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Pictorial Posters from
the Cultural Revolution



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Mao's Graphic Voice: Pictorial Posters from the Cultural Revolution is the gallery guide to an exhibition organized by Patricia Powell from a private collection in Shanghai, China, for the Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, on view from August 31 through October 27, 1996. The exhibition was supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board. Additional funding for programs was made possible by a grant from the University of Wisconsin Anonymous Fund to the International Institute of the University.

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Posters provide access to political events of 1966–1967

Poster art existed in China long before the Cultural Revolution; popular and secularized posters were used to express cultural symbols of peace, happiness, and good fortune. However, the communist takeover in 1949 politicized all aspects of culture including poster art. The Cultural Revolution of 1966, a so-called revolution within the revolution, made all art forms subservient to the politics of Mao Zedong, China's paramount leader. Mao said that culture and art should be used only to educate the people and attack their enemies. He called that serving the revolution. These posters reveal what such education entailed and who was singled out for attack. According to Mao, artists and intellectuals could not be revolutionaries because they were motivated by individual expression. Such human creativity was labeled counterrevolutionary; therefore such art and ideas had to be attacked or eradicated. Facing the ensuing terror, some artists joined committees and produced pro-Mao propaganda. Posters, ubiquitous in the Cultural Revolution, were treated as the pronouncements of Mao Zedong.

The Cultural Revolution posters offer evidence of Mao's preferences. Because these ephemeral objects were not systematically preserved, this collection of posters provides unusual insights into an era of turmoil that shook the lives of the Chinese people, almost one of every four people on Earth.

Background to the Cultural Revolution

China's ancient imperial system ended in February 1912 when the last emperor Puyi abdicated. Sun Yat-sen became titular head of the Republic of China, serving as its first president. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), based on

AVD 3882

the Russian-Leninist model, was founded in Shanghai in July 1921. When Sun Yat-sen died in 1925, Chiang Kai-shek became the leader of the Nationalists and for the next twenty years fought the warlords, the Communists, and the Japanese for control of China. In 1934–1935, Mao Zedong led a 6,000-mile strategic retreat, called the Long March. The survivors came the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and eventually of the People's Republic established on October 1, 1949.

Mao Zedong, born in 1893 in Hunan province, became the leader during the Long March. Mao was impressed by the ability of China's poor peasants to suffer hardship, risk death, and fight for an independent China against foreign invaders. Mao mistrusted intellectuals as people who might not always sacrifice everything for his cause. Some posters issued during the latter part of the Cultural Revolution reflect these basic Maoist ideas that he had promulgated since the thirties: *Never Forget Class Bitterness; Always Remember National Hatred* (fig. 1) (from 1970) and *The Working Class Must Lead Everyone* (from September 1978).



Figure 1. Never Forget Class Bitterness



From the 1940s, Mao instituted purges to rid the party of officials who diverged from his views. From his base in Yan'an in 1942, Mao promulgated his ideas about the function of art. It was to serve his political line and not the creative vision of artists.

What we demand is the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form.

Mao was committed to having everyone and everything subordinated to his notion of revolution.

The Founding of the People's Republic of China

In 1949 Mao's Communists defeated the Nationalists and formed the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland of China. The Nationalists' leader General Chiang Kai-shek and some supporters retreated to the offshore island of Taiwan, recently reclaimed from Japanese control. The Chinese Communist Party and Mao claimed they would save the Chinese people from chronic wars and poverty. The defeat of Japan and the return of order and peace to China formed the basis for a cult of Mao.

Promising a new civilization, Mao urged Chinese to return from overseas where they had relocated during the civil war. Many patriotic professionals and able intellectuals did return. They soon became targets of Mao's attacks, as did so many other Chinese. One of the first tasks the Communists took on was land reform in 1950. Mao decreed that the landlord class was reactionary and must be crushed; the bourgeoisie and urban capitalists might be reformed.

In 1952 Mao called for a movement to suppress counterrevolutionaries. People labeled counterrevolutionaries lost their jobs and their families were stigmatized. By 1956, land was collectivized and urban businesses were pressured to sell to the state. It was increasingly obvious that life would be difficult for those opposing Mao. A frenzied cult of Mao grew as the young competed to prove themselves loyal to the leader.

In a 1956–1957 liberalization called the Hundred Flowers movement, Mao encouraged “the blooming of a hundred flowers and the contending of a hundred schools of thought.” This permitted criticism of corruption and greed in the party. The tremendous outpouring of criticism astonished the party, and Mao quickly stopped the liberalization. Those who had made the criticisms were branded “rightists,” and thousands of educated people were sent to labor camps; the careers of millions of others were ruined.

Mao then launched his Great Leap Forward to produce more iron and steel and speed up economic growth at any cost. Mao insisted from 1958 through 1961 that socialist organization and revolutionary fervor would produce economic miracles. Local party officials and their superiors felt pressured to make false reports of agricultural productivity and success with the backyard steel furnaces in which household pots and pans were melted to produce steel. When farmers, to produce what turned out to be a worthless quality of brittle steel, left the fields, old crops rotted and new crops remained unplanted. Officials in China now acknowledge that twenty million people died from malnutrition and starvation during the Great Leap Forward. Some analysts contend the death toll is twice that.

The Politics of the CCP in the 1960s

Following the disaster of the Great Leap, some of the Communist Party elite challenged Mao's leadership. Liu Shaoqi, chairman of the state, allied with Deng Xiaoping, CCP general secretary, urged the party to look to science, technology, and modern incentives to solve China's economic disaster. They gave limited freedom to villagers to work on family plots and sell to a market to revitalize agricultural production that had been destroyed by Mao's policies of labor mobilization, collectivization, and war on material incentives. These new economic policies produced some positive consequences.

But Mao was not happy with the successes of other leaders. He insisted that their policies would make China capitalist as, he said, had already occurred in the Soviet Union. Mao called on the Chinese people to abandon mar-



ket incentives and “never to forget the class struggle.” Moreover, Mao was humiliated by such overwhelming appeals for change in party policies that he had formulated. Indignant about the challenge to his personal power, he started to view other leaders as his personal enemies. He prepared another campaign to purge the party of these leaders, his newest enemies, dubbing them “capitalist roaders.”

During the same time, foreign affairs deteriorated steadily. After Stalin’s death in 1953 and Khrushchev’s change in policies, the Sino-Soviet alliance began to break down. Mao was appalled by the swift destruction of the cult of Stalin instigated by the new government; he did not want to be mistreated this way when he died. Between 1959 and 1961 China and the Soviets became involved in territorial disputes, and Khrushchev worried about Chinese territorial ambitions. By August 1960 the Soviets had withdrawn all technicians and equipment from China. By 1964 Mao had persuaded other Chinese Communist leaders that China had to prepare to defend itself against a possible Soviet invasion.

Posters as propaganda

Faced by a party no longer devoted to Mao Zedong Thought and by party leaders he considered personal enemies, Mao took his case to the people, especially the young who had been taught to venerate him. One tool for reaching an enormous, and not always literate, audience was the propaganda poster.

During the early sixties, Mao made these brightly colored and appealing images his graphic voice, the direct communication of his policies. These early posters took their imagery from Soviet realist posters, popular in the USSR since the twenties. Nine of the posters in the exhibition are from the sixties war-scare period before the Cultural Revolution was officially launched in 1966. The difference in imagery before and during the Cultural Revolution is striking. The June 1964 poster *Carry on the Glorious Revolutionary Tradition* embodies a patriotic theme urging the younger generation to study the sacrifices of their elders and continue that tradition. Another of this

patriotic type shows Young Pioneers learning about the Long March, *Determine To Be Strong Revolutionary Successors*, from January 1965. In both posters the young people lack fierce expressions. They are not yet in the quasimilitary dress that became common during the Cultural Revolution. The posters also lack the intensity of the color red of later posters and the endless representations of the Little Red Book, a collection of quotations from Mao’s works, put together by General Lin Biao.



Figure 2. Down with U.S. Imperialism





6



Figure 3. Be a Red Seed

Another type of poster used before the Cultural Revolution is the graphic military poster, looking very much like western World War II posters. *The Vietnamese Army and People Fight Valiantly!* from April 1965 stresses Chinese support of the Third World engaged in a struggle against imperialism. *Down with U.S. Imperialism; Yankees Get Out of Dominica* (fig. 2) from May 1965 is a typical war poster, which lacks the intense red so prevalent later on.

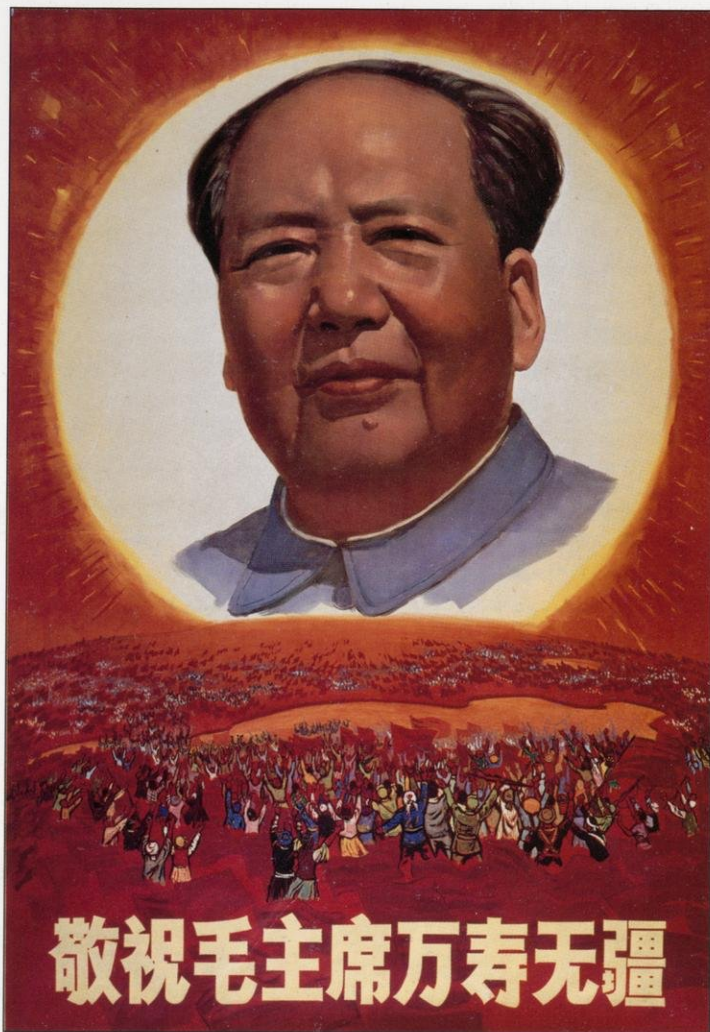


Figure 4. Wish Chairman Mao a Long Life Forever

The solo portrait of Mao, *Long Live Chairman Mao* from September 1965, reflects the extensive build-up of his cult and his near-deification. Earlier scenes of leaders had always included all the top leaders together. A vision of a shared leadership among people who talked with each other was replaced by one of a single and supreme leader whose word—or poster—was policy to be immediately acted upon.

In 1963 Mao called for students to go to the countryside to work with peasants and develop the interior and the northern provinces, especially areas bordering to the Soviet Union, which in fact began to strengthen its border forces in 1963–1964. Millions of enthusiastic youth volunteered to work in the fields and join the local militia for self-defense. *Be a Red Seed. Take Root Where the Motherland Needs You and Grow Leaves and Bear Fruit* (fig. 3) from December 1964, shows a happy urban girl transplanted to the countryside. The poster from September 1965, *Heightened Vigilance. Eternal Preparedness* shows militia on top of a factory prepared to shoot down foreign planes. The message to youth was that war threatened the country, and Mao needed their sacrifices to survive. Idealistic Chinese youth answered that call.

By the mid sixties, Mao found allies to oppose China's economic modernization after the Great Leap Forward, especially in military chief Lin Biao and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Mao instigated purges against the modernizers, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping and those in their political networks. The nation was encouraged to ferret out enemies of Mao who were said to be on the side of the Soviet enemy. Mao held the loyalty of the people, who acknowledged him as sacrosanct, superior to all other people.

Many of the posters in this exhibition show clearly this veneration of Chairman Mao, so encouraged by Lin Biao. Some are particularly notable, such as *Read Chairman Mao's Books and Listen to His Words* from October 1965 and *Mao Zedong Thought Lights up the Road of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, from July 1966. During the height of Mao's veneration during the Cultural Revolution, he was wished a "long, long life" as in the April 1968 poster *Wish Chairman Mao a Long Life Forever*, (fig. 4) that equated Mao with the red, life-giving sun. Mao's portrait was carefully presented; artists depicted him only in shades of red for his face, never using even a hint of green. A popular revolutionary song, "The East Is Red," eulogizes Mao as the rising sun of the east, like a god beaming on the people of China. This Mao-worship grew to the point that Chinese people paused

before each meal to wish Mao a long life. His image was ubiquitous, printed not only on posters but also on numerous articles and utensils for daily use. Mao's photograph and his quotations appeared on the first page of every newspaper every day.

The Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976

Most people agree that Mao launched the Cultural Revolution to eliminate his adversaries in the Communist Party. He claimed they would take *his* revolution down the course supposedly followed by the Soviet Union. The perquisites of power of Mao's adversaries were popularly denounced as a falling away from egalitarian concern for the people and the rise of a new bureaucratic elite. In fact, Mao's entourage continued to enjoy similar perquisites and pleasures. Mao called on the students to "clear out the corruption," to seize and destroy his enemies. Mao Zedong, a founder of the Chinese Communist Party, after seventeen years in power turned on this party and his erstwhile comrades and by enlisting the energy and fury of the youth of the country embroiled his country in another and even more devastating revolution.

Because he appealed directly through posters to the youth, much activity in the early days of the Cultural Revolution was at universities and in middle schools. On May 16, 1966 a big-character poster (that is, not pictorial) appeared at Beijing University which attacked capitalist-roaders within the party. Mao encouraged militant students to attack with such slogans as this. This student militancy is memorialized in one of a series of 1976 posters called "The Cultural Revolution Will Shine Forever," which looks back on the previous ten years. In the next few months all over China big-character posters criticized party members in authority and school administrators.

In July 1966 students, now organized as Red Guard, took trains to Beijing in hopes of seeing Mao Zedong. When





Figure 5. A Long, Long Life to our Great . . . Chairman Mao

the trains became overcrowded, students began “long marches” to Beijing, carrying posters of Mao. The poster *Hike Thousands of Miles to Develop a Red Heart* shows these long marchers, who trekked all over China. What Mao had fostered was quickly out of control.

In August 1966 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued a directive of sixteen points defining the Cultural Revolution. On August 18 Mao Zedong met with 1,500 select representatives of the Red Guard at Tiananmen Square. Introducing Mao, Lin Biao conferred four titles on him: The Great Leader, The Great Teacher, The Great Marshal, and The Great Helmsmen and called on the Red Guards to “Smash the Four Olds”: old thinking, old habits, old culture, and old customs. Such a rally presided over by Chairman Mao can be seen on *A Long, Long Life to Our Great Teacher, Great Leader, Great Marshal, Great Helmsman Chairman Mao* (fig. 5) from April 1968.

The movement spread throughout the country with students “struggling” their teachers, humiliating and beating them. They cruelly beat and attacked anyone they considered rightist; they entered private homes and destroyed everything they considered old or bourgeois. Five more massive rallies with Red Guards occurred before



Figure 6. Bombard the Capitalist Headquarters

November 26, with the slogan “Bombard the Headquarters” (meaning “attack people in authority who took the capitalist road”). The commemorative poster issued in November 1976, *Bombard the Capitalist Headquarters (The Cultural Revolution Will Shine Forever)*, (fig. 6) celebrates this event.

In the fall of 1966 Chinese schools and colleges closed, freeing students to attack and humiliate teachers, school administrators, party leaders, and parents. Students met to discuss the revolution and to post big-character posters. Students were encouraged by leaders of the Cultural Revolution to demolish old buildings, temples, and art objects. When Mao could no longer control the violence, he exiled students to the country to work on farms and learn from the two “best” classes, the former poor and the low middle class peasants. Since an individual’s class was determined by parents’ status and was immutable, those whose parents were former landowners or intellectuals or artists were in particular need of reeducation in the countryside.

People differ in their explanations of why a society that had venerated the elders and the family for thousands of years suddenly produced young people who eagerly attacked everything and everyone who was old. While the

situation is too complex for a single answer, surely students were frustrated by years of politics that reserved benefits for high party officials and preached selflessness to all others. The extent of the violence might also be explained by the system in place for the past seventeen years, which controlled people by assigning class labels and by habituating them to mass campaigns of terror and intimidation, a system that bred both fear and compliance. Mao offered an outlet for anger against the injustice of the system.

In January 1967 workers and peasants were urged to overthrow power holders in factories, mines, and rural areas and to toss out corrupt and selfish party members in government and replace them with true revolutionaries—those loyal to Mao. All levels of government were replaced by the newly formed revolutionary committees consisting of workers, peasants, army troops, and some government cadres. Thus Mao removed from power his political rivals and enemies and replaced them with people presumed to be absolutely loyal to him personally. This January 1967 revolution is commemorated in a poster issued by the new guard, the Revolutionary Rebellion Headquarters of the Shanghai Publishing Occupation, *Grasp Revolution and Promote Production. Smash Thoroughly the Counterattack by the Capitalist Reactionary Line*. A subsequent poster from January 1968, *Long Live the Victory of the January Revolution*, was issued through the regular party printing channels, the Shanghai People's Art Publishing House.

In September 1967 Chinese president Liu Shaoqi was arrested. Formerly the successor to Chairman Mao Zedong, Liu, now disgraced as the Chinese Khrushchev for his modernization policies, was stripped of all power and detained in secrecy. A poster was issued in September 1967 to instruct people about the change of attitude to Liu, *Energetically Criticize the Chinese Khrushchev's Politics, Ideology, and Theories*. Liu Shaoqi suffered injuries and illness while imprisoned and died in November 1969.

The massive military-industrial buildup of China's southwest inland provinces, known as the Third Front, from 1964 to 1971 demonstrates the fear of invasion that



Figure 7. For the People, Prepare for War

characterized the Cultural Revolution. This opposition to expected invaders is conveyed in such posters as the 1969 work *Definitely, Thoroughly, Wholly, Completely Wipe Out the Enemy Who Dares to Invade*, and August 1968 *Don't Invade Us; We Won't Invade You*, and September 1969 *Workers of the World, Unite. Overthrow American Imperialism, Russian Revisionism, and Reactionaries in All Countries!* Mao expected war and prepared both with military buildup and with air-raid shelters and tunnels in which grain was stored. On the poster from January 1970 *For the People, Prepare for War; Prepare for Natural Disaster* (fig. 7) Mao says, "Dig tunnels deep, store grain everywhere, and never seek hegemony," implying that even as they prepared for war, the Chinese loved peace. The background of the poster indicates that the grain storage is taking place in the inaccessible interior of the country.

The posters representing folk heroes or Models of Mao Zedong Thought were plastered on buildings and in schools for inspiration. One of the earliest posters in the exhibition demonstrates a theme continued throughout the Cultural Revolution, focused on a model soldier. *Learn from Lei Feng How To Be a Determined Soldier of the Proletarian Revolution* (cover image) became a ubiquitous slogan



learned by all school children in the 1960s and on into 1970s. Li Wenzhong was elevated to the status of hero and lionized for slavish loyalty to Mao. This attitude of worship of the Great Leader is demonstrated in slogans shown on this 1968 poster, *Learn from Hero Li Wenzhong To Be Boundlessly Loyal to Chairman Mao*: "I love what Chairman Mao loves; I support what Chairman Mao supports; I always obey Chairman Mao's instructions; I march whenever Chairman Mao raises [his hand]." The November 1968 poster *First, Do Not Fear Hardship; Second, Do Not Fear Death* shows another soldier, Wang Jie, as a role model.

In addition to using individuals as models of Mao Zedong Thought, the center also selected as model of agricultural development, Dazhai, a village in Shanxi province that Mao praised for its collective, manual labor. The huge oil fields of Daqing in Heilongjiang province was the model for industrial development. Dazhai appears in *Our Glorious World Tempers Red Hearts; Determine to Sink Roots in the Countryside* from August 1970 and in *Mobilize Party Members for Farming; Imitate Dazhai County* from January 1976. Both models are featured in *Industry, Learn from Daqing; Agriculture, Learn from Dazhai; Everyone, Learn from the People's Liberation Army* from May 1971. Students, soldiers, peasants, and workers all had models to emulate.

At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the army was instructed to remain neutral. But when many revolutionary groups began to fight one another and factionalism spread nationwide, Mao gave the People's Liberation Army the power to disband what they considered to be counterrevolutionary organizations. The army and the Red Guards were in constant conflict, with many casualties. To encourage cooperation between the two groups, the revolutionary committees distributed posters showing Red Guards and soldiers working together, such as *The Liberation Army Firmly Supports the Proletarian Revolutionaries* (fig. 8) from April 1967. That the army was loyal to a person and not a party is demonstrated by *Both Fight for Chairman Mao and Live and Sacrifice for Chairman Mao and Die* issued in 1968 by the 6409 Troops of the People's



Figure 8. The Army Supports the Revolutionaries

Liberation Army.

In July of 1968 Mao disbanded the Red Guards. They, having held great power, were now directed to go to the countryside to learn from peasants, who did not welcome the extra mouths to feed or the unskilled labor forced on them. Two posters illustrate this new expulsion to the coun-





Figure 9. Go to the Countryside

try: *Go to the Country; Go to the Borderland; Go to the Places Where the Motherland Needs You* (fig. 9) from February 1970 and *Become Reeducated by the [Former] Poor and Low Middle Class Peasants; Take Roots in the Countryside for the Revolution* by the Shanghai Going-to-the-Countryside Committee from January 1971. Mao needed to disperse the urban gangs of



Figure 10. The Zhi Bu Railway is a Victory for Mao

violent youth, and scattering them in remote areas was an effective way to do this.

A theme which runs through these posters might be summarized as "Mao's books and ideas are necessary for victory." Mao promoted policies that stressed national self-sufficiency, thereby isolating China from the world's progress and advanced technology. Such policies made economic development difficult and put China behind the rest of Asia in technological progress. Some posters which illustrate Mao's maxims on production are *Surpass the World Advancements in Technology for the Revolution* printed in March 1966 and *Seize the Revolution. Promote Production. Eradicate Imperialists, Revisionists, and Reactionaries* from 1969. Patriots claimed that, as in the ship-building industry, China could succeed even with primitive production techniques. This is shown in *Self-reliance Brings Victory; Hard Work Creates Wonders* and *Completing the Zhi Bu Railway is a Great Victory for Mao Zedong Thought!* (fig. 10) from September 1970. Imported technology is not necessary, since advanced technology can be gained by studying the words of Chairman Mao. This view is expressed in such posters as *Cherish the Red Sun in Your Mind; Crush All Difficulties under Your Foot* from January 1971.



During the Cultural Revolution, revolutionaries were suspicious of those who worked with their minds; they admired only physical labor. Teachers, doctors, scientists, engineers, artists—intellectuals and professionals were sent to labor on farms, where many suffered lasting damage to their health or death. Posters which show why intellectuals needed to be reeducated by peasants include *Take Speech as a Weapon to Destroy Completely the Reactionary and Revisionary Artists and Writers* (fig. 11) from May 1967; *Thoroughly Revolutionize the Battlefronts of Ideas and Culture* from June 1970; *March Forward along the Brilliant Road of May 7 Instruction Given by Mao Zedong* from May 1971; *One Lesson on the Abacus* from January 1974.

Another injunction Mao issued through posters was “Prepare for War and Defeat Imperialism.” In a country where power struggles among government officials were constant, nationalism and patriotism were used to rally people together. Many of the posters in this exhibition reflect this attempt to unify the nation by focusing on the enemy; *Imperialists and All Reactionaries Are Paper Tigers* from January 1971; *People of the World, Unite to Defeat American Imperialists and All Running Dogs—Mao Zedong* from May 1971; and *It Is Not the People Who Fear American Imperialists, but American Imperialists Who Fear the People* also from May 1971.

Yet another attempt to unite people in this period of ferocious factionalism is the overarching ideal of communism, seen in the June 1971 triptych (three-paneled poster), *Strive Heroically to Fulfill the Great Idea of Communism*, and also in the March 1971 *Long Live Marxist, Leninist, and Mao Zedong Thought!* (fig. 12) and the poster *Long Live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Paris Commune* from April 1971. Even at this time Mao was conducting secret talks with the imperialists in the form of American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to bring President Nixon to China.

In September 1971 the head of the military, Lin Biao, attempted an armed coup d'état. When the coup failed, Lin fled for the Soviet Union. Forty minutes after his plane left Chinese territory, it crashed, killing all aboard. The defec-



Figure 11. Destroy the Reactionary Artists and Writers

tion of Lin Biao had a devastating effect on Mao, already in poor health. The incident was withheld from the public for months while ruling groups struggled to come up with a rationale for Lin's betrayal.

In 1973 Deng Xiaoping returned to power as vice-premier. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing (with Mao's consent) orches-



Figure 12. Long Live Marxist, Leninist, Mao Zedong Thought

trated a mass propaganda movement against Confucius (philosopher and teacher, ca. 551–479 B.C.) and Lin Biao, linking the two as reactionary, feudal aspects of Chinese society. The real target—the contemporary Confucius—though never mentioned was the Deng Xiaoping-Zhou Enlai faction. Two posters illustrate this campaign. *Revolutionary Teachers and Students Are at One with Comrades on the Frontline* issued in Beijing in September 1974 shows teachers and students engaged together in the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius (as noted in the poster slogans on the right). Another poster issued the same month, called *Never Forget the Class Struggle. Fiercely Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius*, shows the young worker in the center determined not to forget the class struggle as experienced by the old worker on his right.

Mao had always intended to unite Taiwan with the mainland of China. Such ideas are portrayed in these posters: *We Definitely Must Liberate Taiwan* from January 1970 and *Concern from the Motherland* (fig. 13) of September 1976, which has slogans on the boat reading, “We miss our flesh and bone compatriots in Taiwan,” “Unite the



Figure 13. Concern from the Motherland

Motherland, liberate Taiwan.” Hiding Taiwan’s extraordinary economic achievement, party propagandists depicted the people of Taiwan as suffering and poverty-stricken from American exploitation.

Another theme common in these posters is the revolutionary attitude toward health care. Mao called for more emphasis on traditional Chinese herbal medicine, which reduced the training for health care workers. Popularly called “barefoot doctors,” these slightly trained people were all that was available to much of the rural population, reversing a long trend of advancing modern medicine for all Chinese. (Mao’s personal physician, Dr. Li Zhisui, however, was trained in America. In his biography *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, Dr. Li reveals that Mao was skeptical of all medicine, but he had no faith at all in Chinese traditional medicine.) The poster *Study and Master Medical Techniques for the Revolution* of March 1973 suggests the beginning of the return to scientific medicine with the inclusion of the microscope, even though the book the woman studies is a classic of Chinese traditional medicine.

During the 1970s the Chinese government tried to reduce the rate of population growth. Two decades earlier



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Figure 14. Practice Birth Control for the Revolution

Mao had actually encouraged people to have many children to serve the revolution. This equation of more children with both personal and public good fortune was difficult to reverse, but Mao linked birth control with revolutionary zeal and party rewards. The poster *Practice Birth Control for the Revolution* (fig. 14) from March 1974 shows these slogans: “Learn from Marxist Theory and Chairman Mao’s Thought for the Benefit of Future Generations and Education; Improve Women’s and Children’s Health; Grasp the Revolution; Encourage Production; Encourage Work; Encourage Struggle; Benefit the Nation and National Prosperity.”

The leader of the opposition to Deng Xiaoping and his policies of science, modernization, and openness was Jiang Qing, a movie actress before marrying Mao. She took the world of art as her special sphere of influence and used the Cultural Revolution to punish any who had ever offended her. Her clique, which others called the Gang of Four, banned all pre-1966 Chinese films and all foreign films. It permitted only seven films to be released, which were film versions of stage works that combined modernized Peking opera, elements of traditional ballet, and revo-

lutionary military subjects. A poster from a ballet that was performed continuously during the Cultural Revolution is titled *Modern Revolutionary Dance: Red Detachment of Women* from October 1974, which featured a heroine victimized by a sadistic landlord. She joined a detachment of female communist soldiers during the civil wars of the thirties and learned discipline. The story is told through music and ballet—class warfare *en point*.

On September 9, 1976 after an illness of several years, Mao Zedong died. Less than a month later, on October 6, Hua Guofeng and the new leadership announced the arrest of Jiang Qing’s Gang of Four, bringing the Cultural Revolution at last to an end.

Mao’s anointed successor, Hua Guofeng, in an attempt to bolster his precarious power, published the fifth volume of the *Selected Works of Chairman Mao*, as shown on the poster *Warmly Welcome the Publication of the Fifth Volume of “Collected Essays of Chairman Mao”* published in 1977.

Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978 and criticized the Cultural Revolution as a waste of life, time, and treasure. The last poster of the exhibition, *Unite for a Greater Victory* from April 1978, shows the government trying to heal the divisions so deeply etched during those ten years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Mao’s Voice

People rarely heard Mao’s real voice even when he was alive. Yet, people could understand what Mao wanted through his written and graphic voice, these posters. Mao’s graphic voice is a valuable asset to understanding the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which devastated a generation of the Chinese and overturned the deeply held beliefs of a great civilization.

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