THE GREAT NORTHERN WILDERNESS:
POLITICAL EXILES IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

by

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Abstract

In the spring of 1957, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) encouraged intellectuals and students to speak out against the abuses of Party and government officials, with the avowed intention of improving governance. But when criticisms were directed at a wide range of Party policies, the CCP launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Those who had called for intellectual and political freedoms, and for curbing corruption, were accused of political subversion. In a nation-wide crackdown, more than half a million Chinese, including intellectuals, Party cadres and government employees, were punished with labels of “rightists” or “counterrevolutionaries.”

The CCP sent these people to the countryside or to distant frontier regions to engage in “ideological remolding” through manual labor. This thesis focuses on the life, behavior and psychological experiences of those banished from central organizations to Beidahuang in northeastern Manchuria. Three types of political exiles are examined—the rightists in army farms, the ultra-rightists in labor reeducation camps, and the counterrevolutionaries in labor reform camps.

In Beidahuang, the political exiles were deployed as forced labor in agriculture, forestry, construction, and other sectors. Treated as political outcasts, they suffered physical and psychological abuse at the hands of Communist officials. Internecine strife exacerbated their misery. Their banishment coincided with the most serious famine (1959-1962) in modern Chinese history. Food shortages, hard labor, and a lack of sufficient medical care resulted in high death rates. Under political pressure, many exiles acknowledged that they had committed errors or “crimes” and made considerable efforts to show signs of repentance, in order to redeem themselves. The end of their banishment to Beidahuang in the early 1960s did not end their torment, which was followed by long-lasting political discrimination.

This study reveals the suffering of a specific population of political exiles, but also engages larger issues such as political persecution, forced migration, and the nature of CCP rule.
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Introduction

Wangshi bingbu ruyan
Do not let bygones be bygones.
---- Zhang Yihe

The purposes of this thesis are multiple: to discuss how a particular form of forced migration—political banishment—operated in the early PRC period; to show how political exiles—victims of a mass persecution—fared in the border regions of northeastern China (Manchuria); and to investigate the patterns of behavior and the mentality of Chinese intellectuals in exile.

Theme and Scope

During the years 1957 and 1958, hundreds of thousands of Chinese, mostly intellectuals, were rendered victims of a political campaign—the Anti-Rightist Campaign and were labeled “rightists” or “counterrevolutionaries” by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As part of the persecution, the majority of them were banished to distant frontier regions, or to the countryside or were simply put in jail, and ended up in various forms of forced labor. They had to perform heavy manual work and suffered maltreatment at the hands of Communist officials. For those attacked in Beijing, the national capital, the attack was especially violent and the punishment severe. Many of them were sent to labor camps in the northeastern border region known as Beidahuang, the Great Northern Wilderness. Many stayed there for more than twenty years; still many others died of starvation, disease and over-work, leaving broken families behind.

The Anti-Rightist Campaign has long been discussed by academics, but the individual experiences of the persecuted during and after the campaign have been largely ignored; a significant part of the human suffering has been left out of
systematic treatment by both Chinese and Western historians. This thesis examines the general pattern of banishment to the northeastern border region, the life experiences, the patterns of behavior and the mentalities of the political exiles banished from Beijing, evaluates the success of the social and ideological control of the ruling party through intimidation, coercion and manipulation, and looks at the social consequence of the frontier banishment.

Why focus on those banished from Beijing and why on Beidahuang? There are four reasons. First, the northeastern border region, with its harsh natural environment and isolated geographical location, was long regarded by imperial rulers as the ideal place for physical punishment of various offenders. The CCP government continued this practice. Second, the mass persecution coincided with an ambitious state program of land reclamation in Northeastern China; the banishment of political offenders there provided abundant forced labor, and thus suited the need of a government economic adventure. Third, in a general way, the political exiles from Beijing were among China's best educated elite members, therefore an exploration as to how they fared in one of China's harshest regions will be illuminating. Fourth, the political exiles from Beijing, many of whom were journalists and writers, have left numerous valuable resources, which make research on their collective experience possible.

With regard to the political purge of 1957, China specialists have been confronted with at least three fundamental questions. The first one involves the identification of the persecuted. Are they political dissidents opposed to the governing party, who thus "logically" invited harsh treatment? If the answer is negative, or the number of the dissidents was limited, a second question arises: how to explain the persecution? What was the logic behind political operations in the Communist world? Thirdly, whether or not, or to what extent did the persecution of the intellectuals truly serve the purpose of the ruling party? This thesis attempts to provide some preliminary explanations over these topics.

Note that not all the persecuted in Beijing were subject to labor banishment, neither were all the banished sent to the northeastern borderlands. The treatment of the rightists singled out in Beijing will be formally discussed in detail in Chapter Two.
Punitive Exile in Comparative Perspective

Internal exile of various types of offender to frontiers regions or rural rustication of undesirable elements is certainly not an original idea of the Chinese communists. Rather, it has been used for centuries by various states as a significant form of penalty, with well-known cases including sending convicts to Australia by the British, and to Devil's Island by the French; the Russian banishment of revolutionaries to Siberia; the labor camps (such as the Gulag) in the Stalinist Soviet Union; the Taiwan government's confinement of political convicts on Green Island; and the practice of the Qing government of sending exiles to Xinjiang, etc. The motives for these practices ranged from the removal of disruptive elements to the rehabilitation of offenders, from the colonization of frontiers to the assimilation of ethnic minorities. Discussion of these practices goes beyond the scope of this thesis. The comparative focus will be on the internal and external influences on the CCP practice of banishment, among which the liufang practice of late imperial China and the Soviet labor camps are of special relevance.

In China, the banishment of political or criminal offenders to distant regions has ancient origins. Since the Qin dynasty (3rd century B.C.E.), imperial rulers have been deporting convicts, disgraced officials and other people in political disfavor to remote border locations, such as Yunnan, Guangxi, Guangdong and Hainan. During the Song, there came to be a common practice that convicts were branded on their faces before they were sent to frontier or insalubrious mountain regions for military services or as manual labor in state programs such as land reclamation, road construction and river projects. Under the Ming, Liaodong (Northeastern China) received considerable number of military exiles (junfan).²

In the 18th century, the imperial practice of banishment reached a new height. Manchuria (Northeast) and Xinjiang (Northwest) were successively used by the Qing government as the destinations of banishment. In the early years, the offenders

² For more about the general situation in imperial China, see Joanna Waley-Cohen, Exile in Mid Qing China: Banishment to Xinjiang, 1758-1820 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), Chapter Three, "Exile and Expansion prior to the Qing."
banished to Manchuria were mostly “common criminals such as robbers, counterfeiters, and smugglers. Traditionally such crimes ranked among the most serious.” “Many of these exiles had originally been sentenced to death but had had their sentences commuted.” The exiles to Manchuria also included lesser figures who had participated in rebellions and other illegal activities that posed serious threats to the existing order of the Qing. Disgraced scholars and officials as well as their families were also banished, with the former group being treated rather well by local officials. After Qing conquered what is now Xinjiang in 1759, tens of thousands of people were sent there as laborers as well as officials.

The extent to which the imperial practice links to the PRC banishment warrants interrogation. If we consider that the CCP leadership, especially the Party Chairman Mao Zedong, was extremely familiar with imperial history and ruling tactics, we might perceive a possible connection between the imperial style of banishment and the Communist practice. Both of them made use of exiles as a source of labor, and drove them away from the main centers of China. The CCP assertion of benevolent treatment of “class enemies” and the stress on “ideological remolding” also seems to be consistent with the late imperial focus on benevolent rule. However, there is no visible evidence to show that CCP drew directly for their modern practice from the imperial legacy. Mao frequently flaunted his historical knowledge on almost all important occasions, talking about making the past serve the present (gu wei jin yong). However, from his speeches discovered so far, Mao never mentioned borrowing ideas of imperial practice when he talked about the treatment of the 1957 rightists. In actual practice, the CCP displayed little influence of its imperial ancestor. Qing exiles in Xinjiang, for instance, were provided with enough food or allocated land to support themselves, whereas exiles in the PRC were constantly under the threat of hunger, with their agricultural produce all going

3 Ibid, 57.
4 Sun Xiaoli, Zhongguo laodong gaizao zhidu de lilun yu shijian (Theories and Practices: Reform through Labor in China) (Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 1994), 41. Waley-Cohen believes that the widespread use of frontier banishment reflected the Qing’s reluctance to execute any but the most serious offenders, a concern for the benevolent rule, and its “pragmatic recognition that China’s people were a highly valuable resource.” Waley-Cohen, Exile in Mid-Qing China, 51.
to the state granaries. In the Qing’s Manchurian frontiers, literati exiles enjoyed various job options, working as teachers, river patrollers and even doing business. Confucian scholars were used as assistants to local officials, with their learning highly appreciated. In the PRC frontiers, political exiles, many of whom were well educated, were almost exclusively used as manual laborers, and the CCP local officials on the whole treated the banished intellectuals with little respect. Compared to their counterparts in the imperial period, the communist exiles suffered tremendously in the Manchurian wilderness.

It also should be noted that those who were sent to the frontiers by the CCP government included large numbers of the politically disfavored (including those who had served the previous GMD government and those who had raised different opinions and asked for change), and even innocent people. While the political suspects were deemed dangerous, those who committed criminal offences were considered less threatening to the powers that be. In this aspect, the CCP regime bore more similarity with the Soviet Union than with the imperial court.

The Soviet model of sending offenders to exile settlements and labor camps has been widely discussed by many scholars. It is held that this practice found its origin in Tsarist banishment of offenders to Siberia and the deserted island of Sakhalin. In October 1922 a permanent Exile Commission was set up by the Soviet government to deal with “socially dangerous persons and active members of anti-Soviet parties.” The Gulag was developed as a formidable exile and labor reform regime that held various people from rich peasants and common criminals to “counterrevolutionary offenders.” According to a “socialist principle” propounded by Lenin, that “he who does not work shall not eat,” the Soviet government in 1929 established an elaborate system of exile and imprisonment in conjunction with forced labor, by which the exiles had to earn their life necessities to feed and cloth themselves and to increase national production. Upon the foundation of the PRC,

the Chinese government enthusiastically followed the Soviet model of a combination of exile and forced labor. Mao Zedong and Zhu De both advocated learning from the Soviet Union in terms of using convict laborers in state projects. Soviet advisers were invited to advise on matters such as labor camp structure and inmate administration, etc.\(^8\)

Distinctions between the Soviet system and that of the PRC can be identified. For instance, Gulag practice rarely forced inmates into political study sessions as the CCP did. In the Gulag, political offenders were by and large confined separately from criminal offenders. "Camps were for more ‘socially dangerous elements’ such as political offenders, while colonies had more common criminals."\(^9\) But the CCP practice usually put political offenders among criminals and made use of criminals to monitor and discipline the political. (Chapter Three will discuss this practice in detail) When the Gulag regime built railways, canals and roads with forced laborers, discipline was poor and the number of escapes was large. By contrast, in the early PRC period as will be shown in the case of Beidahuang, forced laborers were primarily used in agriculture and lumbering in isolated and remote regions and the chance of escape was limited.\(^10\) Most importantly, as Hongda Harry Wu noted, "the purpose of the Soviet labor camps is suppression and punishment—not the systematic, complete ‘thought reform’ emphasized by the PRC camps. Furthermore, the economic value of the products from the Soviet camps was only a small percentage of total national production, and available sources suggest that the treatment prisoners receive in the Soviet labor camps is better than that in the CCP labor reform camps."\(^11\) Listing the number of differences between the two countries aims to show that although Soviet influence upon China existed, and although the banishment and labor reform practice in both countries were repressive and entailed

\(^8\) See Sun Xiaoli, Zhongguo laodong gaizao zhidu de lilun yu shijian, 15-17. Mao instructed in a report of April 1951 "to punish considerable number of offenders with life sentences, and to remove them from their native places for state projects such as road building, river conservation, and land reclamation.……The Soviet Union used to treat serious offenders in this way." See Ibid. 15.
high humanitarian costs, both had its own characteristics that were engrained in their own culture and embodied different governing styles.

**Literature Review**

China scholars in the West have paid considerable attention to Communist politics, political campaigns in Maoist period, and the correlation between intellectuals and the state. *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* by Roderick Macfarquhar, *Politics and Purges in China* by Frederick Teiwes, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* by Merle Goldman, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* by Jonathan Spence and the monumental works *The Cambridge History of China* (Vol.14) all contribute substantial chapters discussing the causes, the implementation of the 1957 persecution and its impact on China and Chinese intellectuals. The studies of intellectuals under Communism, it seems, have been integrated into the grand political history—how intellectuals were involved in and responded to China's political changes and how their fortunes were affected by these changes in general. Individual lives of the persecuted, especially those sent to labor camps of border regions after 1957 have largely been left untouched. Despite the extensive body of literature about the persecuted rightists that has been published since the mid-1980s, the life experiences of these people remain little studied subject of research in the Western world, and are more documented than academically treated in China. Within the existing Western scholarship, the limelight often focuses on the limited number of famous writers, scholars, and scientists. Ding Ling, Zhang Xianliang, Fei Xiaotong and Fang Lizhi, for instance, are given special attention due to their scholarly achievements and familiarity to western audience and / or their image as political dissidents. However, what still needs further attention

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is the post 1957 experience of many ordinary professionals, school teachers, university students, government employees, who constituted the vast majority of the persecuted, regarding how they were purged, how they suffered and survived, or how they died in labor camps or exile settlements across the country.

Also important is the question of PRC labor camps. This issue has been much discussed in recent years. The Great Wall of Confinement: the Chinese Prison Camp through Contemporary Fiction and Reportage by Philip Williams and Yenna Wu makes use of fiction and non-fiction sources to approach PRC prisons and labor camps from the 1950s to the 1990s. New Ghosts, Old Ghosts: Prison and Labor Reform Camps in China by James Seymour and Richard Anderson primarily describes the prisons of northwestern China as they existed between the 1980s and the mid-1990s. Hongda Harry Wu’s Laogai—the Chinese Gulag is among the few western-language studies that systematically investigate the PRC’s system of labor camps, yet does not deal with the individual experience of the persecuted Chinese. The accuracy of some of his accounts is open to question. Virtually all of these researches left those banished and enslaved in the northeastern China out, and none of them investigates an alternative labor reform regime—the army farms established by the state in the 1950s, which were also exile settlements for political offenders.

In Mainland China, while the persecuted rightists (including the ultra-rightists) have published their memoirs and recollections in increasing numbers, scholarly treatments of the life experience of political outcasts remain almost nonexistent because of the unfavorable political climate. Probably the only notable exception so far is a semi-academic work Chanji: kunan de jitan, 1957 (Allegorical Words: Bitter Sacrificial Altar, 1957) by Hu Ping, which, based on recollection of some rightists, contributes several chapters to discuss the experiences and behavior of the rightists in labor camps in north and northwest China.

Source Materials and Methodology

The thesis is based on both primary sources such as personal interviews, memoirs, autobiographical works, short recollections, unpublished manuscripts by people who had direct experience of border banishment, and official documents on the one hand, and secondary sources such as biographies and research works on the other. Provincial gazetteers and local gazetteers, as reworked sources produced in official initiative, are hard to categorize but are also made use of with a degree of caution.

(1) Biographies

Since the mid-1980s biographies or biographical works about the persecuted rightists in Beidahuang have appeared in increasing number, due to the public concern for the victims of Maoist persecution and relaxation of government ideological control. Rightists Ding Ling, Ai Qing, Ding Cong, Huang Miaozi, Nie Gannu and others have seen their biographies compiled by young writers and journalists. These sources are of great value in that they provide overall descriptions of these intellectuals under Communist rule as well as brief sketches of their lives in exile, and thus are indispensable to my reconstruction of their experiences. The weakness of some biographies, it seems, is the lack of narrative that could clearly reveal personal characteristics of the protagonists during the years of persecution (as in cases of Ding Cong and Nie Gannu); in addition, little attention is paid to how these people associated with their fellow exiles and labor farm/camp officials. On top of this, some protagonists themselves are unsatisfied with regard to the accuracy of their stories told in these writings.

(2) Memoirs

Publications of memoirs by the banished intellectuals themselves have in some degree corrected this situation. Literati rightists such as Ding Ling, Liu Binyan, Zhang Xianliang, Cong Weixi, Dai Huang, Yin Yi and Wu Yongliang have

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13 Whenever relevant in the following chapters, I will identify and characterize these individual rightists.
14 Ding Cong, for instance, pointed out numbers of mistakes in his biography Ding Cong zhuan, and made careful corrections during my personal interview in August 2003. Xin Suwei, Ding Cong zhuan (Biography of Ding Cong) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1993).
published memoirs since the mid-1980s. Short recollections of certain events during their exile also appeared in magazines and newspapers. We can find from these writings not only what their routine lives in exile were like, but also their inner world—their sad feeling, their attitude toward the thought reform, their sense of guilt for some parts of their behavior, and their reflection upon their painful past after rehabilitation. Since the authors were situated in humble position in those years, however, their memoirs mostly focus on things on themselves; description of how the policy of frontier banishment were implemented in their work units, and what happened in the labor farms/camps they stayed were their secondary focus.

These memoirs vary considerably in terms of the extent to which they disclose what happened to the authors themselves and what happened in the PRC labor camps of the 1950s and 1960s. In general, memoirs published in the 1980s were cautious in describing the darkness of labor camps.\textsuperscript{15} Sensitive topics such as the maltreatment of inmates/exiles by camp officials that were seen as harmful to the socialist state were either avoided by the authors or removed from the memoirs when they were published because of the state censorship in place. Some authors, when interviewed, expressed their regrets at the forced omission of some crucial parts of their experiences. Comparatively, those published in the 1990s and afterwards were more open and sharp, works such as \textit{Jiusi yisheng} (A Narrow Escape from Death) by Dai Huang and \textit{Yuxue feifei} (Floating Rain and Snow) by Wu Yongliang. Even in the 1990s and afterwards, however, memoirs or short recollections that display sharp condemnation of the governing party were not easy to publish so some circulated underground among close friends; a typical case is \textit{Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi} (The True Stories of my Twenty two Years of Laogai Experience) by Chen Fengxiao. By contrast, those published abroad such as \textit{Mirror} by Liu Naiyuan (Peter Liu), and \textit{A Single Tear} by Wu Ningkun enjoy much more freedom to display bold criticism toward the PRC’s labor reform establishment.

\textsuperscript{15} Ding Ling’s narrative of her experience in Beidahuang army farms, for instance, is mild as she intentionally avoids mentioning her physical suffering in her memoir \textit{Fengxue renjian} (The Blizzard World) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987).
(3) Personal interviews

Personal interviews greatly enrich source materials for this research. With thirty-six personal remembrances collected through oral interviews in Beijing and Northeastern China and one in Vancouver, I have been able to find new things that did not appear in published sources. Stories of those who have not written recollections and those who died in the frontier banishment are discovered as well.

The method I took for interviews followed these stages: making arrangements through personal contacts; giving interviewees a rough ideas of what I was interested in; meeting them one on one (because of some sensitive questions involved and for the protection of interviewees); and starting a semi-structured conversation with simple questions at the beginning. The interviewees were encouraged to talk freely, to give more details on concrete aspects, and to recall their actual mentalities at that time. If clarifications were needed, the interviewees were contacted more than once. For those who were from the same work unit or were once in the same labor camp, questions were repeated and the testimonies crosschecked. Through extensive interviews, I was able to discover new sources that the persecuted were reluctant to put on paper, and to correct errors existed in the current memoirs and biographies.16

(4) Other Oral Testimonies

Another type of interviewees—colleagues and/or friends of the persecuted people, whom I met by chance during the interview process—provided supplementary sources. Some of them provided different stories than those told by the persecuted, or, with unique angle, descriptions of the personal characteristic of those people in exile. Some of them told me sad stories of their friends who had died in Beidahuang or elsewhere before they were rehabilitated. In this sense they served

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16 Ding Ling in her Fengxue renjian does not criticize her rival Zhou Yang by name. However, her husband Chen Ming during an interview on August 19, 2003 clearly pointed out that Zhou was the crucial person for Ding's persecution in 1957. Liu Meng during a personal interview on October 4, 2003 mentioned the prevalence of stealing in Beidahuang army farms, which he did not in his memoir Chunqian de yu quqian qing (The Whisking of Rain in Spring, the Clearing Skies in Autumn) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2003).
as spokespersons of the dead. The narratives of these "accidental interviewees" broadened my knowledge of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the border banishment afterwards, and at the same time enable me to treat with caution some information from those with direct experience.

All of these source materials—biographies, memoirs, interviews, and oral testimonies of others—are used for cross-checking, confirmation and mutual reinforcement, thus enabling me to piece together the significant life experience of the political exiles in the northeastern borderlands. Not only did these narratives provide more detailed insight into political campaigns in the Maoist PRC and the collective experience of the victims, but they also permitted reexamination of the differences that separate the victims apart in term of the reasons for which they were persecuted, the pattern of their behaviors, their physical and psychological sufferings, their self-perception in exile, and the ways they treated their fellow exiles, etc. When I try to formulate generalization, these materials remind me that individual experiences of the exiles are always unique, and thus cannot easily be generalised.

(5) Official Sources

Lack of official documents is a limitation that confronts this research. Unlike the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government still speaks of the necessity of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, thus refused to condemn its oppressive nature. Consequently, the majority portion of official archives on this event and maltreatment of the rightists still remains closed to the public, to minimize public discussion and scholarly discourse in China. Only establishment historians of certain rank can have access to crucial parts of the Anti-rightist archives. What are made known to the public include the criteria against which the rightists were classified, the general guideline for treatment of the rightists, basic labor reform

17 Note that some valuable documents such as the central directives of the CCP are already disclosed and appended into research works on the Anti-Rightist topic published overseas. See, for instance, Hua Min, Zhongguo da nizhuan: fanyou yundong shi (China’s Great Reversal: A History of the Anti-Rightist Campaign) (New York: Ming-ching chubanshe, 1996). Scholars such as Frederick Teiwes and Roderick MacFarquhar have used numerous official documents for their research on purges in the PRC. However, official records about political outcasts in the frontier regions are still inaccessible for general researchers.
policies and regulations on labor reeducation of the ultra-rightists, etc., all of which are insufficient to understand how decisions regarding the treatment of various types of rightists were made, how the massive banishment was initiated and managed, and how the banished were treated at the grassroots. Exploration of official attitudes toward and evaluation of the banished rightists is also limited by lack of relevant sources. The still-living officials who managed the banishment in those years refuse to be interviewed, for various considerations. This situation is somewhat remedied by the publication of collections of some important Party documents such as Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian (Selected Collections of Important Documents since the Establishment of the PRC). Farm gazetteers produced by relevant labor farm authorities are of great value, but there are some obvious errors and they are selective in disclosing crucial statistics and events.\footnote{I will discuss the errors in the Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm and Gazetteer of Farm 850 in Chapter Four regarding the death record of the inmates.}

Lack of official documents is compounded by a distinctive technique of the CCP: some central decrees and directives were delivered by telephone message or in person from higher levels to lower levels, rather than in written documents. This practice enhances the difficulty of tracing the CCP's operation of its policies in general, and the policy around the 1957 campaign and the treatment of the persecuted in particular.\footnote{For instance, the evacuation of rightists from Beidahuang at the end of 1960 is not documented in any written official sources. According to journalist Zheng Xiaofeng, the instruction for the evacuation was delivered to the chief of the Beidahuang army farms directly by Premier of the State Council. Zheng Xiaofeng, interview.} Although this situation was in some degree remedied by memoirs and recollections of individuals who underwent the specific events, this insurmountable barrier presents a limitation to the degree of conviction of the thesis.

Paul Cohen, with his research on the Boxer uprising of 1900, raises valuable points on historical research and historical writing. For Cohen, reconstruction of history is not a true recovery of the past; the history a historian creates is fundamentally different from history people make; all historical writing entails radical simplification and compression of the past. Cohen believes that individual participants in "historical events" do not have the entire event inscribed in their
mind, and that the past reconstructed by direct participants has some emotional attachment so that it is hard to say it is totally reliable.\textsuperscript{20} Cohen's thesis is valuable in that it sheds light on the tension between the history that people make and the history that people write. His warning about the limitation of both the narratives of those with direct experience and the writings of historians is also useful for historical research.

Although not aiming to fit this research squarely into Cohen's framework, I feel it beneficial to take Cohen's view in approaching source materials collected. So far all the biographies, memoirs or short recollections used for this research with regards to the 1957 victims were produced after the early 1980s—more than twenty years after their banishment. Almost all of these works build upon their personal memory, since few diaries, notes or other written records of banishment have survived, especially through the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{21} When survivors of the frontier banishment reconstructed their past, what they tell almost solely relies on their memory, which is not free from "emotional attachment" and significant omission. Furthermore, I find in both memoirs and interview records that the narratives provided by individuals from a same work unit or a same labor camp could differ considerably. It is obvious that certain parts of their memory are not reliable.

The most striking distinction manifests itself in another dimension. Political exiles in the PRC period are sharply different from the Boxers that Paul Cohen addresses in terms of their educational background and their social status. They have not only direct experience of the past but they are also writers of history. Almost all literate, these political exiles when rehabilitated were capable of understanding the


\textsuperscript{21} Rightist Wu Yongliang admits that since his notes about Beidahuang composed right after the banishment were all burned during the Cultural Revolution, his memoirs (published in 2002) are entirely based on his recent recollection. See Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei: Beidahuang shenghuo jishi} (Floating Rain and Snow: True Stories of Life in the Great Northern Wilderness) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2002), 11-12. Among the biographies used for this thesis, only the self-criticism of Nie Gannu and the correspondence of Huang Miaozi were taken as references when their biographies were composed.
history of the campaign, and they had basic information on frontier banishment and its consequences. In the 1980s and 1990s when they told their individual stories, their narratives may not have been free from the influence of post-Mao social climates and current literatures. Fully aware of social expectation of them, it seems to me, some of them subconsciously insinuate into their narratives something that might help cultivate ideal images of themselves.²²

Even if rational calculation on the one hand and emotional attachment on the other might not override their honesty, questions must still be raised with regards to the ambiguity and inconsistency of the source materials they offered. Some like to tell how they were maltreated by labor camp/farm cadres, but avoid mentioning their collaboration with these cadres; some like to describe routine life rather than their real mentality in that time. It seems to me that there are some parts of their experience that they like to talk about, some parts they want to conceal, and some parts they want to exaggerate. Some portray themselves as courageous fighters for justice for which they were persecuted without mentioning other contributing reasons for their troubles; some want to show how they took against inhuman behavior in the labor camps while omitting their indifference to their fellows; some want to express their consistent commitment to socialism and the governing party even if they were persecuted for about twenty years. In not a few cases, what they portrayed about themselves is different from the impressions they gave to their fellow exiles. As well, when they do recall their feelings and psychology in the past years, it seems, some ideas of later years intrude into their descriptions, as seen in the use of standard language and framework of the 1980s to present their past mentalities.

