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UPHEAVAL IN CHINA; Faint Echo of the Cultural Revolution

By **SHERYL WUDUNN** and **SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES** MAY 27, 1989

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There is a new joke around here that Jiang Qing, the widow of Mao Zedong, has asked to be released from the prison where she is serving a life sentence for crimes during the Cultural Revolution.

"Why should I stay here when my comrades in the Gang of Four have been released?" Miss Jiang says. "I know they are out there because I see they have been writing the editorials and television news programs again. I can recognize the style."

The point of the joke is that the harsh polemics of the Cultural Revolution, along with the power struggles and the student movements, seem to be enjoying a minor echo in China these days. *A Delicate Analogy*

As the most dramatic power struggle in more than a decade unfolds against the backdrop of armed troops surrounding the capital, one of the most delicate analogies is with the Cultural Revolution, which paralyzed the country and killed hundreds of thousands of people in the years after it was begun by Mao in 1966.

Both sides draw the similarity. The Government says the students have created a chaos that could lead to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Some students and intellectuals say the power struggle among the top leaders and the threat that military intervention could bring violent unrest resemble the circumstances of the

Cultural Revolution.

But if the intense power struggle, among other characteristics, recalls the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, the similarities seem to stop there. Most people say the democracy movement is entirely different from the reign of terror created by student Red Guards in the late 1960's. Then, the movement was orchestrated by factions of leaders from above, principally Mao. Now, the movement appears to come principally from the students and their sympathizers. Then Turmoil, Now Organization

"Now, the situation is absolutely different from the Cultural Revolution," said a scientist who was labeled a counterrevolutionary in the 1960's. "In the Cultural Revolution, people were divided into many groups by China's leaders, and they were fighting among themselves," he said.

"This time, all the people are on one side. We have never seen such a well-organized movement as now in China," the scientist said. "The Cultural Revolution was real turmoil."

Still, some of the similarities are striking. When the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, the students were the first to respond. They traveled throughout the country for free, wearing red bands on their arms. The new movement also began with the students who rode the railways to Beijing for free and who wore red or white bands around their heads.

Moreover, Chinese newspapers have begun to couch front-page articles in the sharp language that was the signature of Miss Jiang and other members of the Gang of Four, who publicly criticized thousands of intellectuals and often tortured and imprisoned them.

Words like "serious political struggle" have begun to appear in the press, and one senior leader called the situation a "struggle between two headquarters." This week a document circulating among Communist Party members criticizes Zhao Ziyang, the party leader, as a head of an "anti-party clique." Propaganda Jargon

Such jargon has rarely been used publicly since the days when Miss Jiang and her comrades in the Gang of Four waged their propaganda campaign. And now, with armed troops occupying the headquarters of major news organizations, editors are practically forced to publish certain articles.

"You can still see news stories in the People's Daily which reflect two lines," a Western diplomat said recently. "We're back to the days of a two-line struggle. You can still hear that top leaders call other top leaders, 'leaders of an anti-party clique,'

a phrase I don't think we've heard for many years. You see clear factional strife. It's just like the good old days."

Like the old days, an intense paranoia has gripped intellectuals and protest organizers. Rumors circulate about a black list of intellectuals. One intellectual went into hiding for three days, and others are cagey about their whereabouts even with close friends.

With warnings against talking to foreign journalists and satellite communications cut off, some Chinese are beginning to limit their contacts with foreigners. Many Chinese use public telephones to call foreigners and almost never name themselves on the phone. Many worry that telephone contact with the outside world will be restricted.

One Chinese was convinced that his international direct dialing service was being tampered with when he was forced to go through the operator to make his overseas call and was then cut off twice during the calls when he mentioned the words "student demonstrations." Democracy vs. Dictatorship

But for all the fear, many Chinese say the present movement is fundamentally different from the Cultural Revolution. In contrast to the Cultural Revolution, there seems to be little infighting among the masses, and the students themselves have adopted "peaceful means" as their guiding principle in sit-ins, class boycotts, marches and hunger strikes.

"Today's movement is democracy versus dictatorship," a young writer said. "The social order has not been disrupted like in the Cultural Revolution, when people would go into private homes and beat up people."

It has been shaped by concepts of democracy and freedom, and a decade of economic growth and openness to the world.

"The atmosphere is entirely different," said a party official who recalled the Cultural Revolution. "There was much more turmoil then. In those days, when Mao uttered one sentence, everyone followed it blindly. Now, when Deng says something, everyone thinks it over and forms his own opinion."

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