The quest for greater social equality is surely one of the most powerful political impulses of our age. For millions around the globe, this quest is identified with Marxian socialism, which is seen as an ideology and political program making possible economic development without the inequalities and entrenched privileges of capitalism. To date, however, socialist regimes have not been very successful "equalizers." True, they generally succeed in eliminating the privileges of the existing "exploiting classes," but subsequently they have shown a tendency to introduce new and complex forms of inequality and concentration of power, rather than gradually limiting them, as originally pledged. The experience of the Soviet Union is the most dramatic in this regard. Lenin spoke buoyantly in *State and Revolution*, written on the eve of the assumption of power in 1917, of the prospect of minimal inequality, with all positions in society performed for "workingsmen's wages." Yet, even before his death, Lenin in power became a forceful advocate of "necessary" incentives and privileges for those holding positions of authority and expertise. By the early 1930s, Stalin completed the repudiation of the "deviation" of egalitarianism, and the basic institutions of the Soviet system of stratification were established: an elitist educational system, a set of material incentives and bonuses to serve as the primary motor of higher industrial production, a massive bureaucratic and terror machine to control the masses, a network of special stores, health facilities, vacation resorts and other such things to cater to the needs of the elite, and even a graded system of uniforms for various kinds of civil servants (1). Some partial measures to
reduce the rigid hierarchies erected during the Stalin years took place under Khrushchev, but nonetheless today anyone who would use the Soviet case as evidence for the proposition that socialism leads to increased social equality will have to engage in some pretty inspired verbal gymnastics.

Still, the lessons to be drawn form the Soviet case are not entirely clear. The familiar (if not tired) approaches usually labelled "functionalism" and "conflict theory" in the sociological study of stratification in the West lead to different analyses (2). The functionalist view argues that a structure of inequality, i.e. stratification, is necessary and valuable, since without such a structure people will not be motivated to undertake the training and preparation for various positions needed in a complex society, to assume the burdens of difficult and demanding posts, and to perform in their jobs in a highly motivated way. Since modernizing and industrial societies have a complex set of occupational and authority hierarchies, an involved set of material, power and status differentials is unavoidable. Seen in this vein, Soviet authorities may have introduced some particularly dastardly forms of inequality arbitrarily, but the present, very unequal form of Soviet society confirms the view that an elaborate system of stratification is one of the "imperatives" of industrialization, and that the early Bolsheviks were foolish to think they could do without such a system.

The familiar counter to this argument, the conflict view, is that inequality and stratification are fundamentally and inherently exploitative and unjust, at least as they have existed up to now. They represent ways in which certain powerful groups manage to control and oppress less powerful groups, pure and simple. All such ruling groups will promote ideas about the necessity and legitimacy of existing forms of inequality, but these should be seen as the self-serving rationalizations for exploitation that they are. In all complex societies existing inequalities are in this sense "irrational" and could certainly be sharply reduced, if not eliminated. Through this prism,
the Soviet experience is seen as a failed or sidetracked experiment, or simply as a cruel and hypocritical hoax. For those who argue this point from a socialist rather than an anarchist view, the conclusion is often that, for a variety of historical geopolitical, psychological and other reasons, "real" socialism was never really tried in Russia, which instead succumbed to revisionism, state capitalism, social imperialism or some such "deformity."

For many of those who, in spite of the failure of egalitarianism in the Soviet Union, remain unconvinced of the validity of the functionalist argument, China in the period since the Cultural Revolution has seemed to offer fresh hope. Prior to that time the Chinese case did not look all that different from the Soviet one, with the pre-1949 economic and political elite dispossessed, but a new, complex set of hierarchies and privileges installed. Military officers, high cadres, intellectuals, Overseas Chinese, and other groups enjoyed a variety of material and non-material benefits, and an elitist and highly competitive educational system tended to assure that those who already possessed privileges in the new society would have privileged children as well. Then in a series of dramatic reform and programs begun in the early 1960s and culminating in the Cultural Revolution (1966-69) and its aftermath, a thorough attempt was made to restructure Chinese society along more egalitarian lines. It is with the nature of those changes and their subsequent fate that we are concerned here.

Destratification

The egalitarian tide began to gather force before the Cultural Revolution. Mao Tse-tung was already expressing grave concern about the social consequences of the existing educational system in 1963-5, arguing that schooling was too long and complex, divorcing students from the realities of labor and contact with the masses while motivating them to become members of the bureaucratic or intellectual elites. He called for shortened schooling, more practical courses, and more physical labor in the curriculum, and promoted such novel
ideas as letting students whisper answers to each other in class and doze off during boring lessons (3). With characteristic bluntness, he proclaimed, "The present schooling system, curriculum, and methods of teaching and examination must all be changed because they trample people underfoot (...) One cannot read too many books (...) Should one reed too many of them (...) one would become a bookworm, a dogmatist, or a revisionist" (4). Experiments with shorter periods of schooling began, student labor stints were increased, and increasing stress was placed on political activism and class background, rather than grades, in educational selections.

In 1965 Mao criticized the Ministry of Public Health as the "Ministry of Urban Lords" for its disproportionate concentration of resources on urban health problems, and initiated a redirection of investment and personnel toward rural health care, resulting eventually in a new set of institutions, including barefoot doctor paramedical personnel and cooperative health insurance systems in the countryside (5). In 1965 ranks were also eliminated from the Chinese armed forces, and Mao and some other leaders made more and more statements arguing that if the existing system of inequality was not transformed further, China would succumb to "revisionism" (i.e. Soviet-style socialism) and forego the egalitarian ideals for which the revolution had been fought. The Cultural Revolution brought this emerging critique to a dramatic climax, as millions of student and worker radicals took to the streets to make a new revolution against the existing elite they called "capitalist roaders" and "bourgeois power-holders." Educational institutions, mass associations, and even the Chinese Communist Party itself ceased to function while contending factions struggled for positions of dominance in this new revolution.

When the dust had cleared three years later (thanks in good measure to the vigorous "dustpans" wielded by teams of workers and soldiers sent to suppress the disorders), many institutions had been altered significantly. The most far-reaching changes occurred in education, a realm of obvious importance for determining whether or how existing inequalities will be transmitted over generations. Our sketch of the reforms introduced must be brief, as more
detailed treatments exist elsewhere (6).

First, the length of schooling was shortened at all levels, from a 6 years primary and 6 years secondary school system to programs of 5 and 4-5 years, and at the university level from 4-6 years down to 3-3½ years generally. Second, the curriculum was modified, with subjects and themes considered unessential or bourgeois dropped, and the remaining academic program pared back to allow for increased doses of labor, military training, and political study. (In many secondary schools students began to spend 2-3 months working in farms or factories, in contrast with the 2-3 weeks or so spent prior the Cultural Revolution.) The theme of "open door schooling" was extolled, with students combining theory with practice inside and outside the classroom, and being urged to become enlightened manual laborers rather than to strive for entrance to higher schooling and to the ranks of white collar workers. Third, China abandoned the previous system of having "key point" primary and secondary schools which received extra resources, the most qualified teachers, and the best students (the latter recruited in urban areas by city-wide, standardized entrance examinations). Special schools for the children of military officers and high cadres were also disbanded. Subsequently all schools as well as students were supposed to be considered equal. Students had to attend primary and middle schools in their immediate neighborhood, with no entrance examinations involved (7). Energetic efforts were made to universalize educational access in both rural and urban areas (the ideal being at least primary school completion in the former, and at least lower middle school completion in the latter). Fourth, within schools the examinations that Mao Tse-tung had branded "surprise attacks" against students were modified or abandoned, and although homework, quizzes, and grades remained, it became official policy to promote students regardless of how they did on such exercises. Fifth, the universities, after they reopened in 1970-72, were similarly transformed. Not only was the period of study shortened, but some universities were in fact closed entirely as "bourgeois citadels," and others were "dispersed" to the countryside to forge
closer ties with the peasant masses. Within the remaining universities the same "open door" emphasis prevailed, with substantial periods spent each year in manual labor and in social investigations in factories and farms, or in workshops run right on campus. Graduate training on a systematic basis ceased, although a few students were apparently kept on in apprentice-like training after graduation.

University students were selected by a method that was perhaps the most novel part of these reforms. It became virually impossible in most fields to go directly from secondary schools to the university. Instead secondary school graduates were required to go out and put down roots in society - a few in factories or the military, but most in rural communes or state farms, which absorbed 16-million urban youths in the period 1966-1977. University students were then to be selected from youths who had spent at least two years at their posts. Initially no examinations or inspection of student academic records was to be used in the selection process. Instead, individuals applied through their work units and then had to pass through stages of discussion and nomination by their work-mates, approval by the local Party authorities, and then a final screening by the university. Labor enthusiasm, class background, and political activism were supposed to be the primary criteria, rather than intelligence or academic ability. Initially, there was not even a rule that the entrants be secondary school graduates, although by 1973 the problems of teaching university-level material to students, large portions of whom were only primary or lower-middle school graduates, led to stipulations that candidates should have the equivalent of upper middle schooling, and to a controversial effort to make the final, university screening stage into a more rigorous examination procedure (8). This reformed selection process attempted to reduce or eliminate the advantage that the urban, educated classes had enjoyed via the standardized university entrance examinations of the pre-1966 period and to fill universities with a new breed of "worker-peasant-soldier" students of good class backgrounds (9). These new students were expected to return to their
work or military units after graduation, rather than using university training as a route of entry into the privileged elite. The egalitarian wave did not, however, lead to the massive expansion of university enrollments; in fact in the early 1970s Chinese universities had only about half as many students as they had at their peak before the Cultural Revolution, although in the meantime the number of middle school graduates had expanded dramatically (10). Finally, education was deemed to be too important a matter to be left in the hands of the educational bureaucrats, and revolutionary committees dominated by members of military or worker propaganda teams sent in from the outside (and including representatives of the teachers and students below as well as administrators) took over the administration of schools from principals and chancellors.

These reforms involved several policy preferences. First, they stressed quantity over quality. The lower levels of education were rapidly expanded while the highest levels were contracted, and the conception of schools as being primarily concerned with the detection and channeling of talented young minds was rejected. At all levels the new system shifted emphasis away from book and classroom knowledge and toward new forms of practical training that, it was hoped, would not make those exposed to them as likely to think of themselves as a privileged stratum. In terms of manpower policy, these reforms seem to reflect the conviction that what a developing society like China needs most is not primarily highly trained experts, but a mass of well motivated manual workers with some basic level of education and technical skills. Even the choosing of the select minority who will receive advanced education was based on criteria which were designed to inhibit elitist aspirations - things like labor enthusiasm, relations with the masses, class background, and political activism, rather than intelligence and academic aptitude. In this regard it is not inappropriate to see the Chinese reforms as a revolutionary effort to find an alternative to the educational meritocracies of other modern societies.
This same egalitarian urge swept through other areas of society. Take the case of policy toward cadres, the leading personnel in the bureaucratic system created by the Chinese Communists. In the Cultural Revolution itself most leading cadres were severely attacked as "bourgeois power-holders" and "capitalist roaders." Some had their houses ransacked by red guards, lost their posts, and were confined to "cowsheds" (often small closets or bathrooms in their organizations) while they examined their errors. In several localities their domestic servants were turned out en masse as vestiges of exploitation, and a system of ration coupons for industrial products distributed according to salary (which benefitted leading cadres and other high income groups) was abolished. Separate dining halls for leading personnel were eliminated along with the special schools for cadre children already noted. In a number of places ranking cadres were forced to move out of their spacious and well-furnished apartments and move into humbler quarters, while several families of ordinary workers moved into their former abodes. The network of special Party and cadre training schools designed to select out and train the elite within this elite also ceased operating at least temporarily, and large numbers of cadres were sent to live among the peasants in distant villages in an effort to purge them of their bureaucratic ways (11). After 1969 a new network of "May 7th cadre schools" was set up to serve the same purpose. There cadres went to the countryside in rotation (initially for 1-3 years, later for only 6 months generally) for agricultural labor and political study designed to "reeducate" them. Cadres in production units were required to spend regular periods (say, one day a week) down laboring at ordinary work posts in their own units. A modified form of administration was also introduced throughout society, the revolutionary committee, in which administrators shared power with representatives of their subordinates and outside workers or soldiers. In general these reforms were designed to prevent cadres in various sectors of society form becoming an elitist "new class" with vested interests separate from those they led (12).
Many of these same policies were applied to intellectuals. Both those trained under the old society and abroad and those trained in China after 1949 were portrayed as arrogant and impractical, concerned more with fame and professional prerogatives than with the needs of production or the opinions of the masses. They too were required to transform their attitudes through stints in manual labor and May 7th cadre schools. They were told to be willing to serve the state in any capacity where they were needed, rather than zealously to plan their ascent up a career ladder in their special field. They were castigated for being overly concerned with useless theory, and directed to learn from the practical skills of ordinary workers and peasants. Teachers were told to cease acting like dictators of the classroom, and students were encouraged to "go against the tide" and criticize teachers who made ideological errors. The system of royalty fees for journalists and writers was eliminated in favor of a straight salary system. Most existing works in literature and the arts were denounced as bourgeois "poisonous weeds," and new, more politically pure works, such as the model revolutionary operas, took their place. In general an amateur ethic was stressed, with poetry, short stories, and paintings increasingly produced by ordinary workers, peasants, and soldiers in their spare time. Individual credits for academic, literary, and artistic work increasingly gave way to collective and anonymous creations.

Other privileged sectors of Chinese society were also affected. Overseas Chinese - those who had relatives abroad or had themselves returned from abroad to live in China - had enjoyed a series of special privileges. They could receive remittance payments from overseas relatives and use these and special ration coupons to buy goods not available to others, often in special stores of restricted access. Special housing was provided in a number of areas for returned Overseas Chinese, and in some places individuals could use funds sent from overseas to purchase privately owned apartments much superior in quality to those lived in by ordinary citizens. Special schools were created
to help returned Overseas Chinese youths to adapt to the Chinese system of education and to prepare them for the university examinations, and such students were also given some preference in university selections as well as being eligible to attend a number of special universities established primarily for them. In general Overseas Chinese were given special consideration (chao-ku) in education, access to jobs, and other areas, with an Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission looking out for their interests. Most of these privileges were swept away as a result of the Cultural Revolution. The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission was disbanded, and the special stores, rations, schools and so forth disappeared. Some of the special private housing was apparently also confiscated and given over to ordinary families to live in. Chinese with relatives abroad could still receive remittances, but in a period of intense suspicion of those with "overseas ties," some were pressured to cut off these ties and refuse to receive the special funds which set them off from their neighbors and fellow workers.

Not the least of the consequences of this egalitarian surge was a modification of the wage and incentive system. Already before the Cultural Revolution the incentive systems used in industrial enterprises came under attack, and existing piece rate and bonus systems were denounced for "putting material incentives in command" (over politics) and enticing the workers toward revisionism with "sugar-coated bullets." These systems were almost universally discarded in favor of straight time-rate, i.e. fixed wage, systems, with workers expected to be motivated to produce more by the operation of moral incentives and group pressure. The existing system of differentiated ranks and wages remained, but now reflected seniority primarily, rather than productivity or related factors. And most urban workers and other employees were "frozen" in their existing ranks, with no large scale promotions occurring after 1963. In 1975 even the remaining fixed wage system fell under attack in the campaign to criticize "bourgeois rights." Using quotations from Mao Tse-tung, the documents of this campaign pointed out the
similarities between China's 8 grade industrial workers wage scale and systems in use under industrial capitalism. Although they argued that the socialist principle of distribution according to work had to be followed, they argued that unless efforts were made to gradually restrict the range of material differentials, these inequalities would spawn revisionism and an eventual restoration of capitalism (13). The virtual freeze on urban wages while rural pay systems allowed for gradual increases helped to reduce the urban-rural income gap, one of the "three differences" the Chinese, as good Marxists, were pledged to eliminate. At the same time within the countryside a number of time rate and other more egalitarian work point systems were pushed in an effort to reduce inequality within villages. And throughout Chinese society systems of distribution and selection increasingly turned away from an emphasis on criteria such as knowledge, skill, and individual productivity, and toward a stress on political activism, labor enthusiasm, and class background.

All of these changes did not result in a society without inequality and stratification, but they did constitute a serious and comprehensive effort to check many of the kinds of established privileges that had existed prior to the Cultural Revolution. They were accompanied in the Chinese media by arguments that such differentials and privileges were not a necessary feature of socialism or a developing economy, but were in fact the first foot in the door of revisionism and capitalist restoration. The altered system was in fact seen as more suitable for generating the mass labor enthusiasm and mobilization of popular wills that was needed to develop China's economy.

Several features of the Chinese social scene compared with the Soviet Union gave some analysts hope that a way had been found to avoid abandoning the egalitarian ideals of the revolution in the pursuit of economic development. First, the Chinese revolution had been a mass revolution which developed in the countryside, rather than emerging on the basis of a small urban conspiratorial elite. As such the need for, and skill in, mobilizing
the laboring masses should be better developed in China, and the impulse to control those masses as "undisciplined" and to cater to the interests of urban elites should be less prominent. Second, China could learn by observing the "negative experiences" of the Soviet Union, and in fact Mao and others had reacted against the social consequences caused by trying to introduce the "Soviet model" into China in the 1950s. Third, China has built a much more intensive and pervasive organizational system than exists in the Soviet Union. With more total state control over non-agricultural employment there is less need to rely on material incentives to allocate personnel than in the more free Soviet labor market, and within work units it may be possible to mobilize group pressure in support of production and other goals, without using material incentives, more effectively than would be possible in the Soviet Union (14). Also some would simply argue that China's more backward economy and huge population simply make a manpower policy stressing geared-down schooling and an emphasis on mobilizing the masses of manual laborers more suitable, especially since advanced technology and science can be borrowed from abroad when needed rather than developed anew internally at considerable cost. For reasons such as these, the post-Cultural Revolution reforms seemed to offer new hope or evidence that more egalitarian social arrangements could be adopted and sustained.

Restratification

All of such discussion appears increasingly academic if not silly. Mao Tse-tung has been dead for two years now, but already the new leadership has set about dismantling the egalitarian reforms of the previous decade with enthusiasm and perhaps even glee. Mao's fears that his egalitarian programs might be swamped by "revisionism" after his death appear justified, for the revisions are occurring on a wholesale and rapid basis. In the wake of the purge, a month after Mao's death, of the "gang of four" (Mao's widow, Chiang Ch'ing, and three of his other radical supporters), the new leaders have utilized the campaign against them
to justify their attempt to turn the clock back to the 1960s, if not the 1950s. Our account of these changes can only be preliminary, as the situation is still in flux, with dramatic revelations occurring almost daily.

In education the pace of dismantling the egalitarian reforms has been particularly swift. Already in 1973-5 there were efforts to restore entrance examinations, to tighten classroom discipline, and to place more stress on academics, although in 1975-6 this "reverse tide" was attacked. Since Mao's death the emphasis on educational quality and standards has won the day. The reduced, ten year sequence of primary and secondary schooling has not been abandoned, although now students will start a year earlier, at age six. Nor is the goal of universalizing lower levels of schooling being repudiated. But the network of key-point primary and secondary schools and universities has been restored (actually there are several nested networks - a national one, provincial ones, and city and other local ones) and will once again receive extra resources, the best teaching personnel and the most up-to-date curriculum innovations. The neighborhood principle for student enrollment is being abandoned, at least at the secondary school level, in favor of restored city-wide entrance examinations to select the most qualified students to attend these key-point schools. Within schools the "open door" emphasis is being cut back by declaring once again that "the main task of students is to study," with manual labor, for instance, returning to its pre-Cultural Revolution routine of a few weeks a year (15). The curriculum is being beefed up, with basic science courses, foreign languages, and other discarded or reduced subjects restored and upgraded, and even introduced in some cases into primary schools. The curriculum and textbooks are to be standardized, on a nationwide basis, rather than adapting to the situation and needs of local communities and production units. Strict control of teacher allocation and other educational matters is now being placed back in the hands of the Ministry of Education bureaucracy. What's more, for the first time an explicit system of
tracking within schools is being lauded, with students given tests and then sorted into "fast," "average," and "slow" classes in order to facilitate maximum learning (16). Respect for teachers is also back in vogue, as is strict classroom discipline.

Perhaps more important, students now know that a select minority among them have the prospect of going directly to the university and escaping assignment to the countryside. The sending down of youths is not being abandoned, and the bulk of urban secondary school graduates will still have to serve a stint in the countryside. But now 20-30% of new university students are being selected directly from secondary school, and those who display particular brilliance can even be selected for the university before they complete middle school. University selection once again hinges primarily on standardized entrance examinations, the first of which was given in December 1977. Scores on this exam are the primary, although not the exclusive, criterion for selection, and it is interesting to note that special age and marital status waivers have been provided to enable middle school graduates of 1966-7 to sit for the exams, apparently on the grounds that they were the final classes to emerge before the Cultural Revolution reforms debased the quality of schooling. Large numbers of disbanded or dispersed universities have been reestablished, and selected institutions have been directed to take in groups of non-boarding day students in order to increase enrollments as rapidly as possible, although this policy obviously increases the advantage urban youths have over rural ones in gaining entrance. At the university level as well, time away in communes, factories, political study and other activities is to be curtailed so that students can master academics. And the period of university education has been lengthened, generally back to four years for liberal arts programs and five years for science programs. Furthermore, new graduate students are being enrolled through examinations on a systematic basis for the first time since the Cultural Revolution. Also, the principle that graduates should return
to their original production units after graduation has now been revised to apply to only a few regular colleges (primarily in agriculture and forestry), but mainly to graduates of the separate network of work unit-run training programs, the rural "May 7th colleges" and the "July 21st workers' colleges." Graduates of most university programs can now be assigned to positions in the professions and the bureaucracy without apology. There have even been oblique references to the possibility of introducing new kinds of tests as a way of allocating graduates to suitable work positions outside. So the new type of university student is to be quite different from the political and labor activist of earlier years, a fact that has already led to tensions between freshman and more advanced students in several institutions (17).

The lot of cadres has also changed. Already in the early 1970s some of the more extreme actions against them were reversed. In many cases they were restored to their jobs, switched back to their more spacious apartments, with their mass "tenants" ejected, and allowed to hire servants again if necessary to cope with the burdens of their work. Their stays in cadre farms were generally reduced to 6 month periods, and the virtual silence of the press in the past year about these "May 7th cadre schools" suggests that this system is currently being reevaluated and may be modified or scrapped. The network of Party schools designed to train cadres for positions of political leadership was recently restored to full operation with fanfare (18). Proper utilization of cadre skills, respect for their authority, trusting them with individual responsibilities, granting them regular promotions (on the basis of performance and not just seniority) and strict organizational discipline are all themes reemphasized today, although abuses of cadre power are also being attacked (19). In major sectors of society (schools, factories, production brigades, research institutes, and so forth) the revolutionary committee form of administration, with its representatives of the masses and outside workers and soldiers, has been junked in favor of a return to a system of indi-
vidual directors or managers supervised by Party committees such as existed prior to the Cultural Revolution. The "gang of four's" contention that the high incomes and authority of leading cadres inevitably lead them to act like revisionists (an argument curiously close to Djilas's new class thesis) has been labelled as absurd (20). There have even been recent suggestions that leading cadres in production units be offered material bonuses and promotions as rewards for increasing production (21). Finally, there are unconfirmed reports that the restoration of ranks in the military is under consideration (22).

For intellectuals the shift in emphasis from "red" to "expert" has had dramatic consequences. The Chinese public is being told that the "gang of four" considered all intellectuals virtual class enemies, but that in fact they are patriotic individuals whose contributions will be vital to the "four modernizations" even if many of them refuse to concern themselves with political matters. Official regulations now state that at least 5/6 of their time must be devoted to work in their specialities, with manual labor, political study, and other activities confined to the remainder, and preferably to their spare time (23). Large numbers of intellectuals who had been assigned to manual labor and other jobs not in keeping with their training, in line with the emphasis on "jacks of all trades" and the subordination of professional concerns to politics, are now being shifted back to work for which they were trained. They are being promised better conditions for their work, including more research funds and equipment, research assistants, and contact with foreign scholars. In some localities at least, those who make outstanding contributions are being promised access to better housing, preference in getting their children transferred back from the countryside, and special consideration in getting spouses working elsewhere transferred to work in the same place (24). Basic theoretical research is back in vogue in a big way. The most prominent current model among intellectuals is a 45 year old mathematician named Chen Ching-jun, who has spent the last fifteen years shut up in his office and
library trying to prove (so far with only partial success) the "Goldbach conjecture," which states that every even number larger than 2 can be represented by the sum of two primes (25). It would be hard to imagine a more perfect counter to the previous stress on intellectuals plunging into manual labor among the masses and solving immediate production problems. Academic titles have been restored, pay raises for teachers and researchers have been carried out or promised, and a few teachers have recently been promoted to "special grade" status above the regular 11 grade salary rank system, in reward for particularly outstanding achievements in teaching (rather than, say, for political purity or simply seniority) (26). Furthermore, more than 100,000 "rightists," many of them intellectuals who were purged in 1957 for criticizing Party rule, have now been pardoned and in many cases restored to work (27).

Banned and disgraced writers and artists have recently come out of the woodwork and resumed their activity, and both works and themes, domestic and foreign, which were prohibited in the previous decade are being seen in bookstores and on stage once again, although it is not clear whether the previous royalty fee system has been or will be restored. In the arts, but even more so in science, the role of the single creative individual is once again being lauded. The autonomy of researchers and research directors is being stressed, and special science classes are being run for Party cadres who have to supervise such personnel (28). All of these changes find curious reflection in the content of official propaganda in China. Now the posters which used to show sweaty representatives of the laboring masses advancing from victory to victory have an addition, usually in the front row - a slim figure with a lab coat and glasses but no perspiration, smiling broadly at being returned to his proper place in official esteem.

Overseas Chinese similarly see a sharp change in policies that affect them. Again the changes predate Mao's death, particularly the beginning in 1972 of granting exit visas on a large scale to those who wish to join kin abroad. The pace has
accelerated in the last year, however. The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission has been restored, and an effort made to reestablish the privileges and special consideration these people enjoyed before 1966. Where confiscated, their private homes and better quality public flats are to be returned to them, and there are reports that their kin abroad will once again be able to send funds to purchase them private housing. Skilled personnel of Chinese extraction willing to come to China reportedly are being promised a number of benefits: assignment to work in the same place, and promises that they can leave China again when they wish. The network of special primary and middle schools catering to returned Overseas Chinese is being reestablished, two special universities for Overseas Chinese have reemerged, and youths from such families are being promised a certain preference in competition for places in ordinary universities. Chinese still abroad are once again being encouraged to invest funds in development projects within China, and the promised rates of interest are substantially higher than those available to citizens in China. There are even reports that special ration cards and purchasing privileges for Overseas Chinese are being restored. They are also being promised that they will not be automatically suspect politically due to their ties abroad, that their ability to receive remittances will not be interfered with, and that they will receive equal or preferential treatment in admission to the Communist Youth League, Communist Party, army, and sensitive work posts (29).

In terms of wage and incentive policy, the first general wage adjustment in fourteen years was carried out in late 1977. The exact effects of this wage reform on inequality are difficult to ascertain. Apparently many of the raises have been concentrated among those in low ranks with long periods of work, which suggests further equalization. At the same time another set of raises is being granted in recognition of performance and contributions, which may suggest more inequality (30). At the same time the Maoist restriction to fixed time-rate monthly wages is being increasingly waived in favor of units
adopting systems of piece rates or time rates with bonuses, which would also seem to foster inequality. (In fact, the Chinese press is now filled with stories of "closet material incentivists," firms that restored such schemes in 1972-4 in spite of official disapproval (31). Furthermore, there are the special "above grade" and professor and researcher promotions referred to earlier, which are clearly not based on the principle of raising the lowest, as well as a recent report that worker grades above grade eight will be formally instituted (32). Since urbanites are now being promised that their wages will regularly be readjusted upward from now on in recognition of increases in productivity, it is clear at least that the income gap between the city and countryside will be enlarged. Within the countryside piece-rate and quota-and-bonus systems are being advocated nationwide, which should foster differentials within villages. However, such systems have been at least tolerated since 1971 (33). On a more general note, the press is now carrying admonitions not to mechanically use class background labels in an attempt to select and promote people to desirable posts, but to place the primary emphasis on individual performance (34).

Admittedly not all of the post-Cultural Revolution policies are being repudiated and not all of the previous ones restored. Special schools for cadre children and separate dining halls for cadres have not been reported, at least in explicit form. May 7th cadre schools and the sending down to the countryside of the bulk of urban middle school graduates are still being maintained, and primary and secondary schooling have been kept at their shortened ten year length. Moral incentives and political work have not been rejected, only confined to a reduced role. Still on balance one must be impressed with both how comprehensive this attempt to turn the clock back is, and with the dramatic speed with which it has been implemented, beginning even before Mao was safely esconced in his crystal sarcophagus. We must examine some of the reasons given for this restratification of Chinese society.
Analysis

The arguments used by China's new leaders and in the Chinese press fall into several categories, not all of which are of much interest to us here. For instance, the previous egalitarian surge is described as a wrongheaded deviation fostered by the "gang of four" in violation of Mao's true wishes, although it is not made very clear if this is so why Mao failed to tell us that at any time during his final decade. Much of the discussion in the press involves going back and citing Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao to prove that the sorts of incentives and differentials now being fostered are in keeping with the Marxist canons. Like most such doctrinal exercises, this produces little enlightenment, since all of these fathers of the faith made contradictory statements on equality and remuneration at various times. In any case most of the oracular statements cited are so vague that they can cover a variety of sins as well as a few virtues. For instance, Maoists and modernizers can all agree with the standard formula that under socialism distribution should be carried out according to work contributions, rather than equally. But they cannot agree on meaningful criteria for comparing the work contributions of political leaders, professors, lathe workers, and peasants, and therefore they disagree about whether according to this formula there should be more or less inequality than there is at present.

If we descend a level below such ideological formulas, we find that most of the arguments relied on in introducing restratification are ones quite familiar, if not dear, to every Western social scientist; we are back in the lexicon of functionalism. Fundamentally China's new leaders are telling their people and us that material, power, and status differentials are functional and necessary for the role that they play in "the four modernizations," i.e. in the drive to transform China into an economically developed society. The reduction of these "reasonable" differentials in the previous decade is said to have done grievous harm to China's economy and
social fabric. Let us review some of the specifics here.

In education it is claimed that the reformed system was turning out low quality and even semi-literate graduates. The combination of a de-emphasis on tests, entrance exams, and academics generally plus no failures, the harassment of teachers, and no prospect for advancement to the university after middle school meant that students had little motivation to study their lessons, and so many didn't bother. Even those motivated to do so found the short period of study, much of it spent out in labor and other activities, and also the stress on political credentials, made it difficult or even politically risky to learn much in their studies. At the university level the new students were so diverse in background and so burdened with "open door" activities that they could not even master middle-school level technical skills (35). In any case, the Cultural Revolution hiatus in university training (no graduates were produced for seven years, and longer in many institutions) and the termination of systematic graduate training meant that China was deprived of a new generation of highly trained experts that would be needed even to keep abreast of developments in advanced countries.

On a different note, the reformed university selection system turned out to be prone to a number of abuses. The previous entrance examination system might be considered a "bourgeois dictatorship of marks," but it must be kept in mind that in China as elsewhere, standardized examinations were introduced in an effort to detect real talent at all levels in society and to prevent university places from being monopolized by offspring of the wealthy and powerful. With standardized examinations gone and replaced by a system of recommendations from local units, the opportunities for using "pull" increased substantially. Both cases of local cadres getting their offspring or kin nominated and of higher cadres pulling strings to get their children admitted "by the back door" have been noted in the press and seem to have occurred on a large scale. Thus it is not even
clear how much this reformed selection system served its original purposes of broadening the opportunities for offspring of ordinary workers and peasants to attend college, or enrolling primarily public spirited diligent laborers (36).

The wholesale criticism of cadres is said to have produced at least three different kinds of problems. Many cadres were apparently so intimidated by their harsh treatment and by the mercurial shifts in higher policies that they became indecisive and refused to boldly take initiative and exercise responsibility within their units. Others descended into factional activity, cultivating ties and recruiting supporters to protect themselves and to attack their local opponents, in spite of the disruptions this produced in the orderly process of work. And in response to such factional activity, the abolition of "bourgeois" rules and regulations, the persecution of their leaders, and the power exercised in their units by untrained outsiders, many subordinates became cynical, indifferent, or simply lazy. In other words a general crisis of authority resulted, and the recent changes are an effort to recreate decisive leadership and willing followership (37).

As for intellectuals, it is argued that most were intimidated or made resentful. They felt they were treated as tantamount to class enemies. Not only were their contributions not appreciated, but they were in danger of being branded with various "labels" and transferred for "reeducation" if they tried to devote their energies to their specialties. And many were transferred to work inappropriate to their training, others worked listlessly, and some feigned illness to withdraw from work altogether. As such even the expertise of those intellectuals China already possessed was not well utilized, leading the country to fall further behind the scientific and intellectual levels of the rest of the world (38). The most serious problems were seen for the future. With no new highly skilled experts being trained in China, and with earlier generations discouraged from working on basic theory, the foundation for
future scientific progress and the solution of technological problems would be seriously undermined. In literature and the arts the production of such a limited range of wooden and repetitious works was seen as leading to mass boredom and interfering with the potential of these media to inspire and entertain the masses. The radical policy also cut China off from much that was useful in her own heritage and in Western culture. For these reasons the effort to fully utilize people in their fields of training and give them rewards and praise is being lauded as necessary and justified (39).

The withdrawal of privileges from Overseas Chinese within China led to resentment among those affected, and prompted tens if not hundreds of thousands to apply to leave China when it became possible to do so after 1972 (40). The shift in policy also affected the flow of remittances into China, cut off the stream of patriotic Chinese born abroad coming to give their services to their homeland, and had a negative influence on the support China enjoyed within Overseas Chinese communities in other countries. The restoration of privileges is deemed necessary to restore the positive contributions that Overseas Chinese can make to China's cause both at home and abroad (41).

It is also claimed that the post-Cultural Revolution reforms caused serious problems among urban workers. The absence of material incentives and sanctions keyed to production results and of prospects for raises led many workers to have low levels of commitment to their enterprises, and to dawdling on the job, absenteeism, petty pilferage, and even to factional protests and strikes that disrupted production and caused large monetary losses. In the urban service trades low pay and status combined with the absence of incentives and penalties led to a lack of diligence and poor service to customers, in spite of repeated study of Mao's article, "To serve the people." The countryside does not seem to have been as severely affected by such problems, but nonetheless in some places peasants are reported to have responded to egalitarian work-point systems by working poorly
or by leaving agriculture to look for outside income earning prospects. In general throughout society remuneration is now judged to have been insufficiently closely related to work results to have the necessary stimulating effect on production. The population is being told frankly that equality must take a back seat to the production drive (42).

In general, then, the arguments presented in the last two years assert that needed authority and incentive systems were undermined over the previous decade, so that people in many walks of life had little motivation to work hard and no penalty for sloughing off, for unruliness and factionalism, or for other undesirable behavior. The pervasive state control over the non-agricultural labor market may have made economic rewards for taking various jobs less essential than in a capitalist society or the Soviet Union, but the bureaucratic allocation system has apparently not found a way to ensure that highly skilled and motivated people fill all jobs, and the penetrating organizational system and mobilized group pressure seem to become routinized and incapable of motivating maximum work efforts without the aid of material incentives. So the system of the last decade, premised on the idea that by reducing inequality the maximum labor effort of the masses of ordinary workers and peasants will be unleashed, has apparently led in practice to fairly sloppy efforts at all levels of society.

There are several objections that can be raised to these essentially functionalist arguments. First, in spite of the horror stories in the Chinese press about poor discipline, lack of motivation, work stoppages, waste, and other problems, the Chinese economy did not do badly in the post-Cultural Revolution period. In fact, over the years 1964-1974 industrial output grew at a rate of about 10% a year, and agricultural output at perhaps 3%, quite impressive figures. It is true that the industrial growth rate has been cut roughly in half in 1974-7, and that in these years agriculture has grown very little at all, but since this concerns only the end of the period we are
discussing, it is not clear that we should blame the distribution and incentive policies of 1966-76 for this drop, or elite political conflict, earthquakes and droughts, or perhaps other problems (43). But in any case the Chinese economy for a time seemed to be progressing fairly well under the destratification regime. Perhaps it can be argued that the Chinese economy could have done better or that the real danger was in the future, particularly given the "gutting" of the educational system, but still the vivid rhetoric about economic harm has no exact fit with the visible evidence. (We should keep in mind that in the Cultural Revolution the radicals told similarly lurid stories about the harm revisionist policies had done to the economy, although the preceding years had also been good ones economically.)

Second, given the familiarity of the Chinese functionalist arguments, those who do not find them persuasive in other contexts may well wonder whether all of the current restratification measures are really required for China's development programs, and what effect they will have on the major sectors of society that do not benefit from them, particularly peasants and poorly educated urbanites. Third, and a related point, critics of functionalism may note that perhaps some other motivations are involved besides simply a concern for China's economic progress. Revenge and spite are not out of the question. Of the current group of five top leaders in China, one, Teng Hsiao-p'ing, was purged not once but twice at the behest of China's radical leaders with Mao's blessing, and turning the tables and having the last laugh may not be completely alien considerations to him. One other member of this group, Yeh Chien-ying, the former Minister of Defence and now Chairman of the National People's Congress, has a son-in-law who is China's foremost pianist. The son-in-law was arrested and struggled against and had his arm broken by rebels in the Cultural Revolution, acts Yeh was then unable to prevent (44). It may be supposed that even such a venerable old gentleman as Yeh Chien-ying gains some pleasure from getting back at the
radicals. And of course there are large numbers of cadres and intellectuals who were purged and vilified in the Cultural Revolution but then restored to their posts in the years 1970-76, but without all their former status and perquisites. One may entertain the thought that such people form a powerful constituency for restratification, whether or not this policy will serve the interests of China's modernization. Finally, we cannot be certain that humpty dumpty can be put back together again. In view of all the alterations in people's lives in the last decade, the new incentive systems may not have the effect on popular motivations that they once might have had. Furthermore, we cannot say with any assurance that the policy of restratification will be permanent and will not be succeeded by another dialectical swing toward destratification as segments of China's leadership become concerned anew about the social consequences of these distribution policies (45).

Perhaps, then, we cannot accept China's embrace of the functionalist theory of stratification without some skepticism. But it should be quite clear that in post-Mao China restratification and its functionalist justifications are the order of a day, after a decade of experimentation with more egalitarian forms. Perhaps China's recent experience does not "prove" that such inequalities and privileges are necessary in any complex society, any more than the Soviet case did. But for the present the Chinese case can no longer be pointed to as evidence that the functionalist arguments are wrong, that socialism can provide a formula for realizing economic development without sacrificing the commitment to social equality. Those who still wish to cling to the faith will find they still have to prove their case, and that China cannot offer them much help in this regard.
NOTES


4. Mao Tse-tung, "Instructions..." *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.


6. A comprehensive overview, and a citation to earlier articles on these reforms, is provided in Suzanne Pepper, "Education and Revolution: The 'Chinese Model' Revised," *Asian Survey*, September 1978.

7. Where there were not enough teachers and places in the neighborhood middle schools for all who wanted to attend, a system of recommendation from lower level schools, considering criteria such as age, class labels, political activism, and family economic circumstances, was used, rather than entrance examinations.

8. After 1973 there was an attempt by radical leaders to repudiate the use of these screening exams, during which they popularized the model individual Chang T'ieh-sheng, who was said to have turned in a blank examination paper and to have protested that he was too busy integrating himself with the peasants to cram for the exam. See Martin King Whyte, "A Tale of Two Models," *Contemporary China*, March 1977.

9. Class background labels refer to designations given each individual on the basis of their family's economic posi-
tion just prior to 1949. Although the labels have no relationship to current jobs or economic standing, they have been maintained, are inherited in the male line, and became increasingly important after 1962 in judging and stigmatizing or rewarding individuals. See Richard Kraus, "Class Conflict and the Vocabulary of Social Analysis in China," *China Quarterly*, no. 69, March 1977, pp. 54-74.

10. University enrollments rose from 200,000 in 1972-3 to 584,000 students in 1976-7, while in 1959-60 there were 810,000 university students claimed. In comparison the number of middle school students increased from 14 million in 1965-6 to 35 million in 1972-3, and then to 58.3 million in 1976-7. See Martin King Whyte, "Inequality and Stratification in China," *China Quarterly*, no. 64, Dec. 1975, p. 694; and Suzanne Pepper, "An Interview on Changes in Chinese Education after the 'Gang of Four',' China Quarterly, no. 77, December 1977, pp. 815-6.


15. The phrase in quotes refers to part of Mao's May 7th, 1966 directive: "This holds good for students, too. While their main task is to study, they should in addition to their studies learn other things - that is, industrial work, farming, and military affairs. They should also criticize the bourgeoisie." (*Peking Review*, no. 32, August 5, 1966, p. 7). This directive was used after the Cultural Revolution to justify a shift away from pure academics. Now by merely moving the emphasis back to the first clause, the entire policy emphasis is
being shifted back to what it was previously.


17. For more detail on these changes, see Suzanne Pepper, "Education and Revolution," op. cit. I thank Dr. Pepper for letting me see this impressive paper before publication. The reference to possible job placement examinations is in Teng Hsiao-p'ing, "Speech at the National Educational Work Conference," Peking Review, no. 18, May 5, 1978, p. 9; see also SWB, FE/5737/BII/8-10. On the tension between the different cohorts of students, see Agence France Presse, Peking, March 22, 1978.


19. See, for example, People's Daily, Oct. 31, 1977; December 7, 1977; May 27, 1978; SWB, FE/5816/BII/6. A recent article even pointed out the benefits of the "Taylor system" used in early industrial capitalism as a technical method for managers to get the most work out of their workers.


22. The discussion of the restoration of ranks was reported in the South China Morning Post, May 5, 1978. On May 23, 1978 the Wen Hui Pao, a communist paper in Hong Kong, carried a cryptic denial by a Chinese military spokesman that the change had occurred.

23. See "C.P.C. Central Committee Circular on Holding National Science Conference," Peking Review, no. 40, Sept. 30, 1977, p. 9; Teng Hsiao-p'ing went further, advocating that scientists be able to devote full time to their work. See his speech at the National Science Conference, published in Peking Review, no. 12, March 24, 1978, p. 15.

24. On the model experience of Szechuan province in this regard, see People's Daily, March 12, 1978; on such practices in Chung Shan University in Canton, see Ta Kung Pao (Hong Kong), Nov. 8, 1977.


26. See SWB, FE/5812/BII/7 (from a New China News Agency Dispatch of May 4, 1978). An informant in Hong Kong who had recently returned from a trip to China claimed he was told that the pay for such special grade teachers could
range up to 250 yuan, or 5-6 times what the ordinary teachers makes.


28. See, for example, the following statements:

"However, we must not underestimate or deny the role of the individual in the scientific-technological field. In science and technology, the hard work and creativity of an individual is extremely important."

(*Foreign Broadcast Information Service* - hereafter *FBIS*, Sept. 26, E8.)

"Some research should be done together with the masses now, and some research has to be done by the professionals alone." (*FBIS*, Oct. 18, E5.)

"The history of science shows what great results can be produced in the field of science from the discovery of a genuinely talented person! (...) There must be a division of responsibilities and a system of individual responsibility at each post from top to bottom (...) We should give the directors and deputy directors of research institutes a free hand in the work of science and technology according to their division of labor (...) We must not look askance at them. Party committees should get acquainted with their work and examine it but should not attempt to supplant them." (Teng Hsiao-p'ing, speech at the National Science Conference, *op. cit.* pp. 16-17.


Occasionally some factories in the past have had special grades for very skilled workers, but the context of this statement makes it appear as if this will become normal practice. If so, it would constitute an obvious rejection of the concern about the degree of differentiation present in China's eight grade industrial worker wage system which Mao Tse-tung voiced, as cited in the
1975 documents of the campaign against "bourgeois rights."


35. Chou Jung-hsin, the 1975 Minister of Education, was hounded out of office by the radicals for making this claim and other criticisms, and subsequently died. However, the scientific and technological group of the Shanghai Municipal Revolutionary Committee subsequently tested college graduates about to be assigned to work in various scientific and technological departments to see if they had mastered basic knowledge that middle school students should know. The results were not encouraging - 68% flunked mathematics, 70% flunked physics, and 76% flunked chemistry, and some could not even answer a single question in their specialty. See People's Daily, Oct. 23, 1977.

On the new emphasis, we find quotes such as the following, "Examinations, which were indiscriminately looked down upon with contempt, now are used as an effective means to raise academic levels and arouse the students' interest in study." (FBIS, Nov. 3, 1977, p. E20.) "Socialist colleges (...) are not ladders for a privileged stratum to climb. In a socialist society, the people all have equal rights to go to college, quite different from the old China. But socialist society is still not communism and the differences in the level of education between rural and urban schools, a relic of history, still exist. The gap is being narrowed step by step, but the only way to eliminate it completely is to develop primary and secondary education in the rural areas and raise their educational standards - all this on the basis of a steady growth in production. It cannot be done by changing the principle of selecting the best students." (Hsinhua News Bulletin, May 13, 1978, p. 17.) "Last year in selecting students quite a few cadre and intellectual children got good grades in the examination, had good political performance, and in accordance with the selection principles, were admitted to universities (...) Old cadres are precious resources of the revolution, intellectuals are laboring people, and if their excellent offspring are accepted into the universities in accord
with the party's policy, that will aid the early realization of the four modernizations, and that is the correct embodiment of the party's proletarian line." (People's Daily, May 24, 1978.)

36. In People's Daily Oct. 26, 1977, we see the following statement about the "gang of four": "They opposed academic examinations and stressed 'recommendations', which provided an opportunity for those who wanted to enter college through the back door."

37. On the hesitant mood of cadres, see the following statement:
"They dare not boldly take the lead in doing things, but adopt the attitude of 'go slow, wait and see and then act.' They want to make sure of everything before they take any action, like wanting to touch the stones in the river when they cross it. Whenever they run into problems, in order to play it safe they invariably say that it is necessary to wait until the situation becomes clear. They will not take action until the arrival of documents with official seals from the 'Red chieftains'." (FBIS, FE/5806/FII/9.)


38. Witness the following view:
"Some college graduates who were trained to do scientific and technical work were instead assigned to be purchasers, salesmen, storehouse keepers, typists or cooks. Some people specialized in rocket launching, for example, were assigned to be doorkeepers. Some majoring in automatic control became butchers, and teachers of mathematics and those who knew foreign languages were made fuel gas sellers or bakers." (SWB, FE/5810/BII/6.)

One third of all the post-liberation university graduates in Liaoning Province were said to be assigned to such inappropriate work, and eight thousand technicians were in this situation in Peking alone, and five thousand in Anhwei Province. The statement that China has lost ground relative to the rest of the world is voiced in Teng Hsiao-p'ing's speech at the National Science Conference, op. cit., and by many other official spokesmen.

39. On policies in literature and the arts, see Peking Review, no. 17, April 28, 1978, pp. 7-10. On the restoring of titles for researchers, "This important policy measure would enhance the sense of responsibility of people in technical posts, bring into fuller play the wisdom and resourcefulness of scientific and technical personnel,
and encourage them to exert themselves in bringing science and technology in China up to advanced world levels." (FBIS, Oct. 5, 1977, E8.)

Similarly, on restoring titles for teachers and raising their pay, "this decision will encourage teachers to make full use of their initiative and creativity in the service of socialist education and will encourage them to be "Red and Expert." thus making a greater contribution to the movement to modernize." (FBIS, March 18, 1978, E20-21.)

40. In 1973-4 about 60,000 people came to Hong Kong from China on the basis of exit visas. In 1976-7 this had tailed off, partly under British pressure, to 30,000 people, but in the first four months of 1978 more than 20,000 legal immigrants arrived. See South China Morning Post, May 4, 1978, ibid., May 25, 1978.


42. See, for example, the following statements:
"To each according to his work encourages the laborer to plunge into his work and this will help raise labor productivity and thus increase social products. Moreover, exercising supervision over the individual amount of labor and the amount of consumption is helpful in stamping out indolence, parasitic behavior, and misappropriation of state assets." (People's Daily, Feb. 27, 1978.)

"One should not judge whether a distribution system is good or bad simply on the basis of whether it is equal or unequal, one should primarily do so by considering what role it plays in the development of production (...) We have never given first place to the question of equality, which is not the objective of the proletarian revolutionary struggle." (People's Daily, Dec. 21, 1977.)

43. I follow here some points made in personal communications from Nick Lardy, although the interpretation is my own.

44. Ta Kung Pao, April 24, 1978.

45. The Chinese press has carried a number of articles which claim there is resistance at lower levels at putting many of these policies into practice. See, for example, People's Daily, Jan. 23, 1978; ibid., March 16, 1978; ibid., May 6, 1978; FBIS, March 29, 1978, H1. The latter source criticizes the view that providing convenient living conditions for intellectuals is "serving bigwigs."