Being alert to the possibility of simplified areas in their narratives, I pay special attention to crosschecking their narratives with other sources, in order to identify the extent to which their recollections might deviate from the past reality, and to filter out what is inconsistent in their narratives. Mutually conflicting narratives are carefully identified or simply left out; only narratives that meet these standards have

²² The memoirs of Ding Ling and Liu Meng, for instance, are subject to this questioning.
been adopted to substantiate arguments. Since personal interviews were mostly conducted after reviewing the memoirs or biographies, questions raised from these published resources were relatively easy to clarify.

I am fully aware that among the thousands of persecuted people who were forced to undergo varying degree of labor reform in Beidahuang, only a small portion of them have published their recollections or disclosed their past in various forms. What I have access to is merely a small portion of the experience of a large population. Validity and effectiveness of the thesis are subject to further test, and deeper treatment of Beidahuang exiles awaits further scholarship.

**Political exiles in Beidahuang: a general picture**

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the political offenders sent to Beidahuang could be roughly broken down into the following categories:

(1) The Beijing rightists in the army farms

With the conclusion of the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1958, thousand of rightists from various agencies of the central government and military units in Beijing, if merely labeled “rightists”, were sent to the army farms in Beidahuang under the name of “labor under supervision” (jianwu laodong). Although free from criminal charges, they were still deemed political antagonists. In Beidahuang, they worked in the same farms with demobilized soldiers and convicted criminals under the surveillance of demobilized military officers. The majority of them labored there for close to three years. The high death rate from starvation in 1960 propelled the central government to call them back to better areas of China.

(2) Counterrevolutionaries in the labor reform (laogai) camps of Xingkaihu

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23 “Counterrevolutionary” in the Maoist period was an ill-defined but all-embracing term. Defined entirely by the Party, this term was used to include various types of what were regarded by the government as politically subversive elements. In many cases, however, the difference between a criminal offense and a counterrevolutionary offense was not clear-cut. Criminal offenders whose offenses were deemed serious could also be classified as counterrevolutionaries with the “hats” like “counterrevolutionary murders” or “counterrevolutionary arsonists.” During most of the PRC period, “counterrevolutionaries” were broken down into “active counterrevolutionaries” and “historical counterrevolutionaries.” In order not to expand further the already unwieldy subject, I mainly consider “active counterrevolutionaries” that are more related to the Anti-Rightist politics but exclude “historical counterrevolutionaries.”
Many of those accused as "counterrevolutionaries" during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, if sentenced, were sent to Xingkaihu labor reform camps. These people were mainly young dissidents (university students, young teachers or government employees). The difference between them and most other rightists was that they had voiced sharp criticism against the abuses of the CCP and were advocates for intellectual independence and political renovation. As well, some of those who were at first labeled "rightists" and appealed for redress instead invited even more severe penalties and thus were elevated to the "counterrevolutionaries" status. Many of those rounded up in Beijing were sent to Xingkaihu, which is the focus of Chapter Three, but also to the Changshuihe, Yinhe and Wulan Farms in Heilongjiang and the Qinghe Farm in Tianjin as well.

(3) Ultra-rightists in the labor reeducation (laojiao) camps of Xingkaihu

The ultra-rightists were those at the top of the scale of rightists. They were considered to have committed serious offenses, and the punishment they received was harsher than that given to those who were sent to army farms, though less severe than those who were sent to labor reform camps. Although they were not formally tried and thus were not subject to a term-sentence because of the Party’s "leniency," they were still seen to be in need of discipline by the police authorities. Labor reeducation camps were thus the perfect places for them to go.

These three types of political outcasts made up most of the Anti-Rightist victims banished from Beijing to Beidahuang. In Beidahuang, they were used as agricultural laborers, lumber workers, construction workers, and so on; essentially they were slave laborers. Their banishment and enslavement coincided with the most serious famine (1959-1962) in modern China. Their food supplies were low, and their labor heavy; these were compounded with a lack of proper medical care. The death rate was high, in some camps up to 20-30 percent. Some of them suffered physical abuse and psychological abuse at the hands of the camp and army farm cadres. Discussions of hardship, hunger, death, physical abuse, escape, punishment and psychological suffering constitute a major part of the thesis. 24 Although I

24 This research primarily focuses on the frontier regions of Heilongjiang. To contextualize this
mainly focus on the Beidahuang border region, some of the findings may reflect the fate of the persecuted in the Mao-era PRC as a whole.

I will also discuss how the ways of thinking and behavior of the persecuted intellectuals were affected by CCP indoctrination. Under political pressure and propaganda, many persecuted people in various degree acknowledged that they did commit errors or crimes, that their criticisms of government officials were anti-Party in nature, and that they needed to take labor reform to wash out their evil thinking, to achieve political and ideological perfection, and to reach spiritual growth through the trials and tribulations. Therefore many made considerable efforts at the labor camps and army farms to show signs of repentance in order to redeem themselves.

Phony activism existed among banished intellectuals. In both army farms and Xingkaihu labor camp, some of the persecuted attacked others to build themselves up. They reported and denounced others politically and used trivial issues to make scathing attacks. Those who succeeded in building up good images were often appointed as group leaders, and were offered better foods, lighter jobs, entrusted to monitor others, and, in the case of labor reform camps, could enforce physical penalties upon others. Those regarded as being politically backward or with poor work performances not only suffered at the hands of camp cadres but also from these activists—their fellow inmates. In this sense, the victims of political persecution were also perpetrators. As a group, Chinese intellectuals were unable to develop collective consciousness in face of a repressive regime.

Different strategies of survival and different experiences also separated the political exiles. By and large, those with official or semi-official positions before banishment showed more enthusiasm than others in “labor reform,” thus were more likely to be released earlier than others; those unable to secure favorable treatment had to try every means to survive in the harsh environment while still cherishing hope for release sometime; young students who were apathetic about Communist research, however, some illuminating experiences of the persecuted individuals in other parts of Northeastern China are also put into analysis. I also occasionally discuss some labor camps in North China such as the Qinghe Farm, to which the inmates from the northeastern frontiers were transferred in the early 1960s.
policies or those who were sentenced for a relatively long term were more likely than others to write themselves off—resisting the labor reform arrangements, refusing to be submissive to camp cadres and thus inviting even worse treatment.

**Thesis Structure**

The thesis is structured as following:

Chapter One discusses the background of the banishment—the Anti-Rightist Campaign and various reasons for the mass labeling of rightists. I argue that although some intellectuals were labeled because of their criticism of the bureaucracy, hierarchy, and autocracy of the CCP government, or their advocacy for the redress of wrongs, the majority were persecuted actually because of factionalism, personal animosity, grudges, trivial issues, or even by mistake. Labeling quotas set by higher authorities also forced local Party branches to frame innocent people. I also suggest that although the campaign was launched by the CCP to deal with its real or imagined threats, it was also taken advantage of by intellectuals to attack their competitors.

The main focus of Chapter Two is the general experience of the Beijing rightists (those from central government and military organizations in Beijing) in Beidahuang army farms. Despite the title of “thought remolding through labor,” they were actually sheer forced laborers, and were not given much ideological indoctrination at farms. As well, despite hardship as general pattern, their experiences and suffering varied depending on their location. In some cases, personal connections with influential officials were important, and their former influence and professional expertise also made their lives easier.

Chapter Three presents an examination of the life experiences of two types of political offenders—the “counterrevolutionaries” and the “ultra-rightists”—in the Xingkaihu labor camps. I argue that the political offenders were the worst treated of all the inmates of the camps, and that young student prisoners were more courageous than others in showing disobedience to the camp authorities. I also examine the CCP practice of putting political offenders together with criminal offenders in labor
camps and mobilizing the criminals to help monitor and deal with the political offenders.

Descriptions of the physical suffering of the banished, such as hardship, starvation, death, physical abuse, and suicide constitute the major parts of Chapter Four. I also argue that dignity and integrity of the intellectuals was heavily damaged by the insurmountable difficulties. When intellectuals were driven by hunger and hardship, demoralized behavior such as lying, fighting and stealing inevitably became normal happenings in their daily lives, and greatly damaged their image as a lofty social elite.

Chapter Five tries to tap the inner world of the political exiles by tracing their psychological journey. It shows how the political exiles, especially the rightists in the army farms, identified with the Party’s ideology and were supportive of labor reform arrangement even though their were purged and banished. This chapter will also examine the internecine strife among Chinese intellectuals. In order to survive, to show their commitment to labor reform, and to be released earlier, some reported and denounced their fellow exiles, betrayed their friends, and tried hard to get rid of their rivals under the auspices of the authorities. Loss of conscience was tremendous and the trauma remained deep in later years.

Chapter Six discusses the completion of the political banishment to Beidahuang. In the early 1960s, the majority of Beijing rightists were allowed to leave the border areas. Many ultra-rightists in the labor reeducation camps of Xingkaihu were also transferred to central parts of China because of government concern over border security. Even though they were released from labor reform establishment, many labeled rightists were in later years still unable to resume their normal life, and they still suffered profound discrimination in society.

The main themes discussed in the Conclusion show how the Chinese Communist Party cruelly consumed its genuine followers, how the syndrome of “dog eats dog” unfolded in the PRC, and asks whether the Party achieved its goal by wielding their tool of banishment. It shows that many brilliant youths who ardently joined the Communist revolution or willingly followed the preaching of the Party
were successively purged by the Party. Through brief discussion of the "loyal dissidents" in the 1940s, the victims and perpetrators in 1957, and the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution, this chapter shows that these people were part of "a chain of prey." A hypothesis is made that those who were deeply involved in the development of Communism in China were eventually rendered its victims, and those who actively attacked others were eventually attacked.
Chapter One

The Anti-Rightist Campaign and Political Labeling

The frontier banishment of the politically suspect in the late 1950s was the direct result of a political campaign—the Anti-Rightist Campaign. During that campaign, sizable numbers of Chinese intellectuals, including writers, teachers, university students, as well as Communist Party officials and government employees were labeled “rightists,” or “counterrevolutionaries,” lost their jobs or were suspended from them, and were sent to labor camps. The campaign negatively impacted the fates of millions of Chinese, as the governing party seemingly achieved its agenda of state consolidation, the crushing of real or imagined forces of opposition, and the imposition of ideological conformity. Therefore, this examination of political banishment cannot start without making reference to the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957-8, the political background and the source of labeling and persecution. Although a full treatment of the campaign is beyond the scope of this project, I focus on three issues: Why the campaign? Who were the rightists? Why were they labeled?

Received perceptions of the rightists (those singled out for persecution by the CCP during the campaign), stress that they were labeled and then banished because they pursued intellectual independence and protested CCP control over intellectuals, that they criticized the government’s bureaucratic practices and abuse of power, that they demanded political and cultural reform and institutional changes, that they questioned the relevance of Mao Zedong thought to academia, and that they

25 Julia Strauss in her work “Paternalist Terror” explores the process and features of the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries in the early PRC. She argues that by unleashing terror upon political competitors and with the paternalist care for their followers, the CCP successfully met the challenges of the revolutionary regime consolidation. See Julia Strauss, “Paternalist Terror: the campaign to suppress counterrevolutionaries and regime consolidation in the People’s Republic of China, 1950-1953,” in Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 44, No.1 (January 2002), 80-105. The frontier banishment featured in this thesis has numerous differences with the campaign of 1950-1953. However, it bears striking similarities in terms of the state agenda achieved, such as eliminating political opponents, controlling social groups, and, ironically, consuming much of the revolutionary elite itself.
challenged the domination of CCP in literary and art spheres. Although recognizing 
that the chief motivation of the critics was to improve rather than to oppose the Party, 
Western scholars prefer to emphasize the political, ideological and literary stance of 
intellectuals as the main reasons for their persecution.26

These explanations are only applicable to a small portion of the persecuted, 
such as well-known student rightist Lin Xiling.27 For the vast majority, as this 
chapter reveals, political labeling was an unpredictable and random blow that hit 
them arbitrarily, a strike that was not caused by their political actions. Frederick 
Teiwes, in his monumental work Politics and Purges in China, argues that during 
the political campaigns of the early PRC period, sanctions meted out to individuals 
were based on the seriousness of their offenses.28 The findings of this research on 
the Anti-Rightist Campaign, however, are unable to verify his thesis. Teiwes also 
discusses the concepts of the rectification and campaign in Maoist China. His model 
was mainly based on his observation of the CCP high level elite purges during the 
1950-1965 period.29 This research, by analyzing the experience of victims during the 
Anti-Rightist Campaign, indicates that the political campaign, when extended to 
lower levels, was implemented in ways that were much different from that at higher 
levels.

The main argument of this chapter is that the majority of those labeled and 
banished were not political dissidents; many of the “critics” (such as Liu Binyan and 
Yue Daiyun) were loyal CCP members, and many others had no intention to be

26 Jonathan Spence, The Search for Modern China (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 
570-571; Merle Goldman, “The Party and the Intellectuals,” in Denis Twitchett and John Fairbank, 
eds., The Cambridge History of China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987),Vol. 14, 251-
253; R. David Arkush, “Introduction” and Hualing Nieh, “Preface” for Hualing Nieh, ed., Literature 
27 Lin Xinling’s criticism against the Party was much harsher than that of many other critics of the 
time. See Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Yuan shang cao: jiyi zhong de fan youpai yundong (Grass 
on the Plains: the Anti-Rightist Campaign in Memory) (Beijing: Jingji ribao chubanshe, 1998), 151-
158; Merle Goodman, Literary Dissent in Communist China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 
1967), 197, 201.
28 Frederick Teiwes, Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 
29 Ibid, Part II.
critics of the Party or to be involved in politics. While recognizing the fact that, on the one hand, some radical activists especially university students boldly condemned Party abuses and demanded political and intellectual independence, and that on the other hand, many adopted a stance of "loyal opponents"—criticizing the Party's errors in order to prolong its rule—I argue that the majority of intellectuals were persecuted not for political reasons but because of factionalism, personal animosity, grudges, jealousy, and a variety of trivial issues, or even by mistake. Labeling quotas set by higher authorities also forced local Party committees to frame innocent people. Consequently, the real practices of the campaign were to a great extent contradictory to the initial motives of high leaders. I also maintain that although the campaign was launched by the CCP to deal with real or imagined threats, it was also taken advantage of by intellectuals and officials to attack their rivals. These people helped to precipitate the massive persecution and banishment.

The Anti-Rightist Campaign

This campaign has been well examined by Western scholars such as Merle Goldman, Roderick MacFarquhar and Frederick Teiwes. Teiwes treats the campaign as a "defensive" measure to restore Party control, Goldman characterizes the campaign as a manifestation of the Party's "anti-intellectual stance," while MacFarquhar cites the campaign as an important step toward the Cultural Revolution. This chapter provides a short overview of the campaign merely to

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30 See Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), Chapter 1; Liu Binyan, *Liu Binyan zizhuan* (Autobiography of Liu Binyan) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban qiye youxian gongsi, 1989). Movies produced in the post-Mao era confirm the images of innocent people who were destroyed by political blows. For example, the literary characters Lin Shaolong in movie *Blue Kite* and "my father—Teacher Luo" in *My Father and Mother* were all ordinary men who were unpredictably involved in and victimized by the Anti-Rightist Campaign.

establish the basic context in which the political initiatives of the Party evolved into a disaster for the general public.

In early 1956, the CCP tried to win the cooperation of intellectuals to facilitate economic and social development. By raising the slogan “let a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend,” the CCP leadership, and especially Chairman Mao Zedong, promised to grant intellectuals degree of freedom to criticize, and to express their own opinions on questions in the arts, literature and science. This was the origin of the Hundred Flowers Movement. During the next spring, Mao went further to enlist intellectuals’ supports for a rectification of the CCP. Non-Party intellectuals were encouraged to criticize the bureaucracy and present differing views. With the encouragement of Mao, other leaders such as Zhou Enlai also expressed unprecedented trust from the CCP for intellectuals.

In the beginning, most intellectuals did not respond positively to Mao’s call for open criticism. Instead, they held back, out of caution; they were instinctively reluctant to involve themselves in politics and potential policy changes. Another reason that accounted for their silence was the conflicting signals that emerged from Beijing in the spring of 1957. As some scholars have noted, while Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai advocated rectification of the Party and an enlistment of different opinions, many other top leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Peng Zhen were rather

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33 For the general context of the CCP initiatives, see *Ibid*, 242-250. For other leaders’ positive echo of Mao, see Zhou Enlai, “The Report on Issues of Intellectuals”, January 14, 1956. Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (Selected Collections of Important Documents since the Establishment of the PRC) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1994), Vol. 8, 11-45. Mao’s real motives, although hard to fathom, have been interpreted by scholars and personnel close to him as having a wide range of considerations, from improving the bureaucracy to avoiding loss of revolutionary spirit, from preempting anti-Communist insurrection as had happened in Poland and Hungary to checking the rapid growth of power of his colleagues such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.
negative toward these initiatives. In these circumstances, many people preferred to remain aloof from Communist politics.

Unhappy with the slow response of intellectuals, Mao intensified his summons for critiques. In speeches delivered on March 12 and March 20, 1957, for instance, Mao made extraordinary efforts to call on “all people to express their opinions freely, so that they dare to speak, dare to criticize, and dare to debate”; “as long as they are not counterrevolutionaries, people should have the freedom to speak not only on pure scientific and artistic problems, but also on matters of a political nature in terms of right and wrong.”

Moved by Mao’s seeming sincerity and benevolent attitude, reassured by his promise to protect freedom of expression, and pressured by repeated encouragement from various Party organizations, intellectuals, professionals, students as well as some government employees finally began to speak out.

Leaders of the democratic parties (such as Zhang Bojun and Chu Anping) criticized the CCP’s monopoly of power, and demanded political independence and real participation in policy making. Writers (such as Ai Qing and Liu Shaotang) complained about the Party’s restraints on literary creativity, and questioned the relevance of Mao’s Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Arts. Scientists and university teachers (such as Qian Weichang and Fei Xiaotong) lodged criticism against the bureaucratic practices of Party cadres, the Party’s interference in academic and intellectual life, the imposition of ideological straight-jackets and the slavish following of the Soviet model. Many students condemned the privileges, hierarchy, abuse of power, alienation from massés, and economic corruption on the part of Party and government officials. Those who had wrongly suffered persecution in previous political campaigns demanded rehabilitation.

35 Teiwes, Politics and Purges in China, 166.
37 See Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Liuyue xue; jiyi zhong de fan youpai yundong (Snow in June: the Anti-Rightist Campaign in Memory) (Beijing: Jingji ribao chubanshe, 1998), 331-343; Niu and Deng, eds., Jingji lu, 154-158; The Cambridge History of China, Vol.14, 251-253. MacFarquhar in
believing his promises a sign of political thaw, the educated elite aired their grievances against the governing party.

Unprepared for the torrent of criticism, the CCP leadership found that the Hundred Flowers had gotten out of hand. Party leaders were shocked that criticism of the abuse of government officials and specific Party policies was leading to criticism not only of individual Party members but also of the Party itself. Even Mao became the target of sharp criticism. Strikes of industrial workers and student protests were also instigated in an increasingly politicized climate. The Party line shifted with the political winds and Mao, the chief architect of the “blooming and contending,” swung to the side of the hard liners after mid May. On June 8, the People’s Daily announced a counterattack, and the formal reversal of policy started. The Anti-Rightist Campaign was set in motion.

The major phase of the campaign lasted from June 1957 to the end of the year, although an additional round of “supplementary labeling” was added in 1958. This resulted in the purging and labeling of more than a half million Chinese intellectuals, government employees and other urban residents. Some had their “rightist” labels upgraded to “counterrevolutionary” due to their refusal to admit their “crimes” or

his Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals also documents these various criticisms.

38 Chu Anping, the newly appointed editor of Guangming Daily, made a criticism of Mao and Zhou with regard to the CCP’s monopoly of state leadership. See Dai Qing, Liang Suming, Wang Shiwei, Chu Anping (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1989), 236-238.

39 MacFarquhar believes that the Anti-Rightist Campaign reflected Mao’s personal anger and embarrassment over his major defeat in the Hundred Flowers. Facing sharp external criticism, MacFarquhar argues, Mao was compelled to agree with other leading figures Liu Shaoqi and Peng Zhen, who advocated severe sanction of critics, and was compelled to defend himself by articulating a plan of “letting the demons and hobgoblins come out of their lairs then we will be able to wipe them out better.” Mao had to justify his original “blooming and contending” plan in order to fix his credibility gaps. See MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Chapter 18; also see MacFarquhar, “The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao,” in The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: from the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward.

40 The People’s Daily editorial of June 8, “What is this for?” suddenly called for an attack on those who “wanted to employ the rectification campaign for waging class struggle.” This editorial, together with an inner-Party instruction by Mao, “Organizing Forces to Counterattack Rightists,” dramatically reversed the favorable political atmosphere built up by Mao’s former speeches, and indicated the Party’s decision for a formal counteract against its critics. See MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, 262; Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji, Vol. 5, 431-433.
The CCP called the targets of attack “bourgeois rightists” (zichanjieji youpai) or “rightists” (youpai); the terminology fluctuated. In English these labels might refer to a person who is a member of right wing political party or who has conservative ideas, thus being resistant to change or liberal reform. In the context of modern China, although the CCP frequently denounced the antagonistic forces against the Party as a “nationalist right wing” (guomindang youyi), or a “bourgeois rightist force” (zichanjieji youyi shili) at different stages of the Communist revolution, the term “right wing” has been mainly applied to those associated with “imperialist forces,” and those with background as urban capitalists and rural landlords, or those with strong anti-Communist stances.

During the campaign of 1957-1958, the term “bourgeois rightist” was used first in Mao’s article (restricted to inner-Party circulation) “Things are Going to Change” of May 15, 1957, in which he stated that 1 to 10 percent of non-Party intellectuals were rightists whose agenda was to get rid of the Party’s leadership. Afterwards, especially after June 8, in various anti-rightist onslaughts, whoever was believed to have questioned the correctness of the Party and socialism was branded a “rightist.” For example, Zhang Bojun was assigned a rightist “hat” for his criticism of the CCP’s monopoly of power, and young clerks who talked about deteriorating rural

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41 Official sources released by the Central Organization Department of the CCP indicate that the total number of labeled “rightists” is 552,877. See Hao Mengbi and Duan Haoran, Zhongguo gongchandang liushinian (Sixty Years of the CCP) (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1982), 491. Considering the fact, however, that official figures are strikingly inconsistent from 1958 to 1979, that the official calculation does not include rightists in high school students and former capitalists, and that significant numbers of people who were at first labeled rightists and later charged as “counterrevolutionaries” or criminal offenders were not counted into the rank of rightists, some Chinese scholars estimate that the number of the direct victims of the Anti-Rightist Campaign was over 650,000. See Hua Min, Zhongguo da nizhuan: fanyou yundongshi (China’s Great Reversal: A History of the Anti-Rightist Campaign) (New York: Ming-ching chubanshe, 1996), 148-149.


43 See Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji, Vol.1, 3-9; Vol. 2, 660-661; Vol. 4, 1182-1185. In the pre-communist period, Mao indicated the existence of “rightists” among Chinese intellectuals. According to Mao, intellectuals who did not entirely trust the Communist Party but favored American imperialism were “rightists in People’s China.” However, Mao also stated that “they were not GMD reactionaries, although there were great deal of reactionary and anti-people thoughts in their mind.” See Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji, Vol. 4, 1374.

The mandate to define "rightist" was officially retained by the CCP central leadership. Despite various charges launched against "rightists" by Mao, Liu, and others, the most comprehensive definition was announced in a speech of Deng Xiaoping, then General Secretary of the Party. In his "Report on the Rectification Movement" given at the third plenum of the eighth congress of the CCP, rightists were assessed the following features:

--- opposing socialist economic and political systems and socialist culture in favor of bourgeois ones;
--- opposing the government's basic policies;
--- denying the achievements of the people's democratic revolution, the socialist revolution and socialist construction, and
--- opposing the leadership of the Communist Party in government work, particularly in cultural, educational, scientific and technological organization.

This definition was published on September 23, three and half months after the campaign was launched. It was not until October 15 that the CCP center finally provided the criteria for the labeling of rightists. From early June to mid October, it was the leaders of local Party committees (or branches) or heads of work units who administered the campaign and decided who needed to be singled out, based on their understanding of the People's Daily and the anti-rightist rhetoric of the CCP leadership. In addition, although the Anti-Rightist campaign was seen as the most significant event of 1957, the sanctions against the rightists were never put into the legal code of China, and there is no evidence that CCP leaders tried to legalize their Anti-Rightist move.

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45 See Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Liuyue xue, 255-258; Liu Meng, Chuntian de yu qitian qing (The Whisking of Rain in Spring, the Clearing Skies in Autumn) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2003), 139.


47 On October 15, 1957, the Party Central Committee itself noted that since the start of the campaign, it was local Party committees that had made the criteria for the labeling of rightists. See Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed. Jianguo yilai zhongyaq wenxian xuanbian (Selected Collections of Important Documents since the Establishment of the PRC) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1994), Vol. 10, 613-614.
The Party center frequently referred the rightists as the proxies of Western imperialism and of the GMD (the Nationalist Party) reactionaries in Taiwan. Some Hundred Flowers critics (such as Long Yun and Chen Mingshu) were ex-GMD high officials or had been employed by the GMD government or foreign agencies. Work unit leaders, when labeling, always searched for possible links between their targets and these reactionary forces.

Actually during the earlier elimination campaigns most GMD supporters had already been sentenced to labor camps or executed. According to Mao Zedong, some 770,000 “counterrevolutionaries” were executed in campaigns before 1957. Those who actively spoke out were precisely those who had collaborated with the CCP in 1949 and had won its trust. Long Yun, for instance, was appointed by the PRC vice-chairman of the National Defense Council because of his cooperation with the Party in “liberating” Yunnan. Accusations against these collaborators with the Party for their lack of allegiance were often groundless.

The language used in the campaign was often caustic, rude and vile. The Party’s call for condemning “anti-Party anti-socialism” elements was taken by activists as empowering them to ruthlessly attack anyone they disliked. If a target tried to make a self-defense when facing arbitrary denunciations he/she would be accused of having a “poor attitude” (taidu buhao), and scorching condemnation would pour out to overwhelm the target. According to published sources, the language used in scolding rightists in the central bureaucracy, democratic parties, and institutions of higher learning included “careerist” (yexinjia), “double dealer.”

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49 Liu Naiyuan, a victim of the campaign, was labeled because he had once worked for an American news agency as a journalist before the Communist takeover, and thus was suspected of being an “American spy.” See Liu Naiyuan, Mirror: A Loss of Innocence in Mao’s China (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2001), 178-179.

(liangmianpai), “academic swindler” (xueshu pianzi), “cultural spy” (wenhua tewu), “rascal” (wulai), “venomous snake” (dushe), and “miser” (linsegui). Cartoons were also used for personal attacks. Because of her obstinate resistance to the criticisms against her, Zhang Hu, a journalist at the Beijing Daily, was portrayed in a cartoon as a wolf with a long tail.

Charged with “crimes” or “wrongdoings”, more than half a million intellectuals and other elite members were condemned harshly; the majority were removed from their jobs, driven out of the urban areas and herded into various labor camps. Human suffering was the direct result of the Anti-Rightist Campaign.

Images of the “Rightist”

Since the late 1950s two contrasting images of the rightists have emerged. The first one, which prevailed during the Maoist period, was mainly produced by official propaganda during the campaign and by officially sponsored literature afterwards. In these publications, rightists were portrayed as an evil force: they attacked the beloved CCP and socialism; they agitated to turn the masses against the Party leadership and sabotaged collectivization; they associated with the GMD in Taiwan and with American imperialists, and tried to drag China back into darkness and backwardness. They deserved heavy punishment. Starting from 1958, rightists began to be categorized as one of the “five black elements” (hei wu lei), right behind landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and bad elements, and thus were officially demonized. This image had a persuasive appeal among the general public, who for a long time were led to discriminate against the rightists, shunning them as a form of disease.

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51 Hu Ping, Chanji: kunan de jitan, 515-518.
52 Cong Weixi, Zouxiang hundun (Going towards Chaos) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 15.
53 See, for instance, Hu Ke, Huishu zhuang (Scholar Tree Village) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1963), 7-10, 54, 66.
54 See Liu Shaoqi’s speech on May 5, 1958, in Fang Jungui, ed., Liu Shaoqi wenti ziliao zhuanji, 297. Insulting and discriminating experiences of the rightists are disclosed in numerous resources. Chen Dengke recalls that a rightist normally couldn’t help but lower his/her head with deep embarrassment whenever coming across a friend or a neighbor after the campaign. See Zheng Xiaofeng, Ding Ling
After Mao died in 1976, another image surfaced, as a result of post-Mao political change and the subsequent rehabilitation of the rightists. The rightists have come to be regarded as figures who courageously condemned the abuses of the ruling party, who pursued political democracy, and sacrificed themselves for the good of the masses. While they experienced untold suffering in their motherland, they still loved the nation as its sons and daughters. In post-Mao literature and movies, such as *Tianyunshan chuanqi* (The Legend of Tianyun Mountain) directed by Lu Yanzhou, *Mumaren* (The Cowboy) directed by Zhang Xianliang and *Kulian* (Unrequited Love) written by Bai Hua, as well as in the reportage *Liang Shuming, Wang Shiwei, Chu Anping* by Dai Qing, rightists were portrayed as courageous, patriotic and having strong political and ideological commitment. They were the backbone of the nation, the true patriots.55

Upon close examination of the category rightists, it can be seen, firstly, that it is an extremely diverse group and thus defies treatment as a unitary group. Among the more than half a million who were labeled, leaders of democratic parties, scientists, writers, university professors and student activists accounted for between a fifth and a quarter of the total, while the majority were elementary and secondary school teachers, government employees, Party cadres, clerks, police officers and military personnel.56 They represented a cross-section of Chinese society. Although all of them were subjected to persecution during the campaign, not all were attacked for political reasons. Great variation distinguish this group in terms of their political allegiance, reasons for being labeled, and personal experience afterwards.

*Zai Beidahuang* (Ding Ling in the Great Northern Wilderness) (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1989), 78. When rightist Li Guowen was sent to a construction site in Shanxi, he was isolated from other workers except at work, and he had to have lunch by himself at a designated table where a placard was set up indicating “Reserved for the Rightist Li Guowen.” See Hu Ping, *Chanji: kunan de jitan*, 598. Yin Yi recalls that even though he completed his term at Beidahuang his colleagues and neighbors still avoided saying hello when meeting him. See Yin Yi, *Huishou canyang yi hanshan* (The Setting of the Sun over the Maintain) (Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2003), 104-105.

55 While movies *The Legend of Tianyun Mountain* and *Cowboy* were celebrated at the end of 1970s because of their motif as “patriotism,” *Unrequited Love* was officially criticized and banned in China due to its “anti-Party” undertones. For a positive portrait of Chinese rightists in 1957, see Dai Qing, “Chu Anping and the Party’s Rule,” in her *Liang Shuming, Wang Shiwei, Chu Anping*, 113-231.

Secondly, although sharp criticism of the CCP did emerge, and turned out to be the cause of the Party’s counterattack and national wide persecution, in truth the vast majority of the persecuted fell far short of being strong critics of the Party. They were either genuine followers of the Party or had little political interest or consciousness. During the Hundred Flowers, the sharp dissenting voices of the few over-shadowed the others, which gives the impression that the majority of those who did speak were political dissidents. As the following will show, most “rightists” were actually “accidental dissidents.” Many rightists were revolutionary cadres, devoted followers of the Communist regime, who firmly identified with the Party. Lu Gang, a former college head in Harbin, said: “I never meant to take a stand against the Communist Party. I joined the revolution when I was 16 years old even before the victory in the Anti-Japanese War, and I followed the Party step by step. How could I take a stand against our Party? I was just very outspoken, raising criticisms against some Party leaders.” 57

Many intellectuals, even though educated in the pre-communist period, were enthusiastic in their service of the nation under the leadership of the CCP. As described by Yue Daiyun of Peking University, young students in the early PRC period were very supportive of the Party. 58 Their sincere trust in the Party led them to have little hesitation to speak out about whatever they believed was good for the Party. With regard to their criticism, their real motive was to help Party’s rectification. With regard to their attitude toward socialism in 1950s China, many firmly supported public ownership rather than private ownership; what they opposed was the sham of the contemporary distribution system and the striking income differentiation between Communist cadres and the working class. 59

57 Lu Gang, interview.
58 Yue Daiyun, a female student and young teacher in Peking University in the early years of the PRC, recounts in her book why she, as well as many youths, became sincere supporters of the CCP. Dissatisfied with the GMD’s corruption and malfunctioning, Yue enthusiastically joined communist-led student movements and entered the Party at the age of eighteen. She optimistically envisioned “a new society based on complete equality, free of corruption” under the Party leadership, the conviction that set the basis for her political activism and full identification with the Party during the early period of the PRC. See Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman, To the Storm, 16-22.
59 Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Yuan shang cao, 167, 244.
Dai Huang’s letter to Mao during the Hundred Flowers bears testimony to this point. As a senior correspondent in the New China News Agency, Dai condemned the emergence of a “privileged class”, criticized Party corruption and the Party’s alienation from the masses, and reported the dissatisfaction of ordinary people. He even blamed the CCP’s Central Committee for widespread bureaucratic malpractice and corruption of the Party. In the same letter, he also swore his unswerving allegiance to the Party and repeated that “our Party is correct and our cause great.” His aim was to make the Party draw close to the masses, who had supported the Party during its quest for the national power.\(^6^0\)

This duality of criticism and allegiance is also the theme of a well-celebrated novel *Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*, in which novelist Wang Meng depicted an idealistic young cadre, named Lin Chen, who was committed to the Party’s policy but ran up against bureaucratic rigidity. While Wang Meng disclosed that the Party bureaucracy had become increasingly arrogant and lazy so that any form of reform seemed impossible, his main thesis was to exemplify the Party’s demand to improve revolutionary spirit.\(^6^1\)

There is no denying that some critics were bold enough to condemn the dictatorship of the Party and to call for a degree of democratic reform. Zhang Bojun loudly suggested that the National People’s Congress, the People’s Political Consultative Conference and the democratic parties should become the designers of China’s governing framework in the form of a political design institute, to share power with the CCP. (Mao later argued that Zhang was trying to “wipe out the Communist Party.”)\(^6^2\)

Some professors in Beijing suggested that Party committees withdraw from universities and warned the Party not to be too harsh towards intellectuals.\(^6^3\) With their unofficial journal *Guangchang* (Square) as a mouthpiece, Peking University

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62 Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., *Liuyue xue*, 257.
63 Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., *Yuan shang cao*, 108.
students spearheaded their sharp attack against the government, and loudly condemned the existing political system, especially the concentration of power in the Party. Some of them claimed that “Marxism has turned into its antithesis since 1895,” that “the bureaucratism, subjectivism and sectarianism have roots firmly placed in the existing social system,” and that “real democracy does not exist in current China...because of high political pressure and absolute subservience to leaders.”

Lin Xiling, a law student at the People’s University, claimed that China’s socialism was not real socialism, and that all Chinese were entitled to show their dissatisfaction with it. During the spring of 1957, some students even tried to form a new party as an opposition party to the CCP. Student Li Jiangxin at the Northeastern People’s University criticized the CCP for ruthlessly exploiting the working class and proclaimed his intention to establish the Socialist Labor Party of China, a proposal for which he was arrested.

It is obvious from such statements that these students had started to question Party doctrine, and to use their own judgment to assess the Party and Chinese social system. They advocated radical reform of the existing political system. In this sense they did challenge the legitimacy, credibility and orthodoxy of the CCP.

Sharp critics as they were, the majority of activists continued to endorse the Communist Party. In order to clarify his stance, Tan Tianrong, the “Number One Rightist” in Peking University, declared that “I don’t doubt Chairman Mao will back us up forever; I don’t doubt that the Communist Party will rid itself of black sheep for its own good, and I don’t doubt that Marxism will rid itself of dogmatism in the course of its development.”

Lin Xiling also claimed that “What we need is a real socialism; ... the Communists should be those who sincerely serve the people and strive for the Communist cause.” Their advocacy of political reform was not aimed at pushing the Party off the scene, but for strengthening the position of the Party.

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64 Ibid., 4-5, 9, 28.
65 Ibid., 153, 156.
66 Dongbei renda (The Northeastern People’s University Newsletter), October 21, 1957; Wang Shushen, interview.
67 Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Yuan shang cao, 57.
68 Ibid, 164.
In addition to student activists, many democratic party leaders who were some of the chief targets in 1957 were actually loyal dissidents. Some, such as Zhang Bojun, were early Communist members in the 1920s or, such as Luo Longji, were long-term collaborators of the CCP in fighting against the GMD government. Chu Anping was also a sincere believer in Mao and the CCP when the New China was established. While advocating the independence of the democratic parties, they sincerely strove to rectify the CCP. They treated bureaucratic malfunctioning and the abuse of government officials as cancers in the body of New China. As long as the tumors were removed, they believed, the Party and socialism would be restored to their glory. Their criticism aimed to make the communist political system perfect.

Given their basic political stance, the CCP greatly exaggerated the threat these “critics” posed. Although the ferment they instigated in China’s political arena and its impact on high politics was tremendous, the number of democratic party leaders and student activists was tiny in relation to the whole population. From April to June 1957, the number of people who were reported by the media in Beijing as having aired their criticism was less than three hundred. In the provinces, figures were even lower. On June 29, 1957, Mao estimated that there were probably 4,000 rightists across the country that had to be condemned publicly. What was threatening to the governing party was the compounding effect that they planted in the minds of high leaders rather than their real numbers.

With the Anti-Rightist Campaign gathering strength and the CCP leadership overestimating the threat the rightists posed, the number of people to be singled out escalated. By early October 1957, around 62,000 had been labeled, and the CCP center estimated that 150,000 rightists would be finally found through the course of the campaign. On April 6, 1958, Mao updated his estimate of rightist numbers to 300,000. In September 1959, the Central Committee of the CCP disclosed that

71 Bo Yibo, Ruogan zongda juece yu shijian de huigu (Recollections on Several Important Policies and Events) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1991), Vol. 2, 149.
450,000 had ultimately been seized. The dramatic increase in rightists being labeled suggests that a sizable number of people who might not necessarily have been critics were netted, given the rapid development of the campaign, many for reasons that were quite different from the apparent ones. Due to the heated atmosphere generated by the campaign, political persecution spilled over beyond the initially designed targets to the broader population.

As mentioned above, at the beginning of the campaign in June 1957, the CCP central leadership had yet to envisage a unitary criterion with which to brand rightists. It was not until October 15 that the Anti-Rightist drive in national and provincial organizations, and institutions of higher learning was so close to completion that the center issued its *Criteria for Labelling Rightists*. According to this document, those who “oppose the socialist system and basic socio-economic policies of the Party and government,” who “oppose proletarian dictatorship, attack the foreign policies of the government, and attack the movement of liquidation of the counterrevolutionaries,” who “take a stand against the Party leadership in nation’s political life, viciously attack organizations and personnel of the Party and government, defame worker and peasant cadres and revolutionary activists,” who “instigate the masses to take a stand against the Party and the government,” and who “participate in anti-Party, anti-socialist clique”—all had to be labeled rightists.

As extensive as these criteria are, the guidelines to judge one’s political stance were actually blurred, and thus subject to manipulation. While the Center might seriously target those who were potentially threatening, the labelers at lower levels could fabricate political pretexts for their own reasons. As will be shown in this chapter, political principles were manipulated as a means to meet various instrumental purposes. Under the guise of political necessity, as claimed by labelers, the real reasons for one’s persecution could in fact be multiple. As well, in the

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process of labeling, practical reasons were often more fundamental than political ones, as noted by Keith Foster in his work on Zhejiang.\textsuperscript{74} Factionalism and group conflicts stretching back decades, personal dislikes and grudges from past campaigns, old love affairs, professional jealousy, labeling quota, all played a role in the persecution of people, all had a part in the growing viciousness of Anti-Rightist Campaign.

**Reasons for Labeling**

Frederick Teiwes argues the existence of a mechanical struggle in post-1949 China that raises minor questions of a practical nature to the level of principle. "In this form of struggle the goal of ideological reform is cast aside; rectifying mistakes degenerates into attacks on individuals. Personal grievances and factional differences come to the fore and instead of strengthening the party unity such struggles deepen already existing rifts."\textsuperscript{75} This research tests Teiwes's thesis in the context of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. As well, it will consider why so many Chinese were labeled and victimized.

(1) **Factionalism and Personal Discord**

Factionalism was one of the most common reasons for which a considerable number of Party cadres, "red" writers, and even senior revolutionaries fell into disgrace. In the Maoist period, factional struggles were widespread both at high leadership and at local level.\textsuperscript{76} During the Anti-Rightist Campaign, factional feuds

\textsuperscript{74} Keith Foster in his *Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province* provides an excellent study of exactly this abuse in Zhejiang local politics, although in a different time period. Forster suggests that for competing political forces in Zhejiang during the Cultural Revolution, pragmatic considerations to a great extent overran the political line. "The claim that callow youth and hard-boiled workers beat, tortured and killed each other over an issue as seemingly remote from their daily terms of reference as the loyalty of political leaders to an ill-defined "revolutionary line" of Chairman Mao may detach political action from its social basis." See Keith Foster, *Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province: Zhejiang, 1966-1976* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 6-7.

\textsuperscript{75} Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China*, 22.

\textsuperscript{76} See *Ibid*, Chapter 5. Forster in *Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province*, too, has discussed how the pervasive factional divisions within both Party bureaucracy and Red Guard organizations featured the provincial politics of Zhejiang and gave rise to ceaseless chaos during the Cultural Revolution.
made political struggles extremely intense. For example, the cultural director of the PLA’s (The People’s Liberation Army) General Political Department Chen Yi was charged as a rightist because of his long-term feuds with his colleagues, and then was sent to Heilongjiang for labor reform.  

Factional struggles were well known in the left-wing literary circles under the Communist influence. Since the 1930s, Chinese left-wing writers had split into two groups based on their alignment with Lu Xun or Zhou Yang (literary watchdog of the CCP). In the early 1950s, while discord continued, the purging of significant number of writers and artists were more or less related to such factional divisions and conflicts in the upper echelon of the cultural bureaucracy, particularly in the cases of Hu Feng and Ding Ling.

The experience of Ding Ling, a prestigious left-wing writer since the 1930s, illustrates how a “red” writer could be violently victimized by factional struggle within the cultural bureaucracy. It was not her criticisms in the Hundred Flowers period, but rather her long-standing discord with Zhou Yang that sealed her fate. As early as 1955, she was internally condemned for an alleged “Ding Ling–Chen Qixia Anti-Party Group.” When the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP was about to redress her case in 1957, the anti-rightist struggle began, in which Zhou Yang persistently questioned her party loyalty. Without a single word of criticism over current political issues, Ding Ling was labeled a rightist and was deprived of her Party membership of twenty-five years standing. For Ding Ling and Zhou Yang, as


78 Hu Feng was persecuted in 1955. Although it is said his argument against the CCP’s literary policy, which forced writers to immerse themselves solely in the life of workers, peasants and soldiers and to study Marxism-Leninism before they could write, infuriated Mao and thus caused his arrest, his poor relations with major literary officials (especially Zhou Yang) to a large extent contributed to his downfall. See Denis Twitchett and John Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 14, 240-241; Dai Guangzhong, *Hu Feng zhuo* (Biography of Hu Feng) (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1994), 94-107; Li Hui, *Lishi beige: Hu Feng Jituan yuan`an shimo* (Elegies in History: the Wrong Case of the “Hu Feng Clique”) (Hong Kong: Xiangjiang chuban youxian gongsi, 1989), 15-19.

79 Although Ding Ling and her husband Chen Ming insisted that divergence in literary lines remained the main cause of conflict between Ding on the one side and Zhou Yang and his henchmen on the other, many believe that personal animosity between Ding and Zhou remained the root cause. The
many other rivals, historically rooted tensions provided the grist for renewed trouble, to the benefit of those who enjoyed more power.

The victims in Ding Ling’s case were far more numerous than Ding herself. During the campaign, most of those formerly associated with Ding Ling—Ai Qing, Lo Feng, and Bai Lang were also subjected to attack. Feng Xuefeng, another of Zhou Yang’s rivals who had said little during the Hundred Flowers episode, was also given a rightist label on the grounds that he was trying to establish an anti-Party magazine. Almost all of the purges of senior left-wing writers in 1957 were related to factional struggle.80

A prominent feature of factionalism, not limited to literary circles, was that antagonists made use of every means to attack their rivals under the guise of “divergence in principles.” “Historical problems” such as family background or association with the former GMD government also provided perfect excuses. Charges against Ding Ling were partially based on her arrest by the GMD government in 1933 and her inability to provide solid evidence for her allegiance to the Party during that period. Charges against Zhejiang provincial governor Sha Wenhan and his three associates were based on the fact that they all came from non-

animosity dated back to the period of Yanan rectification in the 1940s and the Yanan Literary Anti-Japanese Association. In the early 1950s, Ding Ling showed increasing disapproval of Zhou Yang as the boss of China’s literary world (Zhou was then the president of Writer’s Union of China and the deputy director of Central Propaganda Department of CCP), to the extent that she even did not try to conceal her personal distaste toward him in public. Ding’s criticism against the “paternalist authority” of Party cadres over writers was believed to allude to Zhou Yang, while Zhou Yang accused the Literary Gazette Ding was in charge of being an “independent kingdom,” where Party leadership was unable to exert influence. Ding’s increasing hostility toward Zhou and her unwillingness to come to terms with him prompted Zhou’s decision to bring Ding down. Efforts were made in 1955 to collect proof of Ding’s history. Ding’s relationship with a deserter from the CCP and her early imprisonment by the GMD were made use of to accuse Ding of being a turncoat. Although the effort failed because of disapproval of the Central Propaganda Department and Zhou was forced to apologize during the Hundred Flowers period, the Anti-Rightist Campaign provided another opportunity for him. In July 1957, when the CCP waged its open counterattack against those who criticized it, Zhou Yang and his associate Lin Mohan renewed their attack on Ding, accusing her of being a member of an “anti-party group.” In January 1958, Ding Ling was eventually labeled an anti-Party element and rightist. See Zhou Liangpei, Ding Ling Zhuan (Biography of Ding Ling) (Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1993), 72-78; Ding Ling, Fengxue renjian (The Blizzard World) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987), 121. Chen Ming, interview (August 19, 2003).

80 Denis Twitchett and John Fairbank, eds., The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 14, 255-256; Li Xin, interview.
proletarian families and were thus believed to have been significantly influenced by bourgeois ideology.  

From the cases cited above, it is obvious that the CCP’s drive to silence different voices during the Anti-Rightist Campaign was reinforced by intense factional struggles within the targeted group. As well, even when facing persecution, some targets, such as the democratic parties leaders, proved unwilling to stop internal feuds, which exacerbated their misery. When Zhang Bojun and Luo Longji, two chief leaders of the China Democratic League, were accused by Mao of heading the “Zhang Luo anti-Party coalition”, they still continued fighting each other and discrediting each other, as other leaders of the League joined the chorus of accusations.  

(2) Fabrication and Framing

Teiwes notes that in the CCP’s political campaigns, the basic approach to deal with individuals at the elite level “has been selective and surgical rather than arbitrary,” that the “rectification movements prior to the Cultural Revolution were generally under strict Party control with targets carefully chosen, models of deviant behavior widely propagated, and sanctions meted out according to the seriousness of offenses.” Stressing the rationality of the Communist campaign, Teiwes’ thesis might be valid at the highest levels of the Party. At local levels and for ordinary individuals, however, measures and approaches used in the campaigns, at least during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, were rather arbitrary, unreasonable, and far more complex than Teiwes suggests. Cases repeatedly demonstrate that people were charged for wrongdoings that they never committed or for criticisms that they never made so that labelers were able to meet designated political needs.

Ge Peiqi, widely known for his threat to “kill the Communists,” was a university teacher in Beijing. During the Hundred Flowers, he was repeatedly urged

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81 Zhou Liangpei, Ding Ling zhuoan, 46; for information about Sha Wenhan, see Hu Ping, Chanji: kunan de jitan, 427.
82 Hu Ping, Chanji: kunan de jitan, 369-383; MacFarquhar, Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals, 263-264.
to speak up to contribute to the rectification of the Party. According to his memoir, what he argued at a meeting was that non-professional cadres were incapable of managing universities, that the Party should not look down upon intellectuals, and that Party members and cadres should not disassociate themselves from the masses, or seek personal privileges. When printed in an internal circulation memo at the university, parts of his speech were misquoted, having him argue: “do not distrust our intellectuals; if the CCP runs China well, that is ok; if not, the masses are entitled to get rid of the Party; they have right to kill Communists, which does not mean they are not patriotic, because the CCP does not serve the people well.”

When Ge found that his words had been tampered with, he immediately requested the authorities of the university to correct the mistakes. Nothing was done, however, until June 8 when his distorted speech was published in the People’s Daily, together with an editorial comment “Ge Peiqi airing his anti-Communist declaration.” The revised version of Ge’s statement went further to suggest that “the masses have always wished to overthrow the CCP and to kill Communist Party members; if you communists refuse to correct your wrongdoings or continue your corruption, you will meet your doom.”

Even though Ge realized the enormity of the issue and wrote to the newspaper asking for clarification, no correction was made. Instead, a torrent of denunciations appeared in the newspaper. Based on the fabricated evidence, Ge was labeled an ultra-rightist and, soon after that, was delivered a life sentence for “counterrevolutionary crimes”. Consequently, Ge spent 19 years in the prisons of Beijing and Shanxi.

Another case of frame-up is that of the playwright Wu Zuguang. Wu and several friends, on the basis of common interest, formed a literary and artistic club, which met regularly for the enjoyment of poetry, drama, calligraphy, and painting. When the Anti-Rightist Campaign began, this group was attacked as a “small counterrevolutionary clique.” Wu and most members of the club were labeled as

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85 Ibid, 139; Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Liuyue xue, 305.
86 Ge Peiqi, Ge Peiqi huiyilu, 151-162; Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Liuyue xue, 314-319.
rightists. None of them was given a chance to explain what the club really was.\textsuperscript{87}

Ge Peiqi and Wu Zuguang were undoubtedly not the only victims of fabrication. Due to the need to foster an anti-rightist climate, individuals had to be sacrificed, even though the authorities were aware of the mistakes. In Ge's case, although the process of manipulation had thus far not been disclosed, it is not presumptuous to say that with politics in command, Ge's employer, the People's University, and the \textit{People's Daily} closely collaborated to fabricate Ge's case to enliven the campaign, even though they were aware that Ge was misrepresented.

Occasionally, the CCP center publicly announced that it did not want to see the campaign misdirected. On October 15, 1957, it instructed provincial authorities to avoid producing wrong cases during labeling. In the meantime, however, it also stated that

\textit{In the units where labeling was overdone and correction is needed, the enthusiasm and commitment of the masses and activists must be protected. There is no need to publicly announce the mistakes. Avoid the wrong impression that Anti-Rightist struggle is excessive.}\textsuperscript{88}

The undertone of this instruction was probably perceived by leaders of various Party organizations. Lu Gang, a victim of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, confirms that in 1957-8 there seemed to be a consensus among Party organizations and perhaps all political activists: that the campaign was initiated by Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee; and that it was a significant event. Even though individuals might be treated unfairly, there was no need to make major rectification for the sake of protecting revolutionary zeal of the activists.\textsuperscript{89}

When discussing the coercive disciplinary measures used in the political campaigns of pre-Cultural Revolution China, Teiwes argues that “In cases where cadres persist in deviant behavior despite repeated educational efforts, the most

\textsuperscript{87} Li Hui, \textit{Ren zai xuanwo: Huang Miaozi yu Yu Feng} (People in the Eddy: Huang Miaozi and Yu Feng) (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 1998), 270.


\textsuperscript{89} Lu Gang, interview.
severe disciplinary measure of expulsion is invoked. Thus the purge is regarded as an extreme action taken only when rectification fails. Findings from the Anti-Rightist Campaign show a sharp contrast with the Teiwes thesis, at least at local and work-unit levels. A lack of educational efforts and the intent to verify basic facts meant that the purges were meted out with extreme arbitrariness in order to satisfy a political agenda.

(3) Attacks for questioning previous political campaigns and asking for redress

All too often, people were persecuted because of their request for the redress of past wrongs. Those who demanded redress for Hu Feng's case were particularly prone to attack. After delivering to Mao a letter that attacked the contemporary cultural authorities and criticized the CCP literary guidelines, Hu Feng was subjected to a nation-wide criticism campaign and was arrested in 1955. In the spring of 1957, numbers of young students advocated for the redress of his case and for his rehabilitation. The prominent student Lin Xiling argued that "Hu Feng's opinion about literature is correct," and that "the grounds to accuse him as an counterrevolutionary are ridiculous." Lin's persecution afterward was tightly connected with her defense of Hu. Liu Qidi, a physics student in Peking University, put up a wall poster in the university square. That poster argued that Hu was a progressive writer rather than a counterrevolutionary, and that the charges and the arrest of Hu were illegal. He loudly called for the immediate release of Hu. Liu's call won a warm response among university students across the country. While Hu Feng's case was never redressed, Liu himself was charged as a counterrevolutionary, was sent to prison camps, and died before completing his fifteen-year sentence. Lin and Liu were not alone in their suffering.

90 Teiwes, Politics and Purges in China, 9-10.
91 See Lin Xiling, "The First Speech in Peking University," May 23, 1957, in Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds, Yuan shang cao, 151-152; also see Goldman, Literary Dissident in Communist China, 197.
92 Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Yuan shang cao, 113-114.
93 Zhang Xiaofeng, "Hu Feng anjian yu youpai xuesheng" (Hu Feng's Case and Student Rightists). Unpublished paper. Sources regarding the persecution of Liu Qidi come from Chen Fengxiao interview.
Closely related to Hu Feng’s case was the demand for rectification of the Elimination of Counterrevolutionaries Campaign. In the summer of 1955, the CCP central committee estimated that approximately 5% of personnel in existing organs of the Party, state, military, enterprises and schools were “hidden counterrevolutionaries who were trying to sabotage socialism from within.” Thus, the center demanded a nation-wide Elimination of Counterrevolutionaries Campaign. When the campaign was concluded in July 1957, 1.4 million Chinese had gone through interrogation, 81,000 were labeled counterrevolutionaries and 3,800 were labeled active counterrevolutionaries and put into prison. Countless numbers of innocent people suffered under false accusations and physical abuse; some were mistakenly executed. In 1957, aware of the devastating consequences of the campaign, many intellectuals and leaders of the democratic parties asked for rectification of the abuses of 1955, which resulted in their own labeling when the anti-rightist drive got started. Luo Longji, a vice Chairman of China’s Democratic League, was designated a top rightist for his ardent calls for the establishment of a rehabilitation committee to redress the 1955 victims.

Party cadres also suffered from their demands for the redress of wrongful cases. Li Xin, an associate Party secretary of the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP, recounted the reasons for his labeling:

I complained about the serious consequences of the elimination of the counterrevolutionaries campaign in 1955, and I did not agree with the practice of labeling Hu Feng and his friends Su Qun and Luo Feng as anti-Party elements, all of which irritated my direct boss. Consequently, I was

94 See Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., Jianguoyilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian, Vol. 7, 134-148; People’s Daily, July 18, 1957. Wrongful cases were so rampant that even Luo Ruiqing, then Minister of Public Security in charge of the campaign, openly acknowledged that during the campaign “mistakes and maltreatment occurred... when some innocent people were arrested; in some organs and work units, some of those who should not be put under attack were attacked.” See Zhu Zheng, 1957 nian de xiaji: cong baijia zhengming dao liangjia zhengming (The Summer of 1957: from Hundred Schools of Thought Contending to Two Schools of Thought Contending) (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 258.

degraded to a minor post in Hubei Province during the campaign. The next year, I was deprived of Party membership and labeled a rightist. The irony was that when the campaign got started, I was a member of a special Anti-Rightist committee in my unit, while at the end I myself became a rightist.96

At the grassroots levels, many suffered from their demands for redress of wrongful cases involving their families, their friends and even themselves. Hongda Harry Wu complained about his elder brother’s treatment during the campaign, and Liu Meng for his own experience in 1955, which became important reasons for their labeling in 1957.97

(4) Attacks for criticizing individual Party members

In many cases, denunciation and labeling occurred when individuals were accused of “disregarding the Party organization,” “defying the Party leadership,” or “oral abuse of Party members and activists.” Careful analysis of these accusations reveals that almost all those charged were actually those who disregarded, defied, or attacked the Party secretaries or Party members of their work units. For critics in the Hundred Flowers, accusations against individual Communists were very likely to be seen as anti-Party actions, which caused the Party to launch a counterattack. It was assumed that taking a stand against any individual Party member or Party leader was equivalent to taking a stand against the Party organization, and thus opposing the Party as whole.98 The story of journalist Yin Jiliang exemplifies this excess.

In 1955, I criticized one of my colleagues (a Party member) for his philistine taste, for which I was investigated quite a bit. The result showed that I was innocent, therefore my life turned back to normal. In the Hundred Flowers period, I was trying to be an activist to show my political commitment. So I sharply criticized the abuse of power by the Party secretary of my work unit, which greatly irritated him. When the Anti-Rightist Campaign began, I was immediately labeled by him. While

96 Li Xin, interview.
I complained that this was his revenge against me, he said that this was defense of the Party branch. My repeated petitions brought no favorable results. The more I appealed, the worse things became. Eventually I was labeled an active-counterrevolutionary in November 1957. That secretary hated me to the bones. 99

The experience of Yan Xueli, a middle school teacher in Liaoning, also confirms this observation:

Two issues that I addressed sent me to labor reform. One was my discussion of the Hungarian Incident. 100 I said in a school political study session that it was the wrongdoings of Hungarian Communists that caused the riots in the country rather than the influence of foreign imperialism. But the main reason was that, I believe, I had a terrible experience with a member of the Party branch in my school, the person who was in a strong position to label [rightists]. Taking a stand against him was synonymous to opposing the Party branch. Furthermore, due to my consistent refusal to acknowledge this charge, I was labeled ultra-rightist in the end. 101

Discord between political leaders and professional leaders in a work unit often took on a political hue. When a non-Party leader defied the intervention of a Party leader over work plans or the appointment of employees, for instance, an accusation of “taking a stand against the Party’s leadership” would likely be made. He Shanzhou, the head of the Chinese Literature Department of Northeastern Normal University, was branded a rightist mainly because he disagreed with the Party secretary over hiring teachers; his action was seen by Party officials as a political offence. 102

99 Yin Jiliang, interview.
100 As a result of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinism, anti-Soviet riots broke out in Boznan and Hungary in 1956. In Hungary, students and intellectuals expressed deep dissatisfaction with the ruling Hungarian Stalinists, and, on October 23, staged a massive demonstration in Budapest demanding the removal of Soviet forces and asking for democratic reform. These efforts were eventually crushed by the Soviet Union and understood by the CCP as counterrevolutionary rebellions mobilized by imperialist and anti-Communist forces. See MacFarquhar, Cheek and Yu, eds., Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao, 8-9; Liu Shaoqi, “The Report on the Second Plenum of the Eighth Congress of the CCP,” in Fang Jungui, ed., Liu Shaoqi wenzi ziliao zhuanyi, 295.
101 Yan Xueli, interview.
102 He Shanzhou, interview.
Jealousy, petty resentment and poor inter-personal relationships as reasons for political labeling

Tani Barlow, in discussing Ding Ling’s involvement in Communist politics, reflects that antagonisms between people were often “not really ideologically motivated, that had in many cases developed on the basis of jealousy or personal dislike.”

This issue is too extensive to discuss in detail, but a couple of examples show the pattern by which the personal became political in Maoist China.

He Ying was condemned for rising too quickly and eclipsing co-workers:

When I became a rightist, I was only nineteen years old. Before that, I was the youngest editor in a literary journal in Changchun, Jilin Province. I was very famous in the literary sphere of the city, I got higher pay than many of my contemporaries, and I became the focus of public attention. So sometimes I was overconfident and arrogant. Many of my colleagues were jealous of me and liked to see me brought down. I said nothing about politics during the Hundred Flowers, but they put the Party secretary up to label me, and they finally succeeded.

The story told by student rightist Yin Jie in Liaoning is strikingly similar to He Ying’s:

When I was studying at college, I got a higher allowance than many of my fellow students because I was a cadre student (i.e., who joined in the revolution before going to school). I got paid RMB 62 yuan monthly and led a better life than many. In addition, I was not studying hard but always got good marks. Therefore I became a target of jealousy. When the campaign came up, some urged the head of my department to label me.

These examples might emphasize the role of jealousy and personal grudges in political labeling while intentionally downplaying other factors. The interviewees might also be unable or unwilling to recollect all the factors for their labeling. However, since the late 1970s, the political and social climate has been conducive
for them to discuss any elements, including political ones, that affected their fortune. Many interviewees are outspoken in detailing those painful years, and they readily admit that both political and other elements contributed to their purge. It is unlikely, therefore, that interviewees only provided inter-person elements at the exclusion of all others. Personal grudges did play a part in political persecution, and at times an important one.

During the Anti-Rightist Campaign, there was a sharp divergence between the rhetoric and claimed aims of the high leadership on the one side and the personal impulses behind them on the other, both at the top and at local levels. While high leaders tried to liquidate anti-Party anti-socialist forces, those singled out for purge could also be the victims of street level fighting.

(6) Labeling as a means to meet assigned quotas

The movie *My Father and Mother* (Wode fuqin muqin) by Zhang Yimou tells a sad story. In an elementary school set in a mountain region, a young teacher is asked by the principal to fulfill the one space on the labeling quota set for the school, and thus suffers for life. A similar experience is also dramatized in *The Blue Kite* (Lan fengzheng) by Tian Zhuangzhuang. These stories typify the experience of the political campaigns in the PRC, and are invaluable art that reflects the life of the Chinese masses.

During the Anti-Rightist Campaign, as in other political campaigns, the CCP arbitrarily established labeling quotas. In September 1957, as the campaign continued, Mao estimated that “those who uphold socialism approximately account for 90% of the whole population while those who take a stand against socialism account for 10%, among which the die-hard elements account for 2%.”

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106 *My Father and Mother* was produced by the Guangxi Movie Studio, 1999 and *The Blue Kite* by the Beijing Movie Studio, 1992. In *The Blue Kite*, the boss of Lin Shaolong tried to search for more rightists in his work unit, thus held a political meeting in which participants were reluctant to openly point the finger at their colleagues. When Lin Shaolong came back to the meeting from the bathroom, he found out that he had been labeled rightist.

was in accordance with the CCP’s long-established norm that among the whole population less 10% were enemies. Although this talk of Mao’s might not be treated as a compulsory guideline, its idea was reflected in Mao’s other speeches and Party’s directives. For instance, in May 15, Mao formally announced that the proportion of rightists might vary, ranging from one, three, five to ten percent in different work units, and on June 10 the Party Central Committee provided a working example, stating that “in the Democratic League, the proportion of rightists and reactionaries is relatively larger, accounting for around 10% of the whole.”

These documents, although not restricting the labeling quota to 10%, virtually functioned as a requirement during the campaign, as many local Party leaders bore this 10% number in mind. Labeling quotas set by the various Party organizations normally ranged from 5 to 10% while their implementation depended on the activism of Party secretaries or heads of work units. Each work unit, including university, middle school, professional association, academic institution and government agency had to single out a certain number of their employees as rightists, as dramatized in the two movies mentioned above, whether the suspects spoke out during the Hundred Flowers episode or not. Where local enthusiasm and official commitment was high, more than 10% were often labeled. While in Shanghai, 8.5% of university teachers were labeled rightists, in Beijing the numbers were more than 13%.

Since quotas needed to be filled in each relevant unit, mislabeling frequently occurred as Party secretaries and/or heads of work units had to find scapegoats. Otherwise they themselves were at risk of being labeled with rightist tendencies. Consequently, a large number of innocent people who had little involvement in political discussion but merely made casual remarks became victims of this malpractice.

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110 Hua Min, Zhongguo da nizhuan, 149-150.
111 Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 112.
Ye Songtao, a doctor who died in the late 1970s in Dandong, Liaoning, was one of many victims. His story was told by his colleague Wang Zhiliang.

Ye was a medical graduate, who was assigned from Shanghai to our hospital...... When he came back from his vacation in the late summer of 1957, the anti-rightist campaign was almost over. The leaders of our hospital had already decided who were to be rightists except for one rightist space that was still to be filled ... Ye as well as everyone else was asked to say something in a political session to condemn rightist Zhang. “Comrade Zhang,” Ye said, “I thought you were a good guy before. How could you come to take a stand against the Party?” Right at this moment, the chairperson of the session, the Party branch secretary, declared the conclusion of the meeting. An announcement was made very quickly: Ye was designated a rightist because first he called Zhang “comrade’, and second, he said Zhang was a good person before. By doing so, that rightist space was filled. Ye was instantly deprived of his doctor’s position, and down graded to be a sanitation worker.\(^\text{112}\)

In some cases, heads of work units preferred to over-fill the quota to show their dedication to the campaign, a phenomenon described by Teiwes as “excesses” in rectification campaign.\(^\text{113}\) Several example of this are: while in the Harbin Foreign Language Institute, 11% of teachers and students were labeled, the heads of the Ministry of Judiciary singled out 16% of their employees, and rightists in New China News Agency accounted for around 18% of its journalists and news editors.\(^\text{114}\) When the CCP center suggested that ultra-rightists should comprise 20-25% of all rightists, the leaders of universities in Beijing seized 4874 ultra-rightists, accounting for 23% of all the rightists there.\(^\text{115}\)

For Mr. Lu Gang, a senior Party official in a college in Harbin, one of plausible reasons for his designation as a rightist was his criticism of his boss. “However,” recalled Lu Gang,

raising criticism was not the only reason for my labeling. The root cause was that I was a high-ranking cadre in my college although I was only 29

\(^{112}\) Wang Zhiliang, interview.  
\(^{113}\) Teiwes, Politics and Purges in China, 43.  
\(^{114}\) Lu Gang, interview; Hu Ping, Chanji: kunan de jitan, 453.  
\(^{115}\) Hu Ping, Chanji: kunan de jitan, 450.
years of age. I belonged to the “senior cadres of young age,” the group from which a representative needed to be singled out to attack. Thus I was designated as the representative of this type of people. 116

When it was difficult to find scapegoats to meet a quota, some work units had to assign rightist labels to individuals by drawing lots. These were known as “lots-drawing rightists” (zhuajiu youpai). A movie theater was given a rightist quota, which the head found no way to fulfill, either by political accusation or by “election.” What he finally did was requiring employees to draw lots, so this way a box cashier was selected eventually. 117 The absurdity of rightist labeling was fully manifested.

(7) Remaining silent during the campaign and various implications

In his discussion of political labeling, Cai Wenhui agrees that “people could also be labeled deviants simply because they said nothing at the meeting. The term you du bu fang or having poison but not released it……applies to this situation”. 118 Charges against those who remained silent are particularly salient to two situations in 1957. The first, those who kept silent when the Party strongly encouraged criticism during the Hundred Flowers might be accused as you du bu fang when the political wind reversed. The second, accusations could also be leveled against those who refused to show support for the Party’s Anti-Rightist initiative. In both situations, non-activists became targets.

During the Hundred Flowers, some adopted a strategy to avoid trouble—“acting wisely by playing it safe” (ming zhe bao shen) due to the uncertainty of the Party’s intention; they tenaciously kept silent on political issues. Others simply had nothing to say due to a lack of political interest or consciousness. This strategy was not always effective, however. Remaining silent could be perceived as a sign of holding a grudge against the Party—“to nurse a grievance in the heart” or “to bury hatred

116 Lu Gang, interview.
117 Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 112.
inside against the Party" (huai hen zai xin). "The rationale was that no speech
disclosed your refusal to show your support to the Party, an indication that you had
anti-Party intention."119 People in this situation, therefore, were still not entirely
immune from attack if the Party Secretary needed someone to fill the labeling quota.
Lu Wencai, a literature professor in Liaoning, recalls,

I have a friend named Wang Deyu, who was a genius in foreign
languages. He said nothing in the rectification period, but merely put his
opinions in his diary. After the diary was taken out in a sudden house-
search, he was labeled a rightist, even though he continuously refused to
admit his "crime." He was eventually shot in 1968 for "counter-
revolutionary comments."120

The case of Wang Deyu shows that once an individual was locked onto as a suspect,
he/she would eventually be found guilty by some means or other. The likelihood of
being labeled for remaining silent, however, was lower than for other reasons.

In the second case, people were labeled for remaining silent during the
Party's counterattack, and for having failed to expose their friends or colleagues,
even though they did not say anything against the Party. After Chen Yi was labeled,
three of his assistants were labeled too because they all refused to denounce Chen
even after being repeatedly "persuaded."121

During the labeling process, individuals could be implicated by association
with suspected rightists. In Beijing, more than 170 people were implicated in Lin
Xiling's case.122 A person might also be labeled simply for having family members
or relatives who were rightists. Chen Ming was labeled primarily because his wife
Ding Ling was the number one rightist in literary circles; opera star Xin Fengxia was
labeled because of her obstinate refusal to divorce her husband Wu Zuguang.123

Friends or work relations might also be roots of trouble. Qian Xinbo, a journalist in

119 Lu Gang, interview. Mr. Hu, a campmate of Liu Meng, was labeled merely because he remained silent during the Hundred Flower period. Liu Meng, Chuntian de yu qitian qing, 136.
120 Lu Wencai, interview.
121 Hu Ping, Chanji: kunan de jitan, 473.
122 Ibid, 474.
123 Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Jingji lu, 86-87.
the Central People's Broadcast Station, was asked by his boss: “You worked in a bourgeois newspaper before and you also have so many friends who have become rightists now; do you mind if we name you as a rightist?” Qian’s answer was: “It’s up to the Party.” Qian Xinbo was then branded a rightist.\textsuperscript{124} Wang Li said that “a main fault of mine was that some people I helped recruit into a democratic party—the Nine Three Society had become rightists, so I had to take the blame and join them.”\textsuperscript{125}

Political labeling in 1957-1958 China became a bizarre and grotesque process, with multifarious motives. What was common to most cases include the following: 1) Prosecutors often raised mundane issues to the level of a political principle; 2) campaigns interwove high politics with street politics; and 3) local and work unit leaders, especially Party branch secretaries, used the campaign to facilitate their own ends. In this sense, “all politics were local.” As a result, cases of labeling greatly challenged people’s perception and in many cases defied standardized categorization.

-A school principle wanted to have an affair with the beautiful wife of a teacher. During the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the principal finally found an excuse to label the husband, sent him to a labor camp, and married his wife.\textsuperscript{126}

-Dai Juying, the youngest rightist in China, was a 17 year old clerk in the Ministry of Culture when she was labeled. She was deemed guilty for her casual remark that “shoe polish made in the U.S. is really good.” Because of her refusal to accept the criticism against her, she was accused of “worshiping and having a blind faith in foreign imperialist things,” and was sent to the Manchuria border region for labor reform.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid, 402-404.
\textsuperscript{125} Wang Li, interview.
\textsuperscript{126} Cong Weixi, Zouxiang hundun, 254.
\textsuperscript{127} Dai Huang, Jiushizisheng, 103.
During the Hundred Flowers, the Party journal *Red Flag* invited artist Li Binsheng to draw a cartoon to satirize those cadres who were too timid to air their own voices. When the political climate reversed, Li was accused of "using cartoons to release anti-Party poison."\(^{128}\)

A returned overseas student, Xie Hegeng (who was also an underground Communist Party member), was labeled for demanding the CCP center to vacate its residence in Zhongnanhai to make way for a public resort. A middle school teacher, Chen Dongbai, was also accused of being a counterrevolutionary because he opposed the program of simplifying Chinese characters and complained about a PLA unit for its failure to protect historical sites.\(^{129}\)

It must be noted that one was rarely labeled for a single reason. In most cases, the issues through which people were brought down were multiple and interwoven. For the artist Ding Cong, three issues revolved around his disgrace. Firstly, Ding, as the executive editor of *People's Pictorial*, which was published chiefly for the outside world, argued for a less political hue and a greater emphasis on real life; he was thus accused of "holding bourgeois tastes in running the Pictorial." Secondly, Ding frequently took issue with a Soviet advisor regarding management of the Pictorial, thus he was accused of being Anti-Soviet. Thirdly, he and several friends often met together, forming a salon, which was accused of "forming a counterrevolutionary clique with the nature of Petofi Circle."\(^{130}\)

One of the reasons for which Wang Hongren, a junior police officer in Changchun, was labeled was that he tried several times to apply for university for continuing studies, rather than showing more enthusiasm for his work, which was seen by his supervisor as a sign of being uneasy with the job designated by the Party. Another contributing factor was a poem he wrote, which was regarded as containing

\(^{129}\) Zhang Zhicai, *Yongyuan zai chulian* (In Love Forever) (Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 313; Chen Dongbai, interview.
\(^{130}\) Ding Cong, interview.
anti-Party undertones; the poem was entitled The Tree and Grass. Wang was told this by his supervisor before he was labeled,

You described how grass has difficulty surviving under the tree. That obviously implies that you are the grass, and the Party is the tree. How could our beloved Party cause you difficulty in survival? That's obviously an anti-Party poem.\(^{131}\)

The irony is that the people who took a leftist stance in the high tide of the campaign of 1957 were not entirely immune from being seized in the supplementary labeling of 1958. In not a few cases, when some leftists made efforts to show their absolute loyalty to the Party, they ran to the extreme of attacking heads of their work units for administrative failures, for lack of revolutionary initiative, or for lack of enthusiasm for the campaign. When supplementary labeling was initiated in 1958 to net "escaped rightists" (louwang youpai), many of them were then rounded up. A typical case was Hou Fang, a young Marxist-Leninist philosophy teacher in the Northeastern People's University. Many teachers in the university suffered from his aggression during the campaign. When the campaign was concluded with great success, it seemed to Hou that he had secured his place in the Party. Too confident and aggressive to know where to stop, however, in December 1957 Hou waged a sudden attack on the university president Kuang Yaming for his alleged bureaucracy. The result was that Hou was labeled soon afterwards and sent to the Changbai Mountain for highway construction.\(^{132}\)

Being labeled for leftist or egalitarian stance not only was tragic for the victims but also made them less popular. A story told by Wang Meng is illustrating.

It was already close to the end of the campaign, when he came out and raised a loud cry for preservation of the Yan'an spirit, especially sexual puritanism. He condemned the misconduct of several cadres in his unit who divorced their rural wives when they were appointed to important posts after 1949. He also advocated extreme frugality in contrast to

\(^{131}\) Wang Hongren, interview.

\(^{132}\) Wang Shushen, interview; Dongbei renda (The Northeastern People's University Newsletter), December 6, 1957, April 3, 1958.
extravagance of the cadres. Not only were those in power sickened by him, but also ordinary cadres did not like what he said. When he was labeled in the wake of the campaign, nobody felt sympathetic towards him.\footnote{Wang Meng, interview.}

Similarly, there were also people who tried to show their utter devotion to the Party, by making a clean breast of their “unhealthy thoughts.” When their thoughts were disclosed, they were labeled rightists. Their activism and loyalty turned out to be their undoing. A woman cadre in Beijing tried to show her allegiance by handing in her diary that exposed depression over her private life. The result was that her diary was condemned as “anti-Party, anti-socialist poisonous weeds” and she was banished to the Manchurian borderlands.\footnote{Liu Meng, Chuntian de yu qiatian qing, 137.}

From the sources analyzed above, it can be argued that although the CCP claimed that the rightists were anti-Communist, anti-socialist bourgeois reactionaries, and through this process produced more than a half million victims for persecution, the majority of the rightists were labeled for reasons other than those stated. While some did heap criticism on Communist officials and on the social system under the Party, and an even smaller portion challenged the legitimacy, credibility and orthodoxy of the Party, the majority of those labeled neither involved themselves in politics nor had any political interest. At the national level, they were victimized by the CCP’s sweeping attack, whose aim was the preempting of potential threats, and by its strategic design for political control and socialist transformation. At the local and work unit levels, they were victimized for political expediency and to serve the personal purposes of individual Party leaders. In terms of the real process of labeling, there was little relevance to the ideological goals proclaimed by the CCP center.

**Envisioning Punishment**

By early 1958, the Communist Party had achieved seeming success on the political front. Critics were silenced, the press that had been used to spread poison was under strict control, the vast majority of those charged confessed their crimes,
and the working class was mobilized to express its support for the Party. The nation under the Party had apparently achieved an unprecedented conformity.

In line with political labeling, the CCP envisaged a set of policies for the treatment of the labeled. Although insisting that the enmity between the Party and the rightists was similar in nature to “contradictions between ourselves and the enemy,” the Party advocated a solution along the line of “contradictions among the people,” as a sign of the Party’s leniency and willingness to “save” those who had gone astray but wished to repent. With the triumph over the intellectual deviants at hand, Mao began to emphasize leniency. At important conferences in October and December of 1957, Mao stated that “we need to take disciplinary action against those rightists, but not too harsh,” and that we need to “criticize them seriously but deal with them leniently.” The lenient treatment was “to give a way out” to the rightists, to send them to factories, the countryside, or frontier areas to engage in labor reform instead of merely putting them into jail; this would be instrumental in transforming their evil thinking and making them into socialist supporters.

It seems that the CCP center did not enact a special decree regarding the banishment of the labeled. It treated the banishment of the rightists to rural areas merely as a part of the overall pattern of sending cadres for manual labor. On February 28, 1958, the Party issued an instruction “on sending down cadres to manual labor,” which emphasized the necessity of manual labor as a crucial measure for Communist cadres to cultivate a “proletarian outlook” and to “draw close to the masses.”

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135 See Mao’s speeches, respectively, on October 9, October 13 and December 8, 1957, in Red Guard Materials, *Mao Zedong sixiang wanshui*, Vol. 13, 55-75.
136 So far no official document specifying the sending down of rightists has been found, either at the central or local levels. When they were sent down, the rightists were normally not provided official documents as justification of their banishment. Rightists Lu Gang, Wang Hongren and Dai Huang, when interviewed, recalled that heads of their work units all said that the arrangement of “labor reform” was being carried out according to “instructions from above (shangji zhishi),” yet no specific document was shown to them.
All those who are punished to “labor under supervision” due to their serious offences are to be sent to agricultural cooperatives for manual labor overseen by cooperative members and cadres; others who have committed minor offence, show acceptable repentance and are punished by “being kept on the job but on probation” can be sent down after their problems are solved, providing that their physical condition allows for it.

This instruction, together with Mao’s favorable attitude toward “reform through labor,” constituted a formal basis and general guideline for the post 1957 banishment.

In 1957, however, rightists were not banished outright to remote areas. First, they were ejected from the Communist Party or the Communist Youth League if they had been members, some were stripped of their posts, dismissed from their offices, and then waited for further disposal. The waiting period could be a couple of months or could last up to half a year, during which time they were asked to study anti-rightist documents and to write self-criticisms for their alleged crimes. In the meantime, except for a limited number of disgraced revolutionary seniors and leaders of democratic parties, the majority of rightists were required to do manual labor within their work units or at local construction projects nearby.\(^\text{138}\)

For rightists in Beijing, various industrial and agricultural units in or close to Beijing provided places for their labor reform. The majority of student rightists were removed from campus. Peking University student Yan Tunfu, for instance, was sent to a textile mill in Beijing although she retained her student status; Lin Xiling had to perform physical labor under supervision at a university farm.\(^\text{139}\)

As for the thousands of rightists from various central organizations, who are the focus of this dissertation, labor close to Beijing was the first phase of their forced

\(^{138}\) The memoirs of Dai Huang, Cong Weixi, Liu Naiyuan and many others all mention this process. James H. Williams also mentions that Fang Lizhi, due to his involvement in the Hundred Flower movement in Peking University, was expelled from the CCP (to which he had been admitted in 1955) and subsequently sent to Hebei countryside for manual labor. See James H. Williams, “Fang Lizhi’s Expanding Universe”, in *The China Quarterly*, No. 123 (September 1990).

\(^{139}\) Yan Tunfu believes that although Mao suggested in his Hangzhou Conference Speech, January 1958, that 80% of university students be allowed to continue their schooling, Beijing municipal authorities forestalled Mao by quickly sending the students down before Mao’s speech was officially announced. Yan Tunfu, interview. Regarding how Lin Xiling fared after she was labeled, see Hu Ping, *Chanji: kunan de jitan*, 452-453.
labor experiences. Many were sent to the hill region west of Beijing or to the construction site of the Ming Tomb Reservoir north of Beijing, a well-publicized state project. Normally, they were allowed to return home at weekends, to receive a limited stipend (around RMB 28 yuan a month), and some were still considered members of their work units.¹⁴⁰ Waiting in the hope of redeeming themselves, they passed the gloomy winter of 1957 in apprehension of the next spring when large scale banishment began, when they were sent to the countryside in their home regions, to mountain regions and most significantly, to the Manchurian borderlands. The following chapters discuss the experiences of those sent-down, especially, the experience of the banished rightists and counterrevolutionaries from Beijing who were sent to army farms and labor camps in the Manchurian frontier regions.

Chapter Two

The Beijing Rightists in the Army Farms of Beidahuang

When I arrived at Qianmen Railway Station in Beijing, I found that many people were lined up along the sidewalk close to the old dilapidated city wall. Most of them were wearing heavy cotton-padded clothes and cumbersome winter shoes, some with coarse sheepskin overcoats under their arms. They seldom talked to each other, their faces were serious and sadness filled their eyes. I gathered that this was probably the waiting line for rightists coming from various ministries and commissions of the central government. So I joined the end of the line.... When I got on board, I came to realize that this train was a “rightist express” laid on to deliver more than one thousand people. Its destination was Mishan, in eastern Heilongjiang.

Yin Yi, Banished Rightist in Yunshan Farm141

It was a soft rainy day in early April... The rightists of various central organs in Beijing were congregating at Qianmen Railway Station. They were to take trains to the army farms in Mishan and Hulin, to start their unpredictable life of exile in Beidahuang....Many of them had family members and close relatives to see them off. ...People had little to talk about. What could those suffering injustice say to their loved ones? Staring eyes and silent weeping turned to murmured words, disclosing complex feelings to the world. It must be that The Good Lord had found out the misfortune of these people, and thus precipitated a special rain, to pour out his tears for them.

Liu Meng, Banished Rightist in Farm 850 142

The spring of 1958 saw a heavy human flow through the Qianmen station, which had been used for about half century before the new Beijing railway station was completed in 1959 as a present for the tenth anniversary of the People’s Republic. Priority was given to the transportation to the Northeast of a wide variety of migrants, including demobilized PLA soldiers, land reclamation youths, etc.,

141 Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi hanshan (The Setting of the Sun over the Mountain) (Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2003), 25.
among whom the most conspicuous were thousands of political exiles—people labeled as rightists who were to spend years in the remote frontier regions. Yin Yi and Liu Meng were among the witnesses and participants of this huge movement.

The banishment of rightists to the frontier regions or inland rural areas was a remarkable undertaking of the Chinese Communist government. This chapter looks at the basic patterns of banishment of Beijing rightists to the army farms of Beidahuang, the Great Northern Wilderness (in eastern Heilongjiang), the decision making for the banishment, the perceptions of the rightists about Beidahuang, their daily work and lives, and their relationship with their supervision officers.

**Disposition of the Rightists**

By the end of 1957 and early 1958, while the Anti-Rightist Campaign was still going on, the disposition of hundreds of thousands of those singled out was put on the agenda of the CCP central authorities. According to a decision the Party issued in January 1958, the punishment meted out to the rightists was to be broken down into six levels: the first category—ultra rightists—were to be removed from their jobs and sent to labor reeducation camps; the second category were to be removed from their jobs and sent to the labor under supervision; the third category were to be removed from their jobs and sent to do physical labour nearby with reduced salaries; the fourth category were to be allowed to keep their jobs yet remained on probation; the fifth category were to be given lower rank and salaries at their posts; and the sixth category were to be merely given rightist “hats” (or “caps”) but would be free from other punishment.  

Among those who were sentenced to do manual labor, the first category—the ultra rightists—had to be rounded up by police and sent to work together with criminal convicts in labor reform complexes. Those in the second category also had to go to remote region but were allowed a degree of personal freedom. These devices for punishment constituted the formal institutional basis on

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which thousand of rightists from Beijing (hereafter Beijing rightists) were sent to Beidahuang, a formidable place.

Harsh as the sanctions were for the most serious offenders, even with general guideline in place, it seems that the CCP’s supreme leadership had not made clear plans regarding how to systematically dispose of the thousands of rightists from the central organizations. For about five months, these rightists were assigned to do temporary work around Beijing. It was not until February 1958 when Wang Zhen, the Minister of Land Reclamation, proposed his enlarged plan of land reclamation in Heilongjiang that the central government decided to sent the Beijing rightists to Beidahuang.

The decision to send the rightists from the central organizations corresponded with an unprecedented development program in northeast China, land reclamation in eastern Heilongjiang. In the spring of 1958, the land reclamation program was in full force, under the rubric of the GLF. Tens of thousands of demobilized soldiers were ordered to relocate to Beidahuang as major reclamation forces, followed by young peasants recruited from Shandong and Hebei (known as frontier youth), and criminals rounded up from northern and eastern China. In the early stages of the reclamation, however, agricultural, construction and forestry labor was still in great demand. In this context, Wang Zhen, eager to recruit as many reclamation laborers as possible, demanded the sending of the rightists from the central organizations to Beidahuang, and his request was approved by the State Council.

144 Cong Weixi, *Zouxiang hundun* (Going towards Chaos) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 28-51; Xu Ying, interview.

145 In 1954, Wang Zhen sent a report to the State Council advocating reclamation of vast tracts of virgin land of eastern Heilongjiang, and, with his report approved, sent around seventeen thousands demobilized soldiers as pioneers into the regions of Mishan, Hulin, Baoqing Raohe, where they established dozens of army farms. Wang was a crucial proponent for the reclamation project in Beidahuang. See Wang Zhen zhuo bianxiezu, *Wang Zhen zhuo* (The Biography of Wang Zhen) (Beijing: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe, 2001), Vol. 2, 68-70; Heilongjiang sheng difangzhi bianweihui, *Heilongjiang sheng zhi guoying nongchang zhi* (Gazetteer of Heilongjiang: the State Farms Volume) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1992), 6. In addition to the army farms, there were eight collective farms established in the nearby counties by frontier youth recruited from interior provinces. See *Heilongjiang sheng zhi guoying nongchang zhi*, 85.

146 Wang Zhen zhuo bianxiezu, *Wang Zhen zhuo*, 70, 74-78; *Heilongjiang sheng zhi guoying nongchang zhi*, 92-94; Li Hui, *Ren zai xuanwo: Huang Miaozhi Yu Yu Feng* (People in the Eddy:
demand for labor in Beidahuang coincided with the emergence of the rightists, and the intention of the authorities to dispose of them.

Little is known about how the CCP leadership made the decision to send down the Beijing rightists; it is also unclear how the various central ministries carried out the coordinated plan for mass relocation. The recollections of the political exiles, however, provide valuable sources on the process. Ding Ling recalled the experience of her husband Chen Ming:

A couple of days after the New Year, the Beijing Movie Studio under the Ministry of Culture informed Chen Ming of his verdict: while he was to keep his post, he was to be deprived of his rank and to be sent to ‘labor under supervision’ in Mishan, Heilongjiang. He was given three days before reporting to a meeting place in an eastern suburb.  

Other recollections (Liu Meng, Yin Yi) point to similar situations: the rightists, after being stripped of their posts, were ordered to designated meeting places (Qianmen Station, for instance) to board trains for Beidahuang; cadres from their work units supervised their departure. Some trains were “rightist expresses” (youpai zhuanlie) reserved by the Ministry of Land Reclamation, but most were not.  

The rightists banished to Beidahuang came from various agencies of the State Council, professional associations and institutions of higher learning, ranging from senior revolutionaries to members of the non-party elite, from college graduates to office clerks. Many were prestigious figures who had once held important posts in managerial, economic, cultural, literary, or other fields. Figures such as Ding Ling, Ai Qing, Wu Zuguang, and Ding Cong were famous for their achievements in literature and art; Wei Zetong (senior director of the Internal Affairs Ministry) and Xie Hegeng (senior CCP intellectual, graduate of Cornell University) attracted

Huang Miaozhi and Yu Feng (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 1998), 297.  
147 Ding Ling, Fengxue renjian (The Blizzard World) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987), 3.  
148 Yin Yi, for instance, recalls that he took a “rightist express” to Beidahuang, see his Huishou canyang yihan shan, 26; however, Dai Huang indicates that he and his five fellows went to Beidahuang in small groups without any supervision. Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng: wo de youpai licheng (A Narrow Escape from Death: My Experience as a Rightist) (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 1998), 95.
peoples’ attention as revolutionary veterans. Military personnel were not immune from being labeled and banished. Among around seven thousand PLA officers, cadets and technicians who were labeled, more than one hundred were sent to Beidahuang.

Not all the Beijing rightists were banished to Beidahuang, of course. The rightists from the Beijing Forestry Institute, for instance, were sent to the Great Xingan Mountain as forestry workers, and those from the Beijing Daily went to road construction sites of Beijing. Journalist Liu Binyan (a political dissident in the post-Mao period) was banished to Shanxi, and young writer Liu Shaotang was sent back to his home village in Hebei. Some were given the option to choose their destination of the banishment, but most were not.

The severity of the punishment did not necessarily match the severity of the denunciations the rightists received during the Anti-Rightist period. Those who had higher political rank before being labeled normally received moderate punishment. For example, top rightists Zhang Bojun and Lo Longji, who suffered harsh condemnation by Mao, were not sent to labor camps, but remained in Beijing retaining their standing membership of the Chinese People Political Consultant Conference, and living a relatively easy life. Zhang Bojun still enjoyed subsidized housing and car.

Beidahuang: an Imagined World

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152 Although sending rightists down for manual labor was a government decision and great pressure to go was felt, flexibility still existed regarding the destinations they were sent to. Liu Meng, originally to be relocated to Qinghai in the Northwest, was sent to Beidahuang instead because of his strong resistance to going to the Northwest. See Liu Meng, *Chuntian de yu qitian qing*, 63-64.

153 See Zhang Yihe, *Wangshi bingbu ruyan* (Do not let bygones be bygones) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2004), 87, 294.
The term Beidahuang, the Great Northern Wilderness, was at first used by Han Chinese during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Considering Manchuria as their homeland, Qing rulers in the late 17th century implemented an exclusion policy in Manchuria. They planted two lines of willows, the willow palisades, in southern Manchuria, to prohibit Chinese migration and thus preserve the Manchu way of life and retain control over the valuable products of the region.154 The Han who lived south of the willow palisades called the boundless northern land including all of eastern Siberia Beidahuang.155 With the Qing’s lifting of the ban on migration to Manchuria in the second half of the 19th century, and the massive influx of Han migrants, the imagined world of Beidahuang was reduced in scope. By the time of the Communist takeover, the term Beidahuang referred to the vast plains north of Harbin and the Yilerhuli Mountains, the Three River Plain (Sanjiang pingyuan) bounded by the Amur, Ussuri and Sungari Rivers and the Mudan River Plain (Mudanjiang pingyuan). In these areas the ecology was still one of hunting roe deer with clubs, netting fish with ladles made from gourds, and watching pheasants fly into the kitchen.”156

In the massive land reclamation of the mid-1950s, four counties, Mishan, Hulin, Baoqing and Raohe in the eastern frontier region of Heilongjiang, were the location of large numbers of army farms, the farms that the Beijing rightists were sent to.157 In later years, especially during the Cultural Revolution, Beidahuang, as the destination of hundreds of thousands of sent-down youths, was the generic name of the whole Heilongjiang wilderness.

Beidahuang has long been considered an undesirable place to live. Although

155 See Mei Jimin, Beidahuang (The Great Northern Wilderness) (Taipei: Shuifurong chubanshe, 1975) 5-6. Mei believes that due to the fact that the vast territory in eastern Siberia was legally under Qing jurisdiction because of the Treaty of Nerchinsk signed by China and Russia in 1689, the term of Beidahuang bore a broader implication.
156 Ibid, 6.
arable land was abundant and soil fertile, its cold climate (minus 30 degree Celsius on average during winter), its isolation from China proper and the difficulty of communication made people shrink back at the sound of the name. Isolation, a diet based on coarse grains (corn, sorghum) and the lack of vegetables during the winter were also deterrents. Even after the Qing lifted their exclusion policy, Han Chinese, except for some Shandong and Hebei migrants, normally avoided this desolate marsh-land.\textsuperscript{158} In the 1930s Japanese colonizers attempted to open this area but ended in failure.\textsuperscript{159}

While Beidahuang historically provided a perfect site for the rulers of China to banish undesirable elements, its harsh physical environment and isolated geographical location generated immense fear in offenders, including the political offenders of 1957. Being aware that they would be sent to Beidahuang, a sense of sadness and despair overwhelmed many Beijing rightists. They did not know if they would come back alive or whether they would ever see their families again. Some tried to appeal to be sent to other locations, but were usually refused.\textsuperscript{160}

Considerable numbers of Beijing rightists, however, were not afraid of being banished to Beidahuang, and some in literary and cultural circles volunteered to go there even though they were offered other options. According to a directive of the central authorities, only rightists assigned to the first and second levels of punishment had to be sent to difficult regions for labor reeducation or labor under supervision; while those with lower levels of penalty did not have to be sent there. Some rightists such as writers Ding Ling and Nie Gannu requested to go to

\textsuperscript{158} For a general account of Shandong migration to Manchuria, see Gottschang and Lary, \textit{Swallows and Settlers}.


\textsuperscript{160} Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei}, 8. According to Wu, a journalist You Zai of the Dagong Daily tried to remain in Beijing on the grounds of his health problems, only to be refused immediately by his work unit and scolded by anti-rightist activists.
Beidahuang. The reasons for these requests were complicated.

Some political exiles were impressed by the natural landscape of the northeast. With the tidal wave of land reclamation, media coverage of the landscape and the social transformation of Manchuria increased dramatically; this contributed to people’s knowledge of Manchuria and gave an idealized image of Beidahuang. Ding Ling was among many who were impressed by the forests of Heilongjiang pictured in books she collected. Journalist Cong Weixi was also strongly impressed by the boundlessness, the natural beauty and the fertile land of Beidahuang. Cong believed that, for people without families to worry about, Beidahuang was an oasis far away from mundane life. He wrote: “I was infatuated with the northeast, especially in winter when it was decorated by the white snow, so I went to this silvery white world twice in the fall 1956 and spring 1957.” To young idealists, life in this great wilderness could help people with their spiritual growth.

The second reason to want to go there was, for some revolutionary writers, the search for sources and inspiration for literary creations about and for ordinary people. Taking to heart Mao’s injunction in the Yan’an Talks, some writers sincerely believed in the necessity of going to the grassroots and writing about the masses. Ding Ling, for instance, insisted that a revolutionary writer should enthusiastically go down to the rural world, observe and learn from the real life of the masses (tiyan shenghuo) even through adversity. She presumed that living close to the soil would provide nourishment for her literary creativity in writings that would present the epic

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161 Ding Ling, Fengxue renjian (The Blizzard World) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987), 16-18; Zhou Jianqiang, Nie Gannu Zhuan (Biography of Nie Gannu) (Chengdu: Sicuan renmin chubanshe, 1987), 219-220.

162 Ding Ling, Fengxue renjian, 16-17. One of Ding’s pastimes was to go through copies of People’s Pictorial looking at scenes of the Xing’an Mountains in Manchuria.

163 Cong Weixi, Zouxiang hundun, 7, 121.

164 In May 1942, Mao made his famous “Talks at the Yan’an Forum of Literature and Art,” in which he required adherence to the Party line by writers and artists—to go down to the grassroots and write about the grassroots, in order to serve the masses well and to qualify as progressive writers. The Yan’an Talks served as a guideline for production of literature and art in Maoist China. See Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji (Selected Works of Mao Zedong) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe), Vol. 3, 807-808.
transformation of heaven and earth by the northeasters.\textsuperscript{165}

Another example was essayist Nie Gannu. With his prestige as a revolutionary veteran, Nie was offered the option of retirement after being labeled a rightist, or continuing his work at a lower rank at the People’s Literature Press, but he declined the “kindness.” “Life is the source of writing,” he said. “As a writer I should experience all kinds of life. Now that I have become a rightist, I would like to lead the real life of this kind.”\textsuperscript{166} In a sense, what these intellectuals sought was self-banishment.

The third reason some rightists opted for Beidahuang was to show their commitment to ideological remolding and to redeeming themselves. Many artists, such as Ding Cong and Huang Miaoshi, were told by the Party apparatus that they had committed serious crimes against the Party and the nation, and thus needed to redeem themselves through hard labor in the most difficult areas. Beidahuang with its dual features - physical hardship and its unprecedented revolutionary changes since 1949 - was the ideal place to go. Driven by this propaganda, they were willing to go to Beidahuang to prove their commitment to self-reform.\textsuperscript{167}

For most of the rightists, however, revolutionary hyperbole could not make Beidahuang more attractive. But being demonized and having experienced periods of harsh attacks and insults, the rightists were notorious with both their colleagues and their neighbors. A rightist would always have to lower his head in deep embarrassment when coming across a friend, and even their families were persuaded to condemn them and to announce the breakdown of the family relationship.\textsuperscript{168} The

\textsuperscript{165} Ding Ling, \textit{Fengxue renjian}, 17.
\textsuperscript{166} Zhou Jianqiang, \textit{Nie Gannu zhuan}, 220.
\textsuperscript{167} Xin Suwei, \textit{Ding Cong zhuan} (Biography of Ding Cong) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1993),182-184.
\textsuperscript{168} See Zheng Xiaofeng, \textit{Ding Ling zai Beidahuang} (Ding Ling in the Great Northern Wilderness) (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1989), 78. Many other rightists indicate similar experiences they went through after the campaign. Wu Yongliang recalls that with the instructions from above to isolate the rightists, “there was no nodding, no hello, no smile from friends, who began to treat us as strangers and shunned us as contagious disease.” Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei}, 14. Ding Ling as well as leading rightists Zhang Bojun and Chu Anping all had experiences of being denounced by their children or cut off family relationship. See Ding Ling, \textit{Fengxue renjian}, 64; Hu Ping, \textit{Chanji: kunan de jitan}, 508-510. Opera actress Xin Fengxia was persuaded by her boss to divorce her husband Wu Zuguang but she refused. See Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., \textit{Jingji lu}, 87.
social isolation the rightists felt was unbearable. In this situation, going to Beidahuang seemed to be a relief to some extent. Many rightists assumed that in an exile community established in a remote location, everybody would be equal, and that the smell of the black earth meant hope.\(^{169}\) When their fates were sealed and discrimination by their colleagues and neighbors escalated, many wanted to seek refuge in the wilderness, to free themselves from political pressure.

**Arrival in Beidahuang**

When they first arrived in the place of banishment, the chief concern of the Beijing rightists was how long they would have to stay in Beidahuang. Things did not seem so grim at this point. Before leaving Beijing, many rightists were given hints by heads of their work units that as long as they did well, they might be recalled within one or two years.\(^{170}\) There were other signs that reform through manual labor was likely a temporary period: bosses of many work units advised the rightists not to let their professional expertise get rusty. The rightists from the Central Orchestra in Beijing, for instance, were allowed to take their musical instruments with them to Beidahuang. Journalists from the Xinhua News Agency were encouraged to take with them English books and English-Chinese dictionaries.\(^{171}\) Many exiles, therefore, expected that their frontier banishment would not be that harsh and would not last long. As long as they sincerely engaged in reform through labor, they assumed, the Party would give them a chance go back to normal life, and continue their work in their fields of expertise. Journalist Dai Huang recalls that when taking the journey “with a box of books, I was full of confidence in pursuing a bright future in the wilderness.”\(^{172}\) Even though it is hard to gauge if Dai’s feelings were typical, it seems that at least some political exiles were not

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\(^{170}\) When Ding Cong was about to leave for Beidahuang, the director of his work unit encouraged him to show his best performance in labor reform, and promised to get him back in one year. See Xin Suwei, *Ding Cong zhuans*, 186.

\(^{171}\) Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 97.

\(^{172}\) *Ibid*, 97.
feeling entirely hopeless.

From early March 1958, thousands of Beijing rightists arrived at various locations in Beidahuang. Ding Ling was assigned to Tangyuan and Ai Qing, the famous poet, and his family to Farm 852; the vast majority of the Beijing rightists were sent to Farms 850 and 853. Revolutionary veterans Nie Gannu and Xie Hegeng, artists Ding Cong and Huang Miaozhi, as well as journalists Dai Huang, Wu Yongliang and Liu Meng were sent to Farm 850, the first army farm set up in Beidahuang. Foreign literature specialist Huang Wu, playwrights Wu Zuguang and Wang Zheng, and journalists Zheng Xiaofeng and Sun Zhanke were sent to Farm 853. Chen Ming, before being allowed to join Ding Ling in Tangyuan, was also sent to Farm 853. In these farms the Beijing rightists worked with demobilized soldiers, convicts and job placement people (those who had completed their terms but were forcibly retained within labor camps). The gazetteers of Farms 850 and 853, as well as the memoirs of Dai Huang, Wu Yongliang, Yin Yi, and the recollections of Zheng Xiaofeng all mention that these three kinds of people constituted the major labor force in the army farms.

For most political exiles in Farm 850, their experience in the first months was not bad. In sharp contrast to their debased status in Beijing, their formal status in the farm was agricultural worker (nonggong) rather than rightist. The farm authorities designated 120 demobilized officers to supervise their daily life and to organize their

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173 According to the farm gazetteers, 925 rightists were sent from Beijing to different branches of Farm 850 and 486 rightists to Farm 853, totaling 1411. See Bawuling nongchangshi bianxi bangongshi, Bawuling nongchangshi (Gazetteer of the Farm 850) (Hulin, Heilongjiang: No pub., 1986), 30; and Bawusan nongchangzhi bianxian weiyuanhui, Bawusan nongchangzhi (Gazetteer of the Farm 853) (Beijing: No pub., 1986), 2. The figures of the Beijing rightists provided by the two Gazetteers are not consistent with other sources, however. For instance, Wang Zhen zhuan indicates 1039, and Zhongguo dongbeijiao indicates 1327. See Wang Zhen zhuan bianxiezu, Wang Zhen zhuan, 78; Zheng Jiazhen, Zhongguo dongbeijiao, 66. A possible reason is that the gazetteers include the rightists sent from various military units of Beijing while others do not. Another possible reason is that the spouses of the Beijing rightists who came along might be incorporated into the rightist list in some sources while omitted from others. See Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 103.

174 Significant information about these political exiles is drawn from their memoirs and biographies. Zheng Jiazhen in his lengthy reportage Zhongguo dongbeijiao also describes the lives of Ding Ling, Ai Qing, Nie Gannu and Wu Zuguang in Beidahuang.
**Forced labor allocation to the army farms (1958)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Farm</th>
<th>Forced Laborers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demobilized Soldiers</td>
<td>Criminals</td>
<td>Rightists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm 850</td>
<td>12,800</td>
<td>5,074</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm 852</td>
<td>10,600</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ai Qing &amp; His Family</td>
<td>261 (including other “bad elements”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm 853</td>
<td>4,668</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tang Yuan</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ding Ling &amp; husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Bawuling nongchangshi*, 30; *Bawusan nongchangzhii*, 2; *Zhongguo dongbei jiao*, 66; *Wang Zhen zhuan*, 68, 81; *Heilongjiang shengzhi guoying nongchang zhi*, 76.

It seems, however, that the farm authorities did not develop clear measures as to how to remold these rightists ideologically as instructed by the Party. The managerial and ideological control over the rightists was relatively loose in the first months, which enabled them to enjoy considerable freedom to learn, to talk, and to entertain themselves after work. They sang Peking opera, practiced painting, played bridge, conducted research, and read foreign language texts.” While living conditions were hard - they lived in shabby earthen sheds - and the physical work heavy, the rightists led passable lives until the summer of 1959 when food shortages started to be felt.

The situation was similar at Farm 853 where, as journalist Zheng Xiaofeng recalls, the political exiles did not feel much pressure. The demobilized PLA officers in Zheng’s work team treated the rightists rather politely, addressing them as “sent-

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175 *Bawuling nongchangshi*, 30.
down cadres” (xiafang ganbu) rather than using insulting terms. Except for daily work, the lives of political exiles were not badly disturbed, and discrimination against the rightists was kept at a minimum.\(^{177}\)

Some Party officials in charge of the land reclamation took a moderate attitude toward the rightists. Wang Zhen, the minister of Land Reclamation, seemed rather helpful to the rightists that he had recruited from Beijing. He visited the rightists in Farms 850 and 853 shortly after they arrived, and tried to cheer them up by suggesting that they had a bright future if they took a positive attitude towards labor reform. What made the rightists extraordinarily happy was that Wang addressed them as “comrades,” which seemed to remove the stigma and humiliation of the Anti-Rightist Campaign.\(^{178}\)

Under Wang’s instructions, the farm authorities took certain measures to improve the living conditions of the exiles (generating electricity for daily use of the rightists, for instance) and reassigned some rightists to work on local literature magazines, in art troupes, movie theaters, schools, etc. Many rightists in Farm 850 were moved to the point that they even called their experience so far as “civilized banishment.”\(^{179}\)

The rightists were normally allowed to bring family members with them. Although few of them had the heart to make their families experience unforeseeable hardship, there were cases in Farm 850. Han Yuan, an ordinary employee in the Ministry of Culture, went with her husband, trying to follow the example of the heroic wives of Russian Decembrists with whom she was familiar from Soviet movies.\(^{180}\) When Nie Gannu worked in Farm 850, he met several women who had

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\(^{177}\) Zheng Xiaofeng, interview. Huang Wu also recalls that the Farm 853 “was a new world, where we felt liberated psychologically, and there was no discrimination from outside anymore.” Huang Wu, *Mahuatang waiji* (Additional Collection of Mahua Hall) (Guangzhou: Guangdong wenhua chubanshe, 1989), 189.

\(^{178}\) *Bawuling nongchangshi*, 31; *Wang Zhen zhuo*, 78-79; Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 113-115; Liu Meng, *Cuntian de yu qitian qing*, 94-96; Ding Ling, *Fengxue renjian*, 14-15; all acknowledge Wang Zhen’s visits and his paternalist care for the rightists. Wang Zhen’s warm gesture to the rightists was seen as a sign of Party’s concern of the banished intellectuals.

\(^{179}\) *Bawuling nongchangshi*, 31; Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 115. Regarding rightist comments on “civilized banishment,” see Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 119-120.

\(^{180}\) Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 103.
accompanied their husbands to the desolate region. For a period they had to live with other male laborers in a newly-built shed that housed about ninety people.

At night, the wives slept at both ends of the wide *kang* (northern style bed), with their husbands close to them, and the rest of men jammed together on the other side of the husbands. With women about, the men tried to show better behavior, and the dirty jokes that used to circulate among men totally disappeared.\(^{181}\)

Couples in such surroundings certainly were unable to enjoy conjugal life, but the warmth and kindness of the exile community was appreciated.

Rightists with accompanying spouses were rare. Most of them left their wives or husbands behind. In cases where both members of a couple were labeled and banished, their child(ren) were left in Beijing, often without proper care. Even though divorce because of political disgrace was not as common as in the period of the Cultural Revolution, there were cases where one of a couple attempted to avoid being implicated or to draw a political line between themselves and the one who had once been beloved but was now the enemy of the people. While there are many stories about unwavering commitment to marriage, such as the cases of artists Wu Zuguang, Huang Miaozhi and Ding Cong, there were also a few cases where spouses of rightists asked for divorces to show their commitment to the Party, such as the cases of journalists Xu Zimei and Dai Huang.\(^{182}\) Some rightists, however, voluntarily asked their spouses for divorces once they were labeled, or publicly announced a break with their families in order not to bring trouble to them; those who were engaged broke their engagements.\(^{183}\)

**Forced Labor**

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The early, relaxed stage of life in Beidahuang turned out to be transitory, however. It was not long before most of the rightists realized that things would not work out as they expected, and came to see how harsh the conditions they had to confront were. During the years 1958-59, the nation-wide economic adventure, the GLF, featured huge and wasteful inputs of labor. In desolate Beidahuang, the state's agenda to establish a national grain base spelt daunting manual work in agriculture and forestry, work that became the daily job of the rightists.

Eastern Heilongjiang, and Beidahuang in particular, was in a physical sense the toughest region of all Manchuria. When the various forced migrants (demobilized soldiers, convict criminals and rightists) gathered in the area in early 1958, it was just a vast stretch of swamp and boggy grassland as far as the eye could see.\(^{184}\) Since the level of mechanization was extremely low in the early stages, all the tilling, sowing and reaping had to be done manually. Put into special rightist teams the political exiles had to do all kinds of work: cultivating the land, harvesting crops, building reservoirs, cutting wood, excavating earth, making bricks, erecting barracks, building roads and raising livestock, etc. The work was backbreaking for the frail intellectuals who had only done academic work and managerial work before. Dai Huang provided an example of the variety of work done by the political exiles in the Yunshan Branch:

Right after the soybean harvest in the early winter of 1958, dozens of us went into the Wanda Mountains to cut hard oak trees...Less than one month afterward (December 1\(^{st}\), 1958), we were ordered to leave the mountains, to go to the grasslands for an irrigation project...The people in our platoon had to strive to finish their work quotas. We used pickaxes to break up the frozen topsoil, sometimes close to one meter thick, then dug out the unfrozen soil...It was still dark when the reveille sounded in the morning. We had to leave our barracks and rush dozens of li to work, and have breakfast in the fields. During that winter, we usually slept for no more than four hours a day.\(^{185}\)

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\(^{185}\) Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 125-126.
For the rightists, work hours ranged from twelve to sixteen hours a day. In the summer, they had to get up at three or four o’clock in the morning, and to work until dark. In some branch farms, weekends were cancelled during the summer of 1958, during the GLF.\textsuperscript{186} The rightist laborers were driven to ceaseless physical exertion.

Forestry work in winter was another ordeal for the banished intellectuals. As poet Huang Wu recalls:

In the winters of 1958 and 1959, we rightists were twice ordered to go into the Wanda Mountains to cut wood. We went into the mountain in September and left in March the next year, which was the coldest season in this remote frontier area...The mountain valleys were deep and the forest dense without a trace of human habitation. We had to share the forests with wolves, bears and wild boars day and night. The tree felling was not without danger; it was easy for us to get hurt or even killed by the falling trees.\textsuperscript{187}

Casualties happened during forestry will be discussed in Chapter Four. Like winter forestry, charcoal making was also an ordeal for many rightists. In order to produce charcoal of good quality, the rightists often had to go into kilns to bring out the charcoal while the kilns were still filled with hot smoke and ash. The stronger people could manage to do this quickly, but those in poor physical shape often fainted inside. Some were rescued by their fellows, and some died with charcoal ash on their faces.\textsuperscript{188}

The rightists, like the demobilized soldiers and convicts, were put into a quasi-military system and organized along military lines: regiment, company, platoon, squadron and so on, with demobilized officers (now cadres) as their commanders above the company level. Some officers, as Nie Gannu saw in Branch 4, showed a

\textsuperscript{186} Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 120; Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei}, 7, 64. Dai Huang recalls that he and his fellow exiles were once forced to work for 56 hours almost without sleep when constructing an irrigation canal. Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 127.

\textsuperscript{187} Huang Wu, \textit{Mahuatang waiji}, 189.

\textsuperscript{188} Hu Ping, \textit{Chanji: kunan de jitan}, 601; Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 175. Dai Huang was himself a survivor of charcoal making; he once fainted in a charcoal kiln and was rescued by his friends through artificial respiration.
degree of concern for the physical fitness of the rightists, and assigned the elderly and the weak lighter work.\textsuperscript{189} Other officers such as those in the Yunshan Branch, driven by quotas set from above and enmeshed in the fanatical fervor of the GLF, treated the political exiles as slaves and even required them to engage in competitions with demobilized soldiers and convicts. In the busiest seasons (such as harvest), as unreasonable work quotas were set, the work drove the rightists crazy, or in the words of Dai Huang, the cadres “wanted to wring every ounce of sweat and blood out of us.” When designated work quotas were not filled, the rightists were often denied rest and food.\textsuperscript{190}

Despite their seemingly equal status as nonggong, the rightists during most of the period of their banishment were treated worse than demobilized soldiers in terms of their living and working conditions. In the Farm 850, when the rightists had to sleep in the open air during work rushes, the demobilized soldier workers were provided with barracks. In the Farm 853, while the soldiers could refuse to work due to food shortages in the famine years, the rightists still had to come out to work in the fields with empty stomachs.\textsuperscript{191} The low political status of the rightist was underlined in the farms.

The harsh climate posed untold difficulties for the rightists. The first was the extreme cold. As early as mid October, the cold wind began to slice through the mountains and wilderness of eastern Heilongjiang. Between January and March when the land is frozen solid, and any agricultural activity is impossible, traditional northeasterners (dongbeiren) stayed indoors doing nothing except for drinking and gambling, with perhaps the one exception being hunting deer. After the Communist takeover, however, the winter season was used for hydraulic projects, road construction and forest work, which was exactly what was experienced by the rightists in Beidahuang. During the day they were exposed to temperatures of minus 30° C, and at night they lived in makeshift cabins made of thick birch logs with

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{189} Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Yuan shang cao, 309-310.
\textsuperscript{190} Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 158-159.
\textsuperscript{191} Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 49. Zheng Xiaofeng interview.
\end{footnotes}
thatched roofs. The temperature outside could go down to minus 40° C, while inside it was not much warmer because wind and snow could blow in through the cracks.\(^\text{192}\) Many rightists drank alcohol to warm up before sleep and wore the cotton-padded hats to keep warm at night. Eating after work was not easy. When the food (usually corn or sorghum bread) was sent to the work sites, it was often frozen solid; people had to cut it into pieces with axes in order to eat. The bitter cold meant that one had to work without stopping.\(^\text{193}\)

In summer, a major harassment came from insects, especially mosquitoes. Nourished by the grassy marshland, their size was much larger than normal mosquitoes. They tortured everyone in Beidahuang. Writer Wang Zheng recalls:

> Once wakened, these extremely vicious creatures would swarm those of us who worked on the marshland, and would try to get into our noses, eyes, ears, and mouths as well as under our collars. People would go mad in this situation.\(^\text{194}\)

Exposure to mosquitoes would lead to instant bites. Short of wearing cumbersome insect-proof suits, the exiles had to keep their whole body in ceaseless motion. For many political exiles, mosquitoes were a nightmare during their banishment in Beidahuang.\(^\text{195}\)

### Ideological Remolding

Recent Western scholarship emphasizes the Mao era efforts in the political indoctrination of inmates in labor camps, a practice which is considered to be in sharp contrast to the Soviet model. Some academics assume that political study was

\(^\text{192}\) Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 79-80. Wu recalls that during the period when his team was working in the mountains, it was so cold inside their makeshift straw shutts that “neither pen nor ball-pen could be used since ink would simply freeze.”


\(^\text{195}\) Many survivors of Beidahuang banishment see mosquitoes as one of their worst experiences there. See Yin Yi, *Huishou canyang yi han shan*, 33; Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 60; Zheng Jiazhen, *Zhongguo dongbei jiao*, 67.
a distinguishing feature of the labor camps of Maoist China. This argument is true of the general practice in Maoist labor camps and concurs with the CCP’s claims about the significance of thought reform. This research shows, however, that during the period of the GLF and its aftermath and in particular location such as Beidahuang, little effort was made by the army authorities to systematically enforce the thought reform policy, although higher authorities might have seriously believed in using manual labor to remold the minds of those who had committed political errors, and although the rightists there did not refuse political indoctrination.

Generally speaking, the Beijing rightists displayed a certain degree of commitment to thought reform through labor when they first arrived in Beidahuang. While many felt wronged and sad about being labeled, they recognized the necessity of physical labor in terms of the role it played in ideological remolding, and in washing away their “bourgeois ideologies.” As mentioned earlier, Ding Ling and Nie Gannu took laboring in Beidahuang as an opportunity to have access to the working class and rural world, to cast off their old selves, and to achieve spiritual regeneration. Nie Gannu, for instance, wrote in his thought report (sixiang huibao):

I was born into a non-working class family, and thus had neither experience of physical labor nor access to working people. Therefore, I am glad to join in working people, going into the countryside or mountainous area, to participate in physical labor or work at grass level in order to change my ideology....I am now prepared for a long-term self-remolding anywhere.

Such self-reflection should not be simply treated as affectation because it was

196 Philip Williams and Yenna Wu note that Russia’s Gulag almost never compelled its inmates to listen to propaganda, or write self-criticisms and confessions. As a comparison, they believe, in Maoist China, indoctrination sessions were pervasive and usually taken extremely seriously in labor camp. See Philip Williams and Yenna Wu, The Great Wall of Confinement: the Chinese Prison Camp through Contemporary Fiction and Reportage (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2004), 112-113.

197 Given their nature of forced labor, the restriction of individual freedom and the practice of physical and psychological abuse, the army farms in Beidahuang could certainly be considered a special form of labor camps — camps without walls.

198 Nie Gannu, Nie Gannu zixu (Nie Gannu’s Own Account) (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1998), 450, 452.
consistent with his earnest requests to go to Beidahuang and his serious engagement in physical labor there. Many others, such as artist Huang Miaozi and journalist Dai Huang, also took a positive attitude towards labor reform. In the early period, they wrote poems and essays to praise the life in army farms and express their willingness to make a new start. As well, many brought political books with them, trying to improve their minds through political studies after work.

Nevertheless, the rightists found out before long that the army farm authorities essentially saw them as mere slave laborers rather than paying attention to their thought reform; that it was unrealistic to think that they would achieve any ideological remolding. During the years of the GLF, any form of study session was virtually impossible after fourteen hours of backbreaking labor. Yin Yi recalls that during the years of the GLF “daily life was reduced to an endless circle of working, eating and sleeping, plus the morning call of a cadre, Lu. There was nothing more than that.” As long as work quotas were filled, farm cadres did not bother with study sessions. At times, the rightists were asked to submit their thought summaries, but the summaries that the rightists took pains to compose were used by the cadres as toilet paper.

A notable exception in political indoctrination was at Farm 850, as described by Wu Yongliang. Wu recalls that at times his cadre, Zhu, did arrange newspaper reading at breakfast, trying to update the rightists about national politics, especially about the allegedly high crop yields and other myths. Some demobilized soldiers were also brought in to give political talks to these well-educated yet bourgeois rightists.

The most common political instruction given by cadres was rebuking or

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199 A much sung song “Let’s build our beautiful Beidahuang” was composed by an enthusiastic rightist after exhausting work. See Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 119.

200 Huang Miaozi recalls that in the early months of his stay in Beidahuang he seriously read through *Red Flag* (a leading Party journal), and the works of Karl Marx and Fredericks Engels. Li Hui, *Renzai xuanwo*, 307. Nie Gannu also brought many of Mao’s works with him. See Niu Han and Deng Jiuiping, eds., *Yuan shang cao*, 309.

201 Yin Yi, *Huishou canyang yi han shan*, 63.

202 Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 97-98.

203 Ibid, 70.
dressing down (xunhua). Xuhua normally occurred in two types of situation. The first case was whenever cadres found that the rightists had failed to or would not fulfill designated work quotas, or they perceived a less than positive work attitude amongst the rightists; these situations meant a xunhua and the denial of food or the imposition of extra hours of work. The language used was insulting, including phrases such as yiqun cunzhu (a host of pigs), laomianyang (old sheep), fulu (captives), or tufei (bandits). In other situations, officers used xunhua as a regular means to keep pressure on the rightists. Topics would be the rightists’ bourgeois tastes, lack of knowledge of agriculture, and lack of physical strength for work. The rightists were reminded of their inferior status compared to working people, and the need for long-term reform. Aiming to make rightists work harder, the xunhua for the first situations were often given before breakfast and at evening roll call. For the second type of situation, they could be given at any time and happened without any notice. In both types of situation, political indoctrination was simply reduced to reprimand, and reform through labor to forced labor.

This form of political lecture brought a negative reaction rather than a positive one, and undermined the confidence of the political exiles in thought reform. Being deprived of dignity, and merely treated as forced laborers, the rightists came to realize that Beidahuang was far from a refuge, and that land reclamation or any kind of manual labor was for them no more than physical and psychological punishment. As Yin Yi puts it, the maltreatment meted out in his branch made his fellow exiles realize that “thought reform through labor” was merely a camouflage, and the punishment through labor was the whole point of what they were going through. When the food shortages started to loom large from mid 1959, the question of how to survive in Beidahuang rather than how to achieve ideological renewal or how to redeem oneself became the overwhelming concern of the rightists.

After going through years of forced labor few people held a positive attitude

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204 In the case of the Yunshan Branch, directors Lu and Zhu frequently scolded the rightist workers in coarse language during xunhua for their failure to fulfill work quotas. See Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 131; Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 51.
205 Li Hui, Renzai xuanwo, 305; Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei, 66-67.
206 Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 63.
toward their experience with banishment. The result of the ideological remolding or thought reform turned out to be contrary to the stated expectations of the CCP leadership.

In assessing the experience of the political exiles in Beidahuang, the relationship of the rightists with their officers (the cadres) needs to receive special attention. Although the political exiles were generally maltreated in Beidahuang, their lot to a great extent was in the hands of individual cadres, i.e., branch leaders (fenchangzhang), brigade leaders (duizhang), and political instructors (zhidaoyuan), whose attitudes and managerial styles toward the rightists were by no means uniform or consistent, but quite individual, varying by location and time period. Under a considerate and sympathetic officer, the rightists would fare well even if their workload remained heavy and the cold wind chilled them to the bone. Generally speaking, those in Farm 853 fared better than those in Farm 850, within which those in Branches 1, 2, 4, 5 fared better than those in Yunshan Branch (there were no rightists assigned to Branch 3), and Ding Ling in Tangyuan and Ai Qing in Farm 852 fared best of all those in the Beidahuang army farms.207

Most officers, with the responsibility of organizing rightists to work and, in theory, of helping them with thought reform, had to obey rules set by the higher authorities. Nonetheless, they could certainly manipulate and make arrangements in favor of the rightists in terms of foods and living conditions. In Branch 4 (Farm 850), when fifty-six year old Nie Gannu felt pressured with his soy bean sowing quota, his two officers came to help him, something that deeply impressed Nie and other exiles.208 In Farm 853, a brigade leader Li Fuchun worked together with the rightists, treated them as friends and tried to help them with food supplies.209 Under the

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207 Analysis of the memoirs of the political exiles (Liu Meng, Nie Gannu, Huang Wu, Dai Huang, Wang Zheng, Yin Yi and Wu Yongliang) shows that the rightists in Yunshan Branch suffered the worst among all the rightists banished to Beidahuang. They endured longer work hours, poorer accommodations, more stringent food supplies and higher death rates in the years of the great famine. Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Yuan shang cao, 311-312. Even in Yunshan Branch there were still helpful cadres who, like political instructor Liu Wen, were cherished by Dai Huang, Yin Yi and Wu Yongliang. Liu cared about the well-being of the rightists, and showed great respect for them. See Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 34-36; Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 128-129; Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei, 37-38.

supervision of these compassionate officers, the exiles felt respected and thus were highly motivated in their work. These officers stood between the demanding regime and the politically disfavored group.

The same group of rightists might fare badly under different cadres. According to Dai Huang, after his helpful political instructor Liu Wen was replaced, the situation of the rightists in Yunshan rapidly deteriorated as the newly appointed officers Zhu and Yin treated them harshly and reprimanded them frequently. This was the crucial reason that accounted for the lots of the rightists in Yunshan much worse than those in other branch farms.

Fortunate Exiles: Ding Ling, Ai Qing and Others

By and large, the Beijing rightists in the army farms of Beidahuang experienced tremendous suffering, physical and psychological, which, as the fundamental characteristics of the border banishment, will be examined in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. A close look into some individual cases reveals that a small portion of rightists led relatively easier lives, for differing reasons. Compared to those who labored in Farms 850 and 853, Ding Ling seems to have fared much better due to the patronage of Wang Zhen, her friend from the pre-1949 period. Jonathan Spence describes the experience of Ding Ling in the post-1957 Beidahuang:

During this period Ding Ling was assigned to duty in the chicken coops of Tangyuan. She has recorded that she grew absorbed in the task of raising the fowl and expert at looking after the ailing chickens, some of which she nursed back to health on the heated kang in her own hut...She began to take a genuine interest in the problems of developing the best methods for raising a healthy flock, and during her spare time even built models of an ideal chicken complex, using the cardboard from old toothpaste containers or any other materials she could find.

Spence provides a close-up of Ding’s life at the grassroots and her seeming

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210 Dai Huang, *Jiushi yisheng*, 131-133; Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 54-55.
adaptation to her surroundings. Other sources, including her memoir of 1986, piece together a more comprehensive picture of her life. When assigned to Tangyuan, Ding lived in a chicken shed with her husband. On the grounds of her illness (osteomyelitis), she was assigned light work—selecting eggs for hatching, and feeding chickens that were raised around her dormitory. At times when her husband was sent to road construction during the winter, she was asked to engage in literacy projects for the local community. She enthusiastically participated in local affairs such as mediating neighbor feuds and fixing local roads. Under the patronage of Wang Zhen, she did not lack supplies of paper, special food and medicine in the famine years. The good relationships she enjoyed in the village even made her hesitant to return to her professional job in Beijing when the opportunity appeared. It seems that living in Beidahuang did not bother her at all, since she was satisfied with being a chicken run manager and doing manageable physical labor. "Why should not a writer raise chicken while Chinese commoners can do that?" she said. For this reason, Ding did not consider her more than ten years' experience in Beidahuang as banishment meted out by the Communist government.

Like Ding Ling, poet Ai Qing was also lucky among the political exiles. Due to his personal connection with Wang Zhen, Ai Qing received favorable treatment in Farm 852. For him physical labor was symbolic, as his major work was to write poetry in praise of labor heroes/heroines and the great cause of land reclamation. He was appointed as deputy director of a forestry center and offered single housing,

212 Ding Ling, Fengxue renjian, 48-56; Tani Barlow and Gary Bjorge, eds., I Myself Am a Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 44; Zheng Xiaofeng, Ding Ling zai Beidahuang, 19-23.

213 Zheng Xiaofeng, Ding Ling zai Beidahuang, 73.

214 After being released and getting her case reversed in the late 1970s, Ding Ling expressed an even more positive attitude towards the Party. She seldom talked about her personal afflictions in Beidahuang but considered all her suffering in the Maoist period as a special trial the Party afforded to her, as well as a good opportunity to steel her revolutionary spirit. Zheng Xiaofeng, Ding Ling zai Beidahuang, 2, 84.
which was extremely rare in that political context. The experience of Ding and Ai show the importance of personal network, even for ones who were politically disgraced.

For artists, playwrights and engineers who did not have personal connections with important figures, their professional expertise made their life easier. After engaging in several months of reservoir construction, artist Ding Cong was transferred to a part-time job editing a magazine *Beidahuang wenyi* (Literature and Art in Beidahuang) due to his talent in cartoon drawing. Playwright Wu Zuguang had a similar experience. He was asked to serve in a farm art troupe writing plays to sing the praises of land pioneers. Although they still needed to do some physical labor, their new posts provided obvious benefits other political exiles could hardly dream of—better living conditions, freedom to go to county towns, the chance to practice their expertise and, most importantly, better food. In the difficult years, less manual labor and better food supplies meant more chance of survival.

The political exiles granted favorable treatment were limited in number. Of the thousands of Beijing rightists in Beidahuang, no more than twenty were transferred to less strenuous work before October 1959. For the vast majority, the only way to leave the lives mired in starvation and hardship rested with periodical “removal of hats (or caps)” (*zaimao*), which started in the fall of 1959. In August of 1959, the CCP Chairman Mao Zedong proposed to remove rightist labels from a proportion of rightists who were deemed to behave well in labor reform. The proportion of those to be removed of their labels was to be under 10%. When the first round of this removal project was finished in the Beidahuang army farms in winter of 1959,

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217 Ding Cong, interview; Yang Congdao, interview.
only limited numbers of rightists had their labels removed and were given permission to leave the farms. A deep sense of disappointment was generated.  

Ultimately, it was the massive starvation and deaths caused by serious food shortages in Beidahuang (see Chapter Four) that helped put an end to this phase of border banishment. Although initially planning to release the rightists group by group in different time periods, the central authorities were struck by the flood of deaths in 1960. It was obvious that the longer the rightists stayed in Beidahuang, the more of them would die of starvation. Therefore, from the end of 1960 to early 1961, Beijing rightists were allowed to successively leave this great wilderness in which many of their fellow exiles lay forever.

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Chapter Three
Political Offenders in the Labor Camps of Xingkaihu

Starting in late 1957, prisons and pre-trial detention centers in metropolitan Beijing saw an increasing intake of prisoners and suspects of various kinds. In the general context of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the CCP government waged a battle against counterrevolutionaries in December 1957, arresting across the country hundreds of thousands of what were termed “historical counterrevolutionaries” and “active counterrevolutionaries”. On August 3, 1957, the State Council issued the “Resolution on Reeducation through Labor” under which various elements that allegedly fostered political instability were to be sent to labor reeducation camps. In Beijing, the Public Security Bureau elevated its persecution of “social undesirables.” Street hooligans, pickpockets, and tramps who were usually left alone were rounded up as criminals; villagers in the suburbs of Beijing were also picked up for petty theft or vagrancy. Prior to further dispersal, all of these detainees were put into various detention centers, such as Caolanzi, Banbuqiao and Beiyuan. Those who received fixed term sentences were sent to prisons or nearby labor camps, such as the Xindu Machinery Factory, the Qinghe Farm and Tongzhou Prison.

These large scale arrests tested the holding capacity of Beijing labor reform regimes. The Caolanzi Detention Center, which had been notorious for the confinement of political convicts in the GMD period, received approximately 2400...
new inmates. By late December 1957, each cell in the prison held around 40 inmates, and the space for each to sleep was less than 10 inches; inmates had to sleep on their sides at night instead of on their backs. According to Hongda Harry Wu, who was put into the Beiyuan Detention Center, the problem of over-crowding remained unresolved even in 1960. "The kang (traditional brick sleeping platforms used in north and northeast China) were clogged with bodies. No longer did we have two feet of space, but we lay on our sides, pressed tightly together. Twice each night the duty prisoner gave orders for everyone to turn over, and we shifted to the other side in a collective movement because the kang was too crowded for us to move individually."

Facing the annoying dilemma that existing prison facilities were unable to accommodate so many targets of the proletarian dictatorship, the Public Security Bureau of Beijing in early 1958 decided to transfer some inmates (both political and criminal) to the Northeast frontier regions, in particular Heilongjiang’s Xingkaihu Labor Farm, in order to make room for the recent arrivals.

The importance of the Xingkaihu Labor Farm for this study is that it was the most notorious labor reform complex established by the Beijing police authorities in the Northeast frontier region. The results of the 1957 purge for Xingkaihu have hardly been paralleled in PRC history, in terms of the physical conditions, the suffering inmates endured there, and the number of political prisoners it received from Beijing. While those sent to Xingkaihu consisted of various types of offenders, this chapter focuses on the experiences of the prisoners banished for political reasons (hereafter referred to as political prisoners, or political offenders),

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224 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 31.
226 Xingkaihu changshiban, Xingkaihu nongchang shi (Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm) (Mishan: No pub., 1988), 399.
227 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm acknowledges that this labor farm was the biggest labor reform farm that the Beijing Public Security Bureau established in the frontier regions. For various offenders and even the general public in North China and Manchuria, Xingkaihu has been synonymous with severe punishment and death. Literature and movies in the post-Mao period frequently dramatize the harshness of Xingkaihu. In the movie Blue Kite, for example, one of the main characters Lin Shulong was among many who were banished to and died in Xingkaihu, after being labeled a rightist.
typically ultra-rightists (jiyou) in labor reeducation camps, and people sentenced as counterrevolutionaries (fan geming) in labor reform camps. Other inmates are also discussed where relevant. To contextualize this research, the experiences of political prisoners in other labor camps in Manchuria and Northern China are occasionally incorporated.

Since no official documents or police records have been published about political prisoners in Xingkaihu in terms of their work, lives and deaths, it is difficult to obtain the official version of the experiences of these political prisoners. Local gazetteers (such as Heilongjiang Provincial Gazetteer, Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm and Gazetteers of Mishan County, where Xingkaihu farm is located) are useful for providing basic accounts of Xingkaihu’s agricultural activities, population statistics and the farm structure, yet sources regarding how the inmates were managed, and accounts of their lives in Xingkaihu are still lacking. This research has greatly benefited from individual recollections of former inmates — publications by Liu Naiyuan and Wu Ningkun, as well as unpublished manuscripts and interview materials from Chen Fengxiao, Tan Tianrong, Han Dajun, Yin Jiliang, Ba Hong, Hui Peilin, and Hu Xianzhong. In addition, some fragmentary recollections incorporated in Chanji: kunan de jitan by Hu Ping, and Hongda Harry Wu’s Bitter Winds have also proved valuable.

Xingkaihu Labor Farm

Xingkaihu Labor Farm, with its name drawn from the nearby Xingkai Lakes (Little Xingkai Lake in the north and Great Xingkai Lake in the south), is located in the southeastern corner of Heilongjiang. In the mid-1950s, it was a vast stretch of desolate marshland with no trace of human habitation. During the rainy season from April to August when the Little Xingkai Lake frequently overflowed, this region was terribly waterlogged, with thousands of square kilometers of inundated areas.228

When the massive military colonization of Heilongjiang began in the mid-

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228 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 4, 387; Mishan xianzi bianweihui, Mishan xianzhi (Gazetteer of Mishan County) (Beijing: Zhongguo biaozun chubanshe, 1993), 188-189.
1950s, the Ministry of Public Security ordered the Beijing Public Security Bureau to establish a substantial base in the Heilongjiang frontier area to perform the combined functions of grain production and convict rehabilitation. Considering the remote geographical location and the special requirements for confining inmates, preference was given to the Xingkaihu area. In August 1955, with an official document signed by Zhou Enlai, the premier of the People’s Republic, the Xingkaihu Labor Reform Farm was formally acclaimed the Xingkaihu State Farm (Heilongjiang).229

Compared to other labor farms that emerged in Heilongjiang from the 1950s to the 1960s, the administrative features of Xingkaihu were unique. From its establishment to January 1967, when it ceased to be a labor reform farm, Xingkaihu turned out to be an enclave of the Beijing Public Security Bureau. The prisoners, the forced laborers, were customarily transported there from Beijing. All the personnel of Xingkaihu, from camp police and managerial staff to prisoners, had Beijing hukou, used Beijing food coupons and had their farm products shipped to Beijing. The heads of the farm were police officers appointed by the Beijing Public Security Bureau.230

The early development of Xingkaihu involved an intensive use of forced labor. Construction in this area started in winter 1955, when more than ten thousand convicts (former GMD soldiers, subsequently labeled counterrevolutionaries, and various kinds of criminal offenders) were delivered by train and truck. Upon arrival, these convicts were assigned to numerous projects, designed to change the physical landscape of this inundated area. The construction they undertook included: 1) one hundred li of main dykes to separate the Little Xingkai Lake from the surrounding marshland; 2) a flood relief channel, which was used to discharge flood water from the Little Xingkai Lake to the Great Xingkai Lake; 3) a set of drainage works leading to the nearby Songacha River to secure land reclamation; and 4) a fifty-

229 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 387-388; Heilongjiang sheng difangzhi bianweihui, Heilongjiang shengzhi guoying nongchang zhi (Gazetteer of Heilongjiang: the State Farms Volume) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1992), 77.
230 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 3, 9; Chen Fengxiao, interview; Yin Jiliang, interview.
kilometer long trunk canal, which was used to irrigate rice fields. These massive undertakings were accomplished by the convicts using manual labor only—with spades and picks. A local newspaper disclosed that if the excavated earth were piled up in a cubic meter wall, it would circle the equator three and half times. While this achievement in pioneering the formidable wilderness was warmly acclaimed in the official media, only limited credit was accorded to the forced laborers, even thirty years later. By early 1958, when hordes of political prisoners—the victims of the Anti-Rightist Campaign—arrived, the majority of the irrigation projects had been completed. The work left for these newcomers was mainly rice and wheat cultivation.

The years 1958 and 1959 saw a massive deportation to Xingkaihu of various offenders and an influx of police officers who came to supervise them. By the end of 1959, the total population (inmates, police officers, supporting workers, etc.) in Xinkaihu numbered 20,435; by the following year it had reached 25, 694. By 1960, when its holding capacity approached its peak, Xingkaihu was composed of ten branch farms that used convicted labor forces: Branches 1 to 4 were labor reform camps that confined convicts; Branch 5 confined both convicts and resettlement workers—those who had completed their terms but were forcibly retained in the labor reform system; Branches 6 to 9 were labor reeducation camps that accommodated those who had not received a formal sentence but had to be punished in a similar way to labor reform. The livestock farm accommodated female offenders. There was also an affiliated prison for those who repeated their offences during the course of their terms. With these elaborate arrangements and several

231 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 36, 394; Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 69.
232 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 69. Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm acknowledges that the establishment of the Xingkaihu farm entailed a degree of contribution of convict laborers, and that some of whom lost their lives. See the Prelude for Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm.
233 Gazetteer of Xinkaihu Farm, 10. The Gazetteer does not specify the influx of inmates during these two years. However, statistics are available for a longer period. During the 1955-67, the numbers of police officers and camp cadres totaled 1783, convicted criminals, laojiao inmates, and other urban undesirable elements totaled 21364, and supporting workers from Beijing were around 2200. We can estimate that over 84% of the Xinkaihu population consisted of various offenders. Gazetteer of Xinkaihu Farm, 9.
234 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 35, 44; Yin Jiliang, interview.
industrial enterprises (such as a coal mine and a paper mill) that involved the use of forced labor as well, Xingkaihu turned into a huge labor reform complex.

**Labor Reform System and Categories of Political Offenders**

Beginning in August 1957, when the labor reeducation system was instituted, the PRC’s labor reform regime consisted of three distinct parts: camps for reform through labor, or labor reform (*laogai*), that held those who had been sentenced under law; camps for reeducation through labor, or labor reeducation (*laojiao*), that held those who were not formally sentenced but were subjected to administrative discipline by police authorities; and camps of forced job placement (*jiuye*), that held those who had completed their sentence but were not allowed to leave the labor camp system. All the camps that imprisoned offenders and featured intensive use of their labor for production are generally referred to as labor reform camps. 235 Given the fact that those incarcerated in detention centers and prisons were overwhelmingly transferred to *laogai* and *laojiao* camps and, if they were lucky to survive, eventually ended up in *jiuye* camps, *laogai*, *laojiao* and *jiuye* constituted the major part of China’s forced labor reform system. Xingkaihu, with its well-established facilities, accommodated all of these three kinds of forced laborers. Its structure, as shown in the section above, precisely embodied the characteristics of the PRC’s labor reform framework.

During the founding period of Xingkaihu, a significant percentage of the inmates were political offenders. Despite a lack of accuracy, the Gazetteer of Xingkaihu provides valuable clues about the number of political offenders by disclosing that “during the early period of the farm, one third of the convicts were counterrevolutionaries, among more than two thousands of the whole.” 236 During the massive influx in 1959 and 1960, it seems that the proportion of political offenders

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236 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 396.
did not increase substantially. According to Yin Jiliang, who was labeled a counterrevolutionary and placed into Branch One, there were around three or four people sentenced for political reasons in his twelve-person squad during his five years of imprisonment.\textsuperscript{237} Tan Tianrong, an ultra-rightist, also estimates that political offenders roughly accounted for 30\% of all the people in his team.\textsuperscript{238} If this proportion represents the average percentage, at its high point of 1959-60 Xingkaihu might have incarcerated at least 5,000 political prisoners.

Political inmates in Xingkaihu could be roughly broken down into three categories: the ultra-rightists, the historical counterrevolutionaries, and the active counterrevolutionaries.

1. **The ultra-rightists.** Ultra-rightists, such as Tan Tianrong from Peking University and Han Dajun from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, were sent to labor reeducation camps (Tan was in Branch 8 and Han in Branch 7). They were considered to have committed serious offenses, and the punishment they received was harsher than the rightists sent to army farms though less severe than those who were sent to labor reform branches. Although they were not formally tried and were not subject to a term-sentence because of the Party’s “leniency,” they were still seen to be in need of discipline by the police authorities. Labor reeducation camps were thus perfect places for them to go. According to the “Resolution on Reeducation through Labor” promulgated by the State Council on August 3, 1957, “Reeducation through labor” was an administrative, rather than a judicial, penalty used to deal with “anti-socialist reactionaries” and those who were discharged by their work units, both of which were perfectly applied to “ultra-rightists.”\textsuperscript{239}

\textsuperscript{237} Yin Jiliang, interview.
\textsuperscript{238} Tan Tianrong, interview.
\textsuperscript{239} The PRC State Council, “The Resolution on Reeducation through Labor”(August 3, 1957), in Guowuyuan fazhiju, ed., Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianxingfalu xingzhengfagui huibian, Vol. 1, 104. This resolution also applied to other social groups, such as those who refused to accept designated jobs, or those who allegedly committed “sexual misconduct.”
2. **The historical counterrevolutionaries.** This group of offenders mainly included personnel who had been employed in the former GMD government, which was overthrown by the communists in 1949, collaborators with the Japanese and colonial governments during the Japanese occupation, and those who gave military service to these regimes. Leaders of secret societies before the Communist takeover were also categorized into this group. Relatively older than other inmates, they normally had less political commitment, admitted their “crimes,” behaved themselves and showed obedience to the camp authorities. Although they were deemed to be class enemies and some received term-sentences, cadres in prison camps normally treated them with a degree of leniency.  

3. **The active counterrevolutionaries.** This group received the worst treatment amongst the political prisoners, and prisoners as a whole. Considered to have committed the most serious crimes, they went through formal trials and many were sentenced for relatively long terms. The charges against them were weighty, such as “trying to overthrow the people’s government” and/or “the sabotage of socialism.” Many of them were young and energetic, independent in political opinion, less submissive to ideological and administrative control, and thus were deemed by camp authorities as the most dangerous elements. In prisons or in labor camps, they were prime targets for various kinds of persecution and discrimination.

It is often assumed that people who were put into labor reform camps were those who had committed more serious crimes than those put into reeducation camps.

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240 Liu Junying, a camp cadre in Branch Five of Xingkaihu, recalls that the historical counterrevolutionaries under him were generally docile and worked dedicatedly, so he did not give them a hard time. Liu Junying, interview.

241 Chen Fengxiao and Liu Qidi (student dissidents of Peking University), for instance, were both sentenced for 15 years for their sharp criticisms during the Hundred Flower Movement.
Actually some of those sent to Xingkaihu labor reform branch for serious political crime had by no means committed anything that could be referred to “political” or “criminal.” Han Chuntai, an ordinary construction worker in Beijing, was regarded by his colleagues as an upright, dedicated person who never made any dissent against the government. It was his oral abuse of a Soviet engineer that sent him to Xingkaihu. When one day he found the Soviet engineer and the Chinese woman driver who served him hugging each other in public, he was very upset and scolded them “Shameful (buyaolian)!” After he was handcuffed and sent to a detention center, the judges found it difficult to declare him a counterrevolutionary or a rightist. Eventually he was sentenced to fifteen-years imprisonment on the grounds of “insulting a Soviet expert, and sabotaging Sino-Soviet friendship” and was sent to Xingkaihu labor reform camp.242

By contrast, Tai Tianrong, the spiritual leader of student dissidents in Peking University, received no formal sentence, but was sent to a labor reeducation camp even though he stubbornly refused to acknowledge his “error.”243 It is unreliable to judge a person’s political crimes simply based on the classification of laogai or laojiao.

It is also misleading to assume that people in laojiao camps necessarily fared better than those in laogai camps, since laogai inmates were sentenced as criminals while laojiao inmates were merely subjected to “administrative discipline.” For a penal offender whose crime was seen as less threatening to the regime, laojiao treatment certainly lent more hope. But for political offenders, especially for the ultra-rightists, their situation did not see much improvement because of their political status as class enemies. A penal criminal in laogai camps, whose offense was defined as criminal rather than political in nature, likely fared better than ultra-rightists in laojiao camps.

Laojiao inmates in theory enjoyed partial personal freedom and nominal

242 Ibid, 66.
243 Tan Tianrong, unpublished essay “Meiyou qingjie de gushi ” (Stories without Plot), 2; Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 13. Tan received lighter sanction probably because he never tried to flee or resist, but stayed in his dormitory doing research while waiting for the police.
suffrage, and received limited wages, while laogai inmates were deprived of almost everything except for basic subsistence needs.\textsuperscript{244} These advantages, however, could be trumped by the indefinite duration of their confinement in labor reeducation camps. Because no clear, fixed term was declared for laojiao inmates, they could be detained for periods as lengthy as, or even longer than, laogai convicts. Although counterrevolutionary Yin Jiliang was sentenced to a five year term to a laogai branch in Xingkaihu, Tan Tianrong and Liu Naiyuan, as ultra rightists, were incarcerated in laojiao camps for eleven years. According to Meng Bo, some laojiao inmates even served fourteen years.\textsuperscript{245} In terms of hardship, inmates in the laogai branches of Xingkaihu sometimes worked for 8 hours or 8.5 hours since the PLA soldiers who escorted them (when needed) during their work had fixed working hours; but laojiao inmates who theoretically had more freedom normally worked for more than ten hours a day.\textsuperscript{246} This is an important reason why many laojiao inmates saw their sufferings in laojiao camps as being worse than the convicts in laogai camps.

\textbf{Young Intellectuals}

Of the various political exiles in the Xingkaihu labor reform complex, young intellectuals, especially ex-university students and young teachers, were a conspicuous group.\textsuperscript{247} Many of them had received or were pursuing post-secondary education, which had encouraged their independent thinking before arrest or detention. They did not merely assume the position of loyal opponents as many other rightists did, but rather they waged sharp attacks on the existing political

\textsuperscript{244} According to Han Dajun, a laojiao inmate in Xingkaihu received a monthly stipend of 17 yuan Chinese RMB. Han Dajun, interview.

\textsuperscript{245} Tan Tianrong, "Meiyou qingjie de gushi," 2; Liu Nianyuan, Mirror, 314. Both of them were detained from 1958-1969. Also see, Meng Bo, "Laogai jishi" (Stories in Laogai), in Xiao Ke, et al., \textit{Wo qili guo de zhengzhi yundong} (The Political Campaigns That I Have Experienced) (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 1998), 73-74.

\textsuperscript{246} Wu Yue and Tan Tianrong, interviews. Tan said that the best period he spent in Xingkaihu was the several months when he was ordered to temporarily work in laogai branches.

\textsuperscript{247} From the source materials of more than 40 political exiles that I have reviewed, it can be surmised that the student prisoners, both in Xingkaihu and in other labor camps, were the most defiant group among the political prisoners.
system. Their statements such as "the origin of bureaucratism and hierarchy lies exactly in the current political system" and "get the Communist Party committee out of universities" were among the harshest condemnations that appeared during the Hundred Flowers Movement.\(^{248}\) Compared to the rightists in army farms discussed in Chapter Two, these young intellectuals displayed enormous courage in pursuing political and intellectual independence. Many of them were initially labeled ordinary rightists and yet received additional punishment for their firm defense of their opinions and their resolute refusal to admit their "guilt." In labor camps, some of them displayed strong resistance and disobedience towards camp authorities. Although not refusing to do physical labor, their attitudes toward thought reform through labor were largely negative, as will be shown below.

**Chen Fengxiao (1936--)**

Chen Fengxiao was born into an urban family in Weifang, Shandong. Before his arrest in September 1957, Chen was a math student in Peking University and the chief leader of Hundred Flowers Society, a well-known student dissident society in Beijing. Because of their vigorous condemnation of the darkness under the Communist rule, of the Liquidation of Counterrevolutionaries Campaign of 1955, and of Stalinist totalitarianism, Chen and his fellow students were accused of forming a "counterrevolutionary group" and of engaging in "subversion of the people's democratic dictatorship."\(^{249}\) Having found punishment unavoidable, Chen made constant efforts to flee China. He tried to break into the Indian Embassy, the British Office of the Charge d'Affaires, and the Yugoslav Embassy for refuge, and when all of these efforts failed, he attempted to sneak on to a foreign cargo ship anchored at the port of Tianjin. He was arrested immediately, and in April 1958 was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment for his counterrevolutionary treason. After months of imprisonment and forced labor in Beijing, Chen was sent to the Branch 4

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\(^{248}\) Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., *Yuan shang cao*, 42, 108.

In the labor camp, Chen’s work assignment was similar to others—digging trenches, building roads, planting rice, hoeing weeds, etc. During the years of severe food shortages, this work demanded more energy and endurance than a hungry laborer could exert. Chen was so worn out that sometimes he even doubted if he could survive his 15 year sentence with the crushing workload. The frequent witnessing of the deaths of his fellow exiles added to his desperation and grievance.251

Luckily, Chen survived the starvation and the daunting labor. It was the physical abuse that made him most miserable in the camp. Because of his untamable temperament, he spoke defiantly and openly expressed his contempt for the camp cadres; he talked with other political prisoners at will, without fear of punishment.252 He firmly believed in his innocence, and refused to show appreciation for the Party’s labor reform policy; he even used a secret code to write down his reflections on current political issues, such as the Sino-Soviet split, which was absolutely forbidden for prisoners to discuss.253 As the result of such obstinate and unyielding behavior, he was often beaten and hung up, sometime with fifty pounds of shackles on his feet, and sometimes he was badly burned with cigarettes. Several times when he was handcuffed and put into solitary confinement in a small concrete cell, he could only crawl towards food and grab it with his mouth. When the camp police executed convicts, he was hauled out to the execution ground to witness the horrible scene.254 Upon completion of his term in 1972, he was transferred to a camp for forced job placement as a resettlement worker until 1979, when he was fully rehabilitated.

Tan Tianrong (1935—)

250 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 14-15, 41-42.
251 Ibid, 85.
252 Ibid, 74-75. From Caolanzi Detention Center to Tongzhou Prison and to Xingkaihu, Chen rarely kept silent when police scolded him, but spoke back at every opportunity.
Tan Tianrong is marked in Chinese history for his talents as an outstanding physics student and as an ardent critic of Stalinism, of the inherent contradictions in the worldwide communist movement, and of the bureaucratization of the Chinese Communist Party.²⁵⁵ Satirically labeled by Mao “the leader of rightist students,” Tan was demonized during and after the Anti-Rightist Campaign. He was formally arrested in November 1958, and was sent to Xingkaihu in spring 1959.²⁵⁶

Tan treated the labor assigned to him with scholarly seriousness but he was still so closely watched by camp cadres that his campmates preferred not to work close to him and be under constant surveillance. What distinguished Tan from other political prisoners in the labor reeducation camp was his unremitting pursuit of academic interests after work—to read whatever he could find, whether Marxist classics or science texts, from which he drew great inspiration to resist thought remolding. He was passive in formal political study sessions, but quietly conducted research on quantum mechanics and mathematical logic when blizzards in Xingkaihu made field work impossible; his behavior was seen by camp cadres as an indication of “resisting thought reform.”²⁵⁷

Tan’s creative perceptions of Marxist texts, which were officially permitted reading in labor camps, provided him with a useful tool to refute current political indoctrination, rather than follow revolutionary rhetoric. In early 1963, official media claimed that the low price of vegetables in Chinese markets indicated the good living standard of ordinary people under socialism. Yet Tan argued in a political study session that this was exactly the cause of poverty among the Chinese peasantry under the state planned economy; Tan was ruthlessly attacked by camp

²⁵⁵ For the political statements of Tan Tianrong, see MacFarquhar, ed., The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals, 135-137; Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., Yuan shang cao, 28-67.
²⁵⁷ Tan Tianrong, “Meiyou qingjie de gushi,” 3-4. This same “science and resistance” pattern was repeated by Fang Lizhi. See James Williams, “Fang Lizhi’s Expanding Universe”, in The China Quarterly, Vol. 123 (September, 1990), 459-484.
cadres and even by his fellow inmates.\(^{258}\) His independent thinking and his passionate defense of himself were deeply abhorred by camp cadres, thus he was classified several times as an “anti-reform element”\(^{(fanganizao fenzi)}\), and was repeatedly punished with extended session of confinement in labor camps. In 1969, when Tan finally completed his years of labor reeducation, he was sent back to his home village in Xiangxiang, Hunan, as a commune member under mass surveillance, and spent relatively peaceful years with his mother and his friendly fellow villagers.\(^{259}\)

**Hu Xianzhong (1932--)**

Hu's experience as a political prisoner deserves special attention, even though he was mostly confined in Jilin labor camps rather than Xingkaihu. As a student at Northeastern People’s University, Hu had a similar educational background to Tan Tianrong and Chen Fengxiao, except he had experience as a veteran Communist before the Communist takeover.\(^{260}\) In 1957 Hu Xianzhong was severely condemned for his ardent defense of the literary critic Hu Feng. Hu Xianzhong refuted all the accusations against him, and even composed a couplet satirizing his ignorant attackers.\(^{261}\)

Like Chen Fengxiao, in 1957 Hu Xianzhong wanted to leave the country that he and his fellow communists had fought so hard for. He attempted to secure protection from foreign representatives in Beijing, as evidenced by his unsuccessful contact with the British Office of the Charge d’Affaires. When he returned to his university in September 1957, he was labeled an ultra-rightist, and shortly afterward


\(^{259}\) *Ibid*, 82-83; Tan Tianrong, interview. Tan claims that his stay in his home village of Xiangxiang was his best period since he was labeled an ultra-rightist. Although drawing a political line against him, his fellow villagers rarely disrupted his research, such as that on quantum mechanics.

\(^{260}\) After he joined the CCP at the age of 16 as a secondary school student, Hu Xianzhong was enthusiastically involved in underground activities to sabotage GMD rule in his home province, Jiangxi. Having escaped an inner-Party purge before the Communist takeover, Hu lost contact with his Party branch as well as his Party membership, and was thus subjected to constant suspicion in the early 1950s. See Wang Shilan, “Yuanyu ershinian” (The Unjust Sentence of Twenty Years), in *Jishi wenxue*, No. 2, 1989, 73.

\(^{261}\) *Ibid*, 78; Hu Xianzhong, interview; Zhang Xiaofeng, unpublished essay “Hu Feng anjian yu youpai xuesheng” (Hu Feng’s Case and Rightist Students),” 4-6.
was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment with a charge of "treason."  

During his years of imprisonment, Hu was transferred between various prison camps in Jilin Province—Tiebei Prison, Jinqianpu Labor Camp, and Zhennai Labor Farm, etc. Hu obstinately showed defiance to the Party’s labor reform policy and resisted all remolding efforts of the camps. When ordered to talk about what he had learnt from labor reform, his reply was “nothing to learn.” When asked if he realized the Party’s benevolence in providing a chance to reform in prison, his answer stunned all the camp cadres: “Even when the Communist Party supported me for school and allowed me to freely air my opinion, I still criticized it for its errors. How can I shift my stance and sing its praises when it shuts me up and puts me into prison?”  

Because of statements such as these, which were rarely heard in the prison camps, he suffered severe maltreatment. His four attempts to break out of prison all ended in failure, which in turn invited even more physical abuse, including hunger punishment and tight handcuffs biting into his flesh. His survival of labor camp was thanks to a compassionate prison doctor who saved his life from the brink of death several times.  

The young inmates who behaved fearlessly towards the camp authorities are also known to include Xuan Shouzhi, Gu Xiangqian and Liu Qidi. Xuan, a graduate of Qinghua University, kept refusing to work no matter which branch farm he was sent to in Xingkaihu, and was put into the solitary confinement where he was eventually crippled. Gu, a lecturer in the Beijing Film Institute, refused to admit the error of his ways when he was sent to Xingkaihu, and thus suffered repeated insults. He maintained a hunger strike for one week, and finally died in a camp cell.  

By and large, however, political inmates who behaved defiantly in labor camps

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262 Hu Xianzhong, interview. Due to his appeal, Hu was re-sentenced for ten years imprisonment, which was a real exception in the post-1957 period.
263 Hu Xianzhong, interview.
264 Hu Xianzhong, “Sanshiqi nian youzilei” (Tears of a Wandering Son: Thirty Seven Years), in Zhonggong Nanchang shi chenggongbu jinian wenji (The Memorial Collection of the CCP’s Nanchang Urban Work Department) (Nanchang: No pub., 1999), 284-310. In response to repeated abuse, Hu once rose up and punched a duty prisoner (a trustee of the camp cadres), for which he was beaten into unconscious; the constant use of handcuffs also lead to his left arm being semi-crippled.
265 Han Dajun, interview. Regarding Liu Qidi, see Chen Fengxiao’s narrative quoted in Chapter Four.
were rare. Having survived relentless attacks during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, most political inmates collapsed mentally and thus gave up. The charges they faced were intimidating, camp cadres were powerful and labor work was daunting. All of these factors forced them to realize that direct confrontation with camp authorities could only bring physical abuse, hunger and extra workloads. The majority of political inmates tried to avoid direct confrontation with camp authorities and behaved submissively instead, even though they held deep-rooted anger and grievances. Inmates such as Liu Naiyuan, Wu Ningkun and Yin Jiliang all adopted a strategy of silence and endurance to avoid unnecessary trouble. Even though they argued for their basic human rights, such as equal shares of food and shorter work hours, they tried not to excessively irritate camp cadres.

Life in Xingkaihu

Compared to the rightists in the army farms (see Chapter Two), physical conditions the Xingkaihu inmates confronted were worse, and their treatment harsher. Upon arrival, they cut grass and wood to build their shacks, and they collected ice and snow for cooking and drinking. They had to stand in icy mud digging trenches or leveling the ground without any labor protection equipment. Work targets had to be fulfilled. Those who showed poor work performance not only suffered at the hands of camp cadres but also from duty prisoners and other inmates. In Xingkaihu, work was assigned collectively according to the number of

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266 Liu Naiyuan at times went to camp cadre Zhang to ask for an equal share of his cereal ration, which was kept lower than other inmates because of his poor performance at work. His manner was polite; although he was firmly refused, he tried not to irritate cadre Zhang. Liu Nayuan, Mirror, 229-230.

267 Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 391, 397.

268 In Xingkaihu as well as in the PRC’s prison camp system as a whole, the personnel who were in charge of inmates were generally referred to camp cadres or guanjiao ganbu, ranging from political instructors to team leaders and managerial secretaries. Appointed by the Beijing Public Security Bureau, the camp cadres in Xingkaihu were responsible for disciplining inmates, administering their life, supervising their work and giving political tutelage. See Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 72-74; Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 396-397. Duty prisoners or laotou were designated prisoners, who were normally physically strong and politically close to the camp authorities, and thus were entrusted to assist camp cadres in handling inmates at the lowest level. In addition to wielding considerable power over their fellow inmates, they were also responsible for the completion of labor work assigned to their squads or teams.
inmate teams. If individuals did not fulfill their targets, the whole team would lag behind. Camp cadres would then blame duty prisoners, who, in turn, would personally or via other prisoners visit misfortune on that individual. During the three lean years of 1959-62, these forced laborers survived on the meagerest grain rations, with their food subjected to frequent appropriation by camp cadres. Strenuous labor, lack of nutrition and medical care, and physical abuse were among the main causes of their untimely deaths. The physical abuse, mental suffering and death the political prisoners experienced will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Below, I outline a number of distinctive features of their daily camp routine.

Treated as class enemies or criminals, the inmates in Xingkaihu were closely watched and subjected to armed escort even during work. Laojiao inmates were guarded by camp cadres who brought pistols with them while laogai convicts were guarded by PLA soldiers. Fields they worked were marked by red flags. Anyone who went beyond the marked lines could be shot on the spot by the authority of the law. The living areas of laojiao inmates were marked by a large ring of wooden sticks sparsely planted without cords or ropes encircling their living quarters. In the first week after his arrival, a fellow inmate of Liu Naiyuan in Branch 8 was shot dead for crossing the unclear cordon in the night.

In the Xingkaihu labor camps, official newspapers (especially the Heilongjiang Daily) were available, or to be more accurate, were compulsory reading for the political prisoners. After a day of strenuous labor, they had to attend political study sessions of one or two hours before sleep. The main routine of such sessions was the reading out of newspapers by camp cadres, or alternatively, by a literate prisoner. During study sessions, everybody was required to speak, to repeat or to rephrase materials from newspapers, to praise the Party’s policies, or to eulogize economic

269 The death toll varied in the different branch camps of Xingkaihu. According to Chen Fengxiao, among the 75 convicts who were sent to Team One of Branch Four in April 1959, only 29 remained alive on January 1967, when Xingkaihu labor farm was disbanded. Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 90.
270 Xiu Min, a campmate of Chen Fengxiao, was shot in the arm because of slightly crossing the marked line. Ibid, 169.
271 Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 211-212.
achievements. Free expression of individual opinion was not allowed. Prisoners were also asked to examine their daily thoughts and work, and to find fault with others. Study sessions were essentially the focus of thought reform in labor camps.

Free reading was officially restricted, except for the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao. Chen Fengxiao was originally allowed to bring with him a box of books, which included Russian versions of math texts, an English Bible, and foreign literary masterpieces. When he arrived at Xingkaihu, all of these books were seized by camp authorities and burned during the Cultural Revolution. In some branch camps, works on science and technology that were regarded as politically irrelevant were allowed.

Occasionally, severe weather in the borderland allowed relaxation for the Xingkaihu inmates. When blizzards raged, any outdoor work was impossible, and inmates were kept in their barracks. Additionally, right after busy farm seasons, such as spring sowing, inmates were also given a short break. During these breaks, inmates often played chess or chatted among themselves. However, if political offenders met too frequently, camp cadres would intervene.

As a sign of the Party's benevolence, prisoners in Xingkaihu were allowed to write to their families once a month, although letters were censored by camp authorities. Liu Naiyuan recounts,

All our correspondence was under strict censorship. All incoming mails for us from our families were opened before they were distributed to the recipients, and all letters we wrote to our dear ones were submitted, stamped but unsealed, to the police officers who sent them out after examining their contents.

Descriptions of hardship, hunger, and requests for food were forbidden in

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272 Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 97, 103.
274 Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 96. As a laojiao inmate, Han Dajun was allowed to read books of agricultural technology; some camp cadres also borrowed these books from him. Han Dajun, interview.
275 Tan Tianrong, interview; Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 74. Chen was once put into solitary confinement for his frequent chats with other "counterrevolutionaries."
letters during the earlier famine years. When Yin Jiliang hinted to his mother in Beijing that he wanted some biscuits, he wrote “Do you often visit Yili (the name of a food product factory)?” in order to get his request past the censors.  

**Escape**

In the Maoist period, due to its harsh environment, Xingkaihu was considered a formidable place by offenders, criminal and political alike. The remoteness, the marshlands, the cold and the mosquitoes have been infamous for many Chinese especially prisoners. Being banished to Xingkaihu was almost synonymous to a death sentence, so convicts tried hard not to be sent there. In the Beiyuan Detention Center, Cong Weixi recounted how, a rumor of possible banishment to Xingkaihu caused grave fear among the inmates. When their fates were sealed and prisoners were destined for Xingkaihu, some tried to escape during the journey. In April 1959, when around 5,000 convicts were on the way to Xingkaihu, seven plotted to escape. The scheme failed and four of the chief organizers were executed.

Upon arrival at Xingkaihu, exiles found it difficult to flee since the grim geographical and ecological environment made escape unfeasible. The Xingkaihu complex was surrounded by rivers, lakes, and thousands of square kilometers of marshland, which could devour anyone who got lost in it during the wet season. Still, some tried though none succeeded. Inmates fleeing to the wilderness during the winter headed for certain death during the unpredictable blizzards. The only potential way out was a man-made embankment guarded by PLA soldiers. Some

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277 Yin Jiliang, interview.

278 Cong Weixi, *Zouxiang hundun* (Going towards Chaos) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 118-121. The exception existed, however. In the Banbuqiao Detention Center in which Wu Ningkun was put, many detainees did not fear to be sent to any labor camp including Xingkaihu, as long as they could get enough food to eat and leave the crowded prison cells. “After two months of incarceration on a starvation diet, we all jumped at the prospect of working in the sun on a full stomach.” See Wu Ningkun, *A Single Tear*, 77.


280 Liu Naiyuan recalls that an inmate in Branch Eight got away from the encampment after careful preparation. Armed with a map, a compass, and food he stole from the kitchen, he marched into the depth of ripened *wula* grass one autumn dawn, and gradually walked into ankle-deep water in what he thought was the right direction. He walked for the whole day but ended up in neck-deep water and silt. In a desperate panic he shouted for help. A peasant collecting wild-duck eggs in a rowboat saved him and returned him to the camp. Liu Naiyuan, *Mirror*, 240.
would-be escapees put their hope on crossing into the Soviet Union, which faces the Xingkaihu marshland across a shallow river—the Songacha River. During the Sino-Soviet honeymoon, all escapees fleeing to the Soviet Union were sent back, and some were executed.²⁸¹ The Sino-Soviet breakdown bred a degree of hope for prisoners who desperately wanted to leave. One laogai inmate, Wang Xingbai, of Branch 1, successfully escaped. As a former Russian language instructor in a Chinese university, Wang was at first treated well by Russian frontier guards and sent to Moscow, but he was eventually extradited to China. He paid for his adventure with the sentence “stay of execution”. According to Chen Fengxiao, the majority of returned escapees were sentenced to execution or received a stay of execution for their “counterrevolutionary treason” of attempted escape.²⁸²

For those confined in other labor camps in Manchuria, attempted escapes would normally lead to maltreatment by camp police rather than the death penalty. Hu Xianzhong’s frequent escapes rose from the maltreatment he suffered in prison camps, but each attempt resulted in even more abuse. The punishments he received included starvation, beating and hanging up, as well as the noted “Su Qin carries a sword on his back”—being handcuffed with one arm turned over the shoulder and the other twisted up from below.²⁸³

Political Offenders among Criminal Offenders

One of the striking characteristics of the Xingkaihu labor farms, as that of the whole prison camp systems in Maoist China, was the practice of placing political offenders among criminal offenders, in order to use criminals to monitor and discipline the political offenders. Unlike in GMD prisons, where prisoners were locked up separately according to the nature of their crimes, political prisoners of the CCP were distributed to various units of labor camps to prevent their collective gathering. In Xingkaihu, political prisoners amounted to no more than one-third; a majority of the inmates were non-political offenders. Liu Naiyuan recalls that in his

²⁸¹ Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 69, 102; Yin Jiliang, interview.
²⁸² Chen Fengxiao, Ibid, 114.
²⁸³ Hu Xianzhong, interview.
labor team non-political criminals included those who committed "larceny, hooliganism, corruption, murder and the like, the majority being thieves or pickpockets who had been enjoined before, and some were experienced jailbirds." In addition, Yin Jiliang's team also accommodated those who were convicted of sexual misconducts, such as sexual assault, rape, homosexuality and adultery. Although these offenses were abhorred by the general public, they were seen by CCP authorities to be less threatening to the existing political order.

With clear political lines drawn by the central authorities, political offenders in China's prison camps were nicknamed "external contradictions," or "extercons," while criminal offenders were "internal contradictions," or "innercons." The latter received more favorable treatment from camp cadres. Political inmates in Xingkaihu, such as Liu Naiyuan, got a strong feeling that camp cadres had intrinsic hatred towards bourgeois rightists while they were more friendly to "intercons." Thus they were more willing to use the "intercons" as leaders of inmate teams. Chen Fengxiao also recalls that camp cadres explicitly cited the superiority of criminal offenders over political ones and encouraged them to help watch the latter. Cell bosses, overwhelmingly criminals, were particularly responsible for watching and reporting political inmates.

In the beginning, many political prisoners felt insulted to be placed alongside common criminals, or even under them. As Yin Jiliang puts it, "we felt irritated being put among these criminals. As intellectuals, scientists and writers, we felt deeply humiliated." Although some political offenders such as Tan Tianrong did

284 Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 230.
285 Yin Jiliang, interview.
286 In February 1957, Mao in his "On correctly handling contradictions among the people" defined two contradictions within Chinese society: the one between the CCP government (as the spokesman of the people) and anti-socialist reactionary forces, and the one within the ranks of the people. The former spelt fundamental political divergence, and thus needed to be solved by dictatorship and oppression; the latter referred to non-political problems, which could be solved through the approach of "democratic centralism." Mao also stated that offenders such as those who committed larceny, fraud, murder, and hooliganism were also in need of punishment, but their penalty should differ in nature from the suppression of reactionaries. See Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong xuanji (Selected Works of Mao Zedong) (Beijing: Remin chubanshe, 1977), Vol. 5, 364-366.
287 Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 231; Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 56-57.
288 Yin Jiliang, interview.
not mind being placed among criminal offenders (as Tan was absorbed in his academic interests), many treated criminal offenders as human trash. Living in the same cell, hearing the coarse language and street lingo of criminals, and watching their undesirable behavior and unsanitary habits was unbearable for intellectuals who had been well-educated and saw themselves as the social elite. On the other hand, criminal offenders were neither respectful nor sympathetic to the persecuted intellectuals because of their aloofness, their inferior political status, and their inability to carve out a better life in camps.\footnote{Yin Jiliang recalls that only when intellectual prisoners were begged by criminal convicts to help write confessions or letters home could they receive a degree of respect. Tan Tianrong recalls that a young hooligan was once trying to find fault with him and shouted “You are a rightist; it will serve you right if you are beaten to death.” Yin Jiliang, Tan Tianrong, interviews. Harry Wu’s campmates, such as Xing, saw Wu’s school education as useless. Hongda Harry Wu, \textit{Bitter Winds}, 66.}

This poor relationship not only prevented these two groups from forming any alliances, but also provided camp authorities with the opportunity to strengthen their administrative control. In Xingkaihu, camp cadres commonly incited physical abuse of political prisoners by criminal prisoners. “If cadres believed a political prisoner to be difficult to tame, he would tell the duty prisoner to ‘give this guy a lesson,’ then the ruffian would jump up and began to slap and kick the victim,” said Yin Jiliang.\footnote{Yin Jiliang, interview.} This practice extended beyond Xingkaihu. Hu Xianzhong, who was detained in several labor camps in Jilin, recalls that when criminal offenders were violent towards their political counterparts, camp police intervened only when the targets were seriously injured.\footnote{Hu Xianzhong, interview.} By inciting one group of prisoners against the other, labor camp authorities were able to further their end—of driving fear into the hearts of political prisoners who showed disobedience, and retaining efficient control over various groups of prisoners.

However, not all the political prisoners withstood the insults and bullying imposed on them. Some fought back, such as the Shandong native Chen Fengxiao. One day when a ruffian repeatedly made trouble for him at the worksite, Chen responded with unbelievable ferocity, chopping him to the ground with a spade. This violence sent Chen into a solitary confinement cell for three months. As a university

\footnote{Yin Jiliang, interview.}
student who was believed to be inferior in physical and spiritual strength, his 
counterattack to some extent readjusted the relationship between the political 
prisoners and criminals in his squad.²⁹²

By and large, however, the inferior position of the persecuted intellectuals in 
Xingkaihu could not be easily reversed. In addition to their low political status, 
which could be taken advantage of by the criminal offenders, hooliganism flourished 
in the camps, targeting the weak physical condition of the intellectuals. As in other 
labor camps in China, hooliganism developed in Xingkaihu, and those intellectuals 
who were physically weak became easy targets. Being robbed of food and being 
bullied were common places. Mr. Li, a former leading horticulturist, was frequently 
robbed of his food by the criminal prisoners in his squad. Indignant, he rose to 
defend his food and to steal that of others, but he always lost out.²⁹³

The relationship between political and criminal offenders was complex, 
however. At times the former felt that some benefit could be gained from the life 
experience and philosophy of the latter: they increasingly discovered that penal 
criminals—those who were sentenced for theft, robbery, rape, murder, etc.—were 
clever in dealing with hardship in the difficult years. Thus, when their interests were 
not in direct conflict, intellectuals could learn something and get help from them. 
Both Chen Fengxiao and Yin Jiliang recall that some warm-hearted penal prisoners 
advised them on how to deal with camp cadres and how to survive the camp.²⁹⁴

To some extent, criminal offenders exerted an influence upon political prisoners 
in terms of their moral principles and philosophy. This is especially apparent in 
Hongda Harry Wu’s case. During his twenty years of banishment, Harry Wu saw Mr. 
Xing as the first mentor in his life. A poverty-stricken peasant, Xing had roamed 
around and did whatever he could to support himself before he was sent to a labor 
reeducation camp, where he made friends with Wu. Talking from his heart, Xing 
advised Wu to take care of himself alone, rather than to be concerned about others.

²⁹² Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 86-87.
²⁹³ Yin Jiliang, interview.
²⁹⁴ Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 94; Yin Jiliang, interview. Hongda Harry Wu 
also recalls that Lang, a penal criminal, “taught me a lot about how to labor, how to save energy, and 
how to survive in the camp.” Hongda Harry Wu, Bitter Winds, 105.
“In this place the strongest one is the best one.” Xing also suggested that in order to survive, people were justified in doing whatever they could and that stealing “is a small thing, not important, not a big deal at all.” In the beginning, Wu could not accept Xing’s indifference to moral standards. Gradually, however, Wu’s disapproval gave way to respect. “I grew to admire him as the most capable and influential teacher of my life.” He realized that Xing was actually far more intelligent than himself. “To survive in the camps, I needed new skills and different attitudes.” Under the influence of a criminal, Wu employed and justified whatever means necessary for his survival during the difficult years. Ironically, he believed that this was the most important result of his “labor reeducation”: “I realized that my ‘reeducation’ had reached another stage.”

The above constitutes a grim and ironic picture: in the labor camps of Maoist China, inmates of different kinds were put together, where they often shared their philosophy of life. Besides serving as one source of their physical abuse, criminal offenders also taught political offenders unique lessons on how to survive the harsh reality of camp life, and imbued them with street ethics. With these influences and pressure for survival, some political offenders began to disregard their former ideas and scruples, and their sense of dignity gave way to the exigency of subsistence.

Conclusion

Although not significantly different from other labor camps in Maoist China, Xingkaihu stands out as a labor reform regime used to confine and punish various social undesirables from Beijing, most notably the victims of political persecution. The most ardent critics of the government and some of China’s best educated people spent years in this desolate region as their lives were squandered and consumed.

296 *Ibid*, 64, 80.
297 Under the influence of Xing, Hongda Harry Wu “had learned how to steal, how to protect myself, and finally how to fight...I had a new ethic of survival.” Wu confesses how he grabbed food from one of his fellow prisoners and beat him down. When a camp cadre asked him to serve as group record keeper, Wu jumped at the chance to write down everything the prisoners said. The reward for this new assignment was an extra half of cornbread at every meal. See, *Ibid*, 68, 81,107.
Placed under close surveillance by camp cadres and discriminated against by penal criminals, the experiences of political exiles mirror that of many of the country’s political underclass. While their general life pattern and ordinary experiences, as well as the characteristics of the Xingkaihu complex, are treated as the focus of this chapter, the human suffering they endured (heavy workload, physical abuse, starvation, death and suicide) will be detailed in the next chapter, to show how the exiles survived a hellish existence in the frontier region. As well, since the army farms in Beidahuang functioned as another type of labor camp, the suffering of the Beijing rightists, which to some extent paralleled that of the Xingkaihu inmates, will also be explored in the next chapter.
Chapter Four
Life and Death in Beidahuang

“Hey, look over there,” Liu shouted as he was pointing to the east, “the shining Ussuri River, a vast expanse of whiteness. And further east, that would probably be the habitat of the Russians. Have you ever imagined that you, a revolutionary writer, nowadays would come here, to such a primeval forest like Wanda Mountain as a lumber worker?”

“Yes, I have.” I said. “I dreamed of going to the forest when I was very little. I was born on the Yangzi-Huaihe Plain, where there are no mountains or forests at all. So I liked to read about the Xing’an Mountains on the northeastern border. . . . People portray the forests here like heaven—peaceful, quiet, with birds singing and flowers blossoming. You could lie down on the soft grass anywhere you like and enjoy the sunlight, with nuts and mushrooms within arm’s reach. Actually, that is not the real world for us who have to labor here. Just look at that hanging tree there— with just a gust of wind blowing past, it might fall down and crush us to death. . . . In wood-cutting here, the very moment of felling a tree is exactly when one’s fate hangs in the balance.”

Huang Wu, a writer and foreign literature specialist who went through three years of forced labor, reveals a sharp duality in Beidahuang—a lovely world that nonetheless threatens death. While the natural beauty and the vitality of the wild world embraced everybody including the banished, many may not have enjoyed these surroundings because of the very nature of the forced labor they had to perform and the difficult living conditions they had to endure. For the banished, the various challenges to their physical existence were real, and death, gloomy and unpredictable, might descend on them at any time.

Life and death in prisons and in the laogai system of China have been reconstructed and examined by many, including Bao Ruo Wang, Hongda Harry Wu, James Seymour, Kate Saunders, and Philip Williams. The narratives they provide range from the daily routine in labor camps to the human suffering, from “brainwashing” to physical abuse, from individual stories to the collective

298 Huang Wu, Mahuatang waiji (Additional Collection of Mahua Hall) (Guangzhou: Guangdong wenhua chubanshe, 1989), 34.
The life experience of political exiles in Manchuria’s border region during the 1950s and 1960s, however, has yet to be analyzed by scholars in the English-speaking world, although since the early 1990s, publications and underground manuscripts by the banished have significantly contributed to our understanding of their world.

This chapter examines the most common experiences of political exiles both in the army farms and in the Xingkaihu labor reform complex, with a focus on the heavy workload, hunger, death, physical abuse, and suicide, which constitute the main themes of political banishment and of the tremendous human tragedy in the period of 1959-62. While recognizing that some positive experiences did occur, the bulk of the chapter serves to delineate what was painfully carved into the exile’s memory about Beidahuang—suffering and dehumanization, and subsequent distortion of human behavior. This chapter suggests that the policies and actions of the camp and farm authorities were the direct causes of suffering that made human life there extremely fragile.

Life

During the early period of their stay in Beidahuang (approximately from the spring of 1958 to the middle of 1959), hunger was not strongly felt, and the life of the exiles did not seem so bad. Since they were offered relatively sufficient food, their basic needs for survival were ensured. While the ultra-rightists and

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300 The rightists sent to army farms in Beidahuang, such as Dai Huang, Wu Yongliang and YinYi have been able to get their memoirs published in China. By an interesting contrast, those imprisoned in the labor reform complex of Xingkaihu could only publish their recollections overseas, as in the case of Wu Ningkun and Liu Naiyuan; their memoirs (forbidden to be published in the Mainland) were circulated among friends, as in the case of Chen Fengxiao, although the extent to which they disclose the darkness of banishment life is not much different.
counterrevolutionaries sentenced to the Xingkaihu labor reform complex were subjected to tight physical control (see Chapter Three above), those sent to the army farms enjoyed a degree of freedom after their daily work was completed. Therefore, they could feel that they belonged to a lovely and dynamic world, and the life during this early stage was often portrayed by them in a relatively positive manner. Liu Meng recalls that “when I first arrived at Farm 850, I did not feel very bad, probably because I was young and energetic. I was surprised that the northeast plain was so vast, and it took an hour or so to reach the edge of the field where we worked; I worked on the sowing machine. That was really fantastic. I had a feeling that I was embraced by the vast sky and the earth.”

Even though he sharply condemned the CCP policy of frontier banishment in his recollections, Liu does not conceal his good feeling about the landscape of Beidahuang.

An even more positive description is made by Dai Huang, although he was also a harsh critic of the inhumanity of camp life in Beidahuang.

What made us most excited was the spring here. There was no pollution, no destruction of the natural wilderness. The blue sky, white clouds and wild flowers on the fertile plain set each other off beautifully. The plain was then really an impressive sight. In particular, almost every sunny morning, there would be a mirage in the eastern sky lasting for about a half hour—forest, land, houses, lakes, wagons... everything inside....In May after a rainy morning, when we were allowed to take a day off, many of us walked along a trail all the way down to the edge of the forest. Listening to the twittering of birds, we collected various kinds of flowers and took them back.”

This positive description mirrors their passable life in the early stage of banishment. During work breaks, rightists in the army farms were allowed to pursue many pastimes. Painting, singing, playing musical instruments, practicing Peking opera, or playing bridge became regular pleasures. The rightists in Farm 850 even had free

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301 Liu Meng, interview.
302 Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng: wo de youpai licheng (A Narrow Escape from Death: My Experience as a Rightist) (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 1998), 117. Some rightists who had had experience of living abroad claimed that Beidahuang rivaled Geneva in terms of its natural beauty. See Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei: Beidahuang shenghuo jishi (Floating Rain and Snow: True Stories of Life in the Great Northern Wilderness) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2002), 43.
time to maintain a flower nursery close to where they lived.\footnote{303} Huang Wu of Farm 853 at times even enjoyed his favorite poetry by Walt Whitman.\footnote{304}

Living in such an environment, the rightists felt rather contented, and this could contribute to their commitment to manual labor. They built up shacks to live in, produced the food they needed, and cut wood for socialist construction, all of which, seen by at least some of them, were the meaningful life and part of a grand plan for the transformation of the virgin land on the one hand and their inner world on the other. The early life of the rightists in Farm 853 and their positive attitude toward manual labor are reflected in Chen Ming’s letter to Ding Ling. As Ding Ling recalled, Chen Ming:

> described floating snow in April as a picturesque scene, and he presented their work—lumbering in the snow, drilling wells, melting cooking water from ice, and building barracks as being full of meaning. The vast wilderness and the undulating mountain ranges of Beidahuang were captivating. Chen Ming and his friends are actually waging a war against heaven and earth.”

Chen Ming even suggested that Ding Ling come and join him.\footnote{305} Dai Huang also describes how the banished rightists gained a feeling of happiness through their work, and tried to make significance out of their backbreaking labor.\footnote{306} The positive and even aesthetic perspectives on their labor reflect satisfaction with their life and a seeming adaptation to their banishment. They temporarily forgot their sadness, and the nature of their forced labor faded.

\footnote{303} Wu Yongliang, Yixue feifei, 36-37; Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 117.
\footnote{304} Huang Wu, Mahuatang waiji, 36. Huang Wu particularly enjoyed Whitman’s “Song of the Broad-Axe,” which sang of the life of American lumbermen in the nineteenth Century. Huang Wu even tried to imagine some link between his life as a lumber worker in Beidahuang and the imagery reflected in Whitman’s poems.
\footnote{305} See Ding Ling, Fengxue renjian (The Blizzard World) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987), 17. Chen Ming was sent to Beidahuang at first in March of 1958 and sent back a letter that pushed Ding to make up her mind to go and join him.
\footnote{306} Dai Huang writes: “In the field people worked cheerfully while in the sky cuckoo, larks, turtledoves, and quails sang in flight, all of which constituted a wonderful scene of changing heaven and earth.” Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 122.
Another face of banishment rapidly unfolded, however, as their workload became heavier, and especially with the devastating impact of nation-wide famine beginning in 1959. Work satisfaction and an appreciation of natural beauty gave way to untold suffering.

**Death by Labor**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the intensive use of forced labor in Beidahuang caused unimaginable hardship for the exiles as their banishment was prolonged, and their suffering was compounded by food shortages. The consequence of this process was untimely death for many laboring exiles.

The banishment of political offenders coincided with the economic adventure of the PRC government in 1958-59—the Great Leap Forward (GLF), which featured intensive labor and material inputs in exchange for rapid economic growth. In Beidahuang, as elsewhere in China, high production targets spelled heavy workloads for the exiles, which in turn led to mass death from exhaustion in both the army farms and the Xingkaihu labor camps. According to Liu Naiyuan, in an irrigation project all of the inmates were driven to ceaseless labor by the camp cadres and pressured by blackboard assessments that indicated one’s work achievements. Gan, a lean, pale inmate was so pressed and mocked because of his slowness that he could barely take a breath in his efforts not to be left far behind. Eventually after days of desperate physical exertion, Gan was found dead one night.

Chen Fengxiao’s account supplies more details of death through hard labor in Branch 4 at Xingkaihu.

During forty or more days of spring sowing in 1960, the rain went on and on. In order not to miss the sowing season, all the convicts were ordered to go out to the fields with only a plastic sheet shielding their bodies, raking and sowing in the rain. We got up at three o’clock in the morning and went

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307 For a comprehensive narrative of the GLF, see Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 574-583.
home after eight at evening, terribly overwhelmed by hunger and cold. On one horrible day, several weaker convicts fell to the ground on the road back from work. They were taken back to the barrack, and died soon after. Rather than dying of fatal disease, they were actually worked to death.\(^{309}\)

Mass death by excessive forced labor happened in the army farms, as well. According to Dai Huang, on Oct 13, 1960, around one hundred rightists in the Yunshan Branch of Farm 850 were herded into intensive harvesting of soy beans. Seven of them died on the road back home after a whole day of ceaseless work on a snowy day. Lack of food supplies and timely relief also contributed to these deaths.\(^{310}\)

Forced labor led to frequent accidental deaths when exiles were ordered to engage in activities with which they were not familiar. In the winter of 1958, hundreds of rightists from both Farms 850 and 853 were organized into lumbering teams, to go to the Wanda Mