, accessed January 4, 2017, *Financial Times*, <https://www.ft.com/content/63a5a9b2-85cd-11e6-8897-2359a58ac7a5>

<sup>8</sup> "Bo Xilai yu daxuesheng cungan zuotan" 薄熙来与大学生村官座谈：到农村学习不亚于读研究生 [Bo Xilai talks with Little Village Officials: learning in the countryside is no less than doing postgraduate studies]. *Zhongguo jiaoyu zaixian* 中国教育在线转引自《重庆晚报》，July 6, 2011. [http://cungan.career.eol.cn/dxsjcjy\\_5861/20110706/t20110706\\_645985.shtml](http://cungan.career.eol.cn/dxsjcjy_5861/20110706/t20110706_645985.shtml)

<sup>9</sup> On Xi Jinping's inclinations towards Mao, Suisheng Zhao provided early analysis, see Suisheng Zhao, "Xi Jinping's Maoist Revival", *Journal of Democracy* 27, No. 3 (July 2016): 83-97., and "The Ideological Campaign in Xi's China: Rebuilding Regime Legitimacy", *Asian Survey* 56, No. 6 (2016): 1168-1193.

rampantly. One of the many divisions China faces today is between those who are West-leaning, pro-democratic and those who exhibit outspoken anti-Western and ultra-nationalist megalomania. The most notorious part among the latter is the young netizens who use modern internet technology to defend the regime online fearlessly and proudly, even ironically using VPNs to evade the internet censorship that the regime<sup>10</sup> set up to curb the circulation of information. They got ridiculed and mocked as *Xiaofenhong*, or Little Pink, and were titled “modern-day Red Guards”.<sup>11</sup> In March 2018, the Constitution was amended, giving Xi unlimited terms in President’s position, a step further deviating from the term limits inserted by Deng’s reforms but closer to Mao’s era when the supreme leader had no term limits, no checks and balances, and no collective leadership. Besides, the personality cult built around Xi was an easy reminiscence of that of Mao. *The Governance of China*, a heavy-volume book as a part of the personality cult building project around Xi, led one prominent scholar on China to name the book “Xi’s Big White Book”, in comparison to the *Little Red Book* of Mao.<sup>12</sup> Like the very fact that Mao’s giant portray still hangs in Tiananmen Square, the influence of Mao in China, in some other countries, still remains powerful. An understanding of Maoism is, therefore, not only critical to observe any happenings in China, but also essential in deciphering developments elsewhere in the contemporary world.

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<sup>10</sup> Rongbin Han, “Defending the Authoritarian Regime Online: China’s ‘Voluntary Fifty-Cent Army’”, *The China Quarterly* 224 (December 2015): 1006-1025.

<sup>11</sup> “East is Pink,” *The Economist*, Accessed January 4, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21704853-online-mobs-get-rowdier-they-also-get-label-east-pink>, and Jude Blanchette, *China's New Red Guards: The Return of Radicalism and the Rebirth of Mao Zedong* (Oxford University Press, 2019)

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Wasserstrom, “From the Little Red Book to the Big White One”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/little-red-book-big-white-one/>



Significant as it is, the influence of Maoism has received less academic attention. Very often, studies on Maoism (outside China) have followed a nation-state-centered approach and have focused narrowly on single states, such as India, Nepal or Peru, or have been submerged under African/Asian American studies (such as studies of the civil rights movement in the United States). Only recently have studies on Maoism adopting a global history approach started to appear in the academic field.

Building on these studies, this dissertation examines the influence of Maoism from the perspectives of various core actors who engaged with Maoism: translators of Mao's works in China; the radical activists who established ethnic studies in the United States; and the leftists represented by the largest opposition party in Singapore. Covering the period of the 1960s and 1970s, the dissertation looks at three countries, i.e., China, the United States and Singapore. Geographically, the actors were located in individual countries, but they were connected by China's export of Mao's works, their approach to Maoism, and their imagination as part of the global struggles between the Third World versus imperialism, thus the local actors contributed to global Maoist moments in the 1960s and 1970s.

This dissertation analyzes these countries and actors for the following reasons. Firstly, the dissertation looks at China, the birthplace of Maoism. People working in translation, publication, as well as circulation played a pivotal role in globalizing Mao's works, including his speeches, statements, poems, and more prominently, the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* and *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. As with Lin Biao's famous metaphor of Mao's thought as "a spiritual atom bomb of indefinite power",<sup>13</sup> they were global carriers of such a powerful weapon, and they directed it towards the places where it left its mark. According to Bobby Seale, the co-founder of the Black Panther Party, which

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<sup>13</sup> Lin Biao, "Foreword to the Second Edition of Quotations of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung", first published: 1966, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1966/12/16.htm>

was regarded as the most prominent Maoist organization in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s, they purchased copies of Mao's *Little Red Book* from China Book Store in San Francisco and resold them to collect money to buy weapons against police authority.<sup>14</sup> It is believed that the copies they purchased were made possible by the translators, publication staff and those working in circulation in China. This dissertation will fill a gap by uncovering their less-told stories.

Secondly, as the largest target in the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist narrative of Maoism, the United States occupied a special place in the approach to Maoism by all leftists around the world. To some degree, Maoism is an anti-American ideology. Scholars have already explored Maoism in America, especially, the inspiration of Maoism on radical leftist organizations such as the Black Panther Party,<sup>15</sup> and other Asian American organizations like I Wor Kuen, Wei Min She, Asian Americans for Action,<sup>16</sup> etc., in their studies of the civil rights movement. A more detailed account of such studies will be offered in the literature review. However, the impact of Maoism is not limited to party building, but also massively reflected in the cultural and educational spheres. In the late 1960s and 1970s, many activists in the multiple movements ended up in academia. The activists-turned-academics, coming out of the two student strikes at the San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley, bridged Maoism as an organization building principle and Maoism as a source

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<sup>14</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 82. Their story was recounted in Bill Mullen, "By the Book: Quotations from Chairman Mao and the Making of Afro-Asian Radicalism, 1966-1975", in *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, ed. Alexander C. Cook (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 245-265.

<sup>15</sup> See Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015); Robin D.G. Kelly and Besty Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution", *Souls* 1, (Issue 4 1999): 6-41; Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

<sup>16</sup> For these organizations, see William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Temple University Press, 1993); and Fred Ho eds., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics & Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (Edinburgh, San Francisco: AK Press, 2000).

of culture. This perspective contributes to a deeper, wider, and more nuanced understanding of Maoism in America than the existing studies on Maoism in America, which mostly focuses on the aspect of political organizations.

Lastly, though small in size and tiny in population, Singapore, nonetheless is an important case when it comes to nation-building. Since Singapore, as a multilingual, multiethnic former colony, was among one of the very few countries rising “From Third World to First”.<sup>17</sup> Singapore’s nation-building, a blueprint set by the ruling elites in the People’s Action Party, was made possible by their victory over the Maoist-inspired radical leftism. By avoiding the “Paths Not Taken”<sup>18</sup> in which Malay ethnocentrism and leftism were major components, Singapore managed to impose a nation-state building approach and a developmental path. Unique in the swath of newly independent third world countries, Singapore never provoked anti-Western hostility as the “other” in its nation-state building, yet staunchly rejected certain popular Western elements at the time. For example, they adopted some elements in socialism, but rejected social democracy in their social and economic planning.<sup>19</sup> Such an economic and social policy lay the foundation of Singapore’s success, setting Singapore apart from many Third World countries who were in the quagmire of either anti-Western, anti-American nationalism, or the wholehearted embrace of welfare state and socialism. The Singapore section therefore argues that defeating Maoism paved the way for Singapore’s successful nation-building after Malay ethnocentrism was defeated. Singapore thus serves as a significant example to explore the complicated relationship between Maoism and nation-state building in third world countries. While

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<sup>17</sup> The title of the founding Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew’s memoir, is often invoked to refer to Singapore’s success story. Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: the Singapore Story: 1965-2000, Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings: Times Edition, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Michael Barr and Carl A. Trocki ed., *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-War Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> C.V. Devan Nair eds., *Socialism that Works...the Singapore Way* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1976).

the United States invented hyphenated Americans under the impact of Maoism-affected ethnic studies and identity politics, Singapore, benefiting from its victory over Maoism, tamed ethnocentrism, and built and solidified a unified identity as Singapore citizens.

### **Key Definition**

“Maoism” is the central and key term of the dissertation. Maoism as an ideology is derived from and associated with the ethos reflected in the speeches, writings of Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976), the central figure of the Chinese revolution. Besides, Maoism is closely associated with the translation, adaptation, appreciation and worshipping of Mao’s thoughts, Mao himself, and symbolic Maoist events, the most notable of which was the Cultural Revolution. This implies the two sides of a two-way construction: on one the one hand, Maoism refers to the ideas, theories, and analysis of Mao Tse-tung; on the other hand, it was also constructed by the understanding, worshipping, adoption and adaptation of certain words and expressions uttered by Mao, even when those who interpreted Mao’s words had little or no knowledge of the brutalities during the Cultural Revolution. Such case was obvious among French Maoists.<sup>20</sup> Mao’s thoughts regarding the Chinese revolution and the construction of socialism in China were gradually formulated in the 1940s. In 1945, the seventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party enshrined his ideas and thoughts as the formal guiding principle of the Party as “Mao Zedong Thought”. According to the Constitution of the Communist Party of China, Mao Zedong Thought integrates “the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism with the

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<sup>20</sup> Such phenomenon is more academically visible in French Maoists. See Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: May '68, French Intellectuals, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. Mao Zedong Thought is Marxism-Leninism applied and developed in China”.<sup>21</sup>

Domestically termed as “*Mao Zedong Sixiang*” (“Mao Zedong Thought” in Mandarin), ideas of Mao as well as practices around it were alternatively called “Maoism” in the international or global context. It is interesting that Chinese officials and the Chinese Communist Party never use the term “Maoism” (*Mao zhuyi*), nor does this term appear in Chinese media, except in very rare situations.<sup>22</sup> The use of “Maoism” itself indicates an international or global dimension of ideas affiliated with Mao, as well as their circulation, reception and influence. That is the reason this dissertation uses Maoism, rather than Mao Zedong Thought, though the two terms are used interchangeably in many occasions and many works, remarks, and analyses that this dissertation has cited.

Maoism saw its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China.<sup>23</sup> Outside China, it found its adherents, the radical leftists, who were often named Maoists, favorably or pejoratively, in both Third World countries and Western societies. Key elements in Maoism--- Mao’s emphasis on violence and the role of the peasants in the revolutionary process, his staunch anti-imperialist stance, and his stress on the concept of “People’s War”, guerrilla warfare, protracted warfare, as well as his insistence on continuous revolution--provided concrete and feasible guiding revolutionary or insurgent principles for Third World countries to follow. The

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<sup>21</sup> “The official English translation of the latest version of the Constitution of the Communist Party of China”, Communist Party of China, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://english.cpc.people.com.cn/206972/206981/8188065.html>

<sup>22</sup> For example, the state-owned China Central Television reported the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre), then Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as *Ni Gong Mao zhuyi* when it won the parliamentary election of Nepal in 2008.

<sup>23</sup> A recent book by Julia Lovell pushed the origin of global Maoism to the 1930s with the publication of *Red Star Over China* by Edgar Snow. See Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: The Bodley Head, 2019).

practice of the Cultural Revolution, the reading or dissemination of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, or the *Little Red Book*, and the performance of the Revolutionary Model Operas triggered drastic changes in cultural, social, as well as educational norms in both Third World countries and Western societies. From translators who spread Mao's ideas across the world, to Maoism's engagement in nation-state building in Singapore, to American activists who evoked Mao's association of race and capitalism in their protests, to borrow the words of Liu Kang, Maoism is both an ideology of revolution and an ideology of alternative modernity.<sup>24</sup>

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research consists of two dimensions:

The first dimension argues that an ideology could play a role in forming an imagined transnational identity and community. This dimension is most clearly represented in Bill Mullen's discourse on the imagined identity shared by the African American civil rights activists and Asian and African countries struggling for independence and sovereignty. Adopting the class-centered approach emphasized in Maoism, the African American activists saw the racial discrimination that they faced in American society as class oppression and (U.S.) imperialist dominance. Thus, they formed an imagined transnational alliance with Asian and African nations who were against colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, in *Afro-Orientalism*, Mullen gave the 1955 Asian-African Conference in

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<sup>24</sup> Liu Kang, "Maoism: Revolutionary Globalism for the Third World Revisited," *Comparative Literature Studies* 52, (No.1, 2015): 12-28. Wang Hui also analyzes Maoism as a modernity theory, "an ideology of modernization on one hand, yet a critique of European and American Capitalist modernization on the other hand". See Wang Hui 汪晖, *Zhishi fenzi de lichang—Ziyou zhuyi yu zhongguo sixiangjie de fenhua* 知识分子的立场—自由主义与中国思想界的分化 [Intellectual Positions: Liberalism and the Division of the Chinese Intellectual World] (Beijing: shidai wenyi chubanshe, 2000), 90.

Bandung, Indonesia, a special place when he constructed a transnational community connected by Maoism.<sup>25</sup>

The second dimension stresses that the simultaneous dissemination, localization and adaptation of a particular idea in different parts of the world would create an international or transnational network with the idea standing at the center, becoming the “moment” of the idea. Erez Manela termed it “the Wilsonian Moment” when the colonial world, (he used Egypt, China, India and Korea as four cases) utilized, adopted, and localized the idea of the rights of self-determination (proposed in the Fourteen Points by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson) for their anti-colonial and independent cause between April 1917 and June 1919.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, this research adopts the concept of “Maoist moments”. Between the 1960s and 1970s, with the dissemination and reception of ideas of Maoism, actors across the globe absorbed, invoked, and employed Maoism for their purposes, such as opposing authorities and fighting against racial discrimination. Thus, local actors contributed to a global history of Maoism, or “Maoist moments”.

These two dimensions constitute the theoretical framework of this dissertation. In the first place, the actors in three countries interpreted their agenda as struggles between an imagined Third World versus imperialism: in China, following the judgement that “the center of the world’s

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<sup>25</sup> See Bill V. Mullen, “Transnational Correspondence: Robert F. Williams, Detroit, and the Bandung Era”, in Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 73-112.

<sup>26</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

revolution has shifted from Moscow to Beijing” and the leftist turn of its foreign policy,<sup>27</sup> export of Mao’s works was taken as a serious measure to support the international anti-imperialist and anti-revisionist struggles; in America, it was the anti-racial discrimination and striving for education autonomy; and in Singapore, it was the radical leftists’ rejection of the sovereignty of the Republic of Singapore and all related government policies for the purpose of opposing imperialism. The second dimension puts China, the United States, and Singapore into a connected analysis of the “Maoist moments”. China was the birthplace of Maoism as well as the effects of the Cultural Revolution, but more importantly, the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao’s works in China materialized Maoism. Without the prerequisite of export of Mao’s works and the adoption of Maoism in the contexts of the United States and Singapore, the Black Panther Party would not be able to finance themselves, the protesters at the San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley would not be able to read Mao as inspirations and tactics for their strike for the ethnic studies; the opposition party in Singapore would not be able to have a powerful spiritual weapon.

The dissertation selects the three countries for the following reasons. In the first place, they include understudied areas because the existing literature on Maoism centers around countries such as India and Peru, which will be discussed in more detail in the literature review. Secondly, the three countries chosen for this dissertation allow us to look at understudied aspects, such as translations in China, Maoism in the cultural and educational spheres in America, and nation-building in Singapore.

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<sup>27</sup> Yang Kuisong 杨奎松, “Xinzhongguo de geming waijiao sixiang yu shijian” 新中国的革命外交思想与实践 [Revolutionary Diplomacy Thought and Practice of New China], *Shixue yuekan* 史学月刊, Issue 2, 2010, [http://ww2.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/PaperCollection/webmanager/wkfiles/7564\\_1\\_paper.pdf](http://ww2.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/PaperCollection/webmanager/wkfiles/7564_1_paper.pdf) and Niu Jun, “1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China’s Foreign Policy”, Working Paper No. 48, *Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2005.



Also, by including the US chapter into the dissertation, this research moves beyond “Third World Maoism”<sup>28</sup> and the distinction between developing and developed countries.

## Literature Review

Scholars have long approached research on Mao in the form of biographies. Trailblazers and veterans like Benjamin Schwartz, Maurice Meisner, Philip Short, and Jung Chang<sup>29</sup> have made great contributions to the biographical writings on Mao. Apart from the biographical approach to the writing on Mao and Maoism, there are also other efforts and publications. Based on the reading of the current literature, this review will map out major research areas and trends in the studies of Maoism in general and help to clarify some academic gaps to be filled by this dissertation.

### *Maoism in Individual Countries: A Nation-State-Centered Approach*

Besides a biographical approach to Mao and Maoism, a set of the existing literature looks at Maoism in individual countries. Often, the works concentrate on the following countries: India, Nepal, Peru, France, and the United States. The Naxalite movement in India was the most visible Maoist-inspired insurgency during Mao’s lifetime. It is a major research cluster of the academic circle on India. Scholars such as Ranjit Bhushan have noted the impact of Maoism on the insurgencies in

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<sup>28</sup> Alexander C. Cook, “Third World Maoism”, in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 288-312.

<sup>29</sup> See Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952); Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006); Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), and its new and completely revised edition, *Mao: The Man Who Made China* (London: I B Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2016); Jung Chang and Jon Haliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).

India.<sup>30</sup> Due to the ongoing struggles between these radical leftists and the Indian government, the research body of books and monographs keeps growing.<sup>31</sup> These publications enrich the knowledge of Maoism in India by covering and analyzing the origins, evolutions and contemporary development of the Naxalite movement.

Maoism, localized in India as *Naxalism*, provided an alternative for the under-privileged and the marginalized of resisting poor governance, poverty, injustice by arms struggle, seen so apparently in the “thousands of demonstrating the [sic] Naxalites in Calcutta waving little red books of Chairman Mao’s quotations”.<sup>32</sup> Most obvious evidence of the impact of Maoism came from the claim of its leader Charu Mazumdar, who undisguisedly hailed Mao in his *China’s Chairman is Our Chairman: China’s Path is Our Path*.<sup>33</sup> The circulation of Mao’s works, exemplified in Mao’s *Little Red Book*, led the Indian authorities to raid the Naxalites looking for the *Little Red Books* and finally banned the book in 1975.<sup>34</sup>

The significance of the study of Maoism in India goes beyond India proper. As Alexander C. Cook wisely put it, the value of the Naxalite case lies in its illustrations of the three most salient features of Third World Maoism: (1) analysis of society as semi-feudal and semi-colonial, (2) adoption of the strategy and tactics of people’s war to seize state power, and (3) mirroring the domestic Chinese

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<sup>30</sup> “The Naxalite movement is the outcome of the Great Chinese Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966”, in Ranjit Bhushan, *Maoism in India and Nepal*, (New Delhi, London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 139.

<sup>31</sup> Recent publications on the Naxalite movement, especially the Maoist revival are: Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajat Kumar Kujur, *Maoism in India: Reincarnation of Ultra-Left Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2010); S Narayan, *Naxalism and Maoism in India*, (Gyan Publishing House, 2014);

<sup>32</sup> Justus M. Van Der Kroef, “India’s Maoists: Organizational Patterns and Tactics”, in *Contributions to Asian Studies*, ed. K. Ishwaran, Volume 1, January 1971, 49.

<sup>33</sup> Charu Mazumdar, “China’s Chairman is Our Chairman: China’s Path is Our Path,” *Liberation* III, (No. 1, November 1969), [http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI\(ML\)-Orig/Mazumdar/ChinaChairmanOurChairman-CM-691106.pdf](http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI(ML)-Orig/Mazumdar/ChinaChairmanOurChairman-CM-691106.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Sreemati Chakrabarti, “Empty Symbol: The Little Red Book in India,” in *Mao’s Little Red Book: A Global History*, ed. Alexander C. Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 127-129.

agenda of the Cultural Revolution, namely, the continuation of the revolution to combat revisionism and establish socialism.<sup>35</sup> Thus, studies of the Naxalite movement in India provided a model and perspective for scholars of Maoism in other Third World countries. Two of such prominent examples are Maoist studies in Nepal and Peru. Also, in the Singapore section of the dissertation, the three features can be found in the Barisan Sosialis<sup>36</sup> analysis of the socioeconomic conditions of postwar Singapore, which will be analyzed in more details in the Singapore section.

The civil war in Nepal and the eventual Communist victory represented a strong contemporary Maoist revival decades after the collapse of Communist regimes in Europe. Maoist insurgencies and revolutions occurred in Nepal in the 1990s and studies of Maoism in Nepal are closely associated with Maoism in India, and sometimes, these studies overlap with each other.<sup>37</sup> It is not just because of the geographical proximity of the two countries and historical and contemporary

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<sup>35</sup> Alexander C. Cook, "Third World Maoism", in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 288-312.

<sup>36</sup> Barisan Sosialis, or Socialist Front in Malay language, was the main Maoist political party as well as the second largest party in the early history of the Republic of Singapore. It is the main unit of analysis in the Singapore section of this dissertation.

<sup>37</sup> Some recent comparative studies on Maoism in India and Nepal include: Ranjit Bhushan, *Maoism in India and Nepal*, (New Delhi, London and New York: Routledge, 2015); Nishchal N. Pandey, *Nepal's Maoist movement and implications for India and China*, (RCSS Policy Studies 27, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2005); Alpa Shah and Judith Pettigrew, *Windows into a Revolution: Ethnographies of Maoism in India and Nepal* (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2012).

close bilateral ties, but more importantly the impact of the development of Maoism in India upon Nepal.<sup>38</sup>

The case of Peru in the studies of Maoism in an individual state exhibits special meaning. The Naxalite Movement in India occurred during Mao's lifetime. The civil war in Nepal broke out long after Mao's death and decades after China's reform and opening-up policy. The *Sendero Luminoso*, or the Shining Path, rose to prominence just after Mao's death and coincided with Deng Xiaoping's de facto de-Maoist turn. As the most visible Maoist rebellious force right after Mao's passing, the Shining Path serves as an example in providing insights over how the far-leftists who were inspired by Maoism saw China's changed policies after Mao, and how they perceived China's de-Maoist turn initiated by Deng Xiaoping.

Like the Naxalite movement in India, and the "People's War" in Nepal, studies on Maoism in Peru overwhelmingly revolve around the rise and fall of the Shining Path. With the leader of the Shining Path Abimael Guzman captured by the authorities of Peru in 1992, the Shining Path declined significantly. Relevant literature regarding the Shining Path largely came about during the 1980s and

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<sup>38</sup> Numerous studies on Maoism in Nepal feature a causal interpretation explaining India's role in the development of Maoism in Nepal. For example, Rabindra Mishra states that the influence of the Naxalites has permeated into Nepal ever since the killing of Charu Mazumdar, the leader of the Naxalite insurgency. See Rabindra Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency", *Asian Survey* 44:5 (2004): 627-646. Alpa She and Judith Pettigrew also use "a red corridor" stretching from Nepal in the North to the state of Andhra Pradesh of India in the south to refer to the influence of India's Naxalite on Nepal. See Alpa Shah and Judith Pettigrew, "Windows into a Revolution: Ethnographies of Maoism in South Asia", *Dialect Anthropology* 33(2009): 225-251.

early 1990s.<sup>39</sup> Most of the publications have adopted a nation-state-centered approach analyzing the Shining Path in the Peruvian context. It is not until recently that studies of revolution in Latin America have adopted a transnational approach when examining Maoism in Peru. In his 2013 book *Transpacific Revolutionaries: The Chinese Revolution in Latin America*, Matthew Rothwell has offered a comparative analysis of the impact of Maoism on three Latin American countries, namely Mexico, Peru and Bolivia.<sup>40</sup> This is a meaningful attempt to examine the circulation of ideas between China and Latin America in the context of the Cold War, but the Peru part contains limited new insights.

Histories of the influence and engagement of Maoism in India, Nepal, and Peru share one thing in common: Maoism in these countries was the force behind igniting insurgencies, revolutions, or riots. Social chaos and unrest were targeting the government, or the establishment. The strong desire and devotion to change or even subvert the establishment or the status quo is indeed a major characteristic of the far left and ultra-left influenced by Maoism.

The approach to Maoism in America is often associated with, or in a more generalized sense, a history of some radical leftist organizations. Thus, it leaves the Maoist influence in the cultural sphere—for example, encounters with Maoism in higher education or how Maoism contributed to cultural transformations—largely unexplored. This is one of the academic gaps that this dissertation seeks to fill. This dissertation adopts a perspective of an imagined Third Worldness when examining

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<sup>39</sup> For example, David Scott Palmer ed., *The Shining Path of Peru*, (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1992); Simon Strong, *Shining Path: The World's Deadliest Revolutionary Force*, (London: Harper Collins, 1992). Great credit should be given to Orin Starn who provides valuable information on the Shining Path in languages such as English and Spanish in his articles on the topic. See for example: “Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History”, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, No. 2 (May 1995): 399-421.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew Rothwell, *Transpacific Revolutionaries: The Chinese Revolution in Latin America*, (New York: Routledge, 2013).

the actors who interpreted and reworked Maoism in America, i.e., those of ethnic minority backgrounds who participated in the strikes for the establishment of ethnic studies. Although they were born in the United States, they considered themselves to be part of the “Third World” and they perceived of their activism as a struggle against western imperialism. Thus, translators in China, activists in the United States, and leftists in Singapore were connected in an imagined Third World versus imperialism struggle, as the rest of the dissertation will show.

In 1993, in the first-ever single book on the Asian American movement<sup>41</sup> in 1960s America, William Wei dedicated a whole chapter to Maoist organizations in the history of the Asian American movement. In a time-frame between the 1960s and the 1990s, Wei gave a chronology of the emergence, evolution, and decline of Maoist organizations in the context of the decline of the New Left and the rise of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. The organizations covered in Wei’s book include the Red Guard Party, Wei Min She, I Wor Kuen, the Asian Study Group, The League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist), and so on. As the “model minority”, Asian Americans were often labeled as non-militant and conforming to the expectations of mainstream American society. However, in Wei’s chapter, these Chinese Americans showed a political activism rooted in Mao’s China. This adherence to Maoism was demonstrated in many ways, including party-building, mobilization, the naming of their organizations, and even the sectarian conflicts within these Maoist organizations. Wei’s book, however, was criticized in Fred Ho’s compilation *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America*<sup>42</sup> for Wei’s portrayal of activists not revolutionary

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<sup>41</sup> William Wei, “The Emergence and Eclipse of Maoist Organizations”, in *The Asian American Movement*, by William Wei. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 203-240.

<sup>42</sup> Fred Ho ed., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America*, Edinburgh, Scotland and San Francisco, California: AK Press, 2000.

enough and for Wei's sceptical attitudes towards the activism. Ho's anthology adopted a more radical attitude. The impact of Maoism on the Asian American Movement in particular, and the 1960s-1970s activism in general, was given a far more prominent place in the causes and background in Ho's anthology. Ho also emphasized the "revolutionary, socialist-orientation" of the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>43</sup>

Bill Mullen is a notable historian of African American radicalism and Maoism, especially so in his monograph *Afro-Orientalism*.<sup>44</sup> *Afro-Orientalism* examines how African American radical activists in America, inspired by Mao's Yan'an Talks, the Cultural Revolution, and other ideas of Mao, translated Maoist theory in their practice of local and international struggles. Mullen adopts a transnational approach in the book, aligning African American activists with Asians who struggled against imperialist forces in the world. With this approach, Mullen constructed an imagined trans-pacific community based on the U.S. activists' adherence to Maoism and the common revolutionary cause of anti-imperialism of both African American activists and Asian people.

France is another Western country where the Maoist encounters caught wide social, cultural and academic attention with the worldwide media attention given to the youth protests on the Parisian streets in May 1968. Unlike Maoism in America, which was associated closely with ethnic conflicts and struggles, it was the engagement of prominent intellectuals and philosophers with Maoism that

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, II.

<sup>44</sup> Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

played an active role in Maoism in France.<sup>45</sup> A recent exemplar is the widely discussed *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* by Richard Wolin.<sup>46</sup>

*The Wind from the East* contemplates how the leading intellectuals and students of France in the 1960s, inspired by Maoism in the height of the Cultural Revolution, engaged in social movements and tried to break the domestic gridlock. Wolin addresses two myths or paradoxes in the book. The first is that French intellectuals, though boldly claiming they were learning from China, actually lacked the fundamental understanding of Maoism and matters in China. The second paradox is that, in spite of the cruelty and explicit political struggles in the Cultural Revolution, the most distinguished French intellectuals were nevertheless drawn to Maoism. Wolin argues that these intellectual rebels invented Maoism to suit their own romantic vision. Such a romantic invention of Maoism corresponded to what this dissertation would call a “two-way construction”, indicating a highly selective nature of the use of Mao’s words and expressions by leftists for political, social, and cultural purposes, even when the leftists had little or no knowledge of Mao’s China or the Cultural Revolution. More details on the “two-way construction” are provided in the *What is Maoism?* chapter of the dissertation.

#### *Global Maoism and Recent Research Trends*

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to the global dimension of Maoism. Dating back to the turn of the 21st century, Robert J. Alexander offered records of Maoism outside

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<sup>45</sup> Recent publications on intellectuals in postwar France influenced by Maoism include: David Drake, *Intellectuals and Politics in Post-War France* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970s* (Berghahn Books, 2004). Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>46</sup> Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).



of China. In two tomes of *International Maoism in the Developing World* and *Maoism in the Developed World*, published in 1999 and 2001 respectively,<sup>47</sup> Alexander introduced Maoist organizations and activities in most countries outside China. He even dedicated some space to countries like Guyana, Egypt and Lebanon. However, these two volumes were more descriptive than analytical, and the heavy reliance on the single source of *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, published by the Hoover Institution, as well as the narrow focus on the period of the 1960s to the 1970s severely limits the significance of the two books.

Alexander C. Cook's edited volume of global Maoism, *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*<sup>48</sup> was published in 2014. It is a global history of the interactions between China-born Maoism and political movements elsewhere around the world. What is interesting and unique is that this global history is constructed around the symbolic and actual meanings of a particular object, namely, the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, or the *Little Red Book*, and the transnational impact of this pocket-sized book. Besides Mullen's chapter focusing on Mao's *Little Red Book* and its guiding role in the party-building and radicalization of the Black Panther Party,<sup>49</sup> Xu Lanjun's chapter analyses translations of Mao's works. Xu argues that the global success of the *Little Red Book* was a "part of New China's extended efforts to translate Chinese literature...as a common and universal currency of revolution".<sup>50</sup> Julia Lovell explored the global history of Maoism in her 2019 monograph.<sup>51</sup> Lovell centered Maoist

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Alexander, *International Maoism in the Developing World* (Westport Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1999); *Maoism in the Developed World* (Westport Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2001).

<sup>48</sup> Alexander C. Cook, ed. *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Bill V. Mullen, "By the Book: Quotations from Chairman Mao and the Making of Afro-Asian Radicalism, 1966-1975." In *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, ed. Alexander Cook, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 245-265.

<sup>50</sup> Xu Lanjun, "Translation and Internationalism," in *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, ed. Alexander C. Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2014, 76-95.

<sup>51</sup> Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: Bodley Head, 2019).

ideas and experiences as major forces of the recent past, present, and future. One contribution of Lovell is her analysis of Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*. Tracing global Maoism through Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*, Lovell breaks a long-time pattern which often links global Maoism to the viral circulations of the *Selected Works of Mao* or the more iconic *Little Red Book*. Linking global Maoism to *Red Star Over China* also pushes the origins of global Maoism back to the 1930s, thus greatly expanding the ideology's lifespan. However, Lovell did not provide a clear differentiation of Maoism from Leninism. The countries she touches upon were already well-covered cases in current studies on Maoism, and the social unrests and civil activism in the West that she discussed were hardly new aspects.

Some scholars have already looked into the studies of the relationship between Maoism and a particular Western academic subject. For example, Sanjay Seth has analyzed how Subaltern Studies, and postcolonial theory in general, were enabled and shaped by the Maoist upsurge in India in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>52</sup>

Fabio Lanza's monograph *The End of Concern: Maoist China, Activism, and Asian Studies* looks at the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS)--an organization of young professors and graduate students who were vociferously critical of U.S. policies in Vietnam--and their rebellious activism in their engagement with the Asian studies. The young generation of scholars went to great lengths to avoid frameworks used by established scholars, John King Fairbank most notably, whom they criticized of complicity with the U.S. imperialist policies, not only in Vietnam, but also in Asian in general. Though the organization included scholars of Japan, Korea, South and Southeast Asia, Maoist China was the central focus. Seen as the positive other in the organization's criticism of the

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<sup>52</sup> Sanjay Seth, "From Maoism to Postcolonialism? The Indian 'Sixties', and Beyond", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, Number 4 (2006): 589-605.

established Asian studies and U.S. imperialism in Asia, Maoist China provided the young scholars an alternative possibility that “through their evaluation of the Maoist experiences that the Concerned Asian Scholars were able, for the first time in centuries, to consider ‘Asia’ and ‘Asian people’ as political subjects, capable of original thought and practices”.<sup>53</sup>

Both Subaltern studies and Asian studies are concerned about subjects outside the United States. However, in this dissertation, the U.S. section will investigate how encounters and approaches to Maoism contributed to a brand-new set of studies, namely ethnic studies, which observed subjects inside the United States. In her latest monograph, Julia Lovell discusses encounters with Maoism around the globe, including the impact of Maoism on education in the United States. However, she only briefly touches upon the issue saying that “the Cultural Revolution-inspired dissent of the 1960s and 70s contributed to reforms of secondary and higher education, to make teaching methods and curricula more participatory, more representative, more accountable to diverse communities”.<sup>54</sup> This is an elusive reference to the impact of Maoism upon ethnic studies. Other scholars, such as Daryl Maeda,<sup>55</sup> and Glenn Omatsu,<sup>56</sup> have submerged the establishment of ethnic studies under Asian American movement. Although they do mention Mao together with Marx, Lenin, and Che Guevara as the sources of inspiration that the activists drew from in their struggles, their remarks are limited to one sentence. Thus, it leaves an academic gap to fill in this dissertation.

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<sup>53</sup> Fabio Lanza, *The End of Concern: Maoist China, Activism, and Asian Studies* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2017), 3-4.

<sup>54</sup> Lovell, 300.

<sup>55</sup> Daryl J. Maeda, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> Glenn Omatsu. “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s,” in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, Third Edition, eds., Min Zhou and Anthony C. Ocampo (New York and London: New York University Press, 2016), 60-97.

In the field of studies of translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works, He Mingxing is prominent scholar. He published multiple monographs regarding the export of Chinese books,<sup>57</sup> as well as foreign languages books published in China.<sup>58</sup> His publications are rich in data. However, as a scholar in the studies of communications, his main approach is catalogue-compiling and Sino-centric, making China the only actor in this international circulation. This dissertation, on the contrary, by adopting the “two-way construction” approach, also looks at the active understanding, application, and selection of the meaning in Maoism by the so-called receiving end in this international circulation. Some scholars have looked at translations when they write about Maoism. Xu Lanjun has argued that the global success of the *Little Red Book* was a “part of New China's extended efforts to translate Chinese literature...as a common and universal currency of revolution”.<sup>59</sup>

When it comes to Maoism in Singapore, this dissertation looks at the Barisan Sosialis, the second largest political party radicalized by Maoism at the early stage of nation-building in Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew's memoir has provided a detailed account of the history of the nation-building of Singapore. However, the history of the Barisan Sosialis, the main Maoist actor in the political scene

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<sup>57</sup> He Mingxing 何明星, *Xinzhongguo shukan haiwai faxing chuanbo liushinian* 新中国书刊海外发行传播 60 年 [Sixty years of publication and dissemination of books and journals of new China] (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> He Mingxing 何明星, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waiwen tushu chuban faxing biannianshi (1949-1979)* 中华人民共和国外文图书出版发行编年史 (1949-1979) [Foreign Language Books' Publishing Chronicle of P.R. China (1949-1979)] (Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Xu Lanjun, “Translation and Internationalism”, in Alexander C. Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp76-95.

was only briefly recounted in Chapter Eight “The Communists Self-Destruct”<sup>60</sup> in *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*. The experience of dealing with the Barisan Sosialis was part of Lee Kuan Yew and the Singapore government’s efforts in combating and defeating communism. The switch to English in schools was one effort that dried up the supply of Chinese-educated recruits of communism in the context of combating Maoism.<sup>61</sup>

Lee Kuan Yew’s account is, in some way, the official narrative and interpretation of that history. In recent years, a burgeoning literature of monographs, memoirs, edited volumes, and articles revising the official narrative of the Singapore history before the 1980s has emerged. Some former political participants and detainees have published their own versions of historical interpretation, such as Dr. Poh Soo Kai and his *Living in a Time of Deception*, his edited *The Fajar Generation: The University Socialist Club and the Politics of Postwar Malaya and Singapore*; and works written and compiled by historians with a clear revisionist and critical inclination, such as Hong Lysa in *The Scripting of A National History: Singapore and Its Pasts*, and other edited works such as *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: Tangled Strands of Modernity*, and *Paths not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-War Singapore*.<sup>62</sup> The shared theme in this recent literature is its revisionist<sup>63</sup> departure from Lee Kuan Yew’s official

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<sup>60</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, “Chapter Eight: The Communists Self-Destruct”, in *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*, Singapore and the Asian Economic Boom, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000, pp109-119.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

<sup>62</sup> See Poh Soo Kai, *Living in a Time of Deception*, Function 8 Ltd & Pusat Sejarah Rakyat, 2016; Poh Soo Kai, Tan Jing Quee, Koh Kay Yew eds., *The Fajar Generation: the University Socialist Club and the Politics of Postwar Malaya and Singapore*, Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2010; Lysa Hong and Huang Jianli, *The Scripting of A National History: Singapore and Its Pasts*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2008; Loh Kah Seng, Edgar Liao, Lim Cheng Tju and Seng Guo-Quan eds., *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: Tangled Strands of Modernity*, Amsterdam University Press, 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Dr. Hong Lysa may not like the use of “revisionist” here, as she considers that “[the use of this word reminds people] that it was Mao Zedong who labelled his dissidents ‘revisionist’”. Rubaashini Shunmuganathan. “Yale-

narrative of the early postwar history of Singapore. For example, Lee Kuan Yew's other memoir *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* became the common target in these works. Lee's People's Action Party (PAP) was depicted as a party comprised of English-educated political elites and the anti-colonial leftists/socialists, and the former needed the leftists to win the elections to form a government but betrayed them after the election victory. Referring to Lee and the PAP as collaborators with the colonialists and the merger with Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, and Brunei into Malaysia as neo-imperialist design, the new literature, coming to light due to a loosening of publication restrictions, exhibited a strong and obvious revisionist approach to official narrative of history.

Cheng Yinghong's two articles "The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Decline of the Left in Singapore",<sup>64</sup> and its Chinese version,<sup>65</sup> came out as an analysis in opposition to the revisionist works above. In praising Singapore as "one of the very few countries that realized economic development and political stability after decolonization".<sup>66</sup> and a country with "less corruption, effective governance, rule of law, full employment, high standard of living, good social order, personal safety, and a clean and beautiful environment".<sup>67</sup> Cheng argued that the leftists in Singapore followed China's Cultural Revolution in a blind manner and adopted a path both ideologically and practically

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NUS College student is all praise for renowned Singapore historian Dr Hong Lysa for her years of 'invaluable contributions' in Singapore's past," *The Online Citizen*, September 11, 2019.

<https://www.theonlinecitizen.com/2019/09/11/yale-nus-college-student-is-all-praise-for-renowned-singapore-historian-dr-hong-lysa-for-her-years-of-invaluable-contributions-in-singapores-past/> access December 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Cheng Yinghong, "The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Decline of the Left in Singapore," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7 (2011): 211-246.

<sup>65</sup> Cheng Yinghong 程映虹, *Maozhuyi geming: ershi shiji de zhongguo yu shijie* 毛主义革命：二十世纪的中国与世界 [Maoist Revolution: China and the World in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century] (Hong Kong: Tianyuan Book House, 2008), 104.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

detached from the post-merger reality of Singapore which led to the demise of the mass base.<sup>68</sup> “It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that the Cultural Revolution was duplicated by Singapore’s leftist movement from 1966 to 1971. But it is this internationalism that diverted the movement from its nationalist trajectory thereby isolating itself from the political reality of the day. In the end, however, the movement itself fell victim to the schismatic tendency of the CR.”<sup>69</sup> Therefore, in contrast to those who adopted a revisionist approach to Singapore’s official narrative, Cheng argued that Lee’s *Singapore Story* was not far from historical reality in that it was not exaggerating the influence of the Cultural Revolution on Singapore, on the contrary, it did not expose the true impact of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>70</sup> Cheng’s two articles were the only two articles that associated Maoism with Singapore. What he mainly meant was that the Cultural Revolution led to the decline of the Barisan Sosialis and leftism in Singapore as a whole. Cheng’s argument was contested by the surviving participants of the leftist movements and former Barisan Sosialis members, who maintained that Cheng exaggerated the role of the Cultural Revolution and the crackdown by the government was the key factor.<sup>71</sup> This dissertation does not center around to what degree the Cultural Revolution contributed to the decline of the Barisan Sosialis. Instead, it focuses on Maoism in the nation-building of the Republic of Singapore and the Singapore section in the dissertation argues that following the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 107

<sup>69</sup> Cheng Yinghong, The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Decline of the Left in Singapore, *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7 (2011), 211-246.

<sup>70</sup> Cheng Yinghong 程映虹, *Maozhuyi geming: ershi shiji de zhongguo yu shijie* 毛主义革命：二十世纪的中国与世界 [Maoist Revolution: China and the World in the 20th Century] (Hong Kong: Tianyuan Book House, 2008), 107.

<sup>71</sup> Yew Lun Tian 游润恬, “Shezhen moluo shou wenge yingxiang? Zhongguo xuezhe lundian yinfa’shezhan” 社阵没落受文革影响？中国学者论点引发‘舌战’ [Decline of the Barisan Sosialis impacted by the Cultural Revolution? Chinese Scholars triggered “polemics”], *Lianhe Zaobao* 联合早报, July 16, 2010, 15.

defeat of Malay ethnocentrism, the defeat of the Maoist-inspired radical leftism marked the final stage of the struggle over nation-building in Singapore.

## **Research Questions**

A thorough review of the existing literature helps map out some key academic gaps in the studies of Maoism, such as the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works in China, the establishment of ethnic studies in universities in the United States, as well as combating Maoism at the beginning of nation-building in Singapore. The overarching questions to be answered in this dissertation are:

**How should we understand Maoism in the context of the 1960s and 1970s? How did the local actors approach Maoism and contribute to Maoist moments in the 1960s and 1970s?**

In order to answer the questions, this research will try to fill the academic gaps above by answering the following questions:

1. How did the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works, encouraged and pushed by the Cultural Revolution and China's left turn in foreign policy, facilitate the spread of Maoism around the world and contribute to the phenomenon of global Maoist moments?
2. How did the leftist activists approach Maoism by way of establishing ethnic studies in U.S. universities, and what were the implications of such actions on the educational, cultural, and social norms in the United States?
3. What role did Maoism play at the early stage of nation building in Singapore? To what degree were the Barisan Sosialis radicalized by Maoism and how did this radicalization determine their visions and actions for nation-building in Singapore?

## **Dissertation Design**

This dissertation proposes the concept of "Maoist moments" to refer to the global phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s that Maoism sparked radical leftism around the world. It argues



that these “Maoist moments” were made possible by the fact that Maoism incentivized an imagined Third World against imperialism and by the worldwide radical leftists who invoked, adopted, and applied Maoism for their cultural, social, and political agendas. For the purpose of proving this argument and to answer these questions above, this first section of the dissertation will go into the understanding of Maoism in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. By situating Maoism in the historical trajectory of communism and leftism, the dissertation will explain what distinctive elements Maoism contains and why in the context of the 1960s and 1970s, Maoism, or Mao’s China, with a radicalization in the foreign policy of the People’s Republic of China, could be more popular among radical leftists than the appeals of the Soviet Union. This will lay a theoretical foundation for the understanding of the Maoist moments in the places under investigation.

The second section will be devoted to the Maoist moment in China, which, in this dissertation, refers to the translations, publications, as well as circulations of Mao’s works in China, which facilitated the spread of Mao’s ideas to foreign audiences. The reason lies in the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s, it was no doubt Mao’s *Little Red Book*, or the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* and the *Selected Works of Mao* that symbolized and mediated the global popularity of Maoism. Some scholars outside China have attempted to compile or translate works of Mao. For example, Arthur Doak Barnett has added his own preface to Mao’s *Quotations*, and Hualing Nieh has translated Mao’s poems. However, China’s official propaganda apparatus, the Foreign Languages Press, had always downplayed or condemned unauthorized publications. Since the beginning of the 1960s, as the China section in this dissertation shows, with the project of translating the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao*, the translations gradually became China’s homegrown project and China engaged in the translations and dissemination of Mao’s works in its entirety. The section therefore argues that the prerequisite of the embrace, adaptation, or localization of Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s was the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao’s writings, in which translators in China played a critical role. It further argues that China’s translations and export of Mao’s works facilitated the radical leftists in the United States and in Singapore. In the United States, Henry Halsey Noyes set up China Book Store in San Francisco with the collaboration with Chinese publishers, whereas in Singapore, Mao’s works became used in battles between the governments and the Maoist opposition. The translations,

publications, and circulations in China played the key role in connecting the Maoist-inspired radicals elsewhere into a global network and the formation of “Maoist moments”.

The next section thus looks at the Maoist moment in America. This section argues that Mao’s anti-imperialist rhetoric, his association of race with the system of capitalism, the perceived role of Maoism in China’s successful revolution as a “Third World” country, as well as China’s radical revolutionary turn in the 1960s provided activists in America with more powerful alternative imaginations than the Soviet Union, Cuba, or Vietnam. Maoism incentivized an imagined Third World unity. One result of this was the student strike at San Francisco State College and the Third World Liberation Front strike at the University of California, Berkeley for the establishment of ethnic studies. The former radical activists largely occupied faculty positions of such studies in universities and they introduced Maoism into the course contents. The successful establishment of such studies was one of the most enduring legacies of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.<sup>72</sup> The consequences are seen in the founding of other similar academic subjects and identity politics and overall, they contributed to the radicalization of the higher educational institutions of America.

The last section will focus on the Maoist moment in Singapore, a tiny republic with a significant academic value when it comes to postwar nation-state building in a Third World country. This section argues that after Malay ethnocentrism, Maoism constituted the major obstacle in the nation-state building of Singapore. The second largest political party next to the ruling People’s Action Party, the Barisan Sosialis, turned radical leftist when they decided to apply Maoism in their organization in the 1960s, roughly at the same time when Singapore became independent from Malaysia. The Barisan Sosialis engaged in opposing every social, economic, and diplomatic policy of

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<sup>72</sup> L. Ling-chi Wang, *History of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley: Ethnic Studies 98/198* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Department of Ethnic Studies, 2011), 9.

the ruling party, indoctrinated children in their kindergartens with Maoism, and rejected the legitimate parliamentary system. Defeating Maoism paved the way for the conservative elites' blueprint for nation building and a solid Singapore identity took root. The Singapore section in this dissertation contains two chapters for the following reasons: by the late 1970s, the convergence of China's de-Maoist reforms and the marginalization of the Barisan Sosialis rendered Maoism and China irrelevant for Singapore's the nation-building. Instead, Deng Xiaoping's reform took Singapore as its model. This reversed relationship, as the Singapore section would suggest, marked the end of the Maoist moment in Singapore. Thus, two chapters are devoted to Singapore in order to do justice to the full complexity of this historical episode.

### **Methodology and Sources**

This dissertation adopts a transnational approach based on multi-archival research for the purpose of examining Maoism in China, America, and Singapore. These three countries represent the birthplace of Maoism, a liberal Western democratic country, and a Third World country going through nation-building process, respectively. The dissertation relies on a large number of primary sources, the main types of which are organizational publications, newspapers, magazines, memoirs, party newsletters, administrative correspondence materials, as well as personal papers. Besides, the China and United States sections make use of interviews conducted in the two countries in 2017 and 2018 with translators who translated Mao's works and the former activists who took part in the student strikes. The dissertation has also consulted secondary sources, such as monographs, articles, online publications, and so on. Below is a detailed account of how this dissertation will engage the sources with the methods.

The primary source analysis makes use of multiple primary sources collected in Singapore as well as from field trips in China and America. An historical collection of the publications of former leftists and defunct radical organization propaganda materials was made possible by the *Historical Reference Room for Singapore and Malaysia People*. This online collection is very likely collected, compiled and made available by left-leaning scholars or the leftist activists themselves, and it contains a large amount of Chinese-language materials essential for the research on radical activism and leftism in

1960s and 1970s Singapore and Malaysia. However, this collection remains largely unexplored by English-medium educated scholars, possibly because it is printed in traditional Chinese and because some characters are intelligible. This dissertation benefits from this collection, and especially from the party publications of the Barisan Sosialis and Partai Rakyat, such as the Barisan Sosialis Front, Party Information, Branch Information, Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura, and others. Laws, acts, and regulations that the Barisan Sosialis opposed and challenged were checked and verified using the official websites of *Singapore Statutes Online*. Official narratives of nation building, development blueprints, and policymaking were collected from National Archives of Singapore, the memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew, and other government-compiled documents, such as *Socialism That Works...the Singapore Way*.

The Foreign Languages Press (now China International Publishing Group) was at the center of the translations, publications, as well as circulations of Mao's writings. The *Collection of Memorial Articles on the Fifty Years of China International Publishing Group* was used to reveal the personal memories of the participants at the Foreign Languages Press, which shed light upon the regulations, policies, and details behind the cultural and political project. Some regulations regarding the proliferation of Mao's works among foreigners were recorded in government files, such as some circulars of the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council. The Hoover Institution housed some valuable yet unexplored materials on the subjects of Mao himself, on China during the Cultural Revolution, and on the spread and influence of Maoism in the United States. For example, the *Fook Hing Wong Papers* give readers insights on the activities of Chinese communists in the pre-PRC era and their overseas operating of CCP's propaganda efforts. Some of the veterans in this effort continued to play significant roles in the 1960s translating and spreading Mao's works overseas. Stanley Karnow, a long-time American journalist and author on Asian affairs in the 1960s, whose papers at the Hoover Institution included notes, news clippings, transcripts, and reports gave plenty information on Mao's China. Papers of Arne Swabeck, a prominent Maoist and one of the leaders of American communism, provide information on how the communists in America interpreted Mao, Maoism, and China's Cultural Revolution. Also, publications of Pathfinder Press at the Hoover Institution, a prominent press associated with the Socialist Workers Party famous for its leftist publishing, contain many

Maoist items. These collections were consulted and cross-checked during the writing of the dissertation.

As mentioned earlier, research on the history of ethnic studies has been submerged under the studies of other grander fields of academic attention, such as the Asian American movement and the civil rights movement. Indeed, some of the primary sources are found in archives and collections of such fields. For example, some of the primary sources came from the *Steve Louie Asian American Movement Archives* and *Uno Edison Papers* at the University of California, Los Angeles. Given the close relations between the establishment of ethnic studies and the student protests at the San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State university) and the University of California Berkeley, the archives at the two universities regarding the strikes, such as *SF State College Strike Collection* and collections at the Ethnic Studies Library at UC Berkeley were also consulted. Some of the archives at San Francisco State University are already digitized to facilitate research, including protests and conference video footages and strike documents. Also, the Digital Collections at J. Paul Leonard Library has a separate section dedicated to *The 1968-1969 San Francisco State College Strike Collection*. At the University of California, Berkeley, there is a separate library dedicated to ethnic studies. The Ethnic Studies Library houses multiple sources regarding the Third World Liberation Front strike at Berkeley in 1969, and papers and personal collections of veterans in student activism who later became trailblazers in academia in these studies, such as L. Ling-Chi Wang and Him Mark Lai. This dissertation utilizes the collections in these libraries which contain statements, documents, publications of the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front, as well as administrative records of the universities and course content of ethnic studies at its nascent stage. Some of the sources are digitized and made available on the website dedicated to the history of

radicalism at UC Berkeley in the late 1960s, *The Berkeley Revolution*.<sup>73</sup> The US chapter made use of the primary sources both at the physical Ethnic Studies Library, as well as *The Berkeley Revolution* website, and the very valuable compilation of strike files, administrative correspondence, syllabi, and other first-hand strike and ethnic studies related documents by L. Ling-chi Wang, participant in the Berkeley strike himself and later chair of ethnic studies at Berkeley, *History of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley: Ethnic Studies 98/198*.<sup>74</sup> Besides, some memoir-like compilations by former participants complement the bigger picture of the protests and the movement, such as Fred Ho's *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* and Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu's edited volume *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*.

Apart from obtaining access to the primary sources mentioned above, field trips to America and China also facilitated the interviews and communications with many previous activists who later became faculty members or who remained active in academia, politics, and other public affairs today. During the field trip to California, I had the honor of attending three significant commemorative anniversary gatherings of participants in the struggle to establish ethnic studies in the two universities: UC Berkeley Third World Liberation Front 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gathering, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the San Francisco State Strike, and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of Asian American Studies at UC Berkeley. Communications with the still active participants was both inspiring and knowledge-enriching. Besides, I had the privilege of interviewing Mr. Yin Chengdong, who contributed to the Spanish translation of the *Selected Works of Mao*, the *Little Red Book*, as well as Mao's poems. He provided the most valuable firsthand information on the translations. However, due to his official

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<sup>73</sup> "The Berkeley Revolution", for some of the digitized materials on the strike, visit <http://revolution.berkeley.edu/projects/twlf/>

<sup>74</sup> L. Ling-chi Wang, *History of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley: Ethnic Studies 98/198* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Department of Ethnic Studies, 2011).

status as the former Deputy Director of the Central Translation and Compilation Bureau of China and his long-time engagement with the communist propaganda project, the information provided in the interviews was cross-checked against other sources where necessary.

## CHAPTER TWO WHAT IS MAOISM?

### **Introduction**

Maoism is the central and key term in this dissertation. This chapter will focus on the understanding of Maoism in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. To begin with, this chapter will trace the development of Maoism in the historical trajectory of Marxism and communism. Then it outlines the main academic debates over Maoism, such as whether Maoism was more Marxist or more Chinese-rooted, and the distinctiveness of Maoism as compared with Marxism and Leninism. Lastly, the chapter discusses the different uses of Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s through the use of the concept “two-way construction”. This “two-way construction” is crucial in the understanding of Maoism, as it includes and recognizes the agency of actors in the engagement of Maoism, thus transcending both the official narrative of the Chinese Communist Party and the mere words, expressions, and writings of Mao himself.

This chapter sides with Nick Knight’s analysis which emphasizes the Marxist and socialist dimensions of Maoism, but also pays attention to the Chinese characteristics. On this basis, the chapter argues not for a lengthy academic debate over the theory of Maoism as some conceptual historians would do. Instead, the chapter argues that the blending of the Marxist dimensions in Maoism and the Chinese characteristics granted Maoism a particular appeal among leftists, especially in countries with similar social conditions as China. At the same time, the global contexts of the 1960s and 1970s, such as the U.S.’s imperialism in the Vietnam War and the Soviet Union’s “peaceful coexistence” with Western countries, contributed to the emerging image of Mao’s China as the most revolutionary major force. The chapter then looks at the phenomenon of the “two-way construction” of Maoism and argues that such a highly selective use of Mao’s texts in the approach of Maoism added flexibility as well as complexity of the understanding of Maoism.

### **Maoism in the Historical Trajectory of Marxism**



Although Maoism is an ideology inextricably associated with one of the most famous Chinese in world history and was born in the solid Chinese context, it has its place in the historical trajectory of ideas belonging to the left on the political spectrum. Debates over what is political left and right are heated and controversial in both academia and the political domain, and discussions around radicalism and conservatism only make things even more complicated. However, one thing is certain: that the leftist ideologies including Marxism, communism, and socialism originated as the response to the industrial revolution, development of capitalism, the French Revolution, and the Revolutions of 1848. Maoism too stood as a response to Western civilization, urbanization, capitalism and the Soviet model of socialism and communism.

Marx and Engels proposed and advocated scientific socialism in response to the practice of the utopian socialism by Henri St. Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier, such as their attempts of setting up communes in the United States. The utopian socialists argued that humans could set up and organize their organizations or entities according to their own will, and inside these man-created organizations, people were thus engaged in egalitarian, cooperative social enterprises. However, Marx and Engels criticized such practices when they made a distinction between scientific socialism anchored in historical materialism and utopian socialism. Compared with these utopian socialist practices, scientific socialism emphasized the control of the means of production and the initiatives of the industrial working class, or the proletariat.<sup>75</sup>

The scientific socialism of Marx and Engels developed and became the foundation of communism. However, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Marxism faced a strong challenge from Eduard Bernstein. Initially a disciple of Marx and Engels, Bernstein gradually broke away from the

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<sup>75</sup> Thad Williamson, "Political Traditions: Left Political Movements and the Politics of Social Justice," in *Political and Civic Leadership: A Reference Handbook*, ed. Richard A. Couto (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2010), 97-104.

emphasis on force and violence in the Marxist approach to achieving socialism, and instead argued for the possibility of capitalist countries to be reformed into socialism by peaceful and parliamentary means.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Marxism witnessed its bifurcations into what later theoreticians and historians would term as orthodox Marxism, which emphasized the irreplaceability of violence in the path to socialism and communism, and revisionism, which opposed radical revolution but advocated for “evolutionary socialism”. Revisionism kicked off the popularity of social democracy in Western and Northern European countries which remains prevalent today. Orthodox Marxism passed on to Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Tse-tung. The above is the theoretical lineage of Maoism in the history of international socialism, communism, and leftism in general. Maoism inherited from orthodox Marxism the total rejection of the parliamentary path to socialism. This constituted part of the reason that Maoist-inspired political parties, notably, as this dissertation will demonstrate, the Barisan Sosialis of Singapore (1961-1988), rejected the parliamentary system. This will be discussed in more detail in the Singapore section.

### **Maoism versus Marxism**

The above-mentioned theoretical lineage put Maoism as an inheritor of Marxism, thus revealing one of the dimensions in the complicated relationship between Maoism and Marxism. Scholars have already debated in length whether Maoism was more Marxist or more of a Chinese-rooted ideology. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the contribution of Nick Knight. Based on his reading of some newly available documents of Mao and his review of previous scholars on Mao,

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<sup>76</sup> On Eduard Bernstein and the history of the origin of revisionism, see Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952); Joseph Hansen, “Bernstein’s Challenge to Marx”, *Fourth International* 13, No. 4 (Fall 1954): 139-143, from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/hansen/1954/xx/bernstein.htm>

In *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong's Thought*, Knight emphasized the Marxist and socialist dimensions in Mao's thought from the perspective of the place of the peasantry in Mao's thought, his beliefs and efforts at the "Sinification of Marxism", and the "Chinese road to socialism".<sup>77</sup>

When it comes to the place of the peasantry in Mao's thought, there are two schools of thought. Some scholars, such as Maurice Meisner<sup>78</sup> and Isaac Deutscher, argue that Mao's emphasis on peasants made him a "peasant revolutionary", and he "turned his back upon the urban working class"<sup>79</sup>, thus Maoism deviated from the working class-centered orthodox Marxism. Benjamin I. Schwartz, one of the trailblazers on studies of Mao, termed Mao's emphasis on peasants and his disregard for the proletariat-focused Marxist analysis as "heresy".<sup>80</sup> Other scholars such as Philip Huang, Tony Saich, and Trevor Sudama maintained that the emphasis on the peasantry based on the concrete conditions and historical circumstances kept Mao within the Marxist-Leninist paradigm.<sup>81</sup>

Knight sided with the second school of thought. By dividing the development of Mao's revolutionary strategy into four phases, i.e., Reunion with the peasants, 1923-1927; Revolution in the countryside, 1927-1930; Working class power and state formation, 1931-1934, and Resistance and reform, 1937-1945, Knight argued that Mao was convinced that the working class was the

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<sup>77</sup> Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong's Thought* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), chapters 4, 7, and 8.

<sup>78</sup> See Maurice Meisner, "Utopian Socialist Themes in Maoism: The Relationship between Town and Countryside", in Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism: Eight Essays* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 28-75.

<sup>79</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *Ironies of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 99. Seen from Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong's Thought* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 69.

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, "The Legend of the 'Legend of Maoism'", *The China Quarterly* 2, (April-June 1960): 35-42.

<sup>81</sup> Debates by these scholars, see Knight, 70-71.

leading class of the Chinese Revolution and Mao did not abandon the central plank of Marxist orthodoxy.

In addition to Knight's analysis, I would like to provide other evidence in support of Knight's argument. In an unabridged version of Mao's own writing *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, Mao thought that "peasants are generally petite bourgeoisie", an expression which was deleted when the whole article was included in the second volume of the *Selected Works of Mao* and the English translation by the Foreign Languages Press.<sup>82</sup> Apart from the rich peasants and middle peasants, according to Mao, the poor peasants with "no land or insufficient land", were "the semi-proletariat of the countryside, the biggest motive force of the Chinese revolution, the natural and most reliable ally of the proletariat and the main contingent of China's revolutionary forces". It could infer that for Mao, the proletariat would still be the leading force of the Chinese revolution; instead, the reliance on peasantry was more a revolutionary strategy. Mao's emphasis on peasantry did not fall outside of the Marxist analytical framework.

In terms of the "Sinification of Marxism" of Maoism, Knight disagreed with the two main interpretations which suggested that the "Sinification of Marxism" was either Mao's Sinocentrism at the expense of the universal truths of Marxism or Mao's ideological strategy in his power struggle with Moscow-oriented factions within the CCP. Knight argued that Mao's "Sinification of Marxism" was an attempt to discover a formula by which the universal theory of Marxism could be applied in Chinese context without abandoning Marxism's universality.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> For an unabridged version, see "Zhongguo geming yu zhongguo gongchandang 中国革命与中国共产党" [The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party] <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/marxist.org-chinese-mao-193912aa.htm>. (accessed May 19, 2019)

<sup>83</sup> Knight, 199.

And on the issue of Mao's Chinese road to socialism, Knight defied the simple evaluation of the results or consequences of the Chinese road to socialism. He explored the ideas and concepts that inspired Mao's developmental strategy for China's socialist transition alternative to the Soviet model which did not fit into Chinese characteristics and national context. These ideas and concepts included the ubiquity of contradictions, Mao's view of the future, and the theory of "permanent revolution". Knight denied the simplistic assessment that Mao's vision for socialist construction in the 1950s and 1960s was mistaken, for Mao's visions were vindicated by excesses of the reform and open-up policies. The massive inequality, corruption, and the acceptance of the capitalist entrepreneurs into the CCP were all consequences that Mao feared in his socialist construction visions.<sup>84</sup> Knight disagreed with some mainstream Western scholars who labelled Mao's road to socialism as overall negative. And he was also in dispute with the authoritative post-Mao CCP's 1981 Resolution which provided the famous 70 percent versus 30 percent verdict. Throughout Knight's analysis, he emphasized that Mao's road deviated from the Soviet model. Knight's analysis thus added credibility to some scholars who argued that Mao's road to socialism, or Maoism as some scholars would call it,<sup>85</sup> posed as an alternative modernity to both the communism of the Soviet Union and the capitalism represented by Western countries. As the following US section and Singapore section will show, this analysis is of particular insight to the understanding of Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s.

Nick Knight's *Rethinking Mao* is one representative in writings on Mao that places Mao's thought within orthodox Marxism. He elaborated this by arguing that some core dimensions of Mao's thought, such as the place of the peasantry according to Mao, the "Sinification of Marxism",

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<sup>84</sup> Knight, 241.

<sup>85</sup> Such as Liu Kang, "Maoism: Revolutionary Globalism for the Third World Revisited", *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Special Issue: Global Maoism and Cultural Revolution in the Global Context (2015): 12-28.

and Mao's road to socialism, though facing contested arguments of deviating from Marxist orthodoxy, were indeed within the framework of Marxism. On the contrary, Woei Lien Chong, a Dutch sinologist, in her analysis of the writings of Li Zehou, the renowned Chinese philosopher, argued that Li asserted Maoism had nothing to do with Marx's own doctrines, and in spite of Maoism's iconoclastic self-image, most of its roots were even traditionally Chinese.<sup>86</sup> Mao's voluntarism, according to Li in Chong's analysis, was especially harmful as it was "the most extreme culmination of the fundamental fallacies of traditional Chinese thought", which encouraged Mao to "launch ill-conceived and destructive political mass campaigns such as the Cultural Revolution".<sup>87</sup>

I would suggest that for the purpose of serving this dissertation, the point here is not to what degree Maoism was a Marxist ideology or to what degree it was not. Instead, the point is that Maoism blended Marxism--an ideology born out of the European and industrial context--with the Chinese characteristics. Bestowed by a rural, non-white, and war-struggling, and importantly, by later political standard, a Third World society, this gave Maoism a particular appeal, especially in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. It is this distinct appeal that led the actors in this dissertation to choose Maoism over other revolutionary ideologies. I would further point out that although Nick Knight invoked the famous quote of Mao's "Sinification of Marxism", while Li Zehou, argued by Chong, asserted that Maoism was rooted deeply in the traditionally Chinese culture, the two schools of thought actually pointed to one thing, that the Chinese characteristics in Maoism were significant and they contributed to the distinctiveness of Maoism, as well as to its appeal.

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<sup>86</sup> Woei Lien Chong, "Mankind and Nature in Chinese Thought: Li Zehou on the Traditional Roots of Maoist Voluntarism", *China Information* 11 Issue 2-3 (July 1996): 138-175.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chinese Characteristics in Maoism

The following paragraphs serve as a demonstration of the significance of the characteristics of Maoism which were associated with Chinese elements. These Chinese characteristics in Maoism conferred Maoism with special appeal among the radical leftists in the 1960s and 1970s.

Unlike Marxism and Leninism, which originated in industrialized, European, and colonialist countries, Maoism was the first major component within orthodox Marxism born in an agrarian, Asian, Eastern, pre-industrial, (semi-) colonial/feudal society, if we adopt Nick Knight's argument on the Marxist and socialist dimensions of Maoism. This historical fact provided Maoism an even stronger appeal for radicals from similar social backgrounds in a similar way that Japan did for the nationalists in colonies after its victory as a non-European nation in the 1904-1906 Russo-Japanese war.<sup>88</sup> China's status as the largest non-European, non-American, non-industrial country, as well as the most populous country in the world endowed Maoism with credibility and an outstanding place in the leftist political spectrum, especially among those fighting European-American imperialism in agricultural or non-industrial societies and those who attributed social problems to imperialism.

From the bloody experience of the 1927 Shanghai massacre which saw an onslaught on the communists by the armed KMT (Kuomintang, the Nationalist Party of China) forces, Mao came up with perhaps his most famous slogan: "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".<sup>89</sup> The means of violence was given the supremacy and exclusivity in obtaining political power. The slogan,

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<sup>88</sup> Steven G. Marks, "'Bravo, Brave Tiger of the East!': The Russo-Japanese War and the Rise of Nationalism in British Egypt and India," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective. World War Zero*, Vol. 1, History of Warfare Vol. 29, ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 609-627.

<sup>89</sup> The phrase was firstly proposed in Mao's speech Problems of War and Strategy in November 1938 and made popular when it was included into the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. See, Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of War and Strategy," November 6, 1938, accessed May 20, 2017, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_12.htm).

together with another Mao quote “to rebel is justified”, and Mao’s emphasis on “protracted war” and “guerrilla war”, provided guidance on the means and strategy for any form of revolution claimed by radical leftists, from soldiers in the jungles at the Thai-Malaysian border to guerrilla movements in Colombia.

Compared with Marxism and Leninism, Maoism stood the test of real wars. Marx spent decades in London when he developed his thought on social classes, capitalism, and production. Marx and Friedrich Engels passed away before the onslaught of the First World War, and Marxism did not serve as a guidance to wars in any country. Lenin was outside of Russia most of the time when Leninism came into shape. Throughout the first World War, the European socialist parties all supported their own government, nationalism seemed to overwhelm the international unity among the socialists and an international revolution which Leninism had avidly championed. Zurich, Switzerland, was the place where Lenin completed his most classic work *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, yet during the six-and-half years of his stay in Switzerland, he could not even generate a revolutionary ideal among Swiss socialists.<sup>90</sup> In one word, before Russia accepted Lenin’s radical revolutionary imaginations, Leninism was rejected in Switzerland.

Maoism was different in this regard. In some way, Maoism was a collection of Mao’s experiences summarized during the Chinese revolution. In Liu Shaoqi’s *On the Party*, a document regarded as formally establishing Mao Zedong Thought as the guiding ideology of the Chinese Communist Party, it stated explicitly that Mao Zedong Thought “has taken shape and has developed in the course of the long revolutionary struggles of the Chinese nation and people which include the three great revolutionary wars, the Northern Expedition, the Agrarian Revolutionary

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<sup>90</sup> “Lenin and the Swiss Non-Revolution”, *Swissinfo. Ch*, accessed May 9, 2019, [https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/vladimir-ilyich-ulyanov\\_lenin-and-the-swiss-non-revolution/12812](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/vladimir-ilyich-ulyanov_lenin-and-the-swiss-non-revolution/12812)



War and the present War of Resistance Against Japan”, and it was “integration of the Marxist-Leninist theories with the practice of the Chinese revolution” that had given rise to Mao Zedong Thought.<sup>91</sup>

As a result of the war time experience in the formation of Maoism, it contains large amount of analysis, guidance, and teachings on military and party-building. Besides the above-mentioned “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”, there were other military teachings in Maoism. Concrete tenets such as “encircling the cities from the villages and winning political regimes by armed struggles” (drawn from the first collapse of CCP-KMT alliance in 1927), and “protracted war” and “guerrilla war” (both drawn from the anti-Japanese war) were not only unseen in Marxism and Leninism, but also conferring the special appeal of Maoism on those seeking national liberation and opposing imperialism.

Another distinctive trait of Maoism is that Maoism is a highly iconized and idolized ideology. Icons of Maoism, such as the red-vinyl, pocket-sized *Little Red Books* and the iconic gestures of adherents reading or waving the *Quotations*, singing and dancing to Quotation songs found no counterparts in either Marxism or Leninism. Activities, events, and practices centering around Maoism contributed to a culture of rituals not seen in Marxism and Leninism. Besides these Maoist icons, Maoism had a symbolic moment that pushed it to a global height. The climax of Maoism, the Cultural Revolution, in the 1960s and 1970s, helped to popularize its revolutionary zeal among the radicals around the world.

The last reason that Maoism rose beyond the status of being a mere term in the camp of Marxist ideologies, to borrow the words of historian and archivist Song Yongyi,<sup>92</sup> was the self-

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<sup>91</sup> Liu Shaoqi, “On the Party,” Marxists.org, accessed May 11, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/liu-shaoqi/1945/on-party/ch02.htm>

<sup>92</sup> Song Yongyi, personal communication with author, November 30, 2018, Los Angeles, United States.

rebellion spirit of Mao. Mao Tse-tung rebelled against the very own political apparatus he built, the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China, during the heyday of Maoism, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In the eyes of leftists around the world (except for the Communist states in Eastern Europe and Russia), this made Maoism seem even more genuinely rebellious and more outright revolutionary. The subversiveness and rebelliousness did not wane with the founding of Mao's regime; even the regime was not immune from Mao's "continuous revolution". Mao's China in this way was on the opposite to Lenin's Russia, Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam, the Kim's North Korea, and Castro's Cuba.

### **International Circumstances Contributing to Maoism's Revolutionary Image**

The above is a plethora of the Chinese characteristics in Maoism that made the ideology particularly acceptable and popular among the radical leftists in the 1960s and 1970s. Besides, there were other circumstances in the 1960s and 1970s that contributed to the revolutionary image of Maoism. The first was the Vietnam War and the domestic chaos in the United States. The war in Vietnam triggered anti-imperialism protests in 1960s and 1970s America. Maoism, with its high-pitched anti-imperialist tone, gradually became an ideological alternative. Qian Liqun, a famous Chinese literary scholar and historian, stated that when intellectuals were dissatisfied with Western civilization, Maoism then exuded its special appeal.<sup>93</sup> As early as 1956, during a talk with two Latin

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<sup>93</sup> Qian Liqun 钱理群, *Mao Zedong shidai he hou Mao Zedong shidai (1949-2009): lingyizhong lishi shuxie* 【shangce】毛泽东时代和后毛泽东时代（1949-2009）：另一种历史书写【上册】[Qian Liqun, *The Mao Zedong Era and Post Mao Era (1949-2009): An Alternative Writing of History*, Volume 1] (Taipei: Lian Jing Chubanshe, 2009), 22.

American public figures, Mao already came up with the quote “U.S. imperialism is a paper tiger”.<sup>94</sup> Mao not only reiterated that imperialism was the main enemy in the international communist revolution, but he located the United States as the primary representative of imperialism. The unabashed take on the almighty United States pushed Maoism gradually into an anti-American ideology. In this regard, Maoism provided a strong source of reference serving the anti-America sentiment developed during the anti-war movement and became popular especially among the young radicals. As the famous historian Chen Jian stated, “Mao’s anti-American imperialist stance served the fundamental mission of his revolution”.<sup>95</sup> The anti-American inclination led radicals in America to adopt Maoism as their organizing principle in 1960s and 1970s America. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the domestic intelligence and security service of the United States, conducted surveillance upon and infiltrated into the Maoists circles.<sup>96</sup>

The second circumstance came from the Soviet Union after Nikita Khrushchev became the supreme leader. The slogan of “U.S. imperialism is a paper tiger” developed into “Beating Enemies with Two Fists” when the U.S.-targeted anti-imperialism joined China’s anti-Soviet Union revisionism in the 1960s. With the Soviet Union’s adoption of the “peaceful coexistence” with the capitalist countries as well as the Soviet’s de-Stalinisation under Khrushchev, Mao’s China emerged as the most “revolutionary” force in the world, posing a weighty ideological challenge to the USSR. The polemic war and the split of Mao’s China and Soviet Union forced the smaller communist

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<sup>94</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “U.S. Imperialism is a Paper Tiger,” Marxist.org, written on July 14, 1956, accessed May 11, 2019, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5\\_52.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_52.htm)

<sup>95</sup> Chen Jian, “A Response: How to Pursue a Critical History of Mao’s Foreign Policy,” *The China Journal* 49, (January 2003): 137-142.

<sup>96</sup> On the FBI’s operation against the Maoists in America, see Aaron J. Leonard with Conor A. Gallagher, *Heavy Radicals: The FBI’s Secret War on America’s Maoists* (Winchester, UK AND Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2014); and Aaron J. Leonard and Conor A. Gallagher, *A Threat of the First Magnitude: FBI Counterintelligence and Infiltration from the Communist Party to the Revolutionary Union 1962-1974* (London: Repeater Books, 2018).

countries to choose side and thus caused a split in the international communist movement, while in communist organizations in the West, the Sino-Soviet split precipitated the organizational splits, typically into more orthodox factions and Maoist factions. The Maoist factions were often the more radical ones. Fred Ho, a prominent veteran in the Asian American movement in the 1960s and 1970s, recalled that revolutionaries in America rejected the Communist Party of the United States of America for it adhered to the Soviet Union's revisionism.<sup>97</sup>

The emerging image of Mao's China as the most radical revolutionary country in the context of a revisionist Soviet Union precluded Mao's China's ambition to promote revolution worldwide. The theoretical origin of the worldwide revolution was still Marxist-Leninist. Marx had already declared "*Proletarier aller Länder vereinigt Euch!*" and Lenin furthered and proposed the proletarian internationalism when he criticized Kautsky. According to Lenin, the internationalism in the proletarian revolution "means breaking with one's social chauvinists (i.e., defence advocates) and with *one's own* imperialist government; it means waging a revolutionary struggle against that government and overthrowing it and being ready to make the greatest national sacrifices (even down to a *Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty*), if it should benefit the development of the *world workers'* revolution".<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Fred Ho, "Fists for Revolution: The Revolutionary History of I Wor Kuen/League of Revolutionary Struggle", in Fred Ho ed., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (Edinburgh, Scotland and San Francisco, California: AK Press, 2000), 3-13.

<sup>98</sup> Vladimir Lenin, "The Proletarian Revolution And The Renegade Kautsky", <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/oct/10.htm>, words in quotes and in italics are from the original text.

In the 1960s, with the judgment that “China has become the center of the world revolution”,<sup>99</sup> Mao attacked the diplomatic thinking of Wang Jiaxiang and replaced it with his own. Wang was the first Director of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China, who proposed to “provide foreign aid according to China’s capability” when a serious economic downturn hit China in the early 1960s. However, Mao chastised Wang’s moderate thinking as the revisionist path of “three peaceful acts and one reduction (Sanhe Yishao, 三和一少)”,<sup>100</sup> meaning “offering peace to imperialism, to modern revisionism, and to reactionary factions of foreign countries...and reducing support and assistance to the liberation struggle of other peoples”,<sup>101</sup> and replaced it with a reversed “three struggles and one increase”. From the latter half of 1962, Wang ceased to be the Director and was soon denounced and purged. While in 1966, at the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Communique held that “proletarian internationalism is the supreme principle guiding China’s foreign policy”.<sup>102</sup> The export of revolution, in which the translations, publications, and circulations

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<sup>99</sup> See Niu Jun, “1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China’s Foreign Policy”, Working Paper #48, *Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2005; “Chen Yi’s Remarks at Foreign Affairs’ Conference”, 13 November 1962, in Danhui Li and Yafeng Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959-1973: A New History* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Lexington Books, 2018), 79; “Zhou Enlai’s Speech at the Tenth Plenum”, 26 September 1962, in Yang Kuisong, “Changes in Mao Zedong’s Attitude toward the Indochina War, 1949-1973”, Working Paper #34, *Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, February 2002.

<sup>100</sup> The English translation is borrowed from an online database in the Chinese University of Hong Kong Library “The Cultural Revolution in Images: Caricature-Posters from Guangzhou, 1966-1977 漫画中的文化大革命：广州的讽刺宣传画 1966-1977,” Chinese University of Hong Kong, <http://repository.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/item/cuhk-1291024>

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> “Communique of the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China”, *Peking Review* 9, No. 34 (August 19, 1966): 4-8.

of Mao's works (see China section of this dissertation) was a prominent component, had thus affected other parts of the world. The following sections on the U.S. and Singapore provide insights regarding this impact.

### **Two-Way Construction: The Highly Selective Nature of Maoism**

For a better and more nuanced understanding of Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter will use the concept of “two-way construction”. It means that in the process of the construction of Maoism, there were efforts from two interconnected perspectives: on the one hand, it concentrated on the texts of Mao, be they from the *Selected Works of Mao*, or the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, or Mao's other writings and speeches; on the other hand, both communists in China and radical leftists around the world cautiously, intentionally, and consciously selected, cited, and used texts of Mao to fit their respective agendas. Whether a Mao text was to be chosen, highlighted, or ignored and concealed was highly dependent upon the situation for the radical leftists. Thus, it affirmed the flexibility of the understanding of Maoism but also added to its complexity.

The communists in China were not an exception in this two-way construction. Mao's remarks, praising the democracy and freedom of the United States for the purpose of winning its support during the Chinese revolution, were censored from the later officially approved texts in which an anti-America ethos was Maoism's trademark. *History of the First Sound*, a compilation by Xiao Shu of articles published on *Xinhua Daily* and *Jiefang Daily*, two party organs of the CCP published in CCP-controlled areas in the 1940s,<sup>103</sup> revealed a different image of Mao, and a

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<sup>103</sup> Xiao Shu 笑蜀, *Lishi de xiansheng: bange shijiqian de zhuangyan chengnuo* 历史的先声：半个世纪前的庄严承诺 [History of the first sound: solemn promises made half a century ago] (Shantou daxue chubanshe, 1999). Original texts are in Chinese, I provide the English translations in the dissertation.

contrasting attitude towards America that was almost absent from the CCP's official narrative, as well as from the perception of the radical leftists worldwide. The compilation contained several of Mao's talks and articles, as well as articles not written by Mao but certainly approved for publication by him. They admired and praised America and expressed a strong desire to win the U.S. support over the KMT during the concluding stage of the Chinese revolution in the late 1940s. Readers might find Mao's appreciation of America almost reaching the degree of adulation. The author would have been politically denounced were his name not Mao during the various political campaigns Mao launched after 1949.

Claiming that "even the most conservative entrepreneurs of America could not find anything in our platform they would oppose.... the United States will find we [CCP] more easily cooperative than the KMT. We are not afraid of the influence of democratic America, we embrace it",<sup>104</sup> the CCP under Mao eagerly sought the help of the United States. Besides, the CCP highly praised the founding fathers of America. It stated that from their faiths and practices, the CCP "could see the real spirit of democracy and the real fighters for democracy".<sup>105</sup> A *Xinhua Daily* poem lifted the history of America to the height of benefiting the entire human race.<sup>106</sup> In these articles, the United States was lauded for its idealism and democracy. The CCP hailed so many things that were either non-existent in Mao's China, or denounced in the official narrative: the American people's understanding of government, their rights to criticize the government, the freedom of

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<sup>104</sup> Xiao Shu, 106.

<sup>105</sup> Xiao Shu, 110.

<sup>106</sup> Xiao Shu, 111-112.

speech and publication, even America's burgeoning youth.<sup>107</sup> An article published on July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrated America's Independence Day in all praising and cheering words.<sup>108</sup>

The sentences above were either from Mao's talks or from others' articles but approved by Mao beforehand, yet the ideas within were never included in any kind of understanding of Maoism or the official narrative of the CCP. The articles from *Xinhua Daily*, *Jiefang Daily*, as well as many other CCP organs before 1949, remained inaccessible for the public and researchers. The Chinese authorities immediately banned Xiao Shu's compilation containing the original pieces of such publications.<sup>109</sup> The key reason for the ban was the sharp contrast between the criticism of the KMT's one-party rule, the CCP's pursuit of democracy and its adulation of America and the exact opposite to such a stance after the CCP seized power in 1949. This incident reveals a crucial feature in how people approach Mao and Maoism: it is highly selective.

The Mao in the speeches, talks, and articles in Xiao Shu's compilation was undoubtedly not the Mao hailed by the CCP and international leftists who always cast Mao in a staunch anti-America light. Maoism, constructed by the CCP and international leftists, became the combination of the selective texts of Mao serving as inspirations and the practices around it.

Another example concerns the two influential statements of Mao among the African Americans in America: *Statement Supporting the American Negroes in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by U.S. Imperialism*,<sup>110</sup> and *Statement by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in Support of the Afro-American Struggle Against Violent*

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<sup>107</sup> Xiao Shu, 113-116.

<sup>108</sup> Xiao Shu, 127-131.

<sup>109</sup> "Lishi de xiansheng xiangang beijin ji 《历史的先声》香港被禁记" [History of the First Sound was Banned in Hong Kong] <http://beijingspring.com/c7/xw/wlwz/20131112180404.htm>. (accessed May 20, 2019)

<sup>110</sup> *Peking Review*, Vol. 9, No. 33, August 12, 1966, pp. 12-13.



*Repression*.<sup>111</sup> Compared to other tenets of Maoism, such as the emphasis on violence based on Chinese revolutionary experiences, the concept of contradictions, and others, Mao's analysis of race in America was not a major component. However, the inspiration of the two statements and frequent citation and adoption by radical black activists had constructed this analysis as a far more visible tenet in Maoism in the context of the United States, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. This visibility of Mao's analysis of the root cause of racial oppression and discrimination also led to analyses of racial capitalism.<sup>112</sup>

Also, the radical leftists in Singapore flexibly selected Mao's texts to accommodate their contradictory political decisions. As the Singapore section will show, the Barisan Sosialis had a U-turn in their decisions regarding the Singapore parliament and the parliamentary elections. In 1968, they refused to accept the legitimacy of the Singapore parliament, they opposed acts passed by the parliament, and they boycotted the parliamentary elections of the same year. It was understandable that Maoist-inspired political parties rejected the parliamentary road as the result of both Maoism's theoretical lineage to the Marxist orthodoxy which distinguished itself in their opposition to the parliamentary path in revisionism, and Mao's emphasis of violence in achieving socialism, represented by his quote "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". However, by 1972, when the situation turned against them and they decided to change their tactics, they used another quote of Mao, namely, "concrete analysis of concrete conditions" to validate such a drastic turn.

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<sup>111</sup> *Peking Review*, Vol. 11, No. 16, April 19, 1968, pp. 5-6.

<sup>112</sup> See Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); and Ruodi Duan, "Black Power in China: Mao's Support for African American 'Racial Struggle as Class Struggle'", *Medium*, March 9, 2017, <https://medium.com/fairbank-center/black-power-in-china-maos-support-for-african-american-racial-struggle-as-class-struggle-7673f2a6abb>

These highly selective uses of Mao's texts in the approach of Maoism added flexibility as well as complexity in the understanding of Maoism.

## **Conclusion**

Based on an engagement with the academic debates over Maoism, this chapter puts Maoism in the theoretical lineage of orthodox Marxism while taking the Chinese characteristics of Maoism into serious consideration. This chapter thus argues that the blending of the Marxist dimensions in Maoism and the Chinese characteristics granted Maoism a particular appeal among leftists, especially in countries with similar social conditions as China; at the same time, the global contexts of the 1960s and 1970s, such as the Cultural Revolution of China, the U.S.'s imperialism in the Vietnam War and the Soviet Union's "peaceful coexistence" with Western countries, contributed to the emerging image of Mao's China as the most revolutionary major force, thus giving Maoism an extra credibility as a revolutionary ideology. The phenomenon of the "two-way construction" of Maoism revealed a highly selective use of Mao's texts in the approach of Maoism and it added flexibility as well as complexity in the understanding of Maoism.

SECTION ONE  
CHAPTER THREE  
MAOIST MOMENT IN CHINA: Translations, Publications, and Circulations of Mao's Works

## Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, Maoism, compared with Marxism, Leninism, as well as other leftist ideologies, is a highly iconized ideology. The symbols of Maoism, such as the *Selected Works of Mao*, the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, or the *Little Red Book*, Mao's badges and pictures, even the images of waving the *Little Red Books* were essential elements in the construction of global Maoism as a powerful spiritual weapon. In the process of constructing, spreading, and exporting Maoism from China to the world, translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works were essential but often unnoticed components.

The translations, publications, and circulations of the works of Mao facilitated the spread of Maoism to places such as the United States and Singapore and constituted the necessary condition for Maoists in these places to approach, invoke, and adopt Maoism. For example, Bobby Seale, the leader of the Black Panther Party, a militant far-left African American organization often considered inspired by Maoism, recounted the experience of purchasing *Quotations from Chairman Mao* from the China Book Store in San Francisco, California and resold them to buy guns to carry out Mao's saying "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".<sup>113</sup> The China Book Store where Seale

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<sup>113</sup> Bill Mullen, "By the book: Quotations from Chairman Mao and the making of Afro-Asian radicalism, 1966–1975", in Alexander C. Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 245-265. His recounts are based on Bobby Seale's memoir: Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 82.

purchased the *Little Red Book* was another instance of global Maoism in its own right. Henry Halsey Noyes, a China-born American, with the cooperation with publishers in China, opened and ran China Books and Periodicals, Inc., America's largest distributor of printed materials from the People's Republic of China.<sup>114</sup> Similar events took place in Singapore. At the early stage of the independence of the Republic of Singapore, a time when Maoism posed a severe threat to the nation-building blueprint envisioned by the ruling conservatives, it was reported that 8000 copies of the *Little Red Book* were sold at one time on the tiny island.<sup>115</sup> As early as April 1967, the Malayan Communist Party-led army at the Thai-Malaysian border had received their copies of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* which were printed and translated in China.<sup>116</sup> Because Mao's works played an encouraging or instigating role in the activities of the Malayan Communist Party and the Barisan Sosialis members, the Singapore government paid serious and vigilant attention to the circulation of Mao's works.

Official sources from the People's Republic of China remain highly classified. However, there have been efforts to collect, digitize, and publicize documents from the Cultural Revolution era. Historian and archivist Song Yongyi has made a contribution to this effort. His *Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* (third edition, as of 2010) contains massive valuable documents and files, some of which are about the publications and propaganda of Mao's works. China's Foreign Languages Press, a central press unit responsible for the publications of Mao's works as well as works by other prominent revolutionary figures, had a collection of memoir articles by their previous leaders and

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<sup>114</sup> For the story of Henry Halsey Noyes, see Henry Halsey Noyes, *China Born: Adventures of a Maverick Bookman* (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, 1989), and Aaron J. Leonard and Conor A. Gallagher, *Heavy Radicals: The FBI's Secret War on America's Maoists* (Winchester, UK and Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2014), 118-121.

<sup>115</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, 260<sup>th</sup> Issue, December 17, 1967.

<sup>116</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, 366<sup>th</sup> Issue, January 11, 1970.

editors. Besides Chinese sources, the Hoover Institution at Stanford University keeps a great amount of sources related to China, including files, newspaper clippings, drafts, magazines on Maoism, and other Mao's works maintained by long-time China observers who kept collecting sources concurrent with the efforts of the publicity projects of the Chinese Communist Party of China. In addition to textual sources, this chapter also relies on interviews with Professor Yin Chengdong. Yin, now a professor in Spanish language and literature at Dalian University of Foreign Languages in China, was the Spanish translator of Mao's works in the 1960s and 1970s, such as the fourth and fifth volumes of the *Selected Works of Mao*, the *Little Red Book*, and Mao's poems.

This chapter argues that global Maoism was brought to its peak in the 1960s and 1970s not just because of the launch of the Cultural Revolution in a commonly recognized political sense, but also by the translations, publications, and circulation of Mao's works, of which the *Selected Works of Mao* and the *Little Red Book* was an essential part. Also, by bringing the translations, publications, and circulations into the historical analysis, China, was not just the birthplace of Maoism, but also materialized and exported global Maoism. Unlike some current literature within media studies, such a perspective includes the people, i.e., the translators, the publishers, as well as those who worked in official or unofficial capacities, to circulate Mao's works into the same orbit with the radical leftists in the United States who established ethnic studies and those in Singapore who challenged the government's developmental path. That the 1960s and 1970s in China was a Maoist moment does not need questioning. However, this chapter constructs a Maoist moment from a different and unnoticed cultural perspective, namely, it looks at the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works.

### **Translations of Mao's Works before the 1960s**

The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution and the pervasiveness of the works that Maoism relied upon as media for dissemination, such as *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* and *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, or the *Little Red Book*, reinforced each other. Images of group readings of these works or holding the *Little Red Book* in hand during strikes and protests have become iconic scenes associated with the heyday of the Cultural Revolution and global Maoism. However, the translation and publicity of Mao's works was initiated long before the 1960s.

Translations of Mao's writings were not novel projects; but it was only after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 that they took off. The very first translation of Mao's writing into a foreign language occurred as early as 1927, just three months after Mao's classic *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* was published.<sup>117</sup> Throughout the 1930s, Mao's works were periodically translated in newly established Communists-controlled areas. From 1945 to 1949, there were also attempts by Chinese Communist Party members who lived or studied in America to translate Mao's writings. Among these overseas CCP members who took active part in the translations were Tang Mingzhao (唐明照), Chen Hansheng (陈翰笙), Ji Chaoding (季朝鼎), Xu Yonghuan (徐永焕), and others. Many of the early Chinese scholars who were instrumental in the communist propaganda were US-educated, or with working experience in America. The information about Wang Fushi (王福时) below reveals that even before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the propaganda of the CCP was already showing its international dimensions in pre-PRC overseas Communists and the overseas operation of the CCP's propaganda efforts.<sup>118</sup>

Mr Wang was a correspondent for the Hong Kong-based *The Impartial Daily* in India. In 1947, the Wangs moved to San Francisco where Wang Fushi worked for the leftist newspaper *Far Eastern Bulletin* (远东通讯) propagating Chinese Communist activities on Mainland China, reporting progress of the Chinese Civil War and offering commentaries. From the memoir of Wang Fushi's son, Fook Hing Wong, Wang printed the *Far Eastern Bulletin* at home. The *Far Eastern Bulletin* was

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<sup>117</sup> “‘lundunban’ yingyi Mao Zedong xuanji de dansheng ‘伦敦版’英译《毛泽东选集》的诞生” [“The Birth of the ‘London version’ of the English Translations of the *Selected Works of Mao*], <https://cul.sina.cn/sh/2015-03-09/detail-iavxeafs1620204.d.html>. (accessed March 22, 2019)

<sup>118</sup> *Fook Hing Wong Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

entrusted and supported by Guo Xin She, a news agency led by the underground organization of the Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong. Qiao Guanhua (乔冠华), Liu Zunqi (刘尊棋), Liu Simu (刘思慕), Jin Zhonghua (金仲华), among others, were the leaders of Guo Xin She. Among them, Liu Zunqi later became the Deputy-Director of the International News agency of China, editor-in-chief of *People's China* magazine, as well as the Deputy-Director and Editor-in-Chief of the Foreign Languages Press, which will be covered later in the chapter.

In 1950, the whole family moved back to China after being threatened by KMT forces in San Francisco. “Leftist” was the word Wong’s mother used to refer to his father multiple times when he grew up. In 1957, during the Anti-Rightist Movement, in answering the call of the Communist Party in the Hundred Flower Movement to let intellectuals express their opinion freely, Wang Fushi published an article criticizing the International Bookstore. In calling the International Bookstore a “wall” rather than a “bridge”, he commented the International Bookstore had imported Soviet newspapers and books on a massive scale while importing only a few from Western countries, and including less on Western science and technology. Bombarded by the front page article on the *People's Daily*, Wang was instantly labeled as a Rightist.

From Wang Fushi’s memoir, as early as 1940, Liu Simu, whom Mr Wang called a good friend, introduced him to join the meet-ups of leftist intellectuals in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Besides Liu and Wang, regular participants included Liao Chengzhi (廖承志), Jin Zhonghua, Zheng Senyu (郑森禹), Wang Jiyuan (王纪元), Xia Yan (夏衍), Pan Hannian (潘汉年), and others, all of which were prominent leftist intellectuals who played an instrumental role in propagating Communist Party activities in China and across the world. During Wang’s stay in Hong Kong, he established the only institution in the course of the anti-Japanese war which focused on the imported and exported publications. Its name “Sino-Foreign Cultural Exchange Service” was given by Israel

Epstein.<sup>119</sup> Hong Kong exuded its uniqueness in communications, exchanges, as well as information flow which benefited the Chinese communists. Wang transferred the photocopied books from abroad to Chongqing via Hong Kong, and in the meantime, he clipped newspapers and provided the newspapers and magazines clippings to various news agencies, including Central News Agency, *Xinhua Daily*, and Russian News Agency TASS. Even some Japanese military materials were obtained and transmitted this way via Hong Kong. The two-way exchange model taking advantage of Hong Kong helped Chongqing to obtain publications and news from other parts of the world and helped to publicize the anti-Japan war progress to the people of Hong Kong and elsewhere.<sup>120</sup>

After 4 years in India in exile to escape the potential capture of the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the KMT, Wang Fushi went to the United States. It was Tang Mingzhao who persuaded him to work for Communist propaganda in San Francisco instead of pursuing education at Missouri. On October 1, 1949, Wang established *Zhong Xi Ri Bao* (中西日报, China-West Daily) which was the first newspaper in the West Coast that supported the People's Republic of China. The Wang family moved back to China in 1950.<sup>121</sup> Tang Mingzhao, apart from being a Chinese Communist Party member based in America, was also a member of the US Communist Party,<sup>122</sup> which constituted another example of the international cooperation among the world leftist movement, and precluded the cooperation of the CCP and other overseas leftist organizations in the 1960s and 1970s.

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<sup>119</sup> Israel Epstein (1915-2005) was a Polish-born leftist journalist who later became not only a Chinese citizen but also a member of CCP, and editor-in-of *China Today*, a famous magazine in the network of China's foreign propaganda.

<sup>120</sup> *Fook Hing Wong Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*



Apart from Chinese activists, left leaning activists of other nationalities also offered their effort and help in the translation of Mao's works. Douglas Frank Springhall, one of the prominent foreign experts on the publications of Mao's works, even earned a tomb place at Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing, where only the officially recognized revolutionaries with significant contributions were admitted. Springhall was one of the members of the politburo of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and his wife Janet Springhall used to be the editor of *China Pictorial*.<sup>123</sup> The case of Douglas Springhall pointedly suggests that the translation of Mao's works was already an international effort and phenomenon even before the founding of the People's Republic of China.<sup>124</sup>

But it was only after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 that translations of Mao's works on a large scale could be possible and the translation and publicity be initiated as a national project. Those who played pivotal roles in the translations of Mao's works prior to 1949 had again been important participants in this national project when the majority of them answered the call to return from overseas and build the new China.

The 1950s also saw the emergence of the large-scale foreign export of the translations of Mao's works. In this process, communists in Great Britain collaborated with the CCP with the help of Lawrence and Wishart Press, the official publication institution of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Lawrence and Wishart Press thus became the earliest publisher to cooperate with the

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<sup>123</sup> “Nanwang yu waiwenju wushinian de qingyuan 难忘与外文局 50 年的情缘” [Fifty years of unforgettable emotional bindings with Foreign Languages Publishing], last modified September 1, 2009, [http://www.china.com.cn/culture/zhuanti/wwj60n/2009-09/01/content\\_18445208.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/culture/zhuanti/wwj60n/2009-09/01/content_18445208.htm). (accessed April 4, 2019)

<sup>124</sup> Douglas Frank Springhall, in “Soviet Intelligence Agents and Suspected Agents Files,” *UK National Archives*, KV 2/1594.

Chinese state on the project. Famous for being the main publishing company for big-names in the leftists' world, such as Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and many others, till this very day, the Lawrence and Wishart Press claims itself as an “independent radical publishing”.<sup>125</sup> According to the personal memory of Yin Chengdong,<sup>126</sup> the translator of the Spanish version of Mao's works, the Lawrence and Wishart Press was given the authorization to publish *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (translated collectively by Qian Zhongshu 钱钟书, Xu Yonghuan 徐永焕, Ye Junjian 叶君健, and others).

However, the cooperation between the Lawrence and Wishart Press of Great Britain and the publicity department of China came to an end in the early 1960s. The Lawrence and Wishart Press deleted some of the paragraphs in their final publications of the second volume of *The Selected Works of Mao*. The CPGB provided two explanations for this: firstly, the advocacy of armed revolution was inconsistent with the claims of the CPGB, while the British law forbade remarks of subverting the government in open publications; and secondly, the circulations of the *Works* in America might be affected if such remarks were not deleted.<sup>127</sup> Mao personally rejected the CCP's

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<sup>125</sup> It was used as a subtitle or a proud self-claim appearing together with the official logo, seen in the official website of Lawrence and Wishart Press which still operates today. <https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/tags/freedom-of-the-press>

<sup>126</sup> Yin Chengdong, interview with author, June 2017.

<sup>127</sup> “Mao Zedong zhuzuo de haiwai chuanbo 毛泽东著作的海外传播” [Overseas dissemination of Mao Zedong's works], last modified June 27, 2014, <http://www.hsw.org.cn/wzzx/llyd/wh/2014-06-27/26446.html> (accessed January 1, 2019), “Yinggong shangai Mao Zedong xuanji fengbo shimo 英共删改《毛泽东选集》风波始末” [Controversy over Communist Party of Great Britain's deletion of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*], last modified August 15, 2009, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/85039/9791579.html> (accessed January 17, 2019)

initial agreement for such a deletion.<sup>128</sup> As a result, the Chinese publicity department ceased to cooperate with the Lawrence and Wishart Press after the contract was over in 1961.<sup>129</sup>

The case of Lawrence and Wishart Press indicates two characteristics in Mao's works going overseas. The first was the pattern of the translations of Mao's works. Mao's books were translated into foreign languages for overseas circulations. They may be generally grouped under two headings: those translated and published in China and sent abroad for circulation, and others translated and published in communist countries or by communist and pro-communist publishing organs in non-communist countries.<sup>130</sup> Besides the Lawrence and Wishart Press of the CPGB, The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) also organized a "Committee for Translating *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (CTSWMTT)".<sup>131</sup> Assisted by the "Committee for the Publication of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*" under the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the JCP published a Japanese edition of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao*. A Hong Kong-based report already noticed this by saying that "abroad, Mao's books were translated and published mostly by Communist countries in the early period; however, in recent years, some non-Communist countries and Communist parties with pro-Peking leaning have also published them".<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> "Guanyu butongyi yingyiban Mao Zedong xuanji dierjuan suozuoshanjie de piyu 关于不同意英译版《毛泽东选集》第二卷所做删节的批语" [On disagreement of the abridgement of the English version of the second volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*], last modified April 10, 2013, [http://www.hprc.org.cn/gsgl/gsys/201304/t20130410\\_4048492.html](http://www.hprc.org.cn/gsgl/gsys/201304/t20130410_4048492.html) (accessed May 20, 2018)

<sup>129</sup> "Yinggong shangai Mao Zedong xuanji fengbo shimo 英共删改《毛泽东选集》风波始末" [Controversy over Communist Party of Great Britain's deletion of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*], last modified August 15, 2009, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/85039/9791579.html> (accessed January 17, 2019)

<sup>130</sup> "Circulation of Mao Tse-tung's Books Abroad", *Union Research Institute*, Limited, Vol. 42, Non. 19, March 8, 1966. Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

The second characteristic was that while Mao changed his tones, expressions, and discourses over time, unauthorized editing of Mao was strictly forbidden. For example, Mao had a strong disapproval of his writings and quotations being published and misquoted in unauthorized editions. Above, I discussed how the organizational publisher of the Communist Party of Great Britain had ceased to continue with the publications of the *Selected Works of Mao* because they deleted words and sentences from Mao's writings. Apart from the British example, China's Foreign Languages Press also condemned other cases of pirated versions of Mao's publications. In a statement cited by Stanley Karnow, a long-time American journalist reporting on China and the Vietnam War, the Foreign Languages Press condemned A. Doak Barnett,<sup>133</sup> a China expert based at Columbia University for his preface to the *Quotation*. According to the statement, Barnett "slandered and vilified" Mao.<sup>134</sup>

#### **The Fourth Volume of the *Selected Works of Mao***

As discussed previously, since the beginning of the 1960s, the project of translating the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao*, the translations gradually became China's homegrown project. Translators grown and educated in the home soil became pivotal in China's engagement with the translations and dissemination of Mao's works. Some of them are in their 80s and their recollections are of utmost importance in the studies. Yin Chengdong (尹承东), now a professor of Spanish at Dalian University of Foreign Languages, was the former Deputy Director of the Central

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<sup>133</sup> Arthur Doak Barnett was an American journalist-turned China scholar who was born in China in 1921 and traveled widely in China before CCP takeover. He was regarded as one of the earliest "China watchers" in postwar America.

<sup>134</sup> "Stanley Karnow's own writing script," July 7, 1967, *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Compilation and Translation Bureau (CCTB). He orchestrated the Spanish translations of Mao's writings in the 1960s and 1970s. Interviews with Yin help reveal the highly politicized nature of the translations: the translations were intertwined with the Cultural Revolution and the international ambitions were behind this project.

The publication of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao* in the year of 1960 was a turning point in the translation history of Mao's works, according to Yin. As introduced previously, with the translations by Chinese Communist scholars who had overseas backgrounds, the Lawrence and Wishart Press under the Communist Party of Great Britain published the first three volumes of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* in the 1950s. At roughly the same time, a Russian-language version was published in Moscow. Following the publication of the fourth volume in Chinese language in China, the translations and publications of the new volume as well as the revisions of the previous London and Moscow editions were immediately under way.

Wu Xiuquan (伍修权), former deputy director of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China, was behind the organization of the translations. Jiang Chunfang (姜椿芳), then deputy director of the CCTB, the very first President of the Shanghai Russian Language School (now Shanghai International Studies University), and a veteran in Russian translation, was in charge of the Russian translation group. Another Deputy Director of the CCTB, Cao Ruoming (曹若明), who studied in France in the 1930s, supervised the French translation group.<sup>135</sup>

The working unit for the translations of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* started with an English group and a French group in the first instance, and a Spanish group and a Russian group were added later on. For the English and Russian group, their job was mainly

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with Yin.

to revise the London edition and Moscow edition. It took the working unit four years to complete the fourth volume.<sup>136</sup>

Following the Cultural Revolution in 1966, translations of Mao's works were escalated and enlarged. Previous accounts indicate that before the Cultural Revolution, translations of Mao's works were concentrating on the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. Volumes one to three were mostly translated by scholars with overseas educations, published and circulated by Lawrence and Wishart Press for the English edition and in Moscow for the Russian edition. Volume four was in a sense a more homegrown project of the People's Republic of China, for the previous English and Russian editions, the project of translating the fourth volume of the *Selected Works* was more of a revision. The project independently conducted the French and Spanish editions.<sup>137</sup> Thus, the translations of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao* became a turning point because since then, the translations of Mao's works became a homegrown project,<sup>138</sup> and China became the center of the translations and publications of Mao's works.

### **Translations of the *Little Red Book***

With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, the paramount task was the translation of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, or the *Little Red Book*. Reasons behind the move were obvious. The first was that after 1964, with the completion of the translations of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, translations on existing *Selected Works of Mao* came to a temporary end as no volume of the Selected Works was left un-translated<sup>139</sup> (There were altogether

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with Yin.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

five volumes of the *Selected Works of Mao*, and the last volume was compiled in 1975). Another reason, maybe more significant, was the emergence of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* in the context of the radical leftist, and revolutionary turn<sup>140</sup> of China in the 1960s.

Before moving to translations of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, it is important to provide a short introduction of this *Little Red Book*. The *Little Red Book* deserves academic attention here, as the conceptualization, compilation, and circulation of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* itself was an approach to Maoism by Lin Biao, as well as those in the military. Scholars have often regarded Lin Biao as the central figure<sup>141</sup> behind the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* though Mao was orchestrating the Cultural Revolution, writing the texts where quotations were drawn, and approving the publication. In 1960, at an enlarged military committee meeting, Lin Biao made a statement that went: “there are many cautionary sentences from Chairman Mao that need to be recited and remembered...I propose to recite something...to recite the most insightful and significant words from Chairman Mao’s writings in the first place...we have to remember those sentences...”<sup>142</sup> *People’s Liberation Army Daily* became the first newspaper in China to have Mao’s quotations on the front pages to facilitate the study of Mao’s thought, which eventually led to the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. The practice of putting Mao’s quotations next to all newspaper titles

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<sup>140</sup> On the left turn, or revolutionary turn of China, see Niu Jun, “1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China’s Foreign Policy”, Working Paper No. 48, *Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Washington, D.C. October 2005.

<sup>141</sup> For a recent analysis, see Alexander C. Cook, “Introduction: The Spiritual Atom Bomb and its Global Fallout”, in *Mao’s Little Red Book: A Global History*, ed. Alexander C. Cook (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1-22.

<sup>142</sup> The enlarged military committee meeting which was closely related with the *Quotations* was mentioned by many scholars, including an interview with Tian Xiaoguang, one of the editors of the *Little Red Book*, see “Mao zhuxi yulu shi zenyang fengxingyushi de 毛主席语录是怎样风行于世的” [How the Quotations from Chairman Mao became popular around the world], last modified September 30, 2013, <http://history.eastday.com/h/20130930/u1a7690599.html> (accessed April 10, 2018)

in the front pages were modelled after Maoist-leaning organizational publications all over the world. This global cultural phenomenon was seen in both newspapers in the United States and the party organs of the Barisan Sosialis in Singapore.

A recently published monograph on Tang Pingzhu (唐平铸) by his children Tang Yanming and Tang Yaming put Tang into a more visible place in the history of the *Little Red Book*. Tang Pingzhu presided over the collections, selections, and compilation of Mao's quotations at *People's Liberation Army Daily. Quotations from Chairman Mao*, as Tang recalled, was completed as a vital mission by *People's Liberation Army Daily* collectively, pursuant to instructions by the Central Military Committee and the PLA General Political Department. Initially as *The One-Hundred Quotations from Chairman Mao* in 1964, the *Little Red Book*, as what people know it, came into being after Lin Biao provided a preface in his own name in 1966.<sup>143</sup>

The translators for the *Little Red Book* were almost the same group of translators as those of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*.<sup>144</sup> Compared with translations for the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, this time, more work units and departments were taking part. Among the various and wide networks of participating groups were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the China International Publishing Group, Xinhua News Agency, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television of The People's Republic of China, and tertiary institutions such as Peking University and Nanjing University. By the end of December 1966, the scope of the

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<sup>143</sup> Tang Yanming and Tang Yaming 唐炎明、唐亚明, *Mao Zhuxi yulu de dansheng ji qita: Tang Pingzhu wenge shilu* 《毛主席语录》的诞生及其他：唐平铸文革实录 [Birth of the Quotations from Chairman Mao and Others: Veritable Records of Tang Pingzhu during the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2019), 2.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Yin.



translations had been expanded into more than thirty languages. Translations into widely used languages such as English, French, Russian, Spanish, Japanese, German, and Arabic were underway; translations for less widely used ones, such as Hausa, Swahili, Urdu, and Hindi were also included. From the interview with Yin, two apparatuses were in charge of these translations: for more popular languages translations, the Central Translation & Compilation Bureau was in charge. It oversaw translations to major languages except for Japanese; translations to other languages were within the purview of the CIPG, as the CIPG was capable of translations into languages which were not so widely used.<sup>145</sup>

The translations of the *Little Red Book* took three years from the end of 1966 to the end of 1969. Publications and circulations were initiated almost immediately upon the completion of translations. Yin made it quite clear that the copies were not sold, but fundamentally given out, and all Chinese embassies abroad were taking part in this.<sup>146</sup> Mitsu Tanaka, a *Tokyo Shimbun's* former Special Correspondent wrote a report, in which Tanaka said that some foreign correspondents were putting into their trunks some copies of the *Quotations* translated into various foreign languages, displayed in a line at the hotel, as their souvenirs, and all these copies were free of charge.<sup>147</sup>

Yin's recollection and Tanaka's report in *Tokyo Shimbun* corresponded to the accounts of Cheng Yinghong's works: that the nature of the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works were of a highly politicized nature, and in the context of the Cultural Revolution, it was directed at exporting Maoism overseas. Circulations of Mao's works were the major political task in the external relations, and various forms were taken. Besides the oral propaganda towards foreign visitors during external relations events, staffs at the Chinese embassies, journalists, students, and

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<sup>145</sup> The CIPG was also responsible for the translations of the Japanese edition.

<sup>146</sup> Yin interview.

<sup>147</sup> "Returning Home from Peking: Mitsuo Tanaka (Part 7)", *Tokyo Shimbun*, October 1, 1967. Stanford University.

experts living overseas, conductors working on international trains, and seamen were all actively disseminating Mao's works, *Quotations*, pictures, and badges. They even put up slogans of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's image boards and showed propaganda movies in embassies, residential areas and working fields of aiding constructions. Mao's quotes and images were also printed on exported goods and foreign aid items.<sup>148</sup>

### **Lives of Translators during High Maoism: Yin as an Example**

The translations of the *Little Red Book* took place at a time when the Cultural Revolution was launched, and rituals of the Cultural Revolution gradually became the social norms in people's lives. Public denuncements, detentions, factional battles were widespread, and the higher echelon of the Communist Party was not immune.<sup>149</sup> However, fortunate for the participating translators, at least during the period when they served in the translations, they were somehow escaping the unrests, riots, and turmoil which went viral. The translations were organized and concentrated in today's Beijing Friendship Hotel. Translators ate, slept, and worked in the Hotel, without having to commute, and also, possibly, by virtue of political control and confidentiality.<sup>150</sup> As a result, those participating translators were exempted from "taking part in" the Cultural Revolution as they were already contributing to a revolutionary cause officiated by the Party. Mr. Yin recalled this memory more than fifty years later: "these people [the translators] did not participate in the Cultural Revolution, and this now seems quite a blessing. The Cultural Revolution was fiery and fierce. You

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<sup>148</sup> Cheng Yinghong, pp64-65

<sup>149</sup> For more detailed accounts of higher ranks of Communist cadres in the Cultural Revolutions, see existing memoirs on this topic, such as for example, Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004).

<sup>150</sup> Yin interview.

were forced to join this faction against that one or join that faction against this one. It was so cruel, we'd better not discuss this.....when we were locked [in the Friendship Hotel], we were only allowed to come back home every weekend. However, we didn't want to go back home because of the riots and tumults. When we were out on Sundays on the way back home, we were so afraid to see denouncements against people and battles, and Friendship Hotel was a safe place for us".<sup>151</sup>

However, this relative peace and tranquility did not last long. Following the completion of the translations of the *Little Red Book*, their euphoria came to an end.

With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals in China, generally categorized as "cadres" in the Chinese political sphere, were removed into May Seventh Cadre Schools (*Wuqi Ganxiao*) and were forced to undertake heavy and intense labor work.<sup>152</sup> Translators in the Central Compilation & Translation Bureau, where Yin was a member, were not immediately moved to the May Seventh Cadre School, as they were waiting for the finish of the fifth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. As translators, besides making preparations and collecting necessary materials for the upcoming fifth volume, all they could do was to wait anxiously yet passively. It is natural to assume that the reason behind the translators' anxiety might be very likely the fear they might be removed to the May Seventh Cadre School had the fifth volume not arrived in time. They waited year after year only to be informed by October 1975 that they too had to be removed and relocated

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<sup>151</sup> Yin interview.

<sup>152</sup> May Seventh Cadre Schools, or Wuqi Ganxiao, "五七干校" in Chinese, were labor camps established following Mao's May Seventh Instruction, 1966. For the purpose of eradicating the "capitalist remnants" and moving closer to the ideal Communist society, Mao instructed in his 1966 May 7<sup>th</sup> letter to Lin Biao that a nationwide military-style schools be established so that all the cadres (including intellectuals) could be re-educated and produce agricultural and industrial products themselves. In this way, differences between mental and physical labor, between industry and agriculture, and between urban and rural areas could be eliminated.

to the School and undertake labor burden. By that time, most of their colleagues and friends had already been in the School for years.

Yin followed the order and he was sent to a May Seventh Cadre School in a remote countryside in Jiangxi Province. Yet he was lucky that after just five months of his stay in the Cadre School, he was released. Several decades later, Yin would still recall the moment when he was released in vivid details in both his interviews and his own articles:

“It was August 16, 1975. I was swimming in the clean Qinglan Lake after a day’s field work. Suddenly I heard someone calling my name from ashore, ‘Yin Chengdong, go to the office quickly!’ I was astonished by the urgency in the voice. While walking, I couldn’t help wondering if I had made any political mistakes. Waiting for me were three faces serious yet sincere; they were Song Shusheng, and Gu Jinping, who were from the CCTB, and Gong Jiasheng, who was from the General Office of the CCP. They spoke to me in one voice, ‘A call from Beijing, [there is a] political task, you are to arrive in Beijing in two days,’ ‘No need to bring anything, we will send your luggage later,’ ‘we have ordered our people to buy your train ticket and prepared you an introductory letter, you go to Shanghai first and transit to Beijing by airplane, you have to arrive in time, this is a political discipline.’ I was taken to Nanchang [the capital city of Jiangxi Province] overnight by a jeep and arrived in Shanghai the next afternoon.

.....by the time I arrived in Beijing, it was Hou, Director of the Personnel Department of CCTB, who was waiting for me at the airport. However, he kept silent over what political task drove me to Beijing that urgently. My family did not go the airport to welcome me as they thought I was escorted to Beijing for denouncement because of political mistakes. Next, I went to Zhongnanhai for a meeting. It did not surprise me that it was all about the task of translating the fifth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao*, but it did surprise me that it was Hu Qiaomu who

convened the meeting and Xiong Fu was our direct person-in-charge. They informed us that it was Deng Xiaoping who would oversee the project himself.”<sup>153</sup>

### Translation of the Fifth Volume of the *Selected Works of Mao*

The fact that Deng would oversee the project indicated that the CCP and the central government placed high importance on the project. More evidence to this statement included the appointment of Wang Dongxing as the person in charge of logistics, administration, and finance for the translation project. A newly elected member of the Politburo of CCP, Wang served as the bodyguard of Mao, and he was the Director of the General Office of the CCP and also one of the most prominent and powerful political figures in late 1970s China.

This translation project was supervised by a five-person leadership group, formed by Ke Bainian, sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a former Chinese ambassador to Denmark, and fellow supervisors including: Jia Bubin from the General Office of the CCP; Pu Shouchang, the then Director of Foreign Affairs of the State Planning Committee; Feng Xiliang of CIPG; Yin Chengdong from the CCTB, and Lin Liyun, a Taiwan-born, long time veteran as a Japanese interpreter, later joined in for assistance sent by the International Liaison Department of the CCP.<sup>154</sup>

The Office of Translations of Mao's Works of the CCTB played the role of the driving force behind the project. It orchestrated the project while inviting scholars and translators from other departments such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Xinhua News Agency, the Liaison,

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<sup>153</sup> Yin Chengdong 尹承东, “Momo fengxian sishinian: wo suozhidao de zhongyang wenxian fanyibu” 默默奉献四十年——我所知道的中央文献翻译部 [Forty years of silent dedication: what I know about the Central Translation Bureau], *Zongheng* 纵横 6 (2000): 18.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

universities, and so on. These nationally renowned translators were organized into five linguistic groups: English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Japanese. Altogether, more than 120 translators were participating in the five-group translation project. Each group was also equipped with two to three foreign experts.<sup>155</sup>

At the beginning, this translation project was overseen by Deng Xiaoping. Deng, famous as the “General Architect of China’s Reform and Opening-Up”, was no less known for his ups and downs in his political trajectory from the beginning of the Cultural Revolution to the end. By early 1975, it was already Deng’s second return to the political scene after two knockouts.<sup>156</sup>

However, Deng’s denouncement and departure after the April 5 Tiananmen incident<sup>157</sup> almost brought the translation project to a halt. And it was not until the Gang of Four was cracked down and Hua Guofeng came to power that the whole project was continued. Again, it was driven by politics just as it was halted by politics. Hua Guofeng, a low-profile but a die-hard loyalist to Mao, was designated as the successor of Mao after Deng’s fall. He continued the compilation and translations of the fifth volume of *Mao’s selected works* as one integral part on the part of his own legitimacy building using Mao.<sup>158</sup>

However, after Hua was sidelined and Deng became the paramount leader of China following the third Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1978, the circulation of the fifth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao* gradually came to

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Yin.

<sup>156</sup> In the 1930s and the 1960s, Deng was purged twice in the internal conflicts of the CCP. The second was better known that he was in exile in Jiangxi after denounced as the “No. 2 capitalist roader within the Party”.

<sup>157</sup> The April 5 Tiananmen Incident took place on April 5, 1976 at Tiananmen, Beijing, China. The mourning by the crowds of the death of Zhou Enlai turned into massive protests against the Gang of Four. Deng Xiaoping was accused of being the mastermind behind the protests by the Gang of Four, and the incident led to the third downfall in his political career.

<sup>158</sup> There are other components of his legitimacy-building project, including the establishment of Mao’s memorial, even his hair-style.

suspension. The termination was on one hand due to the fact that it was used for the building of the legitimacy of Hua. On the other hand, a more likely reason was the conflicting stances between the main ideas in the fifth volume and political needs to reverse the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and to rectify the mistakes of Mao during the era. The fifth volume was a collection of Mao's writings between 1949, shortly before the CCP became the ruling party, and 1957, when the Anti-Rightist Movement unfolded. The insistence on class struggle, the open denunciations of dissidents, the emphasis on agricultural collectivization, and the high-pitched voice announcing "counterattacks" on the bourgeois reactionaries constituted the main contents of the fifth volume, which made it irreconcilable with correcting and rectifying the Cultural Revolution in the coming open-up and reform era, given that the Party consistently regarded Mao's doctrine as the guiding principle. Also, the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works were indicative of China's gradual suspension of export of revolution overseas. By 1986, translations of Mao's works came to its final end.

### **Publications of Mao's Works**

The work around the publications of Mao's writings itself, as the following paragraphs will show, constituted a complicated network of administrative direction, collaboration, and compromise. Meanwhile, the work behind the translations, printings, and publications, i.e., the Maoist moment in China, constituted a very important chapter in China's ideological building, industrial production, foreign policy, as well as cultural enterprise.

The major institution for the publications of the People's Republic of China in its propaganda towards the foreign people was the China International Publishing Group (CIPG), comprised of the Foreign Languages Press as well as other prominent foreign-language publications. Since its existence in 1949, it had been reorganized several times. The organizational re-arrangements often reflected its altering ranks within the government system.

During the Maoist moment in China, the CIPG's status within the official rank was substantially lifted compared to its relative ranks before 1963 and after 1982. Prior to September 1963, the CIPG was a mere branch of the now defunct General Administration of Press and Publication. After February 1982, the CIPG was transferred to become one of the components of

the Ministry of Culture. Administered directly by the State Council of People's Republic of China since September 1963, the rank of the CIPG was lifted and the institution was granted independent functionality before its management was handed over to Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1970 and subsequently to the International Department, Committee Central of Communist Party of China in 1972<sup>159</sup>.

In 1961, when the publications of the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao* came into being, the subsequent translations and circulations of the volume in its various language versions became the dominant task for related departments, such as CTCB, Foreign Languages Press, and Beijing Waiwen Printing Factory (BWPF). Beijing Waiwen Printing Factory was operating under the CIPG. It was an important ring in the circulation networks of Mao's works. In the 1960s, the printing of Mao's works in various languages overrode all the other tasks with the top importance in the working list of the BWPF.

The CCP Central Committee instructed the publishing department to publish, print, and distribute 80 million sets of the *Selected Works* in the year of 1967, a figure more than twice the 1966 goal of 35 million in two years. Besides, as the emergence of the *Little Red Book, Quotations from Chairman Mao* posed new publishing demand to the Party and the state.<sup>160</sup>

The prioritization on the circulation of Mao's works affected the printing planning considerably, which saw a struggle for the paper sources. The dire economic conditions during the Cultural Revolution caused a serious shortage of materials, including paper supplied for the printing of Mao's works. Faced with a severely damaged economy, the BWPF amassed via Party and State

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<sup>159</sup> For a more detailed overview of the changes in the administrative system of the CIPG, see *Zhongguo waiwenju wushinian huiyilu* 中国外文局五十年回忆录 [Collection of Memorial Articles on the Fifty Years of China International Publishing Group] (Beijing: Xinxing chubanshe, 1999).

<sup>160</sup> *People's Daily*, December 26, 1967.



Council channels the raw materials which were originally intended for other purposes. All the other raw materials and tasks had to be sidelined and given away for the printing, publications and circulations of Mao's works. To secure the supplement of the printing paper, the Central Cultural Revolution Group not only restricted the circulation of many college newspapers, but also brought the key printing factories such as Hanyang, Yibin, and Jiangxi factories under direct military control.<sup>161</sup> Besides the economic downturn, another reason accounting for the rations on printing paper might be to meet the target of 80 million publications of *Selected Works of Mao* set up as the beginning of 1967.<sup>162</sup> In January 1967, when Zhou Enlai publicly declared the goal of 80 million copies of the *Selected Works of Mao* to be completed, he ordered the saving for the printing paper of other purposes for the concentrated task of printing Mao's works.<sup>163</sup> By October that year, according to the Central Cultural Revolution Group, 56 million copies, 70 percent of the annual plan were completed. With two months left for the year, the CCRG even urged those who lagged behind in progress to speed up.<sup>164</sup>

From 1967, provinces started their own competition in publishing and printing Mao's works, including the *Selected Works of Mao*, the *Selected Readings from Mao Tse-tung's Works*, *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, and *Sixty Quotations from Chairman Mao*. For instance, Henan Province proudly announced that between August 1966 and January 1967, the province had published more than 1.06

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<sup>161</sup> 国务院、中央军委、中央文化革命小组转发中央文化革命小组宣传组“关于出版用纸生产和供应情况”的通知。1967.07.24；中发[67]225号。

<sup>162</sup> *People's Daily*, December 26, 1967.

<sup>163</sup> “Xinzhongguo chengli hou Mao Zedong xuanji chuban gaikuang 新中国成立后《毛泽东选集》出版概况” [Summary of the publication of the Selected Works of Mao Zedong after the founding of new China], last modified November 2008, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/85037/8474358.html> (accessed May 20, 2018)

<sup>164</sup> 中共中央中央文革小组关于完成今年《毛泽东选集》出版任务的通知。1967.10.27；中发[67]327号。

million copies of the *Selected Works of Mao*, equivalent to 168% of the total amount of publications of the book from 1952 to July 1966.<sup>165</sup>

The printing workers in Henan Province exemplified show people carried out the ethos in Mao Tse-tung thought in their daily work. When they say that “[they] overcome many difficulties concerning printing equipment and technique and overfulfilled their tasks of printing with plentiful, fast, good and economical results so that the whole province has surpassed the original plan of printing by more than double”,<sup>166</sup> they exuded a voluntarism<sup>167</sup> in Maoism, an ethos which lay emphasis on human will instead of concrete situations. Workers and staff in the paper-making industry turned out 61 percent more letterpress paper in the first eight months of 1967 than in the same period a year before. The output of letterpress paper in the eight months of 1967 was equivalent to 1966’s total, and it was 61 percent higher than the 1965 level and nearly doubled the 1964 output.<sup>168</sup> Previously, the letterpress paper for publishing Chairman Mao’s works was produced in only four big mills. In order to expand the publication of Mao’s works, by the year 1967, more than 20 medium and small sized paper mills were turning out suitable paper for the task. In no case was Henan the only competing province in striving for the increased task. Workers in a paper mill in Shandong Province increased their output by 26%.<sup>169</sup> Printers in Shanghai also claimed that they had put out more copies of Mao’s writings in the months from October 1966 to

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<sup>165</sup> “Honan Province Overfulfilled Tasks of Printing and Publishing Chairman Mao’s Works”, Union Research Service, Vol 46, p333.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> On Mao’s voluntarism, see Woei Lien Chong, “Mankind and Nature in Chinese Thought: Li Zehou on the Traditional Roots of Maoist Voluntarism”, *China Information* (July 1, 1996): 138-175  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X9601100209>

<sup>168</sup> “More paper produced for printing Chairman Mao’s Works”, October 14, 1967, *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>169</sup> Press Collect by Stanley Karnow, draft to Washington Post, April 28, 1967, *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

April 1967 than they had in the whole period since 1949.<sup>170</sup> When it comes to translations of Mao's works, a statistical survey from Beijing was reported to assert that Mao's works had been translated into more than sixty languages in over fifty countries, and orders from abroad for more copies were a hundred times higher than they were in 1952.<sup>171</sup> The numbers might be less accurate as recorded, but they show that people were inspired by voluntarism as if they were in a competition.

Besides the *Selected Works of Mao* and the *Little Red Book*, other writings of Mao had been translated and published as well. Works of Mao, such as his military writings, were translated and served as a guidance and inspiration especially for revolutionaries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, countries and regions categorized as the Third World both by previous scholars, sociologists, and by Mao himself. Newly independent countries or countries fighting for national victory against foreign powers were especially attracted by Mao's military sense, or by its guiding and instructing power in military struggles.

The increase in production and export of Mao's works corresponded to reports of how Mao's works were well received overseas by revolutionaries across the world. It even led the Soviet Union to fight back against the claims that the application of Maoism was the reason for the victories in some places, such as Vietnam.<sup>172</sup> However, the claim that Mao's works were well received overseas required caution, since the Chinese media did not provide sources of adulation to Mao. For example, a report from the Soviet Union noticed that the sources were missing.<sup>173</sup> Indeed, fabricating "foreign consensus" was not a rare practice. For example, it was recounted that Richard

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> "Foreign Adulation of Mao Tse-Tung", *China Topics*, YB 474 (Mao-2), April 17, 1968. Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

Baum, one of the China observers in the late 1960s, sung revolutionary songs out of courtesy when he was surrounded by Hong Kong red guards. Someone took a photo of him singing the revolutionary songs, and the photo was published on the page of *Wen Wei Pao* (Hong Kong) with the caption “Foreign friend warmly loves Chairman Mao...and sends blessings to Chairman Mao for a long life without end”.<sup>174</sup> Many reports from the Xinhua News Agency were featured with unidentified subjects, like two “African students”, “several Dominican progressives”, “a Nepalese friend”, “a Yugoslav couple”, etc.<sup>175</sup> The reports of Xinhua News Agency or other Chinese official propaganda institutions lacked the sources of foreign admiration of Maoism; however, the appreciation of Mao and Maoism was still a prominent phenomenon among the revolutionary leftists outside China in the 1960s and 1970s.

Materials were diverted to the production of Mao’s works and badges, leaving a negative shortage of materials for other productions and daily life. It was reported by *Izvestia* on November 12, 1967, that Chinese housewives could no longer buy ordinary utensils because the raw materials were allotted for the production of Mao badges.<sup>176</sup>

While the mass production of Mao badges resulted in the shortage of materials supposed to be used in the consumers market, it did facilitate the spread of Mao’s thought overseas. From Zambia to Burma, protests regarding the wearing and ban of Mao badges were seen and reported widely by the international press. In one extreme case, the Chinese Embassy in Dar as Salaam,

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<sup>174</sup> Richard Baum, *China Watcher: Confessions of a Peking Tom* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2010), 30.

<sup>175</sup> “Foreign Adulation of Mao Tse-Tung”, *China Topics*, YB 474 (Mao-2), April 17, 1968. Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>176</sup> “Mao Badges Get Priority,” *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Tanzania, distributed thousands of Mao badges to the local schoolchildren, which was forbidden by the Tanzanian authorities.<sup>177</sup>

### **Circulation of Mao's Works**

Circulations of Mao's works constituted another major component in the broader project of exporting Mao Zedong Thought worldwide. Contrary to the general perception of an overt and heavy political direction of Chinese propaganda, the CIPG was constantly reminded of a careful handling of hiding the essential political intentions behind less political tones and expressions. Luo Jun, the former Director of the CIPG, in a compilation of memoir-like articles written by the institution's former officers, concluded that Mao Tse-Tung himself had set three guidelines for foreign propaganda: *Speak with truth*, *Do not to force ideas upon others*, and *Focus on targets*.

The advent of the Cultural Revolution witnessed the new phase of promoting the circulation of Mao's work as the political task with the highest priority. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council issued a circular, which, not only revered the *Quotations from Chairman* as the "treasure book", (very possibly the origin of the nickname "red treasure book" for the *Quotations*) but criticized and retracted the three previously-issued circulars for not actively publicizing the spirit of Mao's Thought. It stated that the "Thought of Mao is the highest and most lively Marxism-Leninism of the time, it is the most powerful weapon of thought for the revolutionary people around the world. With the rapid development of the world revolution, all the

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

revolutionaries of the world are eager to get this treasure book...all foreign-related units must take [giving out the Quotations to foreigners] as the top prioritized political task”.<sup>178</sup>

Promoting Maoism overseas via the circulation of Mao’s works was quite aggressive. In 1966, the Third Algiers International Fair had a Chinese Pavilion in which Chairman Mao’s works were on display, and according to a Xinhua News it drew the biggest crowds. The news report went on saying that as many as 3000 visitors bought copies of Mao’s works and spoke highly of not only Chairman Mao’s works but also China’s achievements “under the guidance of Mao Tse-tung’s Thought”.<sup>179</sup> Given the propaganda nature of Xinhua news, this report should be taken with a grain of salt.

Institutions within China responded to the circular in a very positive and active way. For example, Peking Library received many letters from other countries asking for the works of Chairman Mao. In 1965 alone, the Peking Library posted copies of *Selected Works of Mao* and pamphlets of Mao’s writings in 13 languages, totaling 123 editions, a number that had increased by more than four times as compared with the previous year.<sup>180</sup> In 1966, after purging Zhou Yang, the old head of propaganda for slowing down the printing progress,<sup>181</sup> the reorganized propaganda

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<sup>178</sup> 国务院外事办公室关于对外国人赠送《毛主席语录》的通知 (Circular of the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council on Giving Out Quotations from Chairman to Foreign Friends, Feb 18 1967.)

<sup>179</sup> “Algerian Visitors to Chinese Pavilion Sing Praises of Chairman Mao,” newspaper clippings, *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>180</sup> “Letters from Five Continents Asking for Chairman Mao’s Works; Many More Copies Sent out This Year by the Peking Library”, Peking, Ta-kung Pao, Dec 29, 1965, p3.

<sup>181</sup> Slowing down the pace of publications of Mao’s works was one of the accusations Zhou received when he was purged. A report titled “The Large-Scale Publication of Mao’s Books” mentioned that “In 1962, for instance, only about 50,000 sets of the *Selected Works of Mao* were printed and distributed, while 140,000 sets of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* were published. In the same year, only 72 tons of paper had been used for printing Mao’s books while more than 7,500 tons had been used for printing other books.” *Union Research Service*, Vol 44, No 17, August 26, 1966.

department of the CCP made the decision to print 35 million sets of *Selected Works of Mao* in two years, not including the smaller edition called *Selected Readings from Mao Tse-tung's Works*, the publication and printing of which was left within the purview of provincial, municipal, and regional authorities. For that purpose, the department called on all publication, printing and distribution departments in the country to give top priority to this task to meet the pressing demands.<sup>182</sup>

In two years' time since the Cultural Revolution, according to the Xinhua News Agency, China had distributed to more than 130 countries and regions large numbers of *Selected Military writings of Mao Tse-tung*, *Chairman Mao Tse-tung on People's War*, and Mao's various military writings compiled in a collection or in pamphlet form. In another news clipping of Karnow, the total number of the distribution of Chairman Mao's military writings in the two years was much larger than the grand total distributed in the 17 years before the Cultural Revolution. The distribution of *Chairman Mao Tse-tung on People's War* alone amounted to more than 350,000.<sup>183</sup> Besides, editions in foreign languages other than English, French and Russian were published in the two years since the Cultural Revolution had started.<sup>184</sup>

Other similar figures help prove the efforts of such propaganda. In 1967 alone, 350 million copies of *Quotations from Chairman* were printed; in 1967, China's publishing houses turned out 47.5 million copies of *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao*. More than 57 million copies of poems by Chairman Mao were printed. While only 11.5 million sets of the four-volume *Selected Works of Mao* had been printed in the 15 years before the Cultural Revolution, an aim was set for the year 1967 to

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<sup>182</sup> Baltimore Sun, Aug 8, 1966, from *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>183</sup> "Chairman Mao's Theory on People's War Widely Disseminated throughout the World—Oppressed Peoples and Nations Determined to Take the Road of Armed Struggle", news clippings, *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

print 80 million, and by the end of December that year, 86.4 million sets had been published. Before the Cultural Revolution, Mao's works were being produced by only 13 printing houses in seven provinces and cities. In defying this situation that "the handful of top party people in authority taking the capitalist road headed by China's Khrushchev were opposed to the mass studying of Chairman Mao's thoughts and were suppressing their publication by resorting to all sorts of tricks", in 1967, 181 printing houses in 28 provinces and cities were in full swing for printing Mao's works.<sup>185</sup>

By the beginning of 1969, China printed and distributed more than 150 million sets of *Selected Works of Mao*, which was already 13 times more than the total amount printed in the 15 years before the Cultural Revolution. During this three-year period, China printed and distributed more than 140 million copies of *Selected Readings from Chairman Ma's Works*. Over 740 million copies of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* were printed and distributed, alongside nearly 2000 million copies of Mao's *Lao San Pian* (Three Old Readings: *Serve the People*, *In Memory of Norman Bethune*, and *The Old Foolish man*). And more than 96 million copies of *Chairman Mao's Poems* were printed.<sup>186</sup>

## Conclusion

As discussed in the previous chapter, Maoism, compared with Marxism, Leninism, as well as other leftist ideologies, is a highly iconized ideology. The text media of Maoism, such as the *Selected Works of Mao*, the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, or the *Little Red Book*, required translations, publications, and circulations to construct, spread, and export Maoism from China to the world.

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<sup>185</sup> Colin McCullough, "A Thought Fallout That Covers a Nation," *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

<sup>186</sup> "150 Million Sets of 'Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung' published in China in Last Three Years," *Stanley Karnow Papers*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



As the following chapters on the United States and Singapore will demonstrate, the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works constituted the necessary condition for the Maoists in these places to approach, invoke, and adopt Maoism. However, such an essential part in the history of the globalizing of Maoism has hitherto been submerged in media studies and overlooked in historical writings. This chapter has therefore analysed the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works, most notably, the *Selected Works of Mao*, and the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, in the context of the 1960s and 1970s when the Cultural Revolution brought Maoism to its heyday. Translations of Mao's works were state-sponsored international projects even before the founding of the People's Republic of China, when American-educated scholars played an instrumental role in the translations and foreign communist party-affiliated publishers offered their help. By the fourth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao* in 1960, the Chinese apparatus, such as the Foreign Languages Press, the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, and others played a critical role in making China the center of the translation of Maoism, which corresponded to a gradual leftist turn in China's domestic and foreign policies. Translations of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* and the fifth volume of the *Selected Works of Mao* took place under a similar circumstance.

I would use a metaphor to describe the publications and circulations of Mao's works overseas: before China initiated its reform and opening-up policy and immersed itself in the world trade, Mao's works were the most produced and exported China product. The goal set for the numbers of copies of Mao's works to be printed affected the allocation of printing materials such as printing paper. The workers at the printing factories in different provinces engaged in competitions in printing and publishing Mao's works. They provided overseas Maoists, as well as Chinese communists, concrete material support in their approach to Maoism, and also, they practiced Maoism in their own work when they carried out Maoist voluntarism which emphasized the human will over external conditions. Circulations made up another key link in the broader project of propaganda and the export of Maoism. The chapter has consulted multiple sources, and many of them have recorded the millions of copies of Mao's works printed and the comparison in the surges in its production and distribution before and after the Cultural Revolution.

By unearthing these histories of the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works, this chapter argues that global Maoism was brought to its peak in the 1960s and 1970s not just because of the launch of the Cultural Revolution in a commonly recognized political sense, but also by the translations, publications, and circulation of Mao's works. For the establishment of ethnic studies in America and the embrace of Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis in Singapore, the export of Maoism served as a key prerequisite. However, the translations, publications, and circulations of Mao's works did not only contribute to Maoist moments in America and Singapore, they also constituted a Maoist moment in China.

SECTION TWO  
CHAPTER FOUR

MAOIST MOMENT IN THE UNITED STATES: The Establishment of Ethnic Studies in American Universities

From November 1968 to March 1969, the San Francisco State College witnessed the longest student strike in the history of America,<sup>187</sup> and from January 1969 to March the same year, another student protest took place at the University of California. The two student strikes led by Maoist-inspired radical activists gave birth to the first college and the first department of ethnic studies in higher educational institutions in the United States, with long-lasting consequences felt to this day. Since its inception, ethnic studies, with more specialized divisions including African American/black studies, Asian American studies, Latino/a studies, Native American studies, has become a burgeoning academic field, incorporating university majors, journals, publications, and scholars.

This chapter turns to Maoism in America from the perspective of the relationship between Maoism and the establishment of ethnic studies. It argues that Maoism was directly connected to the foundation of ethnic studies programs in the United States because it served as a source of inspiration. It inspired protest tactics during the two student strikes at San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley. After the strikes, the Maoist activists-turned-scholar occupied the faculty in the first college and department of ethnic studies program of the country and they inserted Maoist ideas into the curriculum of the newly founded ethnic studies programs.

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<sup>187</sup> “America” and “the United States” are used interchangeably in this chapter.

The Maoist link to the founding of ethnic studies formed a Maoist moment in America, and like the famous metaphor in Mao's writings: *a single spark can start a prairie fire*,<sup>188</sup> this Maoist moment had a long-lasting impact upon the American educational, social, and cultural spheres. This dissertation introduces the idea of an imagined Third World. In the case of the United States, the main participants in the strikes for the foundation of ethnic studies departments at major universities in San Francisco, born and raised in the United States, regarded themselves the "Third World", and their struggles the fight against US imperialism just as those in Asia, Africa, and Latin America battling against western imperialism for national independence. This imagined Third World connected the participants in the United States in a global history of Maoism alongside with the translators in China and the leftists in Singapore.

In order to present this argument, this chapter will firstly look at the two student strikes which led to the establishment of ethnic studies departments in the United States, namely student strike at San Francisco State College and the Third World Liberation Strike at UC Berkeley. Next, the chapter provides a concrete analysis of the influence of Maoism in the process of the establishment in the context of the 1960s and 1970s, and finally concludes with thoughts on the ongoing consequences of this Maoist moment in America.

### **Significance of Research**

In the words of L. Ling-chi Wang, one of the founding scholars of ethnic studies, "the establishment of ethnic studies is one of the most enduring legacies of the civil rights movement of

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<sup>188</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *A Single Spark can Start a Prairie Fire*, written in January 1930, accessed May 23, 2019, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_6.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_6.htm)

the 1960s”.<sup>189</sup> The history of this establishment per se, and its relations with Maoism, a central credo of the time, complements studies of Maoism outside China in general, and in America in particular. The link between Maoism and higher education in America expands the existing research in which scholars have approached Maoism in America by means of looking at a few radical leftist political organizations, such as the Progressive Labor Party, the Black Panther Party, the Revolutionary Union, or I Wor Kuen.<sup>190</sup> If political organizations were the central perspective in the studies of Maoism in America, then readers, including researchers, would come to the conclusion that Maoism in America has waned drastically or even disappeared evidenced by the dissolution of these organizations. However, if the observation angle shifts to the establishment of ethnic studies, then a different conclusion will tell that the legacies of Maoism linger on to this day, as the final part of this chapter will demonstrate.

This chapter focuses on Maoism in the United States. It looks at the history of the establishment of ethnic studies in America, such as Black (African American) studies, Asian American studies, Chicana/Chicano studies, or Latin American studies and La Raza studies,<sup>191</sup> Native American studies, and others. The chapter focuses on young radical leftist activists, oftentimes the racial minorities, who read, were inspired by, and adopted Maoism in their imaginations. They redefined themselves as Third World people and in their protests (especially the students protests at the San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley),

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<sup>189</sup> L. Ling-chi Wang, *History of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley: Ethnic Studies 98/198* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Department of Ethnic Studies, 2011), 9.

<sup>190</sup> See William Wei, “The Emergency and Eclipse of Maoist Organization,” in *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 203-240. Max Elbaum, “Maoism in the United States, seen at Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-line,” accessed June 1, 2019, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-7/maoism-us.htm>

<sup>191</sup> “La Raza” means “the people or the community” in Spanish, and it refers to Hispanophone people. La Raza Studies includes Chicano Studies, or Latin American Studies.

which led to the establishment of the first college and department of ethnic studies in the United States higher education institutions.

The central events in the struggle for the establishment of ethnic studies in America were the student protests at the San Francisco State College (now SF State University), and the Third World Liberation Front-led student protests at the UC Berkeley. The strikes were not only essential components of the history of the two universities respectively, especially for the San Francisco State University, but they were also significant milestones in U.S. education history. The chapter relies on the archives kept in the libraries of the two universities, the documents on Asian American movements at other universities, as well as communications with those who participated in the protests.

### **San Francisco Bay Area and Youth Bulge in the 1960s**

Student protests spread across the entire United States in the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s, and they encouraged and inspired each other, from the student's occupation at Columbia University to the Orangeburg Massacre in South Carolina, from the Kent State shootings in Ohio to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Georgia. However, the unique social characteristics at San Francisco Bay Area in particular, and the State of California in general, bred the two student protests at Berkeley and San Francisco, two cities across the San Francisco Bay Area.

Today, the state of California is the home base of liberals/leftists of America, with Democrat candidates winning every presidential election in the state since 1992. Compared with more conservative counties in the state such as Orange, San Francisco Bay Area is even more liberal, or left-leaning than the rest of this already liberal-inclined state. Historically, the Bay Area is notable for its diversified population, and the racially mixed demography attracted newly arrived immigrants, especially immigrants from Third World countries after the immigration reform in 1965. The kaleidoscopic racial components often led to separate racial communities, such as African American ghettos, Chinatown, Manilatown, Koreatown, and others. These racial enclaves were more impoverished, more crowded, with hygiene conditions worse than in other communities. Taking Chinatown as an example, a 1969 course reader for Asian American studies at the University of California, Davis stated that 40% out of the San Francisco Chinatown population with families

lived below the poverty lines, 60% of the housing units shared one bath, and only 3% of the housing units were owner occupied.<sup>192</sup>

The sharp contrast between the harsh conditions of these racial minorities and their locations within the strongest, and the wealthiest country in the world made it easy for the radical activists, often with racial minority background, to link their situations in America as internal colonies, comparable to those Third World countries exploited by imperialists. Such an imagination was theoretically supported by the activists' reading and application of Maoism, the "Third World Marxism",<sup>193</sup> which attributed the internal race problems of America to American capitalism, the same attribution of colonial issues to global imperialism.

Another reason facilitating the access of Maoism in the San Francisco Bay Area was the long history of the entanglement of China's domestic affairs in the region. In the China chapter of the dissertation, the story of Wang Fushi revealed that even before the founding of the People's Republic of China, San Francisco had already become a center for overseas Chinese communists and their propaganda activities. Even after the founding of the PRC, during the period when China and America were in hostility, Henry Halsey Noyes, with the cooperation of publishers in China, opened and ran China Books and Periodicals, Inc., America's largest distributor of printed materials from the People's Republic of China.<sup>194</sup> Although trade between China and America was prohibited

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<sup>192</sup> "Course Reader: The Asian American Experience in America by Asian American Concern, UC Davis", Box 6, Folder 1, Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection. University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>193</sup> "Third World Marxism" was a term used by Max Elbaum in *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London and New York: Verso, 2006). Elbaum argues that New Communist Movement in America was the activists' attempt for Third World Marxism, Maoism captured the initiative within the early New Communist Movement. See page 4.

<sup>194</sup> For the story of Henry Halsey Noyes, see see Henry Halsey Noyes, *China Born: Adventures of a Maverick Bookman* (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, 1989), and Aaron J. Leonard and Conor A. Gallagher, *Heavy Radicals: The FBI's Secret War on America's Maoists* (Winchester, UK and Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2014): 118-121.

because of America's *Trading with the Enemy Act*,<sup>195</sup> the act did not prohibit the importing of books. Taking advantage of this, books published in China, certainly including those translated, produced, and published by the Foreign Languages Press, could still be exported to the United States. Most notably of all was the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*. Both Bobby Seale's memoir and in Bill Mullen's research chapter refer to the fact that the Black Panther Party purchased the *Little Red Book* and resold them to finance their armed struggles against the police in Oakland, another important city in the Bay Area.<sup>196</sup> From this perspective, the import of the *Little Red Books* from China by a bookstore run by a collaborator of Chinese publishers was a necessary condition for the birth of the Black Panther Party, whose influence spread into the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front, the two organizations instrumental in the two student strikes.

Besides the increasing population of the youth (the coming of age of Baby Boomers) and the influence of the civil rights movement, for participants of Chinese origin in the Asian American movement and the two strikes, there was another special circumstance in the background. The *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882*, which had banned the immigration of Chinese laborers, was repealed in the 1940s, and the *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* increased the immigrants from Asian countries. The burgeoning of Chinese American youth, together with the rising youth population over which leftism had an overall influence, boosted the student activism of the 1960s America.

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<sup>195</sup> The *Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917* is a United States federal law that gives the President the power to restrict trade between the United States and countries it deems as its enemies. The People's Republic of China was sanctioned following the Korean War and sanctions were lifted in 1975.

<sup>196</sup> Bill Mullen, "By the book: Quotations from Chairman Mao and the making of Afro-Asian radicalism, 1966–1975", in Alexander C. Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 245-265. His recounts are based on Bobby Seale's memoir: Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 82.



Many student activists in the two strikes with Chinese heritage were among the first generation of American-born Chinese in postwar America.

Student protests were not an isolated American phenomenon but need to be situated in a global youth rebellion against the establishment in the 1960s, be it in politics, education, and race and gender roles. The main participating force in the two strikes were the students, and the students belonged to a worldwide baby boomer generation, a generation of young people coming of age in postwar stability and prosperity. The subsequent expansion of higher education, especially of humanities majors, led to a growing, often easily jobless student community around the world. The California State College system, of which the San Francisco State College was a component, was established in the year 1960 to accommodate the booming young people. The enlarged population of youths intensified the rebellious spirit as a social trend. In America, many young people joined the universities to evade conscription for the war in Vietnam.

Putting the two strikes in both the 1960s American context and the global unrest at the same time, therefore, helps with a better understanding of the historical implications of the strikes. The strikes at the San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley were parts of a tumultuous America that witnessed anti-war movement, civil rights movement, immigration reform of 1965, the New Left, as well as student protests. Seen from a global perspective, the young protestors were among the worldwide protestors against the established order. They were joined by the students protesting in the streets of Paris in May 1968, the Red Guards in China who were instigated by Mao to assault on the cadres within the Communist party, students protesting the *German Emergency Acts* at the Berlin Institute of Technology, as well as their counterparts elsewhere in the world. When the protesting students at the strikes stated their strong opposition to

“paternalism”,<sup>197</sup> the strikers exuded an obvious youth rebel mentality, linking their protests with other youths’ rebels in other parts of the world.

### **The Longest Student Strike in U.S. History: the 1968 Protest at the San Francisco State College**

From November 6, 1968, to March 21, 1969, the San Francisco State College (renamed to San Francisco State University in 1974), witnessed the longest student strike in the history of America. That strike aimed at the self-determination and the control of African American students over admissions and administrations of Black studies and eventually ended up establishing the first College of Ethnic Studies in America. This achievement became a shining mark in the history of the university, and the university celebrates the anniversary of the strike every decade. Its library maintains the collections on the strike as its most notable feature.

Today, the San Francisco State University Library keeps the SF State College Strike Collection both in the virtual archive and in digital forms, including a collection of local news video footage covering the strike, a collection of strike documents, and a scrapbook collection of newspaper clippings on the strike.<sup>198</sup> These collections, together with other primary sources, such as *Crisis at San Francisco State*, and *Shut it Down! A College in Crisis, San Francisco State College, October 1968 to April 1969* (A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, San Francisco State College, in 1969), the digitized archive collection of the College of

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<sup>197</sup> “The Politics of the Strike” in *A Pamphlet of the Third World Liberation Front, 1969*. Ethnic Studies Collections, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>198</sup> “SF State College Strike Collection”, J. Paul Leonard Library, San Francisco State University, for digital collections, visit <http://library.sfsu.edu/sf-state-strike-collection>

Ethnic Studies at the SF State University,<sup>199</sup> as well as contributions by other scholars, help draw the picture of the strike, such as the leading groups of the strike, the strike demands, and the sources of inspiration of the protestors.

In the San Francisco State College, it was the Black Student Union (BSU), the nation's first BSU organization, that called the first shot in the struggle for a Black Studies Department and started the strike.

Before the establishment of the College, according to Joseph White, who was dean of undergraduate studies and faculty sponsor for the Black Student Union at the time, the university occasionally offered black music or black sociology classes taught by part-time faculty.<sup>200</sup> In the spearhead of the later African American Studies, the Black Student Union had developed a Black Studies curriculum. By the time when the strike was initiated, the BSU already pressed campus administrators for a more liberal admissions policy, according to James (Jimmy) Garrett, one of the leaders of the BSU, “[a] year after its launch, the black population at San Francisco State had doubled...and a year after that, it doubled again”.<sup>201</sup>

George Murray, an English instructor at the San Francisco State College,<sup>202</sup> whose dismissal ignited the strike, was a perfect example in showing at least two crucial characteristics of the strike: the enormous influence of the Black Panther Party over the Black Student Union who called for the establishment of a Black Studies Department, and the Third Worldism of the radical leftists.

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<sup>199</sup> College of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University Historical Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/coes/#browse-collections>

<sup>200</sup> Tanya Schevitz, “S.F. State to Mark 40th Anniversary of Strike,” *SF Gate*, October 26, 2008, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-State-to-mark-40th-anniversary-of-strike-3264418.php>

<sup>201</sup> Sam Whiting, “The Black Student Union at SFSU Started it All,” February 1, 2010, <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/The-Black-Student-Union-at-SFSU-started-it-all-3274175.php>

<sup>202</sup> See Black Studies Curriculum Spring 1968, Digital Collections @ J. Paul Leonard Library, <http://digital-collections.library.sfsu.edu/digital/collection/p16737coll2/id/986>

The first characteristic of the protest was that the leading organization, the BSU, was strongly influenced and inspired by the Black Panther Party, a radical, militant Black organization resorting to Maoism, especially in terms of violence.<sup>203</sup> Many of the members of the Black Student Union were early members of the Black Panther Party.<sup>204</sup> Besides, during an interview, James P. Garrett, expressed that before the BSU and the strike, he had already been reading and studying Mao for years.<sup>205</sup> George Murray was himself one of the Central Committee members of the Black Student Union, and also Minister of Education for the Black Panther Party.

According to Jason Ferreira, historian and Chair of the Department of Race & Resistance Studies within the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University today, Murray travelled to Cuba in the summer of 1968 and gave a speech linking the Black Liberation struggle with the struggle of the Vietnamese people. “[E]very U.S. soldier that dies in Vietnam is one less soldier we have to deal with in the streets of Detroit,” paraphrased by Jason Ferreira, and such words caught the attention of the Board of Trustees and then-California Governor Ronald Reagan.<sup>206</sup> Besides, Murray’s call for black students to bring guns on campus<sup>207</sup> also played a role in

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<sup>203</sup> On the Black Panther Party’s turn to violence under the influence of Maoism, see Robin D. G. Kelly and Betsy Esch, “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” in *Afro-Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections Between African Americans and Asian Americans*, eds., Fred Ho and Bill Mullen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 97–154.

<sup>204</sup> Jason Ferreira, “1968: The Strike at San Francisco State, Socialist Worker’s series on the history of 1968,” December 13, 2018, <http://socialistworker.org/2018/12/13/1968-the-strike-at-san-francisco-state>

<sup>205</sup> Ibram Rogers, “Remembering the Black Campus Movement: An Oral History Interview with James P. Garrett,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, No.10 (June 2009): 30-41.

<sup>206</sup> Jason Ferreira, “1968: The Strike at San Francisco State, Socialist Worker’s series on the history of 1968,” December 13, 2018, <http://socialistworker.org/2018/12/13/1968-the-strike-at-san-francisco-state>

<sup>207</sup> William H. Orrick, Jr., *Shut it Down! A College in Crisis, San Francisco State College, October, 1968 to April, 1969. A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.* (San Francisco State College, California, June 1969), 44; and Tanya Schevitz, “S.F. State to Mark 40th Anniversary of Strike”, *SF Gate*, October 26, 2008, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-State-to-mark-40th-anniversary-of-strike-3264418.php>

his suspension. They tried to fire Murray, and Murray's suspension from the San Francisco State by Chancellor Glenn Dumke and President Robert Smith on November 1, 1968 ignited the Black Student Union to announce its strike demands. Stokely Carmichael, then Honorary Prime Minister of the Black Panther Party, gave the first speech of the strike in the evening of November 6, 1968. During the strike, the BSU members were regaled in black berets, Huey Newton<sup>208</sup> buttons and leather jackets. Whenever BSU Chairman Benny Stewart or fellow BSU leader Jerry Varnado raised a clenched fist, an iconic symbol of the Black Panther Party, the following student protestors would shout "Right On!"<sup>209</sup> These were all signature references to the Black Panther Party. This influence from the Maoist-inspired Black Panther Party linked Maoism and the BSU from the inception of the protests.

The second characteristic of the strike was the introduction of the concept of the Third World. November 6, 1968 was the first day of student strikes after the college administration failed to meet the demand the Black Student Union's demand of establishing a Black Studies Department. On the second day of the strike, the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF, San Francisco State College) issued a five-point demand which would complement the proposed Black Studies.<sup>210</sup> Compared with BSU demands emphasizing on Black studies, the most noticeable demand by the TWLF was the establishment of a School of Ethnic Studies for the ethnic groups involved in the Third World.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Huey Newton was one of the most prominent members of the Black Panther Party. He co-founded the Party and became its Minister of Defense.

<sup>209</sup> Howard Finberg, *Crisis at SF State*, (San Francisco: Insight Publications, 1969), 6.

<sup>210</sup> Steve Toomajian, "An Overview: The Strike at SF State", in *Crisis at San Francisco State* (San Francisco: Insight Publications, 1969), 6.

<sup>211</sup> List of 15 Demands, SF State College Strike Collection, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187915>

The most obvious example of the concept of the Third World in the protests were the participation of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF). The Third World Liberation Front (San Francisco State College) was a political coalition comprised of racial minority organizations: Philippine-American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE), Latin-American Students Organization (LASO), Mexican-American Students Coalition (MASC), Intercollegiate Chinese for a Social Action (ICSA), and Asian-American Political Alliance (AAPA).<sup>212</sup> Members of the TWLF were natural-born citizens of America, but their racial minority background led them to self-identify as “Third World” people. According to historian Judy Wu, Third World countries challenged Western colonialism by demanding national liberation, and racialized peoples in the U.S. also identified themselves as “Third World” peoples to highlight internal colonialism within the nation and the need to fight “within the belly of the beast,” a call commonly evoked by the Black Panthers.<sup>213</sup> The idea of the “Third-World” in the context of the 1960s and 1970s America had a strong Maoist mark, as Colleen Lye pointed out, the idea of the “Third World” triggered the revolutionary energies among the new leftists in 1960s America, and Maoism became a binding element between Third Worldism and the New Communist Movement.<sup>214</sup>

The five-month student strike was featured with disruptions, the shutdown of the campus, cancellations, and discontinuations of regular classes, as well as conflicts between protesting students and college authorities and the police. The images of the “San Francisco State College

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<sup>212</sup> There was another TWLF at Berkeley comprised of Afro-American Student Union, Mexican-American Students Coalition, and Asian American Political Alliance.

<sup>213</sup> Judy Tzu-chun Wu, “The U.S. 1968: Third-Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism,” *The American Historical Review* 123, no.3 (2018): 710-716.

<sup>214</sup> Colleen Lye, “Maoism and the Air We Breathe,” review of *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, by Max Elbaum, London and New York, November 29, 2018, <https://communemag.com/maoism-and-the-air-we-breathe/>

Fists” and Acting President S. I. Hayakawa standing atop the truck and disconnecting the wire of the amplifying system have become iconic images of the strikes. George Murray was never reinstated at San Francisco State College, yet the consequence of the strike lasted for decades. By March 1969, the strike came to a conclusion that gave birth to the nation’s first college of ethnic studies.



“San Francisco State College Fists,” by Nacio Jan Brown, [http://libguides.sfsu.edu/ld.php?content\\_id=43409418](http://libguides.sfsu.edu/ld.php?content_id=43409418)



“S.I. Hayakawa Disconnecting System”, Getty Images, <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/acting-president-s-i-hayakawa-tangled-with-militant-news-photo/515553948>

### **Third World Liberation Front Strike at the UC Berkeley**

In the middle of the student strike at the San Francisco State College, across the Bay, students at the University of California, Berkeley launched their strike for the establishment of a department of ethnic studies. At the University of California, Berkeley, it was the Third World Liberation Front (Berkeley) that organized the strike. And that gave the student strike its name. Given that the two branches of the Third World Liberation Front were instrumental in both strikes, some scholars would also refer to the two strikes together as Third World Liberation strikes.

Although the socioeconomic background of the students at the two institutions might differ in that students at the SF State came from working-class background while Berkeley was a research-



oriented university providing courses for middle-class students,<sup>215</sup> the mentality and social context which led the Third World Liberation Front (San Francisco and Berkeley) to strike for the more inclusive and attentive ethnic studies courses were similar. While the SF State College strike started with the request for a Black Studies program and the requests for ethnic studies were added by the Third World Liberation Front (SF State College). In Berkeley, perhaps because the protest was led by the Third World Liberation Front (Berkeley), the requests of the implementations of the Department of Asian Studies, Department of Black Studies, Department of Chicano Studies, and other ethnic studies were announced at the same time.<sup>216</sup> Such inclusivity was the result of the composition of the TWLF (Berkeley).

The Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) within the TWLF was an example of its inclusivity as well as the Third World dimension within it. The AAPA itself was strongly influenced by Maoism. Anti-Vietnam war activists and the Black Panther Party merged and formed the Peace and Freedom Party. Some of the Asian members of the Peace and Freedom Party came up with the AAPA in May 1968.<sup>217</sup> Yuji Ichioka, a participant student at the strike who later became a renowned sociologist in Asian American studies, not only helped found the AAPA, but also coined the term “Asian American”. Both Yuji Ichioka and the AAPA he founded were philosophically influenced by Maoism.<sup>218</sup> Similar to the San Francisco State College strike, the name of the AAPA and the TWLF indicated the self-imagination of the ethnic minorities in the United States as peoples of the

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<sup>215</sup> Jeff Gerth, “Berkeley: son of SF State,” *New Left Notes*, Feb. 28, 1969, pp10-11, <http://revolution.berkeley.edu/assets/BerkeleySonOfSFState.png>

<sup>216</sup> “Strike Demands,” Third World Liberation Front, University of California at Berkeley, Ethnic Studies Library, UC Berkeley.

<sup>217</sup> Madeline Y. Hsu, *Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York City: Oxford University, 2017), 111.

<sup>218</sup> Mike Gonzalez, “It is Time to Debate-and End-Identity Politics,” *The Heritage Foundation*, October 9, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/civil-society/commentary/it-time-debate-and-end-identity-politics>

“Third World” country in the exploitative, colonial, imperialist, and capitalist world system. For example, according to the Asian American activists in AAPA, “the Asian in America is only an extension of Asians in the ‘mother countries’”, and as citizens of America, they felt “an intense camaraderie with the poor and underdeveloped peoples of the world”.<sup>219</sup>

The principle of self-determination was the central issue of the strike. The organizing committee of the strike spoke of the rationale of the principle: “Third World people have been allowed to play only an advisory role in the decision-making process. Thus, if the Administration disagrees with the type of program that is proposed (e.g., ‘if it is too radical’, original words from the committee), it will reject that program”.<sup>220</sup> The self-determination was also reflected in the radical leftists’ insistence on determining the admission policy, the Dean and Chairman of the proposed Third World College. They made it explicit that the admission criteria would be the Third World students who are willing to learn; and “[t]he Dean and chairman should be appointed immediately on the advice of an implementing committee nominated by the Third World faculty and students who prepared this proposal”.<sup>221</sup> The “students who prepared this proposal”, of course, referred to the protestors in the Third World Liberation Front. By self-determination, the TWLFF demanded the autonomy of the Third World College, its admissions policies, faculties, and courses would be controlled by the Third World people. In their own words, “if they feel that Eldridge

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<sup>219</sup> *Asian American Political Alliance*, Berkeley, Box 6, Folder 6, Steve Louie Collection, UCLA.

<sup>220</sup> “The Politics of the Strike” in *A Pamphlet of the Third World Liberation Front, 1969*. Ethnic Studies Collections, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>221</sup> “Proposal for a Third World College”, in L. Ling-chi Wang, *History of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley: Ethnic Studies 98/198* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Department of Ethnic Studies, 2011), 29-37.

Cleaver<sup>222</sup> should teach, then they, and not the administration, not the Regents, not Reagan or the interests they represent should make the decision”.<sup>223</sup>

The students strike at the UC Berkeley in 1969 resulted in the resolution passed by the Academic Senate, which stated:

It is the sense of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate that it favors the establishment of an Ethnic Studies Department reporting directly to the Chancellor and recommends the early appointment of its chairman. Its structure should be of sufficient flexibility to permit evolution into a College.<sup>224</sup>

Another reason behind the insistence on the principle of self-determination by the activists could be drawn from the interview with Ronald Takaki. The radicals wanted an independent ethnic studies department instead of teaching ethnic studies in traditional disciplines such as history, sociology, and economy, etc. The reason was that the radicals considered the traditional disciplines as intolerant of their radical political stances:

Previously, ethnic studies, if they existed at all, were taught through the traditional disciplines. In the late 1960s, it was not viable to teach ethnic studies through the traditional disciplines, especially if one had a radical

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<sup>222</sup> Eldridge Cleaver was one of the early leaders of the Black Panther Party whose radicalism led him on an exile in Cuba, Algeria, Vietnam, China and France. An avid supporter of Mao, he was disillusioned after Mao welcomed President Nixon in 1972, and he became a religious, conservative Republican afterwards. For a more detailed story of Cleaver and his exile, see Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>223</sup> “Support the Strike!”, Third World Liberation Front, UC Berkeley, in Information and Update Sheets of Third World Liberation Front, Ethnic Studies Collection, Ethnic Studies Library, UC Berkeley.

<sup>224</sup> The March 4, 1969 Resolution of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate.

perspective. I had been at UCLA, where a number of professors, including Angela Davis,<sup>225</sup> were fired for political reasons. There seemed to be not much future for radicals in the traditional structure of the university. Berkeley, however, had a unique situation: it could appoint faculty in Ethnic Studies, even recommend them for tenure, and develop a degree of autonomy which did not exist elsewhere in the UC system.<sup>226</sup>

This resolution was a compromise of an establishment of a Department of Ethnic Studies which housed four undergraduate ethnic studies programs: African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano Studies, and Native American Studies. The strike formally ended on March 20, 1969, and one of the most far-reaching educational innovations ever undertaken at Berkeley<sup>227</sup> thus began.

### **Why Maoism, not Marxism?**

The history of the founding of ethnic studies in United States universities, which was submerged in 1960s activism but catalyzed by the two student strikes at the San Francisco State College and the UC Berkeley, shows the guidance and inspiration from Maoism. From protestors of the Students for a Democratic Society reading Mao's works on campus during protests, to members of the AAPA who recalled "every one of us read Mao at that time",<sup>228</sup> Maoism was visible

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<sup>225</sup> Angela Davis was a political activist who was prominent in her role in the Black Panther Party and the civil rights movement. She joined the Communist Party of the United States, and a San Francisco Examiner reporter named her a "known Maoist". Arnold S. Kaufman, Is a Member of the Party Fit to Teach at UCLA?, *The New Republic*, January 4, 1970, <https://newrepublic.com/article/128335/member-party-fit-teach-ucla>

<sup>226</sup> Gloria Bowles, Clara Sue Kidwell and Ron Takaki, Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies at UC/Berkeley: A Collective Interview, *The Radical Teacher* 14, California: Proposition 13 and After (December 1979), 12-18.

<sup>227</sup> L. Ling-chi Wang, *History of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley: Ethnic Studies 98/198* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Department of Ethnic Studies, 2011), 5.

<sup>228</sup> Conversations with previous AAPA members at the gathering of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Asian American studies at UC Berkeley, November 10, 2018.

throughout the protests and the birth of ethnic studies. One might ask why the anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism exuded by the activists were not only considered Marxist but more specifically Maoist. The answer to the question *Why Maoism, not Marxism* is in the imagined Third World that Maoism incentivized.

The activists were natural-born citizens of the United States, yet they allied themselves with the Third World countries who were fighting for national liberation in a world system dominated by imperialism (with the U.S. the biggest perpetrator). The Third World countries, mainly Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba,<sup>229</sup> North Korea and China,<sup>230</sup> challenged Western colonialism by demanding national liberation. The activists imagined that they were fighting the established capitalism within the United States in the same manner. This chapter suggests that Mao's China had a particular appeal among the activists as it stood out as the successful Third World country with the most notable victory in an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist revolution. It served as a primary example in the struggle, and Maoism thus became a powerful spiritual weapon among the activists.

The "Third World" imagination and identification led to a breakaway from the Eurocentric model of social change; Marxism-Leninism was not adequate, and Mao's China and the Chinese Communist Party became the symbol and pioneer for a "Third World" version of Marxism. In the words of Max Elbaum, former activist and author of the renowned book *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, "Maoism captured the initiative within the early New Communist Movement, and Maoist tendencies were at first much better organized than the currents that looked as much or more to the Cuban or Vietnamese Revolutions or to other variants

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<sup>229</sup> Judy Tzu-chun Wu, "The U.S. 1968: Third-Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism", *The American Historical Review* 123, No.3 (2018): 710-716.

<sup>230</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

of Third World Leninism”.<sup>231</sup> Christopher Connery subsumes the term “Third-Worldism” under “thirdness”, a term he argues as one of the fundamental contents of Maoism. He argues that the appeal of Maoism in the United States was as an alternative to Soviet-oriented communist parties.<sup>232</sup> This “thirdness” corresponds to the Third World that Mao conceived: it was neither part of the developed capitalist world nor part of the Soviet bloc.

### **Concrete Analysis of Maoist Influence**

For a better understanding of the impact of Maoism on the establishment of ethnic studies in U.S. universities, we will now turn to the concrete analysis of the Maoist influence. This discussion will focus on examples that demonstrate how Maoism was a source of inspiration for those who demanded the foundation of ethnic studies. It will also look at how it influenced tactics for protest and combating the establishment. Finally, the discussion will cover that of the influence of Maoism on course content and the role of activists-turned scholars in this.

#### ***Maoism as a Source of Inspiration***

Maoism had left a strong influence on the African American activists in their struggles in the civil rights movement or racial equality. Even before the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr., Maoism had already impacted the African-American community, and especially the leading intellectuals. For example, W. E. B. Du Bois, the prestigious sociologist and civil rights activist, visited China in 1936, 1959, and 1963. Maoist China became a model in Du Bois’s search

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<sup>231</sup> Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 4.

<sup>232</sup> Christopher Leigh Connery, “The World Sixties,” in *The Worlding Project: Doing Cultural Studies in the Era of Globalization*, eds. Rob Wilson and Christopher Connery (Santa Cruz, California: New Pacific Press and Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2007), 77-108.

for democracy,<sup>233</sup> and his wife, Shirley Graham Du Bois was buried in Babaoshan Cemetery for Revolutionary Heroes in Beijing.<sup>234</sup>

The Maoist impact on the Black Panther Party needs no further explanation, with many scholars already touching upon the link between the Panthers and Maoism. Bill Mullen recounts the role of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao* in building the organization and ideology of the Black Panther Party. The Panthers not only applied principles from the *Little Red Book* to the American context, but also resold the physical copies of the *Quotations* they bought from the China Book Store in San Francisco to purchase weapons to arm the Panthers against the police in Oakland across the bay.<sup>235</sup> Participant in the 1969 Berkeley strike and later historian Harvey Dong mentions that in 1960s Oakland the Black Panther Party was talking Mao, the *Little Red Book*, and “Serve the People” as a working part of their “Ten-Point Program” for “land, justice, bread and peace”.<sup>236</sup> That Maoism had left a strong impact upon the Black Panthers in terms of their organizational building and their “programs” has already been recognized in academia.

In March 1968, Bobby Seale, a well-known Maoist, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party, spoke in the main auditorium at the San Francisco State and told the audience that

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<sup>233</sup> Bernard W. Bell, “W.E.B. Du Bois' Search for Democracy in China: The Double Consciousness of a Black Radical Democrat,” *Phylon* 51, No. 1 (Fall 2014): 115-127.

<sup>234</sup> Yunxiang Gao, “W.E.B and Shirley Graham Du Bois in Maoist China,” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 10, Issue 1 (Spring 2013): 59-85.

<sup>235</sup> Bill Mullen, “By the book: Quotations from Chairman Mao and the making of Afro-Asian radicalism, 1966–1975”, in Alexander C. Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp245-265. His recounts are based on Bobby Seale's memoir: Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 82.

<sup>236</sup> Harvey Dong, “Transforming Student Elites into Community Activists: A Legacy of Asian American Activism,” in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, eds. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 186-205.

the only power blacks had was with a gun.<sup>237</sup> Considering the Panthers relied on Maoism for political indoctrination and guidance, this remark was very likely a reference to Mao's "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".

The Black Panther Party was also instrumental in popularizing the slogan "Serve the people", and the Red Book for the first time,<sup>238</sup> both items considered as the central theme and elements of global Maoism. "Serve the people", a political outlook first advanced by Mao in revolutionary China, was adopted by the Black Panther Party, and later embraced and elaborated upon by activists in the Asian American Movement.<sup>239</sup> Just in 2016, a book on the history of Asian American studies and Asian America used "Serve the People" as its title.<sup>240</sup>

Terry Collins, a member of the Black Student Union central committee, and a participating student at the San Francisco State College strike, recalled that "there was no such thing as not having [Mao's] Red Book", and indicated that TWLF members relied on Mao's theories as a foundation of their philosophy. Besides, Collins also said that Mao wrote a letter to the TWLF expressing his support for the strike.<sup>241</sup>

The constituting components of the Third World Liberation Front were credited for leading and organizing the strike for the establishment of ethnic studies at both San Francisco State College and the UC Berkeley. Other radical leftist organizations joined in attacking the university

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<sup>237</sup> Helene Whitson compiled, S.F. State Strike 1968-69 Chronology,

[http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=S.F. STATE STRIKE 1968-69 CHRONOLOGY](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=S.F._STATE_STRIKE_1968-69_CHRONOLOGY)

<sup>238</sup> The Asian American Student Movement, Draft, Him Mark Lai Research Files, Asian American-Students, Ethnic Studies Library Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>239</sup> Glenn Omatsu, "Listening to the Small Voice, Speaking the Truth: Grassroots Organizing and the Legacy of Our Movement," in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, eds. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 307-316.

<sup>240</sup> Karen L. Ishizuka, *Serve the People: Making Asian America in the Long Sixties* (London: Verso, 2016).

<sup>241</sup> Reminiscences of Terry Collins: Oral History Interview with Ronald J. Grele, 1984, Student Movements of the 1960s Project, Columbia University Oral History Office, Butler Library, Columbia University.



administration by the flank. Among them was the Progressive Labor Party, which, similar to the Students for a Democratic Society, adhered to Maoism in a more militant and open manner. For example, the Progressive Labor Party, a Maoist communist party, attributed “racism” to capitalism, and argued that only by destroying the capitalist system by revolution could “racism” be ended.<sup>242</sup> The Radical Student Union, too, demanded the release of Bobby Seale,<sup>243</sup> leader of the Black Panther Party, while supporting the establishment of a Third World college.<sup>244</sup>

The most significant textual sources from Mao dedicated explicitly to the Black people’s struggle in America were his two famous statements. In 1963, Mao Tse-tung released *Statement Supporting the American Negroes in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by U.S. Imperialism*. Besides condemning the “fascist atrocities of the U.S. imperialists against the Negro people”, Mao associated the domestic racial conflicts in the U.S. with a global dimension, calling “on the workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, enlightened elements of the bourgeoisie and other enlightened persons of all colours in the world, whether white, black, yellow or brown, to unite to oppose the racial discrimination practised by U.S. imperialism and support the American Negroes in their struggle against racial discrimination”.<sup>245</sup> In this statement, Mao made an influential point that “in the final analysis, national struggle is a matter of class struggle”,<sup>246</sup> a point so influential which to some degree determined the mode of thinking among almost all activists in the 1960s. In the

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<sup>242</sup> “Racism and Revolutionary Violence,” Organizations: Progressive Labor Party (UCB), Ethnic Studies Library Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>243</sup> “Join the National Strike, We Demand,” Organizations: Radical Student Union (UCB), Ethnic Studies Library Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>244</sup> “Principles and Program,” Organizations: Radical Student Union (UCB), Ethnic Studies Library Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>245</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “Statement Supporting the American Negroes in Their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by U.S. Imperialism,” *Peking Review*, (August 12, 1966): 12-13.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

*Statement by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in Support of the Afro-American Struggle Against Violent Repression* released five years later, Mao re-emphasized that “the Afro-American struggle is not only a struggle waged by the exploited and oppressed Black people for freedom and emancipation, it is also a new clarion call to all the exploited and oppressed people of the United States to fight against the barbarous rule of the monopoly capitalist class”.<sup>247</sup>

Mao’s two statements were cited and used extensively in the struggles by the African-American activists as well as other radical groups. Hari Dillon, a student leader of the strike, who was also a member of the MASU as well as a member of the Progressive Labor Party, reflected the ethos that “racism cannot be eradicated in the present system. Only when this capitalist-imperialist system is overthrown can racism be eradicated”.<sup>248</sup> Thus, theoretically, Mao offered the most widely cited inspiration to the 1960s radicals who attributed all the social problems to capitalism and complemented the critics and attacks on Western capitalist modernization. Mao wrote and released the first statement under the request of Robert F. Williams, an African American civil rights leader who visited and lived in China after a period of exile in Cuba. As Mao’s guest, Robert Williams made a public speech condemning discrimination in the U.S. against its Afro-American citizens and supporting their right to use revolutionary violence to counter violence at a demonstration in Beijing to commemorate the third anniversary of Mao’s first statement.<sup>249</sup> Ending the speech by shouting *Long Live Chairman Mao!*, the connection between racial minority activists in the United

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<sup>247</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “Statement by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in Support of the Afro-American Struggle Against Violent Repression,” *Peking Review*, (April 19, 1968): 5.

<sup>248</sup> *Crisis at SF State*, 17.

<sup>249</sup> For speech by Robert Williams, see <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1966/PR1966-33p.htm>

States and Mao's China seemed not a self-imagination by the American activists but a real global phenomenon as well as a reciprocal one.<sup>250</sup>

Activists in the Asian American movement which contributed to the foundation of ethnic studies also took Maoism as their inspiration and guidance. Harvey Dong, an activist himself at the Berkeley strike, recalled that for the activists in the 1960s and 1970s, Mao's China was seen as a positive example in the anti-colonial movements across the world: "...looking towards what we thought was the Chinese socialist ideal."<sup>251</sup> I'm not too sure we knew exactly what that meant in practice at the time. But I'd say, in a very rough way, we saw it [as] a participatory democracy, where everyone has the freedom to be involved in decision-making, and people on the bottom decide how society's going to be run."<sup>252</sup> The "participatory democracy" in the "Chinese socialist ideal" was obviously referring to the Red Guards rebellion, rebellions against the Communist Party establishment during the Cultural Revolution, the most iconic historical event which marked the climax of Mao's China and of Maoism. Such an understanding of the so-called "participatory democracy" resonated with activists in the Third World Liberation Front in particular, and activists who allied themselves with the Third World in general, in their insistence of keeping self-determination as the central goal when they struggled for establishing ethnic studies.

Harvey Dong admitted that the activists did not know much about the practice in the Cultural Revolution, yet this unfamiliarity and little understanding did not stand in the way of

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<sup>250</sup> More details on Robert Williams in China could be seen from "Who is Rob Williams, and what is his relationship to Asians?", by Mary Kochiyama, *Asian Americans for Action*, New York City: Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 3, October 1969, page 4, Box 5, Folder 1, *Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection*, UCLA.

<sup>251</sup> The "Chinese socialist ideal", though Dong did not elaborate it further, was highly likely the practice in Mao's China in general, and the Cultural Revolution in particular.

<sup>252</sup> Harvey Dong, "Transforming Student Elites into Community Activists: A Legacy of Asian American Activism," in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, eds. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 186-205.

studying Mao. Like French Maoism, such unfamiliarity or lack of understanding ironically facilitated the romantic imagination of Maoism, as well as the two-way construction of Maoism. Charlotte Brooks also noted that although these American activists had little knowledge of the Cultural Revolution, they still praised the practice and considered the Cultural Revolution an egalitarian transformation. And the activists, especially the Chinese American activists, saw Mao as an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist revolutionary theoretician and role model.<sup>253</sup>

Among “the Chinese American activists who saw Mao as an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist revolutionary theoretician and role model” Warren Mar was such an example. Mar was among the first generation of American-born Chinese in postwar America. As a member of I Wor Kuen<sup>254</sup> himself, Mar was elected Chair of the Chinatown North Beach Youth Council in 1969. Mar witnessed the youth activities on the streets of San Francisco Chinatown, mostly street gangs, which shifted from centering on traditional organizations run by adults to the newly emerging youth organizations, with the influence of 1960s politics and the lumpenproletariat.<sup>255</sup> As a student taking some of the earliest Asian American Studies courses at the San Francisco State College, Mar read from Eldridge Cleaver to Julius Lester,<sup>256</sup> and finally to Mao. The instructors were “Black Panthers

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<sup>253</sup> Charlotte Brooks, *Between Mao and McCarthy: Chinese American Politics in the Cold War Years* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 239.

<sup>254</sup> I Wor Kuen was a Maoist, Asian American organization. For More information regarding IKW, see William Wei, “The Emergence and Eclipse of Maoist Organizations”, in *The Asian American Movement*, by William Wei. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 203-240.

<sup>255</sup> Warren Mar, “From Pool Halls to Building Workers’ Organizations,” in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, eds. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 32-47.

<sup>256</sup> Julius Lester (1939-2018), was an influential civil rights activist and a veteran professor in Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. On Mao’s influence upon Lester, see Bennett Muraskin, “In Memoriam: Julius Lester,” *Jewish Currents*, (January 24, 2018), <https://jewishcurrents.org/in-memoriam-julius-lester-january-29-1939-january-18-2018/>

or veterans of the strike at San Francisco State and the founders of Asian Studies only two years earlier”:<sup>257</sup>

We were looking for a society that respected and valued people, did not value greed, and did not promote oppression and power for a small group of wealthy mainly white people. We began to study Marx and Lenin but in a particular Mao Tse-Tung Thought. Mao could espouse the theory and practice in such a way that we ordinary people could understand.<sup>258</sup>

Him Mark Lai, another Chinese American activist, and the veteran in the Asian American Student Movement and Asian American Studies at UC Berkeley, recalled that a growing consciousness among the activists was that the study of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Tse-tung “principles” was a necessity, and class struggle was the “fundamental, underlying contradiction of the problem and conditions of all Third World and working class people”.<sup>259</sup> By his analysis, the influence of the Black Panther Party, a well-known Maoist militant organization, was one of the immediate factors preceding and setting the stage for the 1968 Asian American Student Movement.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Warren Mar, “From Pool Halls to Building Workers’ Organizations,” in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, eds. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 32-47.

<sup>258</sup> Ray Tasaki, “Wherever There is Oppression,” in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, eds. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 81-87.

<sup>259</sup> The Asian American Student Movement, Draft, *Him Mark Lai Research Files*, Asian American-Students, Ethnic Studies Library Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>260</sup> The Asian American Student Movement, Draft, *Him Mark Lai Research Files*, Asian American-Students, Ethnic Studies Library Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

In Chinatown, San Francisco, especially for the young Chinese Americans, Mao proved a particularly alluring figure, a widely admired Chinese radical leader whom many conservatives in Chinese American communities hated and feared.<sup>261</sup>

The sway that Maoism held over on Asian American activists led to the use of Maoist elements by the Asian American activists. For example, the name of the Asian American activist group at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, “East Wind”, was from Chairman Mao’s famous, buoyant claim that “The East Wind Prevails over the West Wind”.<sup>262</sup> The Yellow Seed, one of the first Asian American community groups set up in the late 1960s, had a poster of Mao Tse-tung hung in the window at their center at Stockton, California.<sup>263</sup> “Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win”, became the slogan of the Asian Americans for Action on their newsletter.<sup>264</sup>

Like their leftist comrades in Singapore whose stories will be told in the next section, the radical leftists in America, too, celebrated China’s successful testing of the atomic bomb and H-bomb as a ritual to show their admiration of Mao’s China and to prove the validity and vast power ignited by Maoism. “When the Chinese exploded their first H-bomb I wrote a poem saying, in effect, that time for the colored peoples had rebegun”,<sup>265</sup> wrote Amiri Baraka, an African-American Maoist poet in his *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones*.

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<sup>261</sup> Charlotte Brooks, *Between Mao and McCarthy: Chinese American Politics in the Cold War Years*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015, p239.

<sup>262</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “The East Wind Prevails Over the West Wind,” accessed May 24, 2019, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-7/mswv7\\_480.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-7/mswv7_480.htm)

<sup>263</sup> Nelson Nagai, “I Come From a Yellow Seed (For Bobby),” in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, eds. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 248-261.

<sup>264</sup> *Asian Americans for Actions Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 3, page 1, October 1969, Ethnic Studies Collection, Ethnic Studies Library, UC Berkeley.

<sup>265</sup> Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1997), 271.

### ***Maoism as tactics for protest and combating with establishment***

Besides serving as a source of inspiration for the radical activists, some elements in Maoism, such as his most famous saying “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”, the centrality of violence, and his guerrilla warfare strategy, gave the activists guidance on their protesting tactics. It is notable here that the guerrilla warfare in Mao’s analysis of China’s resistance against the Japanese invasion took place in the countryside and mountainous areas, but the protesters localized the guerrilla warfare and emphasized the manipulation of strong-weak powerful relations and flexibility to fit in their campus settings.

The radical leftists at the San Francisco State College carried out faithfully Mao’s doctrine of “There is no construction without destruction”<sup>266</sup> in their protests. Many white radical students were supporting the strike. John Levin and Alex Forman were two prominent participants in the demonstrations. Both of them were affiliated with Maoist-inspired organizations. Levin was a member of the Progressive Labor Party and both were members of the Students for a Democratic Society. Levin was also president of the campus SDS.<sup>267</sup>

Levin put it straightforward in an interview that “We are bent on destroying a university which serves the ruling classes and building a university which serves the people”.<sup>268</sup> Again, Mao’s slogan “Serve the People” found its followers. When the interviewer went on asking what could be included as “the people”, Levin responded he meant “students and community working people, not

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<sup>266</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “On New Democracy,” accessed November 05, 2018,

[https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_26.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm)

<sup>267</sup> William H. Orrick, Jr., *Shut it Down! A College in Crisis, San Francisco State College, October 1968 to April 1969: A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*, San Francisco State College, California, June 1969, p44.

<sup>268</sup> *Crisis at SF State*, 18.

Trustees and corporate interests”.<sup>269</sup> Denouncing him and other participants as “anarchists”, Levin added that they “do want to destroy the political racist values of the university and construct new values”.<sup>270</sup> Forman made similar remarks, saying “it is an attack at the foundation of the university system. This strike is destroying the ivory-tower myth about the university. All the problems of society exist right here on this campus, and we are forcing people to recognize these problems and confront them”.<sup>271</sup>

Guerrilla warfare was one of the key terms in Maoist military doctrines. Mao came up with the guerrilla warfare doctrine in the context of the Sino-Japanese War that the decentralized army made up of ordinary masses could have quickness and flexibility that regular troops might lack in expelling more armed, more powerful armies.<sup>272</sup> The student activists adapted this principle to fit the campus setting in capitalist America. The students on strike created disruptions all over campus, such as stinking bombs clogging up toilets, going to classes and saying, “Don’t you know we’re on strike?”, and doing some political education. The logic was that they were going to disrupt this classroom, but when the police come — boom, the activists disappeared.<sup>273</sup> Jason Ferreira explained the guerrilla warfare by the BSU: “we advance when the enemy retreats, and when the enemy advances, we retreat”.<sup>274</sup> This is precisely how Mao summarized the basic principles of guerrilla warfare in his 1936 article *Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War*. In the latter, Mao famously

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid

<sup>270</sup> Ibid

<sup>271</sup> Ibid

<sup>272</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “On Guerrilla Warfare,” accessed May 23, 2018,

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1937/guerrilla-warfare/>

<sup>273</sup> Jason Ferreira, “1968: The Strike at San Francisco State, Socialist Worker’s series on the history of 1968,” December 13, 2018, <http://socialistworker.org/2018/12/13/1968-the-strike-at-san-francisco-state>

<sup>274</sup> Jason Ferreira, “1968: The Strike at San Francisco State, Socialist Worker’s series on the history of 1968,” December 13, 2018, <http://socialistworker.org/2018/12/13/1968-the-strike-at-san-francisco-state>



stated “[t]he enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue”.<sup>275</sup>

Besides the BSU, the AAPA also adopted the doctrine of guerrilla warfare, one that developed in a war context, in their conflicts with the police whom they condemned as racists. The Asian American Political Alliance invoked Mao’s famous quotes as tactics for guerrilla warfare in their self-defense teaching. From a 1969 file by the AAPA that documented Bryant Fong’s teachings on how to do physical self-defense, tactics included punch & kick, block, gripping, and grabbing holds.<sup>276</sup> The teachings by Bryant Fong were the content of series one of Guerrilla Warfare where the AAPA quoted Mao in a separate sheet at the beginning of their teaching:

WHEN ENGAGING A STRONGER ENEMY:

WITHDRAW WHEN HE ADVANCES;  
HARASS HIM WHEN HE STOPS;  
STRIKE HIM WHEN HE IS WEARY;  
PURSUE HIM WHEN HE WITHDRAWS.

THE ENEMY MUST BE HARASSED, ATTACKED, DISPERSED, EXHAUSTED, AND ANNIHILATED.

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<sup>275</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” accessed June 25, 2018, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_12.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm)

<sup>276</sup> “Organizations: AAPA--Self-Defense Tactics”, Ethnic Studies Library Collections, University of California, Berkeley.

Mao's *Little Red Book*, one of the icons of Maoism, was the guidance for the activists on the one hand; on the other hand, it gave the protesting students at the San Francisco State College the inspiration of satirizing Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa, the Canadian-born Japanese American semanticist. He was instituted as President of the San Francisco State College in order to combat the radical student activists and bring the campus back to normal. The protesting students targeted Hayakawa as the establishment. During the strike, the students imitated the *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, and compiled a satirical *The Sayings of Chairman Hayakawa*. The strikers satirized Hayakawa as "the Sage" and portrayed him and the police as "pigs", a pejorative term that protestors used against the police.<sup>277</sup>

### **Maoism as Course Content, and Activists-turned-Academics**

By the fall 1969 semester, the San Francisco State College had established the College of Ethnic Studies, which comprised of a Black Studies Department, La Raza Studies Department, Asian American Studies Department, and an American Indian Studies Department. Given the freshness of such departments, hiring faculty was not easy at the very beginning, and people from the perspective communities were selected for teaching positions. What was more significant, members of the Black Student Union, with strong inclinations for the doctrines of the Black Panther Party and Maoism, were hired to fill academic positions. Such an act, on the one hand, was the result of the close relationship between ethnic studies and ethnic communities; on the other hand, as the chapter will argue, it was a reflection of the infiltration of radical leftism into academia.

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<sup>277</sup> "The Sayings of Chairman Hayakawa," *SF State College Strike Collection*, accessed December 14, 2018, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187917>

Perhaps no example is more clearly demonstrative of the Maoist link to the studies than the proposal for a department of Asian Studies (in the context of post-strike Berkeley, Asian Studies was synonymous with Asian American studies but different from the Asian Studies in Fabio Lanza's book). For Asian American Studies at UC Berkeley, a B.A. degree-granting program was not offered until five years after its founding in 1969. In the curriculum design of Asian American Studies, the Chinese revolution was the only domestic history of the Asian countries involved in Asian American Studies (China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines). For the Asian Studies of the Third World College at UC Berkeley, the Asian American Political Alliance designed and submitted the proposal. This Maoist-inspired organization did not conceal their inclination towards Mao when they designed the studies proposal. In their submitted proposal, China and the Thought of Mao were singled out for a course on Communism as a part of the *Asian Revolutionary Ideology*, which the AAPA designed it as a core course in the category of The Asian Experience.<sup>278</sup> In the very first course syllabus of the revised Asian studies at UC Berkeley, H. G. Creel's *Chinese Thought: From Confucius to Mao*, and Chow Tse-tung's *The May Fourth Movement* were listed as the required readings<sup>279</sup>. *Thought of Mao* was even offered as a 6-week course by AAPA.

There could be seen a close relationship between the Asian American Studies at Berkeley and the Asian American Concern (another Asian American organization influenced by Maoism). The Asian American Studies Division made it clear that the Asian American Studies Division "is an outgrowth of AAC".<sup>280</sup> The Asian American Political Alliance not only worked on the Asian American Studies at the UC Davis but also sponsored other related activities in other universities.

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<sup>278</sup> Asian Studies Proposal submitted by Asian American Political Alliance.

<sup>279</sup> Yellow Courses, Box 5, Folder 8, Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection. UCLA.

<sup>280</sup> Asian American Studies Newsletter, Box 5, Folder 9, Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection. UCLA.

The two strikes that gave birth to ethnic studies took place at San Francisco and Berkeley, but the establishments of ethnic studies soon bloomed in other universities, especially in other campuses of the UC system.

Like the efforts of AAPA at the UC Berkeley, at the University of California, Davis, it was the Asian American Concern that was proposing the Asian American Studies program, with the course titled “The Asian-American Experience in America”. One interesting character of the Asian American/Ethnic Studies programs was the frequent invitation of outside speakers for different themed classes during the duration of the course. This might have resulted from the lack of full-time professional scholars in a newly born subject field; also, it served as another evidence of these studies’ deep-rooted connections with the Maoist-inspired social activism. Many faculty members were activists themselves, to name just a few: in UC Davis alone, activists-turned faculty included George Woo, L. Ling-Chi Wang, Richard Aoki, and Isao Fujimoto.

The Asian American Political Alliance designed and submitted the Asian Studies Proposal for such academic program at the California State College at Hayward.<sup>281</sup> In fall 1969, the very first Asian American Studies course was implemented at the Cal State Hayward. A screening committee was set up, which would screen any person to be filled in any position.

At the University of California, Santa Cruz, it was the Asian Americans of the Third World Political Alliance that advocated and demanded the inception of courses of Asian American studies. Like their peers in San Francisco State College, UC Berkeley, and UC Davis, the Asian-Americans of the Third World Political Alliance placed no less emphasis on their control over the new course. They demanded that members of the Third World shall review all applications by prospective Third World students to the Santa Cruz campus.

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<sup>281</sup> Asian Studies Proposal, Box 5, Folder 12, *Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection*. UCLA.

Again, like their comrades, in their publications, they used quotes of Mao as their inspirations, guidance, or encouragement. For example, in the middle of a document in which they demanded Asian American studies courses and resolutely announced their principles, they inserted the same Mao quote that had been adopted by the protesting students of the BSU and the AAPA: “When engaging a stronger enemy, withdraw when he advances, harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. The enemy must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated”.<sup>282</sup> Once again, it is of particular interest to see the mentality of the activists to transplant the tactics of guerrilla warfare (the theme of the article from which this quote was taken) to social activism in the U.S. context.

At the University of California, Los Angeles, *Gidra*, the prominent newspaper run by revolutionary students at UCLA, was used as the reading material for the course *CSES 103: Orientals in America*. Publishing the articles by revolutionaries, as well as articles by some high-profile Maoist racial organizations, such as the Red Guard Party, the I Wor Kuen, *Gidra* had been a base for popularizing the political stances of these organizations and arousing the Third World consciousness in the Asian American movement. In explanations of “Suggested Community Project Areas”, the newspaper team was also expected to work in conjunction with the CED 138 course in working on an article or series of articles or any other projects related to the role of the newspaper in relation to the Asian Community.<sup>283</sup>

Many of the earliest faculty of ethnic studies, some of whom are still active in academia and social affairs today, were key student activists in the 1960s who had been inspired by Maoism.

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<sup>282</sup> Students-Other Colleges/Universities, California, Box 6, Folder 8, *Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection*. UCLA.

<sup>283</sup> Asians in America Course Proposal, Box 5, Folder 10, *Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection*. UCLA.

Lauren Chew, a student who participated in the 1968 strike and spent 21 days in jail as a consequence and who was also a member of the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action, one of the components of the Third World Liberation Front (San Francisco State College), later became an Asian American Studies professor at the San Francisco State. Daniel Gonzalez, who was a protesting student in 1968, also became a professor in Asian American Studies at the San Francisco State.<sup>284</sup>

Among these young Chinese American activists, George Woo and Mason Wong played essential roles in the San Francisco State College strike. Wong served as chair of the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action and member of the central committee of the Third World Liberation Front. He was then a Chinatown community youth leader when the strike broke out, and later he went on to teach in Asian American Studies and served as its chair, the academic subject he helped created out of activism. The cases of Chew, Gonzalez, Woo, and Wong illustrate the characteristics of the student activists: they bridged between ethnic communities and ethnic studies, and between student activism and academic subject.

Like their counterparts at the San Francisco State College, activists at UC Berkeley demonstrated similar characteristics. L. Ling-chi Wang was instrumental in the Third World Liberation Front strike at the University of California Berkeley. Wang, a veteran in the studies of Chinese in America, was one of the students who took part in the founding of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the UC Berkeley in 1969, taught its first course in 1969, and became a faculty involved in each step of the development of the Department ever since. He chaired the Department several times from the early 1990s up to his retirement in 2006.

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<sup>284</sup> Rita Berrios Riquelme, "Reflecting on the Impact of the '68 Strike, Then and Now," *Golden Gate Express*, February 22, 2017, <https://goldengatexpress.org/2017/02/22/reflecting-on-impact-of-the-68-strike-then-and-now/>

Him Mark Lai was also a participant in these movements that gave birth to the establishment of ethnic studies in America. His writing (together with Thomas Chinn and Philip Choy) *History of the Chinese in California* series became the outline for a course Lai and Choy co-taught at San Francisco State College in 1969, the first college-level course in the United States on Chinese American history,<sup>285</sup> and the University of California, Berkeley.

Jeanne Quan, a student member of the Asian American Political Alliance who participated in the strikes at the UC Berkeley, later became the first female mayor of the city of Oakland, the birthplace of Berkeley protests and the Asian American Studies. Her husband, Dr. Floyd Huen, was also a prominent member of the Asian American Political Alliance, who represented the organization to release the introduction of AAPA.<sup>286</sup> Besides, Huen was one of the most active radical protestors of the Red Guard Party,<sup>287</sup> a pro-Mao communist group.<sup>288</sup> During the strike which led to the establishment of Asian American Studies, Huen wrote the original proposal, while Quan was sponsored by a professor to teach the first Asian American women's history course at Berkeley.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> L. Ling-Chi Wang, "Him Mark Lai: A Tribute to the Dean of Chinese American History", <https://himmarklai.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Celebrating-HML.pdf?x42697>; Chinese American Hero: Philip P. Choy, *Asian Week*, <http://www.asianweek.com/2009/06/02/chinese-american-hero-philip-p-choy/>

<sup>286</sup> *An Understanding of AAPA* released on August 24, 1968, Ethnic Studies Library Collection, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>287</sup> On the Red Guard Party, see William Wei, "The Emergence and Eclipse of Maoist Organizations", in *The Asian American Movement*, by William Wei. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 203-240.

<sup>288</sup> William Craddick, "FBI Documents Show Chinese Influence in Bay Area Protest Groups," *Disobedient Media*, June 5, 2017, <https://disobedientmedia.com/2017/06/fbi-documents-show-chinese-influence-in-bay-area-protest-groups/> The FBI documents on which Craddick concluded are on *FBI Records: The Vault, Asian American Political Alliance*, <https://vault.fbi.gov/asian-american-political-alliance>

<sup>289</sup> Matthai Kuruville, "Becoming Mayor after Years of Fighting Authority," *SF Gate*, January 2, 2011, <https://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/Becoming-mayor-after-years-of-fighting-authority-2479776.php>

Alex Hing, one of the most prominent members of the militarist, Maoist Red Guard Party, was once invited as the guest speaker for a sociology course at UCLA themed “Impact of Radical Organizations on Community Organizational Structure”. While for the same course, another prominent radical Pat Sumi served as the guest speaker for another class with the theme “Organizing Youth in the Community”.<sup>290</sup>

Yuji Ichioka, then a graduate in UC Berkeley who coined the term “Asian American”, co-founded the AAPA. Ichioka later became an influential scholar in Asian American Studies established by the organization he founded. He was another example of an activist-turned scholar in such studies.

Richard Aoki, the famous Japanese American activist, who was the most prominent Asian American member of the Black Panther Party, served as the coordinator of the Third World Core Course with the course code Ethnic Studies 100. According to the course design, the central purpose of the course “will be to provide advanced students with an interdisciplinary approach to racial and ethnic relations... [T]he course will attempt to actively involve the student in the planning and implementation of future Third World core courses in conjunction and coordination with the Ethnic Studies Department’s staff”.<sup>291</sup> The staff, of course, consisted mostly of Maoist activists. This course design seemed aimed at nurturing successors of this revolutionary course.

The cases of these prominent student activists served as an evidence that a revolutionary action with a particular ideology has been turning into higher education. Some of the participants took the positions of full-time faculty at the educational institutions, such as Lauren Chew, L. Ling-chi Wang, and Him Mark Lai. Others like Jean Quan and her husband Dr Huen became politicians

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<sup>290</sup> Asians in America Course Proposal, Box 5, Folder 10, *Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection*. UCLA.

<sup>291</sup> Yellow Courses, Box 5, Folder 8, *Steve Louie Asian American Movement Collection*. UCLA.



and continued their political activism. While some others, like Alex Hing and Richard Aoki, who were more often remembered for their political radicalism, served as part-time faculty in ethnic studies at U.S. universities. This group of people was instrumental in founding ethnic studies and giving Maoism a prominent yet easily unnoticed place in the subject.

The establishment of ethnic studies in the San Francisco State College and the University of California Berkeley was not just one of the many results of Maoist inspirations over the activists, but also paved the way for Maoism to be spread over to new incoming young students. Steve Yip, a participant in the 1960s activism and a founding member of the radical Maoist group Wei Min She, who entered the University of California at Berkeley in the fall of 1969 right after the establishment of ethnic studies, stated that “the newly founded Asian Studies introduced us to many revolutionary writers of the day, especially the works of Mao”.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, they answered Mao’s call to “Serve the People”, some of them even dropped out of colleges and universities. As the first generation in their families of immigrant backgrounds to enter colleges or universities, they were the most determined ones to abandon colleges compared with activists/revolutionaries after them.

### **Other Social Organizations**

The Black Student Union and the two chapters of the Third World Liberation Front played the leading role in the two student strikes which contributed to the development of ethnic studies in American universities. Apart from these two organizations, there were other groups, many of which

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<sup>292</sup> Steve Yip, “Serve the People-Yesterday and Today: The Legacy of Wei Min She,” in *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America*, ed. Fred Ho (Edinburgh, Scotland and San Francisco, California: AK Press, 2000), 15-30.

were Maoist-inclined, supporting, and supplementing the strikes. In the words of Fred Ho, “[t]he radical and revolutionary activists were in the leadership of creating Asian American studies in college campuses”.<sup>293</sup> Some of the students who participated in the San Francisco State College strikes and the strike at the University of California, Berkeley were members of the Red Guard Party.<sup>294</sup>

The Red Guard Party derived its name from the rebellious youths in China in the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Apart from its name, the political stances, its analysis of international relations, and its party building principles all showed an apparent Maoist mark. The discipline of the Red Guard Party contained *Eight Points of Attention and Three Main Rules of Discipline*, which the Party took from the military doctrine of the Red Army and People’s Liberation Army set by Mao Tse-tung in 1928. The rules were born out of a militant, agricultural context, as especially manifest in “If we ever have to take captives do not ill-treat them”, “Do not take a single needle or a piece of thread from the poor and oppressed masses”, and “Turn in everything captured from the attacking enemy”. However, the Red Guard Party transplanted these principles onto the American soil without even a modification.

Besides the Chinese-dominated Red Guard Party, the white-student-majority organization the Students for a Democratic Society also played a supportive role in the student protest in San Francisco State College. Compared with the BSU and the TWLF, the SDS was even more radical, especially in their attitudes towards the demands being met at the close of the strike. The SDS,

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<sup>293</sup> Fred Ho ed., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (Edinburgh, Scotland and San Francisco, California: AK Press, 2000), Introduction, i-vi.

<sup>294</sup> Fred Ho, “Fists for Revolution: The Revolutionary History of I Wor Kuen/League of Revolutionary Struggle,” in *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America*, ed. Fred Ho (Edinburgh, Scotland and San Francisco, California: AK Press, 2000), 3-13.

unlike the BSU and the TWLF, had a far less genuine desire for such studies. Not only did the SDS ridicule the black students willing to accept an agreement as “admirable dupes”, they even went far as to intend to “use explosives, and make the place too unsafe for students to attend classes”. The SDS carried out Maoism in a more explicit manner. They were proud that they “have succeeded in getting one of them (black student protestors) to read from the Chinese communist handbook over a microphone, on campus”.<sup>295</sup>

## Conclusion and Ongoing Consequences

Throughout the history of the establishment of ethnic studies at American higher educational institutions, Maoism served as the inspiration for the activists, affected their protest strategies, became important parts of the syllabi, and the Maoist-influenced activists occupied the key faculty positions at universities. The establishment of the Department of Ethnic Studies, according to L. Ling-chi Wang, was the beginning of one of the most far-reaching educational innovations ever undertaken at Berkeley.<sup>296</sup> In a 1998 open letter, Wang stated the educational impact of ethnic studies. Ethnic studies emphasized interdisciplinary approaches, which reversely led other more established and traditional departments to adopt “joint faculty appointment, transferring of faculty from one department to another, and offering of courses in both social science and humanities departments parallel to courses already offered in Ethnic Studies”.<sup>297</sup> However, the consequences of the founding of ethnic studies, with Maoism throughout its

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<sup>295</sup> Provocateur Document, Special Collection in SF State Strike Collection, San Francisco State University. <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187990>

<sup>296</sup> Wang, 5.

<sup>297</sup> Wang, 259.

founding, were by no means limited within higher education in America but spreading into other social spheres.

The establishment of ethnic studies, was, first of all, an assault on the liberals and liberalism in America. In the words of Jason Ferreira: “liberals just want stability; they don’t want to change the power dynamics”.<sup>298</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, the liberals were in the middle between the right and left. With fifty years of practice of radical leftism in America, now in the contemporary context of America, the liberals were almost equal to, and replaced by the leftists. The establishment of ethnic studies thus precluded the leftists’ infiltration and occupation and replacement of the liberals after the 1960s, though Barry Rubin claimed such a process took place from the 1930s onwards.<sup>299</sup>

Another consequence of the founding of ethnic studies was that it posed a challenge to the nation-building of the United States and facilitated identity politics in the following decades. Yuji Ichioka, then a graduate at the UC Berkeley who coined the term “Asian American”, co-founded the AAPA. Ichioka later became an influential scholar in Asian American Studies established by the organization he founded, and he was another example of an activist-turned scholar in such studies. Following his coined term, more derivatives, such as Chinese American, Japanese American, together with African/Afro-American, Latin American, Mexican American came to the fore. As an academic program set up by the radical leftists, ethnic studies inculcated a political sense of radical leftism. Students in ethnic studies were inspired to view themselves not only as American citizens, but more as Asian/African/Mexican, and other hyphenated Americans. Merle Woo, the radical

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<sup>298</sup> Jason Ferreira, “1968: The Strike at San Francisco State, Socialist Worker’s series on the history of 1968,” December 13, 2018, <http://socialistworker.org/2018/12/13/1968-the-strike-at-san-francisco-state>

<sup>299</sup> Barry Rubin, *Silent revolution: How the Left Rose to Political Power and Cultural Dominance* (New York: Broadside Books, 2014).

activist and instructor of literature at both UC Berkeley and San Francisco State College, was said to find “her identities as an Asian American through the Ethnic Studies struggle in the 60s”.<sup>300</sup>

In his open letter of 1998, Wang’s call for replacing the Ethnic Studies with a “more inclusive” American Studies reflected a potential divisive nature of such subjects. “Ethnic studies came into being as a separate academic entity in late 1960s precisely because of the failure of American studies to be inclusive. However, over the past thirty years, American studies itself has undergone significant changes and has, in fact, become more inclusive”.<sup>301</sup> Wang did not make it explicit that Ethnic Studies exuded a less inclusive or even divisive nature, though, yet such concerns were felt throughout Wang’s open letter.

Lastly, the practice of the ethnic studies did not help to achieve or maintain the quality of higher education. In a letter to the Chairmen of the Social Science and Humanities Departments opposing the creation of Ethnic Studies Department at the UC San Diego, Melford E. Spiro, a professor from the Department of Anthropology, expressed explicitly that the available candidates for faculty positions were either second-rate, or black militants who viewed such department as vehicles for political indoctrination and political action; and the creation of such a second-rate department would be a disservice to the black students and all, and a threat to academic standards.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Emily Woo Yamasaki, “Perspective of a Revolutionary Feminist,” in *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America*, ed. Fred Ho (Edinburgh, Scotland and San Francisco, California: AK Press, 2000), 47-51.

<sup>301</sup> “A Proposal to Transform Ethnic Studies into American Studies”, April 29, 1998, Ling-Chi Wang, in L. Ling-chi Wang, *History of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley: Ethnic Studies 98/198* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Department of Ethnic Studies, 2011), 260

<sup>302</sup> “Objection to Creation of Ethnic Studies Department”, letter by Melford E. Spiro, Boxer 45, Folder 22, Third World Studies, 1969, Geisel Library, University of California, San Diego.

During the strike, one of the demands proposed by the BSU and TWLF was the unconditional admissions of black and other non-white students. The BSU demanded that “all Black students wishing so, be admitted in Fall 1969”,<sup>303</sup> while the TWLF demanded that “in the fall of 1969, all applications of non-white students be accepted”.<sup>304</sup> This emphasis on race but not the students’ qualifications was the American version of the practice in Mao’s China that the class background determined the social mobility of the masses. In Mao’s China, roughly between 1949 and 1978 when “taking the class struggle as the key link<sup>305</sup>” was abolished, the class of one’s father was the decisive factor in determining one’s admission to schools, promotion in careers, and even personal fates. Students with family backgrounds such as landlords, rich peasants, rightists, or with relatives overseas or in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, were often inadmissible, while students who came from poor peasants’ families were admitted, even with far lower scores.<sup>306</sup>

When the protesters at the two strikes demanded the unconditional admissions for non-white students rather than their actual qualifications, it is foreseen that it had consequences, even in 50 years’ time. In 2019, the admission of Kyle Kashuv, an 18-year-old conservative, pro-gun rights, pro-Trump, activist, was rescinded by Harvard University due to a “racist” comment he had made two years before. However, back in 2017, Ziad Ahmed was admitted into Stanford University when he just wrote the same words “BlackLivesMatter” 100 times in his application essay. Anyone familiar with the Cultural Revolution of China would immediately think of Zhang Tiesheng (张铁

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<sup>303</sup> Demands and Explanation from the Black Student Union, *SF State College Strike Collection*, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187909>

<sup>304</sup> List of 15 Demands, SF State College Strike Collection, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187915>

<sup>305</sup> “以阶级斗争为纲”, translation was taken from China Daily, see “The Great Historical Course of Reform and Opening Up,” *China Daily*, [http://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2007-10/31/content\\_6218870\\_3.htm](http://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2007-10/31/content_6218870_3.htm)

<sup>306</sup> “Sishiwu ge ‘jiating chushen’ daima 45 个 ‘家庭出身’ 代码” [Forty-five Codes for “Family Origins”], <http://mjsh.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/Book.aspx?cid=4&tid=465> (accessed May 10, 2018)

生), “hero of the blank answer sheet”. Zhang sat for the 1973 college entrance exam of Liaoning, China. Unable to answer questions of the physics and chemistry exams, he wrote a letter on the back of the examination paper expressing how hard he had worked on the countryside, the disgust with the bookworms who had never done a day of physical work, and his frustration that the few hours of written exams could determine the qualification of candidates. Zhang’s letter fit into the political agenda of denigrating the value of education. Not only was he admitted into the Academy of Agriculture of Liaoning, but also became a national hero and later elected as a member of the fourth plenum of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of China. It is hard not to associate Ziad Ahmed with Zhang Tiesheng and come to the conclusion that after 50 years of radical leftist practice in America, in which the Ethnic Studies and Maoism were significant participants, that the United States now has its own “hero of the blank answer sheet”.

The US section in the dissertation has traced the history of the founding of ethnic studies in the United States higher educational institutions. It argues that during the student protests for ethnic studies and the program’s initial stages, Maoism served as the theoretical source of inspiration, it provided protesters with tactics in their battles against establishments and authorities, and after the strikes, those Maoist-influenced activists-turned-scholars occupied teaching positions in ethnic studies programs and injected Maoist ideas into the course contents. The founding of ethnic studies marked the highlight of the Maoist moment in America in the 1960s and 1970s in which activists, most of which were of ethnic minority, engaged in the struggle between an imagined Third World and imperialist forces, linking themselves with actors elsewhere in a global history of Maoism.

The above observation and analysis thus move beyond the current studies on Maoism in America which put political organizations, especially some Asian American or other ethnic organizations in the 1960s and 1970s at the center of analysis. If political organizations were the central perspective in the studies of Maoism in America, then readers, including researchers would come to the conclusion that Maoism in America drastically waned evidenced by the dissolution of these organizations. However, if the observation angle shifts to the establishment of ethnic studies, then a different conclusion could be that the legacies of Maoism linger on to this day.

### SECTION THREE MAOIST MOMENT IN SINGAPORE

The 1960s was a tumultuous yet a critical period in the history of Singapore. The tiny island nation faced with challenges both inside and outside the country. Its merger with Malaysia in 1963 and Singapore's sudden independence in 1965 accelerated the already deepened internal political fissures between the conservative, ruling elites, represented by the People's Action Party, and the radical leftists, oftentimes pro-Malaya and pro-China, represented by the Barisan Sosialis (the Socialist Front in Malay language). The Malaysian authority came to grips with the Maoist-instigated guerilla warfare at the Thai-Malaysian border by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) in the 1968, which was historically known as the second Malayan Emergency.<sup>307</sup> Likewise, the internal political struggles of Singapore coincided and intersected with the peak of global Maoism. The Barisan Sosialis, embracing and employing Maoism, rejected both the Republic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaysia and openly supported and acclaimed the Malayan Communist Party. All these factors resulted in the 1960s and 1970s being not only significant in the stability of Singapore, but also crucial in the nation-building in the young republic.

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<sup>307</sup> There are numerous monographs and articles on the insurgencies of the Malayan Communist Party in the 1960s. To name just two publications: Wen-Qing Ngoei, *Arc of Containment: Britain, the United States, and Anticommunism in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2019); Wang Gungwu and Ong Weichong eds., *Voice of Malayan Revolution: The CPM Radio War against Singapore and Malaysia, 1969-1981* (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 2009).



This section on Maoist moment in Singapore takes the Barisan Sosialis, whose embrace and application of Maoism would have led Singapore to a different developmental path, as the central unit of analysis. In 1959, Singapore held its first ever general election after the British granted full internal self-governance. This election saw the People's Action Party (hereafter PAP), then comprised of both conservative, right-wing, English-educated elites and radical, left-wing, Chinese-language, socialist-leaning activists, achieve a landslide victory, winning 43 seats out of 51. In 1961, the two sides within the PAP came into a conflict over the issue of merger with Malaysia. The pro-communist, left-wing faction, who were strongly against the merger with Malaysia, including 13 members of the legislative assembly, split from the PAP and reconstructed as the Barisan Sosialis.<sup>308</sup> Dr. Lee Siew Choh (李绍祖) was the party chairman, whereas notable members included Lim Chin Siong (林清祥), Chia Thye Poh (谢太宝), and S. Woodhull. 70% of the PAP members left the party to join the Barisan Sosialis.<sup>309</sup> The Barisan Sosialis members also included some participants in the University of Malaya Socialist Club, such as Poh Soo Kai (傅树介) and James J. Puthuchery.<sup>310</sup> On February 3, 1963, the Singapore government carried out a large-scale security operation which was known as Operation Coldstore. During the operation, more than 100 political activists were detained, including many prominent members of the Barisan Sosialis. The operation severely weakened the Barisan Sosialis and paved the way for Singapore's merger to form Malaysia. However, in the aftermath of Operation Coldstore, the political struggles between the Barisan Sosialis and Singapore government were also intensified.

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<sup>308</sup> John Drysdale, *Singapore: Struggle for Success* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1984), 283.

<sup>309</sup> Cheah Boon-Kheng, "The Left-wing Movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s: 'an era of hope or devil's decade?'," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, No. 4 (2006): 634-649.

<sup>310</sup> See Loh Kah Seng, Edgar Liao, Lim Cheng Tju and Seng Guo-Quan, *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: Tangled Strands of Modernity* (Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

Singapore's independence from Malaysia on August 9, 1965 did not mitigate the political confrontations between the two sides. The Barisan Sosialis strongly rejected the independence of the Republic of Singapore as neo-imperialist plots. They attacked Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Tunku Abdul Rahman as lackeys of imperialism. Besides, they openly acclaimed the insurgencies by the Malayan Communist Party-led National Liberation Army at the Thai-Malaysian border area.

As the second largest political party in Singapore from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s, the Barisan Sosialis once achieved the most successful election results for any non-ruling party in the history of the Republic of Singapore. Yet the Barisan Sosialis remains an understudied research topic in the research on Singapore, especially with regard to activism after the independence of Singapore. Scholars such as Bilveer Singh and Lee Ting Hui provide lengthy accounts of the communist struggles in Singapore, but do not detail too much for developments after 1965 and the Barisan Sosialis.<sup>311</sup> Cheng Yinghong has perhaps the only research article regarding the rise and fall of the Barisan Sosialis in which Cheng argues that the Cultural Revolution led to the radicalization and demise of the party.<sup>312</sup>

This section promotes a nuanced understanding of the Barisan Sosialis in particular, and the leftism in the history of Singapore in general by taking the embrace and realization of Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis as a unit of analysis. By providing two chapters, the section constructs

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<sup>311</sup> See Bilveer Singh, *Quest for Political Power: Communist Subversion and Militancy in Singapore* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2015); Lee Ting Hui, *The Open United Front: The Communist Struggle in Singapore, 1954-1966* (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1996).

<sup>312</sup> Cheng Yinghong, "The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Decline of the Left in Singapore," in *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7 (2011): 211-246.

Singapore's "Maoist moment" by examining the impact of Maoism upon the nation-state building of Singapore.

The reason that this section considers the Barisan Sosialis influenced by Maoism, but not Marxism or Communism is twofold. The first dimension is that Communism and Maoism were highly intertwined and overlapped in the Singapore context, as they were elsewhere in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. Lee Kuan Yew, the founding Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore who fought against the Communists at the very beginning of the nation-building of Singapore, equated Communists in Singapore with Maoists.<sup>313</sup> He might lump them together not for academic classification purposes. However, throughout this Singapore section, readers could find the overt reference to and appreciation of Mao by the Barisan Sosialis. That brings us to the second dimension: the Barisan Sosialis embraced Maoism in a highly overt, visible, and discernible manner. A closer look at the overt embrace of Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis constitutes an integral part of this section.

Chapter 5 looks at the Barisan Sosialis's embrace and adoption of Maoism as its spiritual weapon in their heated political confrontations with the ruling party. The Barisan Sosialis worshipped and practiced the Maoist rituals, methods, arts performances, and semi-religious personality cult. As the second largest political party in Singapore between 1961 and the mid-1970s, the Barisan Sosialis, throughout their party publications, openly and devoutly embraced Maoism as its theoretical guidance. Their rituals to Maoism included the arts performances and their worshipping of Mao. The arts performances were manifesting the ethos of Mao's Yenan Talk. Their worshipping of Mao, many times inconsistent with historical realities, fell into a personality cult.

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<sup>313</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000, Singapore and the Asian Economic Boom* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 441.

The devotion to Maoism rendered the Barisan Sosialis stuck in fierce political confrontations with their own comrades. For example, many high-ranked Barisan Sosialis members arguing the independence of Singapore was an “established fact” were denounced and penalized, such as S. Thendayatha Bani, Kow Kee Sing and Chio Cheng Thun. Such a devotion also led the Barisan Sosialis to engage in polemic war with other Maoist-inspired political parties, such as the Partai Rakyat, in an ideological competition for who was more “revolutionary”. One of the contentions within the Barisan Sosialis and between the Barisan Sosialis and other leftist groups was the fusion between the two struggle paths: extra-parliamentary path and struggles within the parliamentary system. In the Singapore context, the former referred to a rejection of the legitimacy of the Parliament of Singapore and a resort to street politics, while the latter accepted the existence of the parliament and restricted political struggles within the parliament.

Chapter 6 recounts the actions of the Barisan Sosialis as the result of their adoption of Maoism. The theoretical embrace of Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis included: 1) rejecting the reality of the existence of the Republic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaysia; denying the border between the two countries; refuting the new national identity, and regarding the existence of the two sovereign countries as the plot of neo-imperialism; 2) inculcating children with Mao’s teachings in their kindergartens; 3) boycotting the parliament and the parliamentary elections, and resorting to extra-parliamentary street struggles; and 4) opposing any policy of the PAP, even the *Garden City* initiative.

What the Barisan Sosialis so avidly rejected, in essence, was the nation-state of the Republic of Singapore and the awareness of the national identity associated with it. Marked by the underperformances in the 1972, 1976, and 1980 Singapore parliamentary elections, the Barisan Sosialis was gradually marginalized in the political arena of Singapore, wrecking the entire leftist movement in Singapore but paving the way for the realization of the ruling elites’ blueprint of Singapore’s nation-state building. The Singapore “as we know it” was only possible when the Maoist-influenced Barisan Sosialis was defeated.

The introduction chapter of the dissertation has presented literature published in Singapore and Malaysia in recent years with revisionist approaches to the history of the postwar years. As opposed to the literature, this section looks at the early post-independence era of Singapore.

Different from Cheng Yinghong's article which revolves around the leftwing movement, this section, by introducing the concept of a Singapore's "Maoist moment", analyzes the adoption of, the adherence to, and the efforts by the Barisan Sosialis in bringing Maoist ideals to reality in Singapore. Unlike many other revisionist literatures published in Singapore which focuses on pre-independent era, this section looks at the early and crucial stage of the nation-building of Singapore.

Historian Cheah Boon-Kheng proposed that the 1960s witnessed the rise of communal politics,<sup>314</sup> which referred to politics along racial lines. Cheah argued that defeating racial politics, or Malay ethnocentrism, was the first phase of the nation-building of Singapore. Based on reading and analyzing the organizational publications of the Barisan Sosialis, as well as other leftist publications,<sup>315</sup> this section moves further and goes beyond Cheah's focused stage of the nation-building in Singapore. It uncovers that the Barisan Sosialis, impacted by Maoism, had self-conscripted itself into an imagination of Third World in a struggle against the U.S. imperialism, thus linking them with the translators in China and the protestors and activists in America. They called both Singapore's merger with Malaysia and later separation from it as neo-imperialist plots. The governments of Singapore and Malaysia, headed by Lee Kuan Yew and Tunku Abdul Rahman, became their targeted enemies. The section argues that defeating the Maoist-inspired radical leftism by the ruling conservative elites in the 1960s and 1970s was the second phase of Singapore's nation-building which ultimately made possible a national identity of Singapore citizens, a national Singaporean identity distinct from either ethnic Chinese or Malaysian identity. When addressing the significance of struggling for a "unified Malaya", the first emphasis by Chairman Lee Siew Choh

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<sup>314</sup> Cheah Boon-Kheng, "The Left-wing Movement in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo in the 1960s: 'an era of hope or devil's decade?'," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, No. 4 (2006): 634-649.

<sup>315</sup> The references from the Barisan Sosialis Front (阵线报) and other leftist publications are basically in traditional Chinese, English translations are provided by author unless specifically stated otherwise.

was “to build the correct awareness of a Malayan nation and to defeat the plot of the British and American imperialism and the regimes of Tunku Rahman and Lee Kuan Yew in creating the hypocrite and reactionary concepts of ‘Malaysians’ and ‘Singaporeans’”.<sup>316</sup> Denying the existence of both the Republic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaysia, the Barisan Sosialis’ insistence of a unified Malaya constituted an alternative and challenge to the elites’ blueprint for the nation-building of the Republic of Singapore.

Unlike other case country analyses in this dissertation, the Singapore section has two chapters. The reason is that the Maoist moment in Singapore came to an end in the 1980s, thus completing the Maoist encounter in Singapore. Mao’s portrait still hangs in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The identity politics and the left (in the disguise of liberalism)-conservative clashes still haunt the United States to this very day. However, in the case of Singapore, when the Barisan Sosialis was marginalized in the politics of Singapore, China under Deng Xiaoping’s de-Maoist reform ceased to be the source of inspiration for the Singapore leftists, and a reversed bilateral relationship emerged. Singapore started to influence China with its developmental pattern and the Maoist moment in Singapore ended. With it, a solid Singapore identity took root.

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<sup>316</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 330, May 4, 1969.

## CHAPTER FIVE THE THEORETICAL ADHERENCE TO MAOISM BY THE BARISAN SOSIALIS

When the Barisan Sosialis was founded in 1961, it was far from a radical leftist political party with Maoist imprint, at least not seen from its Party Constitution and Regulations. The core of the Party Constitution was the first clause of the second section: that the aim of the Party was to eliminate colonialism and build an independent and unified Malayan nation comprised of the federated states of Malaya (today's Peninsular Malaysia) and the island of Singapore (today's Republic of Singapore).<sup>317</sup>

In the wake of the 1963 Operation Coldstore, the intensified domestic political confrontations between the Barisan Sosialis and the ruling party coincided with the burgeoning global Maoism. The intensity of the political struggles between the left-wing Barisan Sosialis and the conservative right-wing ruling elites only became fiercer after Singapore's independence in 1965. In the contexts of both the independence of Singapore and the rise of global Maoism, the Barisan Sosialis turned rapidly to Maoism as their theoretical weapon against the government. Maoist rituals, methods, arts performances, semi-religious personality cults, etc., were practiced and worshipped by the Barisan Sosialis.

This chapter traces the Barisan Sosialis' theoretical adherence to Maoism. They embraced Maoism as a spiritual weapon, carried out the ethos of Mao's Yenan Talk in their revolutionary arts performances, and built a personality cult of Mao. Their loyal adherence to Maoism led to a polemic war with other Maoist political organizations in Singapore, such as the Partai Rakyat, which also

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<sup>317</sup> Party Constitution and Regulations of the Barisan Sosialis. Independent Publication by the Barisan Sosialis.

strived to represent the true revolutionary spirit of Maoism. This theoretical embrace of Maoism laid the foundation for their concrete actions that challenged the nation-building blueprint by the ruling elites, which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

### **Embrace of Maoism as a Spiritual Weapon**

The second half of the 1960s in Singapore was marked by political confrontations. The independence of the Republic of Singapore in 1965, the outbreak of China's Cultural Revolution in 1966, and the global rise of Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s coincided and converged. In this context, Maoism provided the Barisan Sosialis members a spiritual weapon in their political struggles against the Singapore government, which often resulted in the Barisan Sosialis members being arrested for their political radicalism. For one example, on December 4, 1967, one of the detainees of the June 13 arrests invoked Mao's quotes when defending himself at court.<sup>318</sup> When leaving the court, some of the detainees shouted Maoist slogans, such as "To rebel is justified", "Long Live Chairman Mao", and sung revolutionary songs like "Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman", "Making Revolution Depends on Mao Zedong Thought", and "Resolute and unafraid of sacrifice, surmount every difficulty to win victory". According to the description on the Barisan Sosialis Front, the acts of the defiant detainees struck a chord with the bystanders who shouted "Long Live Chairman Mao" alongside.<sup>319</sup>

Like many organizational publications of leftist groups of the time, the Barisan Sosialis Front cast Mao's China in a very positive and inspiring light while it castigated the American and British imperialism in a ruthless and fierce manner. The United States, in particular, was portrayed

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<sup>318</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 259, December 10, 1967.

<sup>319</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 260, December 17, 1967.



not only as the biggest imperialist country which threatened the peace and stability across the world but also as a country whose citizens live miserably domestically.<sup>320</sup> Issue 123 of the Barisan Sosialis Front, for instance, compared the lives of laborers in Mao's China, the United States, and Malaya. Besides attributing the misery of Malayan laborers to foreign capitalist exploitation, it also contended that the high wages of American workers were offset by the high cost of living, harsh working conditions, and a lack of social security. At the same time, the article gave prominent space to the lives of Chinese laborers before and after 1949, a depiction too positive to be objectively true.<sup>321</sup> Mao's China was the only country in the Barisan Sosialis Front to receive positive coverage.<sup>322</sup>

The Barisan Sosialis employed Maoist principles in their internal party building. The study brochure titled *Six Don't Forgets* published by the Barisan Sosialis<sup>323</sup> was a clear indication, "Don't forget to enhance the unity of the world's anti-imperialist peoples" was a response to Mao's hailed proletarian internationalism; "Don't forget Class Struggle" was the famous Mao's slogan at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee; and "Don't forget to trust the masses and count on the masses" was clearly an inspiration of one of the key elements in Maoism, the mass line.<sup>324</sup>

Mao launched several campaigns and movements aimed at thought reform for the purpose of party building, such as the Rectification Movement, the Anti-Rightist Movement. For their own party building, the Barisan Sosialis also invoked thought reform in their own campaign. In

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<sup>320</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 102, November 28, 1964.

<sup>321</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 123, May 1, 1965.

<sup>322</sup> See *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 80, August 15, 1964, and *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 90, September 26, 1964.

<sup>323</sup> "Six Don't Forgets," published by the Barisan Sosialis, October 21, 1967.

<sup>324</sup> Paul Saba, "Chairman Mao's Teaching on the Mass Line: Combining Communist Leadership with Masses," *The Call* 5, No. 34 (December 27, 1976), seen at <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/nem-3/call-mass-line.htm>

September 1966, the Barisan Sosialis-affiliated Branch Information bulletin covered the news of the “Two-Anti movement”, i.e., “anti-rightist opportunism to establish the correct struggle path, and anti-looseness and sloppiness to establish the fine study attitude”.<sup>325</sup> The campaign aimed at removing rightist opportunism, individualism, liberalism and reactionary elements among the leftists to ensure the leftist movement “never loses color”.<sup>326</sup> Similar movements used similar methods that were adopted by the various Mao-launched thought reform movements: establish study units, organize studies around the blackboards, write big-character posters, stickers, criticisms and big debates, etc.<sup>327</sup> Who would be labelled as rightist opportunists? According to the official definitions set by the Barisan Sosialis, politically, the rightist opportunists included those who opposed the boycott of the parliament, recognized the independence of Singapore, argued for the importance and necessity of parliamentary struggle, put economy first and politics second, etc.<sup>328</sup>

In the New Year resolution released by the editorial department of the BSF, the Barisan Sosialis openly declared that they would place propagating Mao Zedong Thought their central job of the coming 1968:

The year 1967 was the year the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution achieved its decisive victory. The victory symbolized that the entire world had entered an era with Mao Zedong Thought as its flag and that the center of the world revolution had shifted to Beijing...

In this great era, in this glorious year, the people of Malaya had been following the direction of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China, taking Mao Zedong Thought as the weapon, and undertaking struggles across the country against American and British imperialism and Rahman/Lee Kuan Yew puppet group. The

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<sup>325</sup> *Branch Information*, Issue One, West Branch Organizing Committee, Barisan Sosialis, September 15, 1966.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> *Branch Information*, Issue Three, West Branch Organizing Committee, Barisan Sosialis, October 4, 1966.

revolutionary masses of Malaya did their very best to learn, apply, and propagate Mao Zedong Thought, and carry out the right policy with Mao Zedong Thought as its guiding principle...

Our party organ, the Barisan Sosialis Front, propagated Mao Zedong Thought, publicized the correct extra-parliamentary road for struggle, reported the struggles by the masses, and expressed people's voices...<sup>329</sup>

For leftists in Singapore and Malaya, Maoism, represented by both Mao's quotations and his instructions, as well as the Chinese revolutionary experiences, became the guidance and spiritual weapon against the conservative ruling forces.

In their embrace of Maoism, The Barisan Sosialis sometimes adopted a ritualistic approach to the ideology. The Barisan Sosialis answered Mao's call of *Serving the People* by doing some welfare work, such as cleaning drainages, building bridges and roads. Some of the work units within the Barisan Sosialis were titled "Anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism unit", "Serve the people unit", and "Liberate Malaya unit". On their way to "serve the people", these work units "held high the billboards of Mao's quotations, sang revolutionary songs and quotations songs".<sup>330</sup> Even the principles during China's Great Leap Forward, i.e., "quantity, quickness, quality, economic", became the guidance for the welfare work by the Barisan Sosialis.<sup>331</sup>

Unlike most social activists in the United States, the Barisan Sosialis approached Maoism by way of referring to Mao in ceremonies, quotation songs, and arts performances. One such example was the one-year anniversary of commemorating the death of Cai Nan Bao, a Barisan Sosialis member who passed away under detainment. Mao's quotations, taken from his well-known article

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<sup>329</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 262, January 1, 1968. The original text is in Chinese, I translated it into English.

<sup>330</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 298, September 15, 1968.

<sup>331</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 299, September 22, 1968.

*Serve the People*, that “Wherever there is struggle there is sacrifice, and death is a common occurrence. But we have the interests of the people and the sufferings of the great majority at heart, and when we die for the people it is a worthy death”, was scripted into a quotation song and was performed by the Barisan Sosialis members at the Jurong Branch at the ceremony commemorating the one-year anniversary of Cai’s death.<sup>332</sup>

Mao’s *Serve the People* was delivered as a eulogy for Zhang Side, a soldier who sacrificed his life in a collapse accident and who became world-known by Mao’s article. Here, the Barisan Sosialis made an elusive metaphor of Zhang to Cai Nan Bao, which was an act of self-conscription into the army of Mao, in the context of Southeast Asia. And indeed, after reciting Mao’s “resolute and unafraid of sacrifice, surmount every difficulty to win victory” in the classic *The Foolish Old Man Who Moved the Mountains*, comrades at the Bukit Panjang plugged red flags and “glittering boards of Mao’s quotations”, and recited aloud Mao’s *Serve the People* in the rain.<sup>333</sup>

The Barisan Sosialis made it clear that they took Maoism as their guidance in their publications. There were several evidences to support this. In commemorating the seventh anniversary of the Party, the BSF’s front page announced that “we [the Barisan Sosialis] will continue to widely and deeply implement Mao Zedong Thought. We will associate Mao Zedong Thought with the revolutionary practices of Malaya and use Mao Zedong Thought to direct the revolutionary practices of Malaya, to ensure the eventual victory of the revolution”.

In an October 1971 news report about the celebration ceremony of the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China organized by Bank of China at Singapore, the Barisan Sosialis described the wide popularity that the PRC and Chairman Mao enjoyed among the

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<sup>332</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 315, January 12, 1969.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

local people. The calendar books of the year 1972 were distributed to participants, and when it was announced that the number of recipients had reached 35,000, rambunctious clappings and chantings “Long Live Chairman Mao!” “Long Live the People’s Republic of China!” reportedly filled the air.<sup>334</sup> According to the news report, an old man from Canton, bowing to Mao’s picture on the board, spoke to people around him, tears in eyes: “Without the leadership of the great leader Chairman Mao, there is no happy socialist China today”.<sup>335</sup> The news report also documented a group of laborers gathered in front of Mao’s picture, who sang the revolutionary song “A Long, Long Life to Chairman Mao”, and chanted “Long Live Chairman Mao” slogans. Family members of political detainees in Singapore also attended the Bank of China celebration and donated a silver banner, a typical Chinese manner of expressing appreciation, which inscribed Mao’s famous words on his Chungking negotiations: “How to give ‘tit for tat’ depends on the situation. Sometimes, not going to negotiations is tit-for-tat; and sometimes, going to negotiations is also tit-for-tat”.<sup>336</sup>

### Joining Mao’s Cultural Army

In the 1942 *Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art*, Mao famously stated that “a cultural army... is absolutely indispensable for uniting our own ranks and defeating the enemy”.<sup>337</sup> To embrace Maoism as the theoretical weapon, the Barisan Sosialis spontaneously absorbed the ethos. The importance of arts and the association with revolutionary cause were emphasized in the Barisan Sosialis’ learning of Maoism.

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<sup>334</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 455, October 10, 1971.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.* The words are taken from Mao’s writing *On Chungking Negotiations*, 1945, October 17, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4\\_06.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_06.htm)

<sup>337</sup> Mao, Tse-tung, "Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art," Delivered in May 1942. Accessed May 15, 2019. [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm)

The New Year Issue of the *Barisan Sosialis Front* of 1968 was featured with references to Maoism by the *Barisan Sosialis*, leftist trade unions, nine alumni associations, arts groups, and the editorial department of the *Barisan Sosialis*. The *Barisan Sosialis*-related or affiliated arts groups stated that “we, genuine progressive and revolutionary arts workers at Malaya, were deeply encouraged and boosted by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Alongside with revolutionaries, we carried out learning, using and mastering Mao Zedong Thought, and we have learnt that the art must serve the industrial and agricultural masses...”<sup>338</sup> Such a claim might be of propaganda nature, but the leftist groups and *Barisan Sosialis* put it into practice in their performances and poems.

Besides these verbal appreciations, the *Barisan Sosialis* carried out the spirit of the talk in their performances at new year celebrations and party anniversary celebrations. The 1968 Chinese New Year celebration by the Pineapple Industry Union of Johor Bahru paid homage to Maoism with the programs, including recitals “Red Hearts always to the Sun”, “To Rebel is Justified”, and one with the theme of the 1967 Hong Kong riot under the influence of Maoism.<sup>339</sup> The 1968 Chinese New Year celebration of the *Barisan Sosialis* was featured by the Mao’s Quotation Dance, a very popular cultural practice during the Cultural Revolution in China, and a cross-talk show named “To rebel is justified”.<sup>340</sup>

In the context of joining Mao’s cultural army, besides putting the Yanan talk ethos into Singapore practice, the *Barisan Sosialis*’ emulation of the Cultural Revolutionary arts in China became frequent in Singapore. When *The Legend of the Red Lantern*, the most famous piano-accompanied Peking opera was made public, it instantly became not only the “model” opera in

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<sup>338</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 262, January 1, 1968.

<sup>339</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 268, February 18, 1968.

<sup>340</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 266, January 28, 1968.

China, but for the radical leftists in Singapore. “Our revolutionary arts workers in Malaya, listened carefully to *The Legend of the Red Lantern* from Beijing’s Central People’s Broadcasting Station for one, two, three times...we firmly believe that the Chinese revolutionary arts workers armed with Mao Zedong Thought will have greater achievements! We revolutionary arts workers in Malaya should follow the example of Chinese revolutionary arts workers, hold high of the great red flag of Mao Zedong Thought, and struggle to develop revolutionary arts of Malaya”.<sup>341</sup>

The art performances by the Chidao Wenyi in October 1968 served as prominent examples of the Barisan Sosialis’ efforts in carrying out the mass line of Maoism. For the purpose of evading the regulations set by the government related to the art performance by leftist groups, the Chidao Wenyi (hereafter CW, literally Equator Arts Society) abandoned the so-called “Victorian Theatre style” performance and embraced the mass line approach of Maoism.<sup>342</sup> Maoism was the central theme of the entire performance. “All the dark forces harming the masses of the people must be exposed and all the revolutionary struggles of the masses of the people must be extolled”.<sup>343</sup> Mao’s guidance in his famous *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* became crystalized in the CW performances on their depiction of the local government, the parliament, as well as all the legislative acts. Titles of programs during the performances with a clear reference to Mao were also numerous. “Thought of Mao sheds light” and “Sailing the seas depends on the great helmsman” were highlights of the performance. Others such as *On the Golden Mountain in Beijing*, *I’m a soldier*, and *Heroes cross the Dadu River* were all indicating an homage to the revolutionary history of the Communist Party of China. *On the Golden Mountain in Beijing* had been originally a folk song in Tibet

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<sup>341</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 288, July 7, 1968.

<sup>342</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 303, October 20, 1968.

<sup>343</sup> Mao, Tse-tung, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art," Delivered in May 1942. Accessed May 15, 2019. [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm)

which was then re-produced to express the joy on the liberation of Tibet by the CCP. *I'm a Soldier* was a famous military song produced at the early period of the People's Republic of China. *Heroes cross the Dadu River* was based on one military battle during the Long March.<sup>344</sup>

By the beginning of 1969, the Barisan Sosialis Front announced that as the party organ, the Barisan Sosialis Front would firmly carry out what Mao had instructed in *A Talk to the Editorial Staff of the Shansi-Suiyuan Daily*: “You comrades are newspapermen. Your job is to educate the masses, to enable the masses to know their own interests, their own tasks and the Party’s general and specific policies”,<sup>345</sup> making the propagation of Maoism the central task of the BSF. In a poem commemorating the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, the author referred to MLK’s behavior as “begging for freedom with tears”, while castigating the death of “non-violence” and strongly rejected the “non-violent” principle. Furthermore, the author declared “For the rebirth of America, Chairman Mao must be followed”.<sup>346</sup>

The arts editorial department of the Barisan Sosialis Front expressed their hopes for the younger generation of the arts writers. “If [the younger generation of arts writers] have difficulty in absorbing the traditions of our literature and literature of foreign countries, especially China’s, then try learning the excellent revolutionary models of the contemporary China and all their advantages. Whether fiction, plays, poems, musicals, dances, paintings, folklores, or new forms of arts performances, such as *Duikouci*,<sup>347</sup> the Chinese artists offered us many, many good examples”.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> The Battle of Dadu River was a significant battle during the Long March.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid. Translation of Mao’s text is from *A Talk to the Editorial Staff of the Shansi-Suiyuan Daily* at [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4\\_36.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_36.htm)

<sup>346</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 276, April 14, 1968.

<sup>347</sup> A kind of traditional Chinese theatre art, literally meaning “rhymed dialogue”.

<sup>348</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 314, January 5, 1969.



Thus, they made an open calling to model after China's revolutionary arts following the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Besides, some of the names of contributors were clear reminders of Maoist adulation: Xiang Dong (Face the east), Wen Gong (Verbal intimidation, part of a popular Cultural Revolution slogan, Wengong Wuwei), Wen Hongbing (literary red guard), Zhong Hong (loyal to the Red).

From the 435<sup>th</sup> issue (May 23, 1971) onwards, the *Barisan Sosialis* featured revolutionary songs in the *Flag* section of the *Barisan Sosialis Front*, a section dedicated to revolutionary arts. The songs featured were composed of melodies and Mao's famous quotes. One or two sentences of Mao's quotes made up the entire lyrics, with a single quotation being sung in the loop from the beginning to the end. In a more revealing example, the revolutionary song featured in the 440<sup>th</sup> issue was titled "Our Party is a Great Party, Glorious Party, Correct Party", and the lyrics of the song was "Our Party is a Great Party, Glorious Party, Correct Party" repeated twice, and "Great Party, Glorious Party, Correct Party" repeated three times.<sup>349</sup> The above evidences demonstrated that the *Barisan Sosialis* actively and sincerely adhered to Mao's Yenan Talk as an important component in their ritualistic approach to Maoism. There were almost no associations between the events and stories behind such programs and the social realities of the Republic of Singapore. This corresponded to Cheng Yinghong's argument that the imitation of China's Cultural Revolution led to the self-demise of the *Barisan Sosialis*. Cheng offered his analysis from the perspective of the leftist movement in the Singapore context. This section will reveal from the angle of the nation-building in Singapore. The determined marginalization of the *Barisan Sosialis* paved the way for the developmental path to take root.

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<sup>349</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 440, June 27, 1971.

## Building a Mao Cult of Personality

Throughout the pages of the Barisan Sosialis Front, the admiration and appreciation of Mao himself often went to the extreme of adulation and personality cult. Apart from the textual statements of using Maoism as the guidance of the party, the Barisan Sosialis worshipped Mao to the degree of deification. The frequency of mentioning Chairman Mao was far more than their own party chairman Dr. Lee Siew Choh.

Depictions of Mao, as a way of worshipping the “greatest revolutionary mentor of the time”,<sup>350</sup> often went to an extreme that was either surrealistic or anachronistic. The 318<sup>th</sup> issue of the BSF, February 2, 1969 featured a 12-piece graphic news report of the story of a female laborer named Zhang Guizhi. Titled *Paralysis Patient was Able to Stand up because of Mao Zedong Thought*, the article told that Zhang Guizhi, from a poor peasant family, who was unable to move or talk due to quadriplegia. Yet, the doctors at the 208<sup>th</sup> Hospital of the China’s People’s Liberation Army, through learning Mao Zedong Thought and criticizing the “revisionist” medical treatment, were determined to cure this class sister. The very first step taken by the doctors was to study Mao’s works. They announced to “throw away foreign experiences and rules and to diagnose disease by Mao’s Thought”, after which the party branch of the hospital stated that in order to cure the disease of the patient, Maoism must be applied to cure the disease in the minds of the doctors when some of the doctors and nurses demonstrated hesitation and suspicion. In the process of treatment, doctors studied Mao’s works in the middle of the night; nurses “armed the patient with Mao’s Three Old Articles while giving her medicines and injections”; one of the nurses sung Maoist songs and danced Maoist pieces for her. On the day of the actual operation, before Zhang was sent into the operation room, the doctors and nurses read to her one of Mao’s quotations, that “this army

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<sup>350</sup> This title the Barisan Sosialis gave to Mao appeared many times in their newsletter.

has an indomitable spirit and is determined to vanquish all enemies and never to yield”. And during the operation, Mao’s portrait hung in the wall gave her an indefinite power. “By the stimulation of the electric current, her fingers moved, she slowly grabbed the Red Treasured Book and lifted it up! Then she shouted ‘Long live Chairman Mao! Long live Chairman Mao!’ Zhang Guizhi stood up, and that’s the great victory of the thought of Mao Zedong!”<sup>351</sup>

Another similar case centered around a self-learned acupuncturist named Zhao Puyu who claimed to apply Mao Zedong Thought onto medical practices and made deaf people able to hear and speak. When the deaf people could hear and speak, they shouted, “Long Live Chairman Mao!” and sang “East is Red”, and they participated in propagating Mao Zedong Thought. Zhao’s story was given two full pages at the 348<sup>th</sup> Issue of the *Barisan Sosialis Front* on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1969.<sup>352</sup>

The practice of granting Mao, or Maoism, a semi-religious, omnipotent quality that even had a therapeutic ability was not rare in China during the Cultural Revolution. However, the *Barisan Sosialis* reprinted and publicized such news reports in their official party organ without any suspicion and reservation. They published such reports to show they followed and approached Maoism as their guiding ideology in a serious manner. In this sense, the *Barisan Sosialis* was no different from the followers of Maoism in China and those who glorified Mao in the United States. This section would term it as an imagined self-conscription into Mao’s army. There were other examples in such an embrace of the cult of personality of Mao.

There was also an anachronistic portrait of Mao in the pages of the *Barisan Sosialis Front* for the purpose of the construction of Mao’s glorious images. In the newly added Story Section of the BSF, stories about Mao in his youth were published. In one instance, the 319<sup>th</sup> Issue of the

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<sup>351</sup> The entire story was published on the 318<sup>th</sup> Issue of the *Barisan Sosialis Front*, February 2, 1969, page 10.

<sup>352</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 348, September 7, 1969.

Barisan Sosialis Front published an article on Mao sending off students of the Diligent-Work Frugal-Study Movement<sup>353</sup> on voyage to study in France. Some of the sentences regarding this send-off ceremony were as follows:

On May 21, 1920, Chairman [sic] Mao came to the shore of the Huangpu River to send off another batch of students on voyage to work and study in France;

The students were in the fourth class with not-so-good conditions; however, they did not care. They firmly believed in Mao's instructions "Transform China and the World" ...

How can they (the students) forget that since 1918, with the ambition to "Transform China and the World", Chairman Mao had actively promoted and organized the Diligent Work and Study in France Movement. For the students to go overseas to seek revolutionary truth, Chairman Mao organized...in Beijing...and made the most painstaking efforts on this...

When they (the students) thought of this (Mao's instructions), they were deeply emotional and inspired. Looking at the great leader Chairman Mao, everyone felt splendid respect in the heart. Chairman Mao, we will never let your expectations be in vain...

In an hour of saying goodbye, everyone was around Chairman Mao and unwilling to move even one step apart, all wanted to see Chairman Mao's face one more time and hear Chairman Mao's instruction one more time...<sup>354</sup>

Sentences hailing Mao's sending off the students to France were all through the entire two-page article. The whole passage left an impression that Chairman Mao took the students into

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<sup>353</sup> It was a 1920s arrangement of work-study programs sending Chinese students to Europe, mainly France, to study Western technology and culture with expenses supported by Chinese institutions and partly by the French Government. Some of the participants, such as Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, became not only key members of the Chinese Communist Party but played prominent roles in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century China.

<sup>354</sup> The original text is in Chinese, I provide the English translation.

sincere consideration and the students were benefiting so much from Chairman Mao's teachings, and they were so reluctant to leave Chairman Mao.

As is said in earlier paragraphs, the adulation of Mao by the Barisan Sosialis often went to the extreme of personality cult at the expense of historical accuracy. It required little historical common sense to see the anachronism in this image construction. Mao was respected as Chairman thanks to his prominent position within the Chinese Communist Party. However, his top position was not established within the Party until the 1935 Zunyi Conference where he took over the military command of the party. In the year 1920, Mao, still a newcomer to Marxism, Communism, and the Chinese Communist Party (Mao helped establish a Communist organization in his home Hunan Province, but the CCP was officially founded one year after in Shanghai), was in no way hailed as "Chairman" and worshipped the way he was as the article depicted. Although Mao did offer help in securing funds for the students and participate in sending off the students before they headed to France,<sup>355</sup> it was widely acknowledged that the major promoters and architects behind this Work-Study project to France were Cai Yuanpei, Wu Zihui, and Li Shizeng.<sup>356</sup> Although the slogan "Transform China and the World" might possibly have appeared in 1920, it was until 1921 that it was taken as the cause of the Xinmin Institute. Its popularity and appeal as depicted in the article remains questionable.

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<sup>355</sup> Zhu Yuhe and Cai Lesu eds., 朱育和, 蔡乐苏主编, *Mao Zedong yu ershi shiji Zhongguo* 毛泽东与 20 世纪中国 [Mao Zedong and 20<sup>th</sup> Century China] (Beijing: Qinghua Daxue Chubanshe, 2000), 44.

<sup>356</sup> See Marilyn A. Levine, *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe during the Twenties* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1993). Paul J. Bailey, "Cultural Connections in a New Global Space: Li Shizeng and the Chinese Francophile Project in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Print, Profit, and Perception: Ideas, Information and Knowledge in Chinese Societies, 1895-1949*, eds., Pei-yin Lin and Weipin Tsai (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014), 17-39.

Another case involving historical inaccuracy was the depiction of Mao in the Anyuan coal mine strike. In the article on the 329<sup>th</sup> Issue of the Barisan Sosialis Front, Mao was given the exclusively central place in the leadership of the strike. However, the historical records as well as scholars' research work have confirmed that Mao was not the only one who led the strike, as Elizabeth J. Perry argued in *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition*, Li Lisan and Liu Shaoqi were no less significant leading roles.<sup>357</sup> The practice taken by the Barisan Sosialis was exactly what Elizabeth J. Perry analyzed in her book of the systematized tradition of the CCP from the Anyuan strike. The early Anyuan strike was associated with the personality cult of Liu Shaoqi, not Mao Zedong. The Party denied the central role of Li Lisan and instead focused on one charismatic leader: Liu Shaoqi. This charisma building around Liu reached its peak in the early 1960s with monuments, a new museum, paintings, books, and films. In the mid-1960s, in the context of the Cultural Revolution and Liu Shaoqi's denouncement, there was a reversal that readers might expect: Liu was deposed, and the history was rewritten to put Mao at the centre of the Anyuan strike.<sup>358</sup> Accepting such a narrative without any reservation, it once again showed that the Barisan Sosialis, a political party in Singapore, followed the tradition of Communist Party of China in personality cult building around Mao.

Even in the event of the celebration of international women's day in 1969, the leftist groups in Singapore would call on the women to study hard Mao Zedong Thought and raise political

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<sup>357</sup> See Elizabeth J. Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

<sup>358</sup> See Chapters 5-7 of Perry, *Anyuan*.

awareness<sup>359</sup>. At the ceremony, every speaker would either shout “Long live Chairman Mao!” to end the speech or invoke Mao’s famous quotations during the speech as spiritual power.<sup>360</sup>

The May 1<sup>st</sup> Celebration of 1969 was featured with Maoist slogans and references. All the speakers present advocated learning from Mao. Representative from the Partai Rakyat<sup>361</sup> shouted “Long Live Chairman Mao” three times. Chairman of the Barisan Sosialis, Dr. Lee Siew Choh, spoke candidly that the future work of the leftists should be “guided by Mao Zedong Thought and the mass line”.<sup>362</sup>

The ninth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held at the climax of the Cultural Revolution in September 1969 was certainly watched closely by the Barisan Sosialis and other leftists in Singapore. Lin Biao’s speech was reprinted verbatim on the Barisan Sosialis Fronts from Issue 330-333. In following issues, sections were given to explanations of the terms used in the report of the ninth congress as a way of educating the masses.

In commemorating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the May 13 National Service riots,<sup>363</sup> the revolutionary students referred to Mao all through their commemorative article. They required “first of all, to learn and apply Mao Zedong Thought strictly, solemnly, and flexibly to initiate

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<sup>359</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 322, March 9, 1969.

<sup>360</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 323, March 16, 1969.

<sup>361</sup> Partai Rakyat, or the People’s Party in Malay language, was another leftist political party in Singapore. It was also influenced by Maoism. In 1968, Partai Rakyat supported the Barisan Sosialis over the boycott of the Singapore Parliament, and it maintained its stance in 1972 despite the Barisan Sosialis changed its position. The polemic conflict between the Barisan Sosialis and the Partai Rakyat is documented and analyzed in the Singapore section.

<sup>362</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 330, May 4, 1969.

<sup>363</sup> When the British colonial government passed the National Service Ordinance in December 1953, many students from the Chinese middle schools in Singapore refused to register for National Service. On May 13, 1954, the student demonstration for petition to Chief Secretary William Goode turned into a violent clash between the police and students. The May 13 National Service riots triggered more left-wing, anti-colonial activities in colonial Singapore and contributed to the PAP victory in the 1959 general elections.

struggles against any faulty thoughts of non-proletariat classes...third, actively propagate, implement, and defend Mao Zedong Thought and the correct mass line for struggle...<sup>364</sup> In another commemorative event, around two hundred young students paraded the streets with a huge portrait of Chairman Mao in the front. “Long Live Chairman Mao” was loudly chanted by the fellow participants.<sup>365</sup>

Building the personality cult of Mao formed another segment of the Barisan Sosialis’ approach to Maoism. In line with the Communist Party of China, the Barisan Sosialis followed the tradition of the CCP in charisma building around Mao and they totally accepted the narrative in the deification of Mao regardless of historical inaccuracy and anachronism. Besides, the mechanical use of Mao’s slogans and shouting of “Long Live Chairman Mao” at events was also part of the Barisan Sosialis’ rituals in showing their dedication to Mao. Such an embrace precluded the disconnection of the Barisan Sosialis with the social realities of Singapore and the Barisan Sosialis’ gradual marginalization and Maoism’s decline in Singapore, as the next chapter shows in more details.

### **Conflicts with Other Leftists: Inside and Outside the Party**

By adopting the Maoist analytical framework of anti-imperialism, the Barisan Sosialis refused to admit the separation of Singapore and Malaysia, the independence of the Republic of Singapore, and strongly rejected the Singapore parliament and parliamentary path in their struggles against the ruling party. Such an approach to Maoism often led the Barisan Sosialis into the internal rifts against their own comrades and other political organizations within the left-wing camp.

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<sup>364</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 331, May 11, 1969.

<sup>365</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 333, May 25, 1969.



Many high-ranked members of the Barisan Sosialis, such as S. Thendayatha Bani, Kow Kee Sing and Chio Cheng Thun, who argued that the independence of Singapore was an “established fact”, were denounced and penalized. A growing number of pieces of reports were seen on Barisan Sosialis Front on the expulsion of members off the Party-demarcated political line. The Hong Kah office in the Jurong Branch of the Barisan Sosialis was demolished and closed due to the office staff’s reluctance to release and distribute the anti-parliamentary elections leaflets.<sup>366</sup>

The languages used in retaliation of those who diverted from the Barisan Sosialis-designated path, such as “black gang”, “carry the red flag to oppose the red flag”, were all common languages used during Cultural Revolution in particular, and Mao’s China in general. Denunciations of the “traitors” started to fill the pages of the Barisan Sosialis Front. The increase in numbers of pieces of reports related to the expulsion of members who were anti-left also indicated an intensified internal conflict as well as political divergence within the leftists. Ye Demin, a historian who was a student at Nantah in the 1960s but was expelled after protesting the *Wang Gungwu Report*<sup>367</sup> and joined the Barisan Sosialis in the Moulmein and Farrer branch, wrote that “Lee Siew Choh’s crackdown on the leftists was no different from Lee Kuan Yew”.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 277, April 21, 1968.

<sup>367</sup> *Report of the Nanyang University Curriculum Review Committee of 1965*, also known as *Wang Gungwu Report*, refers to the review and recommendations regarding the courses at Nantah, then Nanyang University. The report recommended streamlining various courses, opening up the university to students of all streams, not just Chinese-stream students, and ensuring the bilingual ability of all students. The Report sparked controversies and protests among Nantah students and staff. Protests and boycott of classes led to the expulsion of many students. Falling enrolment of students in the 1970s of Nantah resulted in the merger of Nantah merged in 1980 with the University of Singapore in 1980, and the National University of Singapore was formed.

<sup>368</sup> “Qianxi Xinjiapo zuoyi yundong de xingshuai 浅析新加坡左翼运动的兴衰” [Brief Analysis of the Rise and Fall of the Leftist Movement of Singapore], <http://www.nandazhan.com/lishi/sgzuoyun.htm> (accessed May 19, 2018)

The disputes over the extra-parliamentary struggles became another area where the Barisan Sosialis clashed with other leftists. Here, a few words are required for readers to understand the importance of the issue of parliament for political organizations which took Maoism as the guiding ideology. As discussed in the chapter on Maoism, Maoism was both inheriting and developing orthodox Marxism, and orthodox Marxism was born out of its total rejection of revisionism which argued that socialism could be achieved via a parliamentary road. Besides this theoretical lineage, violence was a key element in Maoism, evidenced by the most famous Mao quote “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”. Therefore, when the Barisan Sosialis openly embraced Maoism, they held a firm opposition against the Singapore parliament, its elections, and the possibility of a parliamentary road to socialism. A further and more detailed account of the Barisan Sosialis’ rejection of the parliamentary path will be provided in the next chapter.

The internal conflicts within the Barisan Sosialis became intensified following the confession letter of Lim Chin Siong, one of the most notable leftist activists of the postwar era, the co-founder of the People’s Action Party, the secretary-general of the Barisan Sosialis, and one of the most well-known detainees during Operation Cold Store. In July 1969, Lim Ching Siong announced his departure from politics with two public letters to Lee Kuan Yew and Lee Siew Choh. The letter to Dr Lee Siew Choh explicitly stated Lim’s disapproval of the strategies and paths taken by the Barisan Sosialis: “I sincerely believe the genuineness of the independence of Singapore, it has a complete sovereignty...The current extra-parliamentary mass struggle that the party [Barisan Sosialis] took is not correct, in my opinion, I fully support the path of struggling within parliament”.<sup>369</sup> In fact, the promise not to participate in politics, to focus on the pre-detainment career, and to fully support the parliamentary system was the key element that the Singapore

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<sup>369</sup> *Nanyang Siang Pau*, July 24, 1969.

government required when they proposed the detainees to make such a confession in exchange of release.<sup>370</sup> Lim's letter, by nature a political confession, was to be taken with a grain of salt in the context of a six-year detainment in exchange of freedom, but it did reveal the internal fusion between the two paths: extra-parliamentary and struggles within the parliament.

The Barisan Sosialis not only came into conflicts with their comrades within the party, but they were also engaged in verbal attacks upon other leftists, often in the form of criticizing others for being fake leftists, or opportunists. One notable example was the Barisan Sosialis's attack of Kuo Pao Kun, the most famous playwright and intellectual of Singapore.<sup>371</sup> Kuo's plays before 1976, such as *Hey Wake Up!*, *The Struggle*, *Growing Up*, had demonstrated a clear inclination towards the leftist agenda of opposing capitalism, re-thinking the national developmental path, and a Chinese orientation that the Barisan Sosialis had explicitly advocated in their publications and daily practices. However, the Barisan Sosialis still called Kuo "the director of the reactionary TV station (author's note: Kuo was appointed TV Producer, Radio and TV Singapore, RTS in 1968) and the chieftain of the Singapore Performing Arts School". Editors of the Barisan Sosialis Front accused

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<sup>370</sup> Not just Lim Chin Siong, but Lim Hock Siew was also required to make such promises in his confessions if he wanted to be released. Besides, a detainee is also required to explain activities in the past, see Low Tai Thong's memoir: "Dashidai zhongde Xiaozu 大时代中的小卒" [An unimportant person in an era of significance] <http://xingmarenmin.com/projects/01> 《大时代中的小卒》(卢大通, 2007-03-06).pdf (accessed May 4, 2018).

<sup>371</sup> Quah Sy Ren 柯思仁, "Guo Baokun de juchang yu 1980 niandai Xinjiapo renting de pipanxing goujian" 郭宝崑的剧场与 1980 年代新加坡认同的批判性构建 [Kuo Pao-Kun's Theatre and Critical Construction of Singapore Identity in the 1980s], *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue* 中国现代文学, 20 (December 2011): 71-96. Kuo Pao Kun (1939-2002) was a playwright, theatre director, and writer in Singapore. Kuo wrote plays in Chinese as well as other languages spoken in Singapore. He founded the Practice Performing Arts School, the first of its kind in Singapore. Between 1976 and 1980, Kuo was detained under the Internal Security Act for the pro-leftist stance in his plays. He continued arts creation after release. Kuo was considered by many critics and scholars as the most important artist and public intellectual in post-independent Singapore.

Kuo of a “fake progressive”, and his school “fake red”. Kuo’s Performing Arts School was mocked for its “semi-public study” of *Quotations from Chairman Mao* and its fancying itself as proletarian. In the article titled “Hypocrite Progressiveness”, the author Gao Wu (likely named after the place where Malayan Communist Party gained military victory against government army of Malaysia) chastised Kuo for charging students 12 Singapore dollars per person each month for the tuition fee without covering the transport fees for those trainees. In the attempt of “tearing down Kuo’s masks”, the author pointed the finger at Kuo’s background as working for the reactionary institution with an overseas education experience when Gao challenged Kuo’s genuine progressiveness.<sup>372</sup>

On March 8, 1970, in an article for the Afro-Asian Writers’ Bureau<sup>373</sup> which was titled “Hold High of the Great Flag of Mao Zedong Thought, Sweeping All the Lackey Literati”, the editor at the *Barisan Sosialis* once again attacked Kuo for his experience at the RTS: “Kuo was originally a producer at the reactionary, obscene TV station, a professional accomplice. However, he held the banner of ‘Performing Arts School’, and took part in his fake progressive arts activities, such as holding the ‘Lu Xun Memorial Gala’. And he proposed some radical programs during rehearsals for the public performance but changed course before the official debut, claiming being banned by the authority. His propaganda back and forth, only ended up in some botched programs with fake realism”.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 358, November 16, 1969.

<sup>373</sup> Inspired by a Marxist worldliness, the Bureau was founded by China as a counter-narrative to Eurocentric conceptions of world literature and universal culture. See Pieter Vanhove, “‘A World to Win’: China, the Afro-Asian Writers’ Bureau, and the Reinvention of World Literature,” *Critical Asian Studies* 51 (9): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2018.1544499>

<sup>374</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 373, March 8, 1970.

As mentioned previously, Kuo's plays exuded a strong left-wing ethos of opposing capitalism, criticism of inequality, suspicion of the government blueprint of national development, and so on. These leftist agendas were in alignment with those of the Barisan Sosialis. Yet, Kuo was criticized and attacked by the Barisan Sosialis because he once worked for a national TV station. It was another indication of how far extreme the Barisan Sosialis had gone when they pursued the purity of ideology under the impact of Maoism.

The Barisan Sosialis also engaged in clashes and conflicts with other leftist parties, even those with Maoist inclinations but different emphases, such as the Partai Rakyat. The skirmish between the Barisan Sosialis and the Partai Rakyat was a revealing example of how the Maoist-inspired leftist organizations collided with each other, how their confrontation weakened both parties and the leftist movement, and how this contributed to the waning of Maoism in Singapore.

Like the Barisan Sosialis, the publications of the Partai Rakyat Singapura, another leftist political party influenced by Maoism, adopted the same approach in their regular reporting. The organizational newsletter of the Partai Rakyat Singapura, Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura, (meaning People's Forum in English), proudly announced it held high the great red flag of Mao Zedong Thought and featured Mao's quotations in their newsletters. The similar accusations against the ruling party, such as criticism against the *Keep Singapore Clean Movement*,<sup>375</sup> and the analyses of the situations of Singapore and the world affairs reflecting Mao's analyses were almost identical to the Barisan Sosialis. Following the Malayan Communist Party's launch of the second emergency with the backing of the CCP, like the Barisan Sosialis, the Partai Rakyat also directly reprinted the articles

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<sup>375</sup> *Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura*, Issue 71, April 1, 1969.

from the *Voice of Malayan Revolution* radio.<sup>376</sup> In one case, the story of the exaggerated role of Mao Tse-tung in the Anyuan mine protests was printed by both organizational newspapers.<sup>377</sup>

The Barisan Sosialis and the Partai Rakyat were not passive actors with no agency of their own in their adoption of Maoism: they actively approached Maoism in the conflicts over paths for struggle and the issue of “re-unification” of Malaya and Singapore. The Partai Rakyat even adopted a more overtly adulatory attitude in invoking Maoism to enhance their theoretical validity. Calling Maoism “almighty”, and “omnipotent”,<sup>378</sup> the Partai Rakyat pushed the personality cult of Maoism to a new height. Compared with the Barisan Sosialis, the Partai Rakyat was even more radical on the issue of the re-unification of Malaya and Singapore and the problem of political regime.

The Barisan Sosialis argued that the re-unification was both an important and an urgent task, and it should be dealt with as soon as possible. In the 26<sup>th</sup> issue of *Party Information*,<sup>379</sup> the internal circulation within the Barisan Sosialis, the Barisan Sosialis published an article which in their view expressed the fundamental principles of the party.<sup>380</sup> The Barisan Sosialis maintained that the re-unification of Malaya was the most basic issue, but it did not mention the issue of struggling for political power, and at the same time, it clarified that the Barisan Sosialis was not a political

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<sup>376</sup> The Voice of Malayan Revolution was part of the propaganda projects by the Malayan Communist Party. The clandestine radio network was operated in Hunan, China under the codename Project 691, transmitting as “Suara Revolusi Malaya” or VMR from November 1969 to 1981. For the history of the radio and transcripts of its radio broadcasting, see Wang Gungwu and Ong Weichong eds., *Voice of Malayan Revolution: The CPM Radio War against Singapore and Malaysia, 1969-1981* (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 2009).

<sup>377</sup> The story of Mao in Anyuan was published on the 329<sup>th</sup> Issue of *Barisan Sosialis Front* on April 27, 1969, and on the 69<sup>th</sup> Issue of *Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura* on February 1, 1969.

<sup>378</sup> *Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura*, Issue 87, January 1, 1970.

<sup>379</sup> *Party Information* of the Barisan Sosialis was established on April 1, 1964, and its main aims included: publish the important declarations and announcements of the Party, publish important theoretical articles, reprint important but long articles which are unable to get reprinted on the *Barisan Sosialis Front*, and report the working experience of the Party. See *Party Information*, Issue 31, December 31, 1969.

<sup>380</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 26, September 20, 1969.

party for armed struggle. Such an attitude towards armed struggle and the issue of political power soon attracted criticism from the Partai Rakyat. And the back-and-forth verbal jabs traded between the two sides soon escalated into a debate, mimicking the Sino-Soviet polemics over who grasped the true meaning of Communist ideology.

The Partai Rakyat accused the Barisan Sosialis' omission of armed struggle and political power and of straying from theories on class and class struggle in Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.<sup>381</sup> Arguing for "opposing anti-revolutionary violence by revolutionary violence", the Partai Rakyat labelled those forces who did not follow the path of armed struggle as opportunist and anti-revolutionary,<sup>382</sup> which was a clear hint at the Barisan Sosialis. The armed struggle was the central term used in the argument by the side of the Partai Rakyat. They argued that the "re-unification" proposed by the Barisan Sosialis, without the introduction of armed struggle and leaving out the issue of political power, was a fake re-unification, not a genuine one.<sup>383</sup> The "national awareness of Malaya" put forward by the Barisan Sosialis was also deprecated by the Partai Rakyat as lacking the content of class and ignoring the class essence of state.<sup>384</sup>

The responses from the Barisan Sosialis to the criticism went from euphemism to intensification. At first, the Barisan Sosialis only used "some comrades", "some comrades outside the Party" to refer to the disputing Partai Rakyat members while defending themselves over re-unification and reiterating the legal status of the Barisan Sosialis to reject the option of armed struggles.<sup>385</sup> However, soon afterwards, the Barisan Sosialis intensified their attacks by calling the

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<sup>381</sup> *Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura*, Issue 81, October 1, 1969.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 27, September 24, 1969.

Partai Rakyat “poisonous weeds”,<sup>386</sup> which was a popular, derisive term during China’s Cultural Revolution originating from Mao’s 1957 speech *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*, used to refer to art pieces, or articles from the reactionary side. The “poisonous weeds” immediately fought back by accusing the Barisan Sosialis of reformism and opportunism, and of forgetting the fundamental issue of political power, which was a wrong path.<sup>387</sup> Such accusations attracted instant refutations from the Barisan Sosialis. The Barisan Sosialis bombarded such wording as the “most vicious, principle-less accusation, distortion, and defamation”.<sup>388</sup>

Corresponding to the “two-way construction” in the *What is Maoism?* chapter, the polemic war between the Barisan Sosialis and the Partai Rakyat demonstrated that both parties had their agencies in selecting and using Maoism. While both parties overtly expressed their whole-hearted embrace of Maoism, their firm rejection of the creation of both the Federation of Malaysia and the Republic of Singapore, and their dedication to the re-unification of Malaya in which the island of Singapore was an inseparable part, their approaches differed considerably. The Barisan Sosialis constantly reaffirmed “concrete analysis of concrete issues”,<sup>389</sup> the core concept in Mao’s *On Contradiction*, in their rejection of armed struggle in the context of Singapore. However, the Partai Rakyat adopted a more radical, exclusive, non-compromising Maoist stance in their verbal emphasis on the class nature of political power, their loyal adherence to Mao’s teaching that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”, and “encircling the cities from the villages and winning political

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<sup>386</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 28, September 29, 1969.

<sup>387</sup> *Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura*, Issue 82, October 15, 1969.

<sup>388</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 35, April 5, 1970.

<sup>389</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 27, September 24, 1969.



regimes by armed struggles”.<sup>390</sup> From the organizational newspaper, the Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura usually had fewer pages per issue yet devoted more space to a pure worshipping of Maoism and the Cultural Revolution. For example, the 72<sup>nd</sup> issue of the Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura had eight pages, yet six of them were given to the timeline of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>391</sup> All above showed that the leftists in Singapore, represented by the Barisan Sosialis and the Partai Rakyat, invoked Mao’s teachings and quotations to increase their ideological credibility.

This chapter has traced the Barisan Sosialis’ theoretical adherence to Maoism. Such an embrace of Maoism could be seen in the Barisan Sosialis’ use of Maoism as a spiritual weapon, their adherence to Mao’s Yenan Talk, and their adulation and appreciation of Mao to the degree of building a personality cult of Mao. Given the anti-parliamentary stance in Maoism, they were often engaged in conflicts inside and outside the Barisan Sosialis over the struggle path: extra-parliamentary or within the parliament. The theoretical adherence to Maoism resulted in some concrete actions taken by the Barisan Sosialis in the 1960s and 1970s challenging the conservative ruling elites. These actions constituted the Maoist moment in Singapore, but they also precluded the gradual marginalization and decline of the Barisan Sosialis. The next chapter in Singapore section of the dissertation provides a more detailed account of these actions.

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<sup>390</sup> The original words of Mao were “gathering strength in the villages, using the villages in order to surround the cities and then taking the cities”. The words were from *Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, delivered on March 5, 1949. See Mao Tse-tung, *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 4 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), 363.

<sup>391</sup> *Partai Rakyat Negeri Singapura*, April 15, 1969.

## CHAPTER SIX PUTTING MAOIST THEORIES INTO SINGAPORE PRACTICE

As the last chapter has shown, the Barisan Sosialis embraced Maoism as the guiding ideology of the party in their political struggles against the ruling party. Out of such a theoretical inclination, the Barisan Sosialis adopted a Maoist analytical model of class, economic base, exploitation, and the use of the term “contradiction” in their political analyses of societies in Singapore and Malaysia, just as Mao did for Chinese society before 1949. This resulted in their regarding Singapore as one part of the “enemy-occupied area”.<sup>392</sup> This was a particular term that the Chinese communists used to refer to areas within the sphere of influence of KMT during the Chinese revolution. This contrasted sharply with the Thai-Malaysian border area, which was positioned ideologically as a liberated area because it was a region where the Malayan Communist Party-led National Liberation Army were active in their guerrilla warfare.

In such a self-imagined “enemy-occupied area”, the Barisan Sosialis, under the guidance of Maoism, failed to respond to the realities of the Republic of Singapore. This chapter focuses on the concrete actions by the Barisan Sosialis as the subsequent results of their theoretical adherence to Maoism. These actions included: their opposition to all social policies initiated by the PAP (including those on citizenship, national border, male conscription, their support of the Malayan Communist Party), their inculcation of Maoism upon the children in their kindergartens, and their reversal decisions over the parliament and the parliamentary elections. Their concrete Maoist-inspired actions, put in the context of the early stage of the Republic of Singapore, were alternative

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<sup>392</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 514, December 10, 1972.

initiatives at construction of an alternative national identity and state policy. The final marginalization of the Barisan Sosialis thus paved the way for the nation-building of Singapore after the ruling elites' defeat of Malay ethnocentrism, and ended the Maoist moment in Singapore.

### **Opposition to All PAP Policies: In the Name of Anti-Imperialism**

The theoretical underpinnings of Maoism led to the failure of the Barisan Sosialis in recognizing the social realities of the Republic of Singapore. They rejected the independence as the neo-imperialist plot, and they actively and staunchly opposed every policy undertaken by the ruling People's Action Party, in the following aspects.

Citizenship and Employment. Citizenship, though its meaning remains highly contested, is a key central concept in nation-state building as it determines in legal terms who is and who is not a member of a national entity. The issue over the citizenship of the Republic of Singapore became the point of contention between the ruling party, the People's Action Party, and the leftist parties who refused to recognize the independence of Singapore immediately after Singapore's independence. Given that the Barisan Sosialis considered Singapore and Malaya as a whole and rejected both the Federation of Malaysia and the Republic of Singapore, their notion of sovereignty was bound to be in conflict with the citizenship defined by laws in the two countries.

In addition to rejecting the Republic of Singapore as an independent, sovereign state, the Barisan Sosialis also categorized citizenship as "Rahman-Lee Kuan Yew regime's dividing and persecuting"<sup>393</sup> people. This stance was somehow easy to understand as, from the logic of the Barisan Sosialis, who were still seeing the entire peninsular Malaya and Singapore as a whole

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<sup>393</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 298, September 15, 1968.

motherland of Malaya, Dr. Lee Siew Choh even used the metaphor that Singapore was to Malaya what Taiwan was to Mainland China. The Barisan Sosialis also defined citizenship as the “rule of darkness”, and “an official declaration of ‘separate and rule’”.<sup>394</sup> The dual rejection of the existence of the Federation of Malaysia and the Republic of Singapore went as far as an attack on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) when it recognized Singapore as a sovereign republic.<sup>395</sup>

All through the newsletters of the Barisan Sosialis Front, each time the radical leftists mentioned the word “motherland”, or “our country”, they always meant “Malaya (including Singapore)”,<sup>396</sup> their vision of the nation-state conflicted with both the newly independent Republic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaysia. The “national identity” that the Barisan Sosialis defined and advocated, was not an exclusive “Chinese nation”, or a “Singapore nation”, but a more inclusive “Malayan nation”, i.e., a nation formed by Chinese, Malays, Indians and other ethnicities living in Malaya.<sup>397</sup> Since the middle of 1970, the Barisan Sosialis started to use the term “People’s Republic of Malaya” in their party organs, the same goal for the Malayan Communist Party-led Malayan National Liberation Army. It was exactly for the purpose of building this national identity that the Barisan Sosialis self-claimed that they were undertaking a “national liberation”.

In the wake of Singapore’s independence and the finalization of the national mappings of the Federation of Malaysia, both states initiated the nation-state building within their borders. Citizens’ rights and obligations, as well as the drawing of clear-cut national borders, became their

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<sup>394</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 301, October 6, 1968.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> For example, see page 4 of *Barisan Sosialis Front* Issue 283, June 2, 1968, “people across the causeway belong to a united family, all people living in Malaya, are not Malaysians nor Singaporeans, but Malaysians!”

<sup>397</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 304, October 27, 1968.

strategies and vehicles for their nation-state building. In Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew initiated the defining of citizens and non-citizens through job opportunities, and “replacing non-Singaporeans with Singaporeans” was undertaken in the name of “taking care of Singaporeans”.<sup>398</sup> Job opportunities were restricted for the non-citizens, including those from the Peninsula Malaysia. Across the causeway, Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, took similar measures that prohibited Singapore citizens from working in Johor Bahru, Malaysia.<sup>399</sup> In the 274<sup>th</sup> Issue of the Barisan Sosialis Front, the Barisan Sosialis condemned such actions as persecution: “it was estimated that people persecuted by Lee Kuan Yew amounted to roughly 20 thousand, and those persecuted by Rahman were about 30 thousand, and the reactionary measure had impacted some 150 thousand to 200 thousand people”.<sup>400</sup> Given the nature of the Barisan Sosialis Front as a party organ, the numbers listed by the Barisan Sosialis were possibly to be exaggerated, but it was indeed a reference of the measures taken by both governments to draw a clear demarcation along the citizenship issue. This also led the Barisan Sosialis to strongly oppose the introduction of a “work permit” system in both Malaysia and Singapore as a plot of “divide and rule”<sup>401</sup> and creating the “reactionary concepts of ‘Malaysian’ and ‘Singaporean’ within the Malayan people”.<sup>402</sup>

Military conscription. For male Singapore citizens, military conscription was an issue closely related to citizenship. Also for the young Republic of Singapore, the national service served as one of the powerful means in national integration and the forging of the national identity. One statement by the Ministry of Defence of Singapore explained the contribution of compulsory

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<sup>398</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 274, March 31, 1968.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 274, March 31, 1968.

<sup>401</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 348, September 7, 1969, and *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 349, September 14, 1969.

<sup>402</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 349, September 14, 1969.

military training to nation-building in that “National Service will provide an opportunity for all races to come to know one another better in an environment in which they will start to love their nation, to understand social obligations and develop civic mindedness and strength of character”.<sup>403</sup>

Thus, the male conscription became a constant and frequent topic in the Barisan Sosialis newsletter, which attacked it as service to British and American imperialism<sup>404</sup>. Since 1964, the party defined the National Service Registration of that year as an ideological struggle of two roads: one, the “correct” mass line espoused by the Party, and second, the one which the Barisan Sosialis called the “anti-revolutionary right-wing opportunist” path, that followed methods used during the Cultural Revolution. Revoking the citizenship of those who were involved in radical leftist politics was used both by authorities in Malaysia and Singapore to combat radical leftism. Cases of activists who were stripped of their Malaysian or Singaporean citizenship became quite common among the leftist groups.

National border. Another area in which the Barisan Sosialis conflicted with the authorities in Singapore and Malaysia in nation-state building was the clear-cut national boundary and border. When Chia Thye Poh<sup>405</sup> and Lee Siew Choh were banned by the Malaysian authority from entering Malaysia for life for their political activism, a protesting article in the Barisan Sosialis Front stated:

We consider Malaya as our motherland and the country we hold loyalty to, regardless of whether we live in Singapore or continental Malaya, we are all Malaysians, not Singaporeans or Malaysians. As Malaysians, we are entitled to move in our land. The Singapore-Johor Causeway is just a bridge, not a political fence.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> An excerpt of the statement is seen in Jon S. T. Quah, “Singapore: Towards a National Identity,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1977): 207-219.

<sup>404</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 283, June 2, 1968.

<sup>405</sup> Chia was a member of parliament representing the Barisan Sosialis from 1963 who was detained in 1966.

<sup>406</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 203, November 5, 1966.

In 1967, Dr. Lee further explained what Malaya meant for the Barisan Sosialis. He defined “Malaya” as the peninsula in the south of Thailand, which comprised of Penang and Singapore.<sup>407</sup> In fact, after the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, the Barisan Sosialis, with their long-time opposition to the creation of Malaysia, did not celebrate it but continued to bash Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP for fake independence which did not grant true independence, freedom, and democracy to the people of Singapore. The Barisan Sosialis even mocked the famous scene of Lee Kuan Yew’s emotional breakdown in front of the press in their newsletter.<sup>408</sup>

Civil and Urban Planning. In a Singapore context, civil and urban planning is another area where efforts were aimed at forging the national identity of Singapore.<sup>409</sup> Out of the same anti-imperialist logic when they embraced Maoism, the Barisan Sosialis challenged the PAP government in the area of Singapore’s civil and urban construction after independence. The party condemned the efforts of the Singapore government to fine people who broke the regulations over city cleaning as an exploitation of the people by the government on behalf of British and US imperialism.<sup>410</sup>

In 1968, the Singapore government took several initiatives on sanitation and urban cleaning, such as the *Keep Singapore Clean Campaign* launched in October, and the passage of the *Destruction of Disease-Bearing Insects Bill*<sup>411</sup> three months earlier. For the first time in the state’s history, fines were used to control social behaviour. Under the program, police, special constabulary and public health

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<sup>407</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 211, January 1, 1967.

<sup>408</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 136, August 14, 1965.

<sup>409</sup> Joan C. Henderson, “Planning for Success: Singapore, the Model City-State?,” *Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 2 (2012): 69-83; and Lily Kong, “Cultural Icons and Urban Development in Asia: Economic Imperative, National Identity, and Global City Status,” *Political Geography* 26, Issue 4 (May 2017): 383-404.

<sup>410</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 299, September 22, 1968.

<sup>411</sup> “Destruction of Disease-Bearing Insects Bill,” accessed November 27, 2019, <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Bills-Supp/29-1968/Published/19680713?DocDate=19680713>

inspectorate sent officers patrolled and advised members of the public against littering and water-stagnation hazards. Those who were caught littering were warned of the penalties during the campaign; and once the campaign ended, first-time litter-bugs were fined up to S\$500, while repeat offenders were fined up to S\$2,000.<sup>412</sup> The Barisan Sosialis interpreted the Act as an exploitation of the poor when 20 rag pickers were called before the court and faced with fines.<sup>413</sup> Similarly, the Barisan Sosialis condemned the passage of the *Destruction of Disease-Bearing Insects Bill* as putting a new burden on the poor.<sup>414</sup>

Labeling the *Keep Singapore Clean Campaign* a sinister political deception and a vicious conspiracy, the Barisan Sosialis further analyzed these campaigns as a means of shifting people's attention from the deteriorating economic and political crisis. They asserted that besides distracting people from the "cruel control, exploitation, and oppression of the imperialism and its lackeys", these campaigns had an additional economic aim. These were to use such fines to generate state income and to shift the cost of developing tourism onto the ordinary people.<sup>415</sup>

The Barisan Sosialis also criticized a new campaign *Keep Singapore Clean and Mosquito Free* as looting the people to make up the huge expenditure of the bureaucratic apparatus.<sup>416</sup> In another article, the editor of the party's newsletter, Xiang Donghong (literally, meaning facing the east which is red, a Maoist adulation) commented that the primary purpose of the mosquito destruction campaign was to collect taxes from the people and impose severe exploitation.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> "New Approach to Keep S' Pore Litter-Free", *The Straits Times*, 9 July 1995, Page 3. <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19950709-1.2.7.5>

<sup>413</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 300, September 29, 1968.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 302, October 13, 1968.

<sup>416</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 357, November 9, 1969.

<sup>417</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 347, August 13, 1969.



From the newspaper reporting, this Mosquito campaign will be island wide. They said they [government authority] would go to public places, and even every area to eliminate mosquitoes.

Meanwhile they would set up trash cans and ask people not to litter about trash and fruits waste. In the circumstance that people in the rural area fail to comply with this Mosquito campaign, they would be fined or brought to court. The reactionary regime of Lee Kuan Yew spared no efforts in ruthlessly exploiting the people, their sinister means, at the end of the day, would only ‘shoot in their foot’”. Even fine penalties upon those who spat around were criticized as another way for the PAP government to “loot money”.<sup>418</sup>

From a historical hindsight, the efforts by the PAP government in civil planning and cleaning movement contributed to Singapore’s reputation as a modern “Garden City”, which constituted a significant component of Singapore’s national identity,<sup>419</sup> and that vision could be traced to Lee Kuan Yew’s proposal in the early 1960s. The history of the opposition by the Barisan Sosialis, as well as other leftist parties, such as the Partai Rakyat revealed that building the “Garden City” was once part of the struggles between the leftists and ruling elites.

Laborers’ working conditions. Going over the pages of the Barisan Sosialis Front newsletter, one issue appeared often and frequently as a subject for coverage, analyses, and discussions. This was the laborers’ working conditions vis-à-vis the passage of several industry-

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<sup>418</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 410, November 22, 1969. The original text was in Chinese, I provide the English translation.

<sup>419</sup> Min Geh and Ilsa Sharp, “Singapore’s Natural Environment, Past, Present and Future: A Construct of National Identity and Land Use Imperatives,” in *Spatial Planning for a Sustainable Singapore*, eds. Tai-Chee Wong, Belinda Yuen, and Charles Goldblum (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 183-204.

related acts in the early days of the Republic of Singapore, such as *Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act (1968)*,<sup>420</sup> and the *Employment Act*<sup>421</sup> of 1968. The Barisan Sosialis asserted that these acts sabotaged the rights of laborers, enabled foreign capitalists' exploitation, and downgraded the working conditions for local workers.<sup>422</sup>

The resolutions passed at the Third Barisan Sosialis Congress in 1969 made it clear that the Barisan Sosialis embraced “exposing the political fraud”<sup>423</sup> as their central mission. As part of this resolution, the Barisan Sosialis encouraged laborers, students, and the masses to challenge the critical acts passed by the Singapore parliament, such as the *National Service (Amendment) Bill*<sup>424</sup> (March 14, 1967), *Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill*<sup>425</sup> (1965), *Societies Act*<sup>426</sup> (1966), etc.<sup>427</sup> Under Lee Siew Choh's leadership, it encouraged the masses and its leftist comrades to boycott the *Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill* and *Societies Act* by refusing to report to the authorities the names and data of committee members. Such deliberate defiance only resulted in the deregistration of the various

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<sup>420</sup> “Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act is Enacted,” August 15, 1968, accessed April 14, 2019, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/d7778e3e-1d07-457d-8cb4-6b27c0b8eb6d>

<sup>421</sup> “Enactment of the Employment Act,” August 15, 1968, accessed April 14, 2019, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/73b9f60e-9252-4b7a-9bcc-e91ee59bdba5>

<sup>422</sup> There was large amount of news reports, such as *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 328, April 20, 1969.

<sup>423</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 353, October 12, 1969.

<sup>424</sup> “National Service (Amendment) Bill,” accessed April 14, 2019, <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Bills-Supp/3-1967/Published/19670301?DocDate=19670301>

<sup>425</sup> “Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill,” accessed April 14, 2019, <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Bills-Supp/69-1965/Published/19651224?DocDate=19651224>

<sup>426</sup> “Societies Act,” accessed April 14, 2019 <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/SA1966>

<sup>427</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 353, October 12, 1969.

leftist alumni clubs, cultural groups, trade unions, which, as it turned out, brought leftist movements in Singapore only closer to the total decline, and to the desire of the authorities.<sup>428</sup>

Supportive relations with the MCP. Records did not show the nature of the relationship between the Barisan Sosialis and the MCP, for example, if they had ever collaborated, or if the Barisan Sosialis served as front organization for the MCP. However, one thing was clear: the Barisan Sosialis agreed with and approved the armed struggle approach by the MCP. One evidence of this relationship was a new year celebratory letter from those who were forced into exile from Malaysia. The letter said:

Under the leadership of the Malayan Communist Party, accompanied by the *coordination*<sup>429</sup> of the Barisan Sosialis, all races of our country earnestly mastered the Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought, winning glorious records in the national liberation struggles and dealing heavy blows to Rahman, Razak, and Lee Kuan Yew puppet regimes...<sup>430</sup>

The letter was openly published in the pages of the Barisan Sosialis Front, indicating that the ideas expressed were approved by the Barisan Sosialis. As Chairman Lee Siew Choh summarized, the purpose of the Barisan Sosialis was to expose the enemy and educate the masses.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> “Nian shiji liushi niandai Xinjiapo zuopai gongyun zaoyu wenti tansuo xupian: jinian wuyi guoji laodongjie 廿世纪六十年代新加坡左派工运遭遇问题探索” [Sequel to Explorations of the 1960s Leftist Labor Movements in Singapore: In Commemoration of the May 1<sup>st</sup> International Labor Day], last modified April 14, 2013 [http://suaramjb1.blogspot.com/2013/04/blog-post\\_24.html#content1\\_3](http://suaramjb1.blogspot.com/2013/04/blog-post_24.html#content1_3) (accessed May 24, 2018)

<sup>429</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>430</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 368, January 25, 1970.

<sup>431</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 36, September 23, 1971.

In a September 1970 article in the *Barisan Sosialis Front*, even in the field of arts, the editor explicitly claimed:

Our revolutionary arts worker should undertake the task of battling. The first [arts workers should do] is to approve and accept the leadership of the Malayan Communist Party, resolutely carry out the policy of the MCP, and undertake the struggle in the ideological area by the direction of MCP...<sup>432</sup>

The MCP is our only proletarian party armed with Marxism-Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought, and the core leader in our all races' struggle against imperialism and feudalism; without the MCP, without the armed struggles the MCP initiated and led, our people could not gain the genuine victory.<sup>433</sup>

### **The Barisan Sosialis-run Kindergartens: Nurturing Socialist Successors in Identity Building**

Kindergartens have been a hotbed for the nurturing of national identity. The famous slogan that “We are successors of Communism” placed high value upon inculcating children with communist ideals. The conscription of children in the Communist Party-affiliated organizations, such as the Communist Youth League, was regarded by some scholars as a way to forge a self, as well as a national identity.<sup>434</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s Singapore, both the Barisan Sosialis and the People’s Action Party run party-sponsored kindergartens. Kindergartens, together with the sales of the Barisan Sosialis Front newsletters, consisted of another major source of income, especially for

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<sup>432</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 401, September 20, 1970.

<sup>433</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 401, September 20, 1970. The original text is in Chinese, I provide English translation.

<sup>434</sup> For example, see Ngan-Pun Ngai, Sek-Yun Ngai, and Fang Wei, “Revisiting China’s Youth Policy”, accessed June 10, 2019, [http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/China\\_2011\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Situation\\_Article.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/China_2011_Youth_Policy_Situation_Article.pdf)

the branches of the party.<sup>435</sup> Barisan Sosialis' statistics revealed that by May 1964, there were already 3000 students in the culture and literacy classes, more than 5000 children in their kindergartens, and over 400 teaching staff in 33 of the 35 party branches.<sup>436</sup> By the end of 1968, there were nearly 7000 children enrolled in Barisan Sosialis-run kindergartens.<sup>437</sup>

The efforts that the Barisan Sosialis made in teaching the kindergarten children with Maoism were no less significant than their efforts in opposing the PAP social policies and boycotting the parliament under Maoist strategies and ideologies. While the party continually denied the government's accusation of preaching Communism through the Barisan Sosialis-run schools, their publications continued to validate such a connection. For example, an article in the 310<sup>th</sup> Issue on December 8, 1968 went:

Education is part of the party organization. It serves to realize the eventual goal and current task of the party. Therefore, the mission of education is to educate the youth with socialist ideas through education and entertainment so that they can be imbued with socialist moral ethics and the correct thoughts and to train new cadres for the party who are astute and capable and who dare to struggle and dare to sacrifice.<sup>438</sup>

A vivid illustration of the party's policy of inculcating kindergarten children with Maoism<sup>439</sup> would be the ceremony staged for the sixth anniversary of the founding of the Barisan Sosialis. Signaling elements of Maoism were all through the ceremony. Banners carrying Maoist slogans,

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<sup>435</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 36, September 23, 1971.

<sup>436</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 107, January 1, 1965.

<sup>437</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 310, December 8, 1968.

<sup>438</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 310, December 8, 1968. The original text was in Chinese, I provide the English translation.

<sup>439</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 258, December 3, 1967.

such as “resolute and unafraid of sacrifice, surmount every difficulty to win victory”,<sup>440</sup> and “We should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports”<sup>441</sup> were hung around the venue. Children at the Barisan Sosialis-run kindergartens performed the trademark revolutionary songs like “Chairman Mao Is Dearer to Us Than Our Parents” as well as other revolutionary-style songs and dances. An ironic twist to this whole event would be found in China, where the songwriter Li Jiefu was denounced and purged politically after his link with Lin Biao was discovered and politicized.

Inculcating the children with Maoism by way of arts performance was also a further indication of the Barisan Sosialis’ efforts to carry out Mao’s Yen’an talk ethos. Besides the children’s performances at the sixth anniversary ceremony of the Barisan Sosialis, their performances at November 1967 Reunion Gala were also highly reflective of the party’s pro-Mao politics. Praised by the Barisan Sosialis Front for reflecting teachings of Chairman Mao,<sup>442</sup> the 1968 Barisan Sosialis reunion party also featured the children performing Mao’s Quotation dances and Quotation songs, both were common items during China’s Cultural Revolution.<sup>443</sup> Propagating Maoism was hailed as one of the three characteristics of the annual reunion party.<sup>444</sup> The art performances and graphics exhibition witnessed an intense effort by the Barisan Sosialis in spreading Mao Zedong Thought among its kindergartens with Mao’s Quotations, Quotation pictures, Quotation songs and Quotation dances being seen everywhere.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “The Old Foolish Man who Moved Mountains,” delivered on June 1945, accessed May 14, 2019, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3\\_26.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_26.htm)

<sup>441</sup> Interview with Three Correspondents from the Central News Agency, the Sao Tang Pao and the Hsin Min Pao, September 16, 1939.

<sup>442</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 261, December 24, 1967.

<sup>443</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 310, December 8, 1968.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*

The Barisan Sosialis-run kindergartens were therefore the focal points where the Barisan Sosialis' Yenan style rituals and their efforts of nurturing "successors of Communism" were conjoined and combined. The reunion party held by Barisan Sosialis-run kindergartens in 1970 were featured with arts performances by the six or seven-year-old. The editors at the Barisan Sosialis Front proudly said that "of all the performances, the Chairman Mao's quotation songs and Red Guard-style drama dance were most common and most outstanding".<sup>446</sup> "In today's world when the radiance of Mao Zedong Thought shines over the globe, it is indispensable and correct that our arts activities focus on honoring the great mentor Chairman Mao and spreading Mao Zedong Thought".<sup>447</sup> When conducting welfare work, the teaching staff at Barisan Sosialis-run kindergartens, altogether over 130 people, distributed Mao's quotations cards, played revolutionary songs, delivered articles from the Voices of Malayan Revolution to the masses when they cleared the drainage for people in Geylang, Singapore.<sup>448</sup>

The Barisan Sosialis never denied the apparent imitation of China's Cultural Revolution in the art performances by the children in their kindergartens, in fact, they admitted it with pride: "the performances done by the children were almost all copied from China's programs with virtually no original creations".<sup>449</sup> Such practices were not unnoticed by the Singapore government. The publication of the government-supported NTUC criticized that such practice: "at the weakest period of their lifetime, the children were taught to kill Americans, to resent Prime Minister Lee, and to worship Chairman Mao",<sup>450</sup> a stand against which it would be difficult to argue.

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<sup>446</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 374, March 15, 1970.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 379, April 19, 1970.

<sup>449</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 374, March 15, 1970.

<sup>450</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 391, July 12, 1970.

As discussed, the conscription of children in the Communist Party-affiliated organizations, such as the Communist Youth League, was a way to forge a self, as well as a national identity.<sup>451</sup> Combining this analysis with the above-mentioned claims of the Barisan Sosialis that “the mission of education is to educate the youth with socialist ideas through education and entertainment so that they can be imbued with socialist moral ethics and the correct thought”, it could be inferred that the Barisan Sosialis-run kindergartens, serving as hotbeds of Maoism, were instruments for instilling leftist ideas into the Singapore children at the very early stage of the nation-building of Singapore. Thus, the kindergartens became another area in which the Barisan Sosialis posed a challenge to the PAP blueprint of nation-building. The eventual demise of the Barisan Sosialis, therefore, helped the PAP win over the children and paved the way for instilling a Singapore national identity into their hearts and minds.

### **Boycotting the Parliament and Elections: Handling Constitutional Stage to Opponents**

As discussed in Chapter one and five, the attitude towards parliament and parliamentary elections occupied a prominent place in the Maoist approach to socialism. Maoism rejected parliament and its election for Maoism was a stage further developed from orthodox Marxism which was based on its total denunciation of the peaceful parliamentary path in revisionism. Also, the emphasis on violence in achieving revolutionary victory precluded any peaceful means. This theoretical underpinning led the Barisan Sosialis to boycott the Singapore parliament and its elections resolutely in the 1960s. Of all the political moves that the Barisan Sosialis made to oppose the People’s Action Party government under their radicalization by Maoism, their boycott of the

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<sup>451</sup> For example, see Ngan-Pun Ngai, Sek-Yun Ngai, and Fang Wei, “Revisiting China’s Youth Policy”, accessed June 10, 2019, [http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/China\\_2011\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Situation\\_Article.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/China_2011_Youth_Policy_Situation_Article.pdf)



Singapore parliament and parliamentary elections in 1968 was the one most often cited as the decisive factor in their decline.<sup>452</sup>

Historically, the party achieved an election result that has not been matched by any other opposition party in Singapore's history until today. The general election held in September 1963 witnessed the biggest victory for any opposition party in Singapore history. Despite the fact that most Barisan Sosialis leaders were absent—detained during the previous year's Operation Cold Store—the Barisan Sosialis won 13 seats of the 51-member Legislative Assembly, becoming the second largest political party in Singapore. No opposition party has ever managed to match the Barisan Sosialis both in the seats obtained or the percentage of seats in the Singapore Parliament. Regardless of the genuineness of the democracy and constitutionality of Singapore at the time, the Barisan Sosialis, with the best election results for any opposition party in Singapore's history at hand, indeed had an opportunity to use the parliament as an alternative battlefield. However, by boycotting the parliament and the parliamentary elections in the 1968, they had given up this platform and handed it over to their political opponents.

The decision to boycott the parliament and parliamentary elections by the Barisan Sosialis had a profound theoretical root in Maoism. The chapter of *What is Maoism?* in this dissertation has shown that Maoism was an inheritance and development of orthodox Marxism, which strongly rejected the revisionism that argued for a peaceful and parliamentary road to socialism. Besides, one of the core approaches in Maoism was that it placed high value on violence and popular masses. Maoism emphasized armed struggles and despised any peaceful attempts as opportunist and revisionist. Partly for this reason, Mao's China attacked the Soviet Union when Nikita Khrushchev offered his famous theory of “peaceful coexistence” with the West. As loyal and ardent worshippers

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<sup>452</sup> For example, see Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First*, 110.

of Mao, the Barisan Sosialis members not only rejected any parliamentary approach and the elections in both Singapore and Malaysia, but also applauded the Malayan Communist Party's imitation and copy of the experience of the Chinese revolution and their adoption of the guidelines of "encircling the cities from the villages and winning political regimes by armed struggles".<sup>453</sup>

The Barisan Sosialis strongly castigated the "parliamentary democracy", and they rejected the parliamentary process outright to the degree that they even criticized the leftist Workers' Party as "anti-revolutionary right-wing opportunist" and "denying the fact that Malaya was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society".<sup>454</sup>

As the second largest political party in Singapore parliament as well as Singapore in general, by October 1966, the nine Barisan Sosialis members of the Singapore Parliament, headed by Chia Thye Poh, resigned from the Parliament,<sup>455</sup> an act that would be later described as "another fatal mistake after the rejection of independence".<sup>456</sup> By resigning from the "hypocrite" Parliament of Singapore, the Barisan Sosialis announced that they would undertake the mass struggle massively outside the Parliament, calling it "Job's news for the imperialists and their lackey, the Lee Kuan Yew fascists control" and "a big good thing for people struggling for national liberation and democracy".<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> The original words of Mao were "gathering strength in the villages, using the villages in order to surround the cities and then taking the cities". The words were from *Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, delivered on March 5, 1949. See Mao Tse-tung, *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 4 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), 363.

<sup>454</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 274, March 31, 1968.

<sup>455</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 199 October 8, 1966. The nine resigned members were: Chia Thye Poh, Koo Young, Ong Lian Teng, Poh Ber Liak, Tan Cheng Tong, Loh Miaw Gong, Lee Tee Tong, Chan Sun Wing, and Wong Soon Fong.

<sup>456</sup> Cheng Yinghong, The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Decline of the Left in Singapore, *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 7 (2011): 211-246.

<sup>457</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 199 October 8, 1966.

The boycott of the parliament and parliamentary elections in Singapore also incentivized the radical leftists in Malaysia. After the Barisan Sosialis boycotted the 1968 General Elections of Singapore, they again advocated for the boycott against the 1969 Malaysia Elections. Radical leftists in Johor Bahru and Selangor, Malaysia, imitated their comrades in Singapore and boycotted the 1969 Malaysian Elections. Using the same argument as the Barisan Sosialis, the action committee formed by the leftists to boycott the parliamentary elections stated that they would prove that “parliamentary democracy” was non-existent by boycotting the voting and elections themselves.<sup>458</sup> They called on the people that “people are never to follow their rules but to rely on powerful and wide mass struggles and military struggles to fight back firmly. Only in this way could the US and British imperialism and their Rahman-Lee puppet clan be crushed, a country with the people’s democratic dictatorship be established, and a socialist Malaya be realized”.<sup>459</sup>

The Barisan Sosialis Front’s defiant claim that the “people did not care for the elections, neither were they interested in” was refuted by the election turnouts. Except for the voters in walkover constituencies, the turnout in other seven contested constituencies was as high as 91.8%.<sup>460</sup> It seemed the people, at least in the contested constituencies, did care about the elections. Barisan Sosialis’ continuing rejection of the PAP victory in the elections, their labelling of those opposition party candidates who chose to contest, and their bullheaded claim of the correctness to boycott the elections proved only to have side-lined the Barisan Sosialis, evidenced by the results of elections when they chose to participate four years later.

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<sup>458</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 328, April 20, 1969.

<sup>459</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 327, April 13, 1969.

<sup>460</sup> “Parliamentary General Election 1968,” accessed May 14, 2019, <http://www.singapore-elections.com/general-election/1968/>

Later in 1968, during an interview with the international press before a two-month overseas trip, when asked how he was able to get away from it (the domestic problems), Lee Kuan Yew also remarked that “fortunately the Communist made catastrophic mistakes from 1961 onwards. They are out for the time being and they have decided to opt out completely from the constitutional arena”.<sup>461</sup> As the later paragraphs will show, the Barisan Sosialis’ withdrawal constituted a major factor in their decline and marginalization in the Singapore political arena.

### **U-Turn for Parliamentary Elections**

On March 26, 1972, the Barisan Sosialis made a sudden and unanticipated U-turn on the issue of parliamentary elections on the first page of Issue 478. They announced that they would stand in contests for the upcoming General Election in late 1972.<sup>462</sup> Ironically, the reasons that the Barisan Sosialis gave for the reversal of their previous obdurate stance were exactly the same as the one they gave for their stubborn boycott: to expose the plots of the reactionaries and defend the interests of people.<sup>463</sup>

This reversal also revealed that the Barisan Sosialis was not just a passive recipient of Maoism but demonstrated their own agency in choosing different Mao teachings for changing decisions. When they boycotted the parliament and the elections, they invoked the militancy and mass line in Maoism, and as is shown in the last chapter in their polemic with the Partai Rakyat,

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<sup>461</sup> Transcript of Television Interview-The Prime Minister being Interviewed by Derek Round, Reuters, John Hughes, Christian Science Monitor, and Ken Jalleh, Hong Kong Standard, at the Peninsula Hotel, Hong Kong, October 14, 1968, National Archives of Singapore.

<http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/lky19681014.pdf>

<sup>462</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 478, March 26, 1972.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

when they decided to participate in the elections, they used the principle of “concrete analysis of concrete issues” for validation.

The context of the reversed decision to participate in the parliamentary elections also required further investigation. When the decision was announced by March 1972, Mao had invited and hosted U.S. President Richard Nixon to China to the global political surprise in February 1972. “The week that changed the world”<sup>464</sup> certainly had an impact on the radical leftists on the tiny island of Singapore. The names of Mao himself and direct references to him since Mao had invited Nixon in July 1971 were far less numerous than the years before. The articles reprinted from the Voice of Malayan Revolution and reports attacking the domestic affairs of Malaysia under the new Prime Minister Razak made up the majority of the pages.

The U-turn of boycotting the parliament and its elections in 1968 but deciding to stand in contest four years later certainly attracted the criticism from the ruling party of Singapore. When Jek Yeun Thong, Singapore’s Minister for Culture, criticized the vacillating policies and decisions concerning the participation of the election, the Barisan Sosialis responded by accusing Jek of “fomenting disunity and dissension”,<sup>465</sup> and like its Chinese Big Brother, the Barisan Sosialis proudly claimed that “the policies of the Barisan Sosialis are correct in both past and present!”:<sup>466</sup>

It is not necessary here to refute all the PAP’s twisted logic and distorted theories. As a reactionary, Jek would and could never fathom the logic of anti-imperialism...whether [to boycott the parliament], mainly depends on the different circumstances and timings.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> A term often used to refer to Nixon’s visit to China in 1972.

<sup>465</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 486, May 21, 1972.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.* The original text was in Chinese, I translate it into English.

The defense was quite powerless and even contradictory. By stating that “in deciding whether to boycott the parliament, whether there is ‘parliamentary democracy’ is a crucial factor”,<sup>468</sup> the Barisan Sosialis explained their boycott of the 1968 Singapore parliament and the elections as there was no parliamentary democracy. However, they also stated that their decision to stand in the contest for the upcoming election in 1972 did not necessarily mean that the parliamentary democracy came to exist in Singapore. The Barisan Sosialis had to make a further explanation that “parliamentary democracy is not the decisive factor”<sup>469</sup> as a remedy.

The slogan “to expose the political deception and vicious plot of the reactionaries” was used again in the situation that the Barisan Sosialis reversed their previous stance and chose to stand in the upcoming election, yet it is hardly the convincing reason behind the U-turn decision. However, the Barisan Sosialis’ own words explained the fundamental mentality behind the reversal: “the situation has changed. We find that currently, it is completely unnecessary to continue the boycott”.<sup>470</sup>

What did it mean when the Barisan Sosialis said that “the situation has changed”? For the Barisan Sosialis who followed Maoism and watched the Cultural Revolution and China affairs so closely, the changes in Mao’s China may provide some insights. Late 1971 through the early months of 1972 was a crucial moment for China during the Cultural Revolution. The Lin Biao incident dealt a blow to the fanaticism of the Cultural Revolution, and in today’s history textbooks in China, which are heavily censored by the Chinese Communist Party, the incident is regarded as the turning point of the Cultural Revolution. Besides the Lin Biao incident, another major event was China’s

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

official announcement that Chairman Mao, the idol of the global anti-imperialist fighters and anti-establishment rebels, would invite President Nixon, the head of the biggest imperialist empire to officially visit China in 1972. The impact of the Lin Biao incident on the Barisan Sosialis was unclear, as it was not seen from the currently available Barisan Sosialis Front and Party Information, but Mao's welcome of Nixon to China instantly triggered the reactions of the Barisan Sosialis.

As early as September 1971, two months after the world was stunned by the news that Nixon would visit the People's Republic of China following the invitation of Mao, a sense of confusion, disillusion, or crisis had already been prevalent among the Barisan Sosialis. The 36<sup>th</sup> Issue of *Party Information* of Barisan Sosialis, which was a bulletin dedicated to the internal discussion and analysis within the Barisan Sosialis, printed a first-page article titled "The Crisis the Party is facing", in which Chairman of the Barisan Sosialis, Dr. Lee offered analysis of the situations of Singapore and a crisis facing the party. That article turned out to be pivotal in understanding the decline of the Barisan Sosialis and the entire leftist forces in Singapore.<sup>471</sup>

Lee made it explicit that the people across the world were very much concerned about the negotiations between China and the United States. By posing questions such as "What results could the negotiations between China and Washington bring?" and "What does it mean by Nixon's visit to Beijing?", the Barisan Sosialis could not hide their uncertainty over the possible changing attitudes of Beijing. Besides the nerve over the coming contact between Beijing and Washington, the changing attitudes of China toward Malaysia under the leadership of Razak (such as the suspension of attacks on Malaysia, Razak, and Lee Kuan Yew by the Peking radio, donation from the Red Cross Society of China to its counterpart in Malaysia, as well as the mutual visits of trade representatives of both countries) also caused concerns among the Barisan Sosialis. Contrary to

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<sup>471</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 36, September 23, 1971.

exuding defiant confidence on the Barisan Sosialis Front, what Lee expressed via the Party Information, its internal circulation publication, was pessimistic:

Some of the comrades in our Party who saw China's foreign policy today, have turned low in spirit, even to the point of completely giving up struggling.

Meanwhile, our Party has dealt with issues according to the leftist theories and principles and has been supporting China's general path of socialism. If China compromises with the U.S. imperialism, then it would deal an inevitable blow to us.<sup>472</sup>

It was a rare move that the Barisan Sosialis openly admitted the vast difficulties they were facing. Dr. Lee even used the term "half-alive-half-dead" to describe the situations of the Barisan Sosialis. From Dr. Lee's description, the Barisan Sosialis was faced with less active members and low spirits among the comrades. Except running kindergartens and selling party newsletters, the Barisan Sosialis had suspended its activities in all other fields, even incapable of supporting the political detainees except holding press conferences and hanging banners, leaving that to the families of the detainees, and organizing demonstrations and protests were out of the question.<sup>473</sup> In analyzing the factors contributing to the decline of the Barisan Sosialis, Chairman Lee cited sectarianism within the party, the suppression from the government, the withdrawals of party members, and specifically, the influence of China, to which Lee made a particular reference, "was a huge factor":<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.



China's Cultural Revolution has a massive impact on the thoughts of our comrades. During the Cultural Revolution, all sorts of ideas came out of it and spread out, leading many of our comrades to make radical "leftist" mistakes. Some of the remarks, in the particular circumstances of China, might be correct. However, when they were transplanted onto the island of Singapore and the Barisan Sosialis, things were completely different. Yet Some of our comrades mechanically invoked and applied some remarks and quotations, without associating them with the actual situations in Singapore...some of the statements on the Cultural Revolution of China had harmful and detrimental influence over our party. This phenomenon was because many comrades of our party lacked experience; they didn't have a concrete analysis of concrete issues.<sup>475</sup>

Given such a difficult situation for the Barisan Sosialis, Chairman Lee proposed three options for the struggling Barisan Sosialis: 1) to maintain the status quo, 2) to be dissolved, and 3) to eliminate the leftist ideology, attract new human resources, and to adapt to the current situations as an anti-imperialist organization for the masses.<sup>476</sup>

The proposal of the three options was solely an introduction and transition for the affirmation of the third option, in which eliminating the leftist ideology was the central task. From a historical hindsight, to eliminate the leftist ideology was to review and reappraise the Barisan Sosialis' history of its embrace of Maoism.

These strong leftist thoughts, Dr. Lee analyzed, started around 1965, and got stronger and stronger following the party's boycott of the Singapore parliament. It was an apparent reference to the embrace of Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis. "In 1966, our party launched an anti-rightist struggle and an extra-parliamentary struggle. The Cultural Revolution of China had both positive and negative impacts on the Barisan Sosialis. The negative impact caused an extreme strong

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<sup>475</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 36, September 23, 1971. The original text was in Chinese, I provide English translation.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*

tendency of factionalism, sectarianism, and anarchism within the party. Many comrades mechanically used remarks popular in China without considering the particular situations in Malaya, especially the island of Singapore. Some comrades' remarks were extremely leftist, so red that they saw themselves as communists and saw our party, the Barisan Sosialis as a communist party!"<sup>477</sup> Here Chairman Lee set a definite boundary between a communist party and the Barisan Sosialis.<sup>478</sup> His constant emphasis that the Barisan Sosialis was a legitimate party in Singapore implied his recognition that the MCP was illegitimate. However, the record of the Barisan Sosialis' support of the MCP contradicted such a reflection.

For the highly likely reason of Mao's changing posture toward U.S. imperialism, represented by his invitation of President Nixon to visit China, the name of and the references to Chairman Mao significantly decreased on the Barisan Sosialis Front pages after the end of 1971. From April 30, 1972, Mao's writings, which were the routine of the Barisan Sosialis newsletter, were given way to the writings of Lenin. The title of the selected Lenin writing indicated the potential exploration and reflection of the leftists' embrace of radical leftist ideologies: "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. And from the 485<sup>th</sup> Issue (May 14, 1972), Mao's quotations, which were put side by side with the big-character title of the Barisan Sosialis on the head of the first page of the newspaper, were also given way to quotations of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Articles worshipping Mao in a clear and candid manner, such as the ones that Mao led the Anyuan mine workers protests introduced in the previous chapter, were no longer seen in the Barisan Sosialis newspapers. Even cartoons and pictures showing an open adulation to Chairman Mao were replaced by the ones on the Vietnam War and the protests in other countries of the world.

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 36, September 23, 1971.

## Campaign Platform: Challenging the Nation-State of Singapore in Elections

Although the Barisan Sosialis critiqued their influence under Maoism in their internal circulations, the openly stated campaign platform of the Barisan Sosialis in the 1972 parliamentary election did not go differently from the open claims of the party in all those years. It was a clear evidence of the sharp, and even toe-to-toe contrasting stances between the Barisan Sosialis and the ruling People's Action Party over the issue of the status of Singapore and its nation-building:

1. A genuine independent, democratic, unified Malaya (including Singapore island)
2. Freedom of thought and speech. Immediate and unconditional release of all political detainees
3. Loosen the regulations on citizenship
4. Abolish the Johor-Singapore Causeway restrictions
5. Abolish Fascist acts, especially the *Employment Act, Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act*
6. Abolish draft and "National Service"
7. Stop immediately forced relocation and "urban planning"
8. Lower the HDB rent
9. Stop oppressing hawkers and taxi drivers
10. Freedom of education, abolish the "study permit"
11. Free medical care for the poor
12. Gender equality and equal pay
13. Improve the lives of peasants and fishermen
14. Promote national industry and commerce
15. Lower taxes
16. Abolish unemployment and poverty

17. An equal, justified, democratic, and progressive socialist society<sup>479</sup>

The central proposition of the pursuit of a united Malaya in this campaign platform, of which Singapore was a part, denied the legitimacy of both the Republic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaysia. Apart from that, some claims, such as abolishing national service, were to abolish the institutions and arrangements aimed at forging a distinct Singapore identity. The proposal to eliminate the Johor-Singapore Causeway restrictions was an effort to remove the national border between Singapore and Malaysia to pave the way for a unified territory. Such a platform was a direct challenge to the nation-state building blueprint set by the ruling party of Singapore.

### **Elections Results and Marginalization: Failure of the Maoist Alternative to Nation-building**

The 1972 general election of Singapore witnessed another sweeping victory for the ruling People's Action Party in that they won all the 65 seats. The result was not surprising. Even the Barisan Sosialis had considered their participation in the election as “symbolic contests”.<sup>480</sup> Chairman of the Barisan Sosialis, Dr. Lee Siew Choh, lost the race in Rochore constituency to PAP veteran Toh Chin Chye. The Barisan Sosialis attacked the parliamentary election as cheating, fake, undemocratic, and unfair immediately after the results were announced.<sup>481</sup> Ironically, the Barisan Sosialis could claim that they made unexpected strides in “exposing the political deception and

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<sup>479</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 500, August 27, 1972.

<sup>480</sup> In the statement released by the Barisan Sosialis on June 5, 1972, they announced that the Barisan Sosialis would participate in “symbolic contests” in ten constituencies: Chua Chu Kang, Kampong Chai Chee, Toa Payoh, Kuo Chuan, Rochore, Havelock, Bukit Ho Swee, Delta, Bukit Merah, and Bukit Timah. See page one of *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 489, June 11, 1972.

<sup>481</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 501, September 10, 1972.

improving people's political awareness one step further" when they claimed that the parliamentary democracy was fake yet they still chose to stand in contests.<sup>482</sup> However, very rarely for the Barisan Sosialis who defiantly stated that "the policies of the Barisan Sosialis are correct in both past and present!"<sup>483</sup> made a subtle and easily unnoticed reflection: "...but one thing is clear, if our party [Barisan Sosialis] wants to be an organization for the masses, she must correct the 'left' and right opportunistic mistakes made in the past, [she] must play the role of an organization for the masses with feet on the ground, and conduct some work which accommodates the concrete situations and needs of Singapore and the entire Malaya".<sup>484</sup> The reflection was a small paragraph in a long first page article condemning the "giant fraud of the 1972 election". Nonetheless the sentences revealed that the Barisan Sosialis elusively admitted they made mistakes in the past and the mistakes were due to the fact that they once failed to capture the realities of post-independent Singapore and Malaysia. Such mistakes, though the Barisan Sosialis labeled them as "left" and right opportunistic mistakes, were very closely associated with their embrace of Maoism and application of Maoism onto the context of Singapore and Malaysia. Evidence supporting this argument was that the Barisan Sosialis toned down the appreciation of Maoism as their guiding principle, a move not just limited within the internal circulation of the *Party Information*, but made public in their party organ the Barisan Sosialis Front.

Such attitudes were reflected in the congratulatory message celebrating the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Barisan Sosialis. For the first time since the mid-1960s, Mao's name was not mentioned in speeches, articles, or messages during significant events. Also for the first time, the

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<sup>482</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 502, September 17, 1972.

<sup>483</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 486, May 21, 1972.

<sup>484</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 502, September 17, 1972.

Barisan Sosialis, the party taking an adulatory attitude towards itself, at least in public publications for a long time, admitted that they too, made mistakes:

Today, some of the comrades within the party had the incorrect left-wing thought, estimated the development of the situation in an excessively positive light, and treated the work with subjectivism. They did not adhere at all to the concrete circumstances in Singapore and the level of people's political awareness, but indulged in shouting empty slogans and acting as empty revolutionaries.

Today, no one could deny that our party is an organization for the masses. If our party is an organization for the masses, our party must adhere to the current concrete situations in Malaya (uniquely Singapore) and the needs of the masses, conduct work down to earth combining the role and tasks of our party, only then could we claim that we are indeed an organization for the masses; ...

[A]ll comrades of our party must eliminate all the wrong left-wing thoughts, keep [their] feet firmly on the ground, adhere honestly to the particular situations in Singapore, promote our work, not to become revolutionaries in words who shout empty slogans. If we do not correct these wrong ideas, still act recklessly, then it would lead consistently to an alienation from the reality and the masses, and the crisis of self-disintegration.<sup>485</sup>

Openly stating that the primary purpose of the participation in the 1972 parliamentary election was to expose the plots of the reactionaries and defend the interests of the people, the Barisan Sosialis defiantly claimed that they made achievements in this regard. However, from the frequent discussions and reflections of the party on their newspapers, a strong sense of crisis was prevalent, in contrast to the past defiance and endless confidence drawn from the "good revolutionary situation".

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<sup>485</sup> *Barisan Sosialis Front*, Issue 503, September 24, 1972. The original text was in Chinese; I provide the English translation.

The failure at the 1972 general election of the Singapore parliament was undoubtedly a trigger point. As the second largest political party in Singapore only after the ruling People's Action Party, the results of the election were humiliating. The Barisan Sosialis contested for ten constituencies, yet no candidate successfully won a seat. In terms of the votes, with a combined collected votes of 34, 483, the Barisan Sosialis, the second largest political party and the biggest opposition party in the political life of Singapore, ranked only in the fourth, after not only the ruling People's Action Party, but also far behind parties in the leftist camp, the Workers' Party and United National Front.<sup>486</sup> In one word, though the Barisan Sosialis claimed the election was unfair and undemocratic, yet it was clear that after years of embrace of Maoism and their radical leftist practice in the Singapore context, it was side-lined and marginalized in the parliamentary system where the acceptance and popularity of the political party was best represented in the votes received. Even years before the 1972 election, the Barisan Sosialis already sensed their actions yielding no results. Dr. Lee admitted that after years of struggle and inculcation of the concept of a Malayan nation by way of articles, declarations, newspapers and other media, the fact of the separation of Malaya and Singapore had only become more and more robust.<sup>487</sup>

## Conclusion

Following the defeat of the 1972 Parliamentary Elections, the Barisan Sosialis participated in the next two elections in 1976 and 1980. In 1976, they collected 25,411 votes, making up 3.1% of

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<sup>486</sup> "Parliamentary General Election 1972," accessed May 20, 2019, <http://www.singapore-elections.com/general-election/1972/votes.html>

<sup>487</sup> *Party Information*, Issue 26, September 20, 1969.

the total amount, which was even more atrocious than their 1972 elections results.<sup>488</sup> While the 1980 elections witnessed an even worse result for the Barisan Sosialis, the second largest political party in Singapore which once achieved the best election results in Singapore that no other opposition party had achieved to today, received only 16,488 votes, a 0.5% drop compared with the 1976 elections.<sup>489</sup> In the parliamentary democratic system of Singapore, the shrinking percentage of the votes they received indicated one thing for the Barisan Sosialis: that after their embrace of Maoism theoretically, and their active application of Maoism in the Singapore context in the 1960s and 1970s, the Barisan Sosialis was marginalized and side-lined in the political arena of Singapore. Their vision of an alternative building of Singapore failed to generate Singaporeans' enthusiasm and identification.

The shrinkage of their acceptance from the early 1960s to 1980s was in correspondence to their adherence to Maoism and their application of it. Even before the Cultural Revolution, Mao's China had already become a socialist model for the Barisan Sosialis, and when the Cultural Revolution started, the Barisan Sosialis openly established Maoism as their guiding ideology. They embraced Maoism as a spiritual weapon in their battle against the PAP, their rejection of both the Republic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaysia, and their conflicts with other leftists inside and outside their party. Besides, they accepted the Maoist guidance on arts, and like China during the Cultural Revolution, they appreciated and worshipped Mao to the degree of adulation and personality cult. Under such a theoretical guidance, they actively applied Maoism in their political moves. They opposed all social policies initiated by the PAP, from citizenship to national borders,

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<sup>488</sup> "Parliamentary General Election 1976," Singapore Elections, <http://www.singapore-elections.com/general-election/1976/votes.html>

<sup>489</sup> "Parliamentary General Election 1980," Singapore Elections, <http://www.singapore-elections.com/general-election/1980/votes.html>



from male conscription to plans to keep Singapore clean. They inculcated children at their kindergartens with Maoism and turned the kindergartens into hotbeds for Maoism. They strongly rejected the Singapore parliament and the parliamentary elections in 1968, and they validated their reversed decision to contest in the 1972 elections with Mao's quote "concrete analysis of concrete conditions".

Based on a thorough reading of the organizational publications of the Barisan Sosialis, the Barisan Sosialis Front, as well as other leftist parties, the Singapore section has provided a detailed account of the theoretical adherence to Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis and their concrete actions as a result. The Barisan Sosialis' engagement with Maoism took place in the context of the 1960s and 1970s when the Republic of Singapore underwent its initial stage of nation-building. The Singapore section argues that defeating and marginalizing the Maoist-inspired leftism represented by the Barisan Sosialis helped pave the way for the realization of the nation-building blueprint by the conservative ruling elites. The Barisan Sosialis' theoretical embrace of Maoism and their subsequent actions constituted Singapore's Maoist moment in the 1960s and 1970s.

This Maoist moment in Singapore came to an end in the 1980s. During a rally for the 1980 General Elections for the Parliament, Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister, the biggest target in the narrative of the Maoist-inspired Barisan Sosialis, spoke to the masses:

The Chinese tried the Communist model, with their own modifications, and it failed! And they have admitted that it failed, and they're trying to pick up the same competitive spirit between workers, between different enterprises...

Dr. Lee Siew-Choh and Mr. Jeyaratnam talk as if these things have never happened. They haven't learned!

Deng Xiaoping is a great man... He fought a great revolution. He saw the product of that revolution turn sour. He was fortunate to live long enough and he had the courage to say “No! We change course! Let’s learn!...”<sup>490</sup>

Lee’s remarks which praised the reform initiated by Deng Xiaoping and criticized Dr. Lee Siew Choh at the same time were significant considering the context of the late 1970s. Previous paragraphs have shown that the Barisan Sosialis declined in the late 1970s Singapore politics evidenced by the shrinking votes they received. At the same time, the inspirational source of the Barisan Sosialis, the People’s Republic of China, had undergone fundamental changes. Deng had initiated de-Maoist reform and the opening up policy just two years before Lee’s 1980 rally speech. Before Deng’s reform, he had visited Singapore. Histories after Deng’s visit are known to many: Deng accepted Lee Kuan Yew’s advice to terminate support to communists in other countries, and the Singapore model occupied a prominent place in Deng’s blueprint for China’s reforms. Linking this historical turn, the decline of the Barisan Sosialis with the nation-state building of Singapore, it could be inferred that China since the late 1970s ceased to be the exporter of the ideology which triggered any possible challenge to the nation-building of Singapore. Instead, China took the developmental path of Singapore as its model for modernization. Such a reversed relationship marked the end of the Maoist moment in Singapore.

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<sup>490</sup> “Lee Kuan Yew talks about China and Deng”, accessed May 19, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=nM1f6xNfwZw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=nM1f6xNfwZw)

## CONCLUSION

### Summary

This research centers around these questions: How should we understand Maoism in the context of the 1960s and 1970s? How did the local actors approach Maoism and contribute to Maoist moments in the 1960s and 1970s? The main content of this dissertation shows the efforts to address these questions. The countries under analysis, namely China, the United States, and Singapore, were positioned differently in the Cold War system. This dissertation, which focuses on Maoism, a key force in the Cold War, sits between the cultural history and Cold War studies.

This dissertation is solidly based on archival sources. It has made use of multiple types of primary sources, such as papers at university library collections, memoirs, and organizational publications during research trips in more than one country and in both English and Chinese. It also includes interviews with actual participants in the various social movements in the 1960s and 1970s under analysis. In addition, the dissertation incorporates various secondary sources. This dissertation proposes the concept of “Maoist moments” to refer to the global phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s that Maoism sparked radical leftism around the world. It argues that these “Maoist moments” were made possible by the fact that Maoism incentivized an imagined Third World against imperialism and by the worldwide radical leftists who invoked, adopted, and applied Maoism for their cultural, social, and political agendas. To support this argument, this dissertation provides an understanding of Maoism in the context of the 1960s and 1970s and makes sub-arguments by examining core actors in three countries, namely China, the United States, and Singapore during this period.

By situating Maoism in a historical trajectory of communism and leftism, and by engaging in academic debates over the understanding of Maoism, the first sub-argument this dissertation makes is that the blending of the Marxist dimensions in Maoism and the Chinese characteristics granted Maoism a particular appeal among leftists, especially in countries with similar social conditions as China; at the same time, the global contexts of the 1960s and 1970s, such as the Cultural Revolution of China, US imperialism in the Vietnam War and the Soviet Union’s “peaceful coexistence” with Western countries, contributed to the emerging image of Mao’s China as the most revolutionary major force, thus giving Maoism an extra credibility as a revolutionary ideology. The dissertation

introduces the concept of “two-way construction”, meaning that the construction of the understanding of Maoism is twofold: construction based on understanding of textual meaning of Mao Tse-tung’s works, and construction based on a highly selective use of Mao’s words and expressions by radical leftists around the world to serve their agendas. The phenomenon of the “two-way construction” adds flexibility as well as complexity to the understanding of Maoism and enlarges the connotation of Maoism. This sub-argument lays the theoretical foundation for explaining the Maoist moments in the places under investigation, especially the United States and Singapore.

The second sub-argument the dissertation makes after unearthing histories behind Mao’s works is that global Maoism reached its height during the 1960s and 1970s not only due to the Cultural Revolution in a commonly recognized political sense, but also due to the translations, publications, and circulation of Mao’s works. The export of Maoism by way of translations, publications, and circulations served as a key prerequisite for the radical leftists in other countries, such as the United States and Singapore, to adopt, invoke, and practice Maoism. By bringing the translations, publications, and circulations into the historical analysis, China, was not just the birthplace of Maoism, but also materialized global Maoism. This perspective brings both the people, i.e., the translators, the publishers, and those who worked to circulate Mao’s works into the analytical orbit that also includes the radical leftists in the United States and Singapore.

The third sub-argument relates to Maoism and the establishment of ethnic studies programs in higher educational institutions of America. It argues that Maoism was closely and inherently associated with ethnic studies in America as it served as the source of inspiration and protest tactics during the two student strikes at San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley; after the strikes, the Maoist activists-turned-scholars occupied the faculty in the first department and college of ethnic studies in America and they put ideas of Mao into the course contents of ethnic studies. The Maoist link to the founding of ethnic studies programs formed a Maoist moment in America apart from much of the current literature on Maoism in America which gave Maoist organizations the central place. This Maoist moment in America has a long-lasting impact upon the American educational, social, and cultural spheres.

The last sub-argument is on the Maoist moment in Singapore, a tiny republic but with a significant academic value when it comes to postwar nation-building in a Third World country. It

provides the historical account of the engagement of Maoism in Singapore in the context of the 1960s and 1970s: the theoretical embrace of Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis and their subsequent actions. The Barisan Sosialis' adherence to Maoism led to their radicalization and their final marginalization. The section thus argues that the embrace of Maoism by the Barisan Sosialis posed an alternative modernity plan as well as a blueprint for nation-state building, which directly challenged those of the ruling conservative elites. As the second largest political party next to the People's Action Party, the Barisan Sosialis engaged in opposing every social, economic, and diplomatic policy of the ruling party, indoctrinated children in their kindergartens with Maoism, and rejected the legitimate parliamentary system. By the late 1970s, China's de-Maoist reforms dealt a heavy blow to the theoretical foundations of the Barisan Sosialis, Maoism thus discontinued to be a major force disrupting the developmental path set by the Singapore government. Instead, Deng Xiaoping's reform took Singapore as its model. Compared with China's insistence on Mao Zedong Thought and the lingering ramifications of ethnic studies programs in the United States, this reversed relationship, as the Singapore section suggests, marked the end of the Maoist moment in Singapore.

### **Contemporary Implications**

The appeal of Maoism in particular, and leftism in general seemed to be countered in the 1980s, symbolized by Deng Xiaoping's de-Maoist reform in China, the rise of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan across the Atlantic, and the end of the Cold War worldwide. In the economic field, neoliberalism became the dominant ideology. Economic liberalization, industrial privatization, free market economy, globalization, etc., were emphasized, and they occupied the center of economic,

political, and academic discussions. Steve Bannon claimed during an interview that “we [the West] won the economic argument against communism”.<sup>491</sup>

This dissertation is not intended to argue against the decline of the left. However, it would point out that the triumph of neoliberalism has overshadowed the due attention paid to the studies of the left. In the contemporary context, the issues of immigration, environmentalism, LGBT rights, identity politics, all share some theoretical roots in the leftism of the 1960s.

The dissertation centers on Maoism, the latest major derivative of Marxism, communism, and leftism and a prominent component of the 1960s leftism. It has explained that among some radicals, Maoism’s popularity and appeal was even stronger than that of Stalinism and Leninism. By doing so, the dissertation sheds new light on two aspects of the significance of Maoism after the 1980s and in the contemporary era:

In the first place, Maoism was critical in the understanding of the meanings of leftism, liberalism, and conservatism. They are in the process of being reshaped and redefined in the following decades after the 1960s, and the left-right, liberalism-conservatism conflicts often make news headlines day.

In many Western countries, Maoism triggered splits among leftists. Leftists involved in Sino-Soviet polemic wars cracked based on their pro-Soviet, or pro-Mao inclinations, with the latter often being more radicalized and left-wing. In America for example, the leftists’ radicalization pushed the liberal camp to a more left stance in the political spectrum, thus leaving the classical liberals being considered conservative since the 1980s. Jeane Kirkpatrick, the diplomat who served as United States Ambassador to the United Nations under the Reagan Administration, became conservative and

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<sup>491</sup> Steve Bannon, “The Candace Owens Show: Steve Bannon,” interviewed by Candace Owens, *PragerU*, August 4, 2019, video, 25:42, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qC-r0izU4j0&t=2824s>.

criticized the Democrats as the “blame America first” party.<sup>492</sup> The incumbent President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, was a long time New York Democrat, but he gradually evolved and became a Republican President.<sup>493</sup>

Secondly, the dissertation inspires a new thinking of the cultural, educational transformation, as well as the nation-building in the West. Richard Wolin mentioned that Michel Foucault staffed the Department of philosophy of the University of Vincennes in Paris with Maoist militants.<sup>494</sup> This dissertation looks at mainly the context of the United States.

The case of Ziad Ahmed, the American version of “hero of the blank answer sheet” which echoed Zhang Tiesheng of Mao’s China, as it is discussed in the U.S. section, is only one example of the leftists’ influence over the American campuses. That the strong-willed Ronald Reagan shut down the students protests during strikes at the San Francisco State College and the UC Berkeley for ethnic studies and gained credibility when running for Presidency in the 1980 election has been in the past.<sup>495</sup> Today, the conservative writers could only lament “where is Ronald Reagan when we need him?” when UC Berkeley caved to radical leftists’ demands to silence conservative voices on campus.<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Tim Weiner, “Jeane Kirkpatrick, Reagan’s Forceful Envoy, Dies,” *New York Times*, December 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/09/washington/09kirkpatrick.html>

<sup>493</sup> During *Face the Nation* interview, Trump stated “I was from an area that was all Democrat. And, frankly, over the years, I have -- and especially as I have gotten more and more involved, I have evolved. And I have taken positions that are different than the past. And I feel strongly about them.” See “Face the Nation Transcript August 23, 2015: Trump, Christie & Cruz,” *CBS News*, August 23, 2015, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/face-the-nation-transcripts-august-23-2015-trump-christie-cruz/>

<sup>494</sup> Wolin, 17.

<sup>495</sup> Jeffrey Kahn, “Ronald Reagan Launched Political Career Using the Berkeley Campus as a Target,” NewsCenter, June 8, 2004, [https://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2004/06/08\\_reagan.shtml](https://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2004/06/08_reagan.shtml)

<sup>496</sup> Donna Carol Voss, “Here’s What Ronald Reagan Did When College Kids Went Ape at UC-Berkeley,” *The Federalist*, April 24, 2017, <https://thefederalist.com/2017/04/24/heres-ronald-reagan-college-kids-went-ape-uc-berkeley/>

After 50 years of leftist practice, where the Maoist link to ethnic studies was an important part, Americans', especially the youth people's perceptions of socialism have changed. A March 2019 poll showed that the majority of American youths between the age 18 and 24 were increasingly supportive of socialism<sup>497</sup>. Faced with such a social trend as well as the increasing pro-socialist Democrats, President Trump emphasized, quite unusual for his predecessors, in his State of the Union address 2019, that "America will never be a socialist country"<sup>498</sup>.

Besides, the two strikes for the establishment of ethnic studies programs in the two universities and ethnic studies programs where Maoist ideas were inherently incorporated were manifestations of the emergence of the identity politics in America. The U.S. section of the dissertation has analyzed Yuji Ichioka, who was active in the Asian American Political Alliance and the founding of Asian American Studies Department at the UC Berkeley, and who coined the term "Asian American". Following his coined term, terms such as Latin American, Mexican American, Japanese American, and all the other hyphenated Americans have come to the fore. This dissertation discovered a contrasting phenomenon that while by defeating Maoist-inspired Barisan Sosialis, Singapore managed to develop a solid identity of Singapore citizenship above one's ethnicity, while in the United States, the incorporation of Maoism into the ethnic studies was instrumental in cracking citizens of America into fragmented hyphenated Americans. Hence, any analysis of new developments in nation-building in America cannot be done without taking Maoist inspirations into consideration.

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<sup>497</sup> Trevon Austin, "New poll shows American Youth are Increasingly Supportive of Socialism," World Socialist Web Site, March 13, 2019, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/03/13/yout-m13.html>

<sup>498</sup> "Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union Address", White House, February 6, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-state-union-address-2/>



## Limitations of the Research

This dissertation has filled the following academic lacunae: it centers Maoism as a major force shaping national, cultural, and international affairs in the postwar period, expands studies of Maoism in Western countries beyond the concentration on organizations, and it sheds new light upon the interactions between Maoism and Third World countries.

However, meaningful efforts for further explorations do not stop at the dissertation. There is still work to be done to expand the studies and understanding of Maoism. The following lists a few areas that could be examined and explored:

First of all, limited by language proficiency, the translations of Mao's works under analysis of the dissertation are restricted to the Chinese and English versions. In the chapter "What is Maoism?", the case of Maurice Meisner has shown that the differences in versions read and analyzed by scholars might affect understandings of Mao's thought. Several questions thus arise:

1. Besides the official translations of Mao's works done by the Chinese authorities, did radical leftists in other non-English speaking countries translate their own versions of Mao's works, from the *Selected Works of Mao* to the *Little Red Book*, from Mao's poems to his separate speeches and articles?
2. If so, did they change, delete, or even fabricate certain words or expressions of Mao to fit their agendas in their respective social and political context? As the section on China has shown, the Communist Party of Great Britain-affiliated Lawrence and Wishart Publishers had tried to delete some sentences to adapt Mao's thought to British and American social contexts. In this regard, comparative translation studies would be an avenue.

It is the sincere hope of this dissertation that these questions are addressed, explored, and answered, to enlarge, and complement the broader Maoist moments.

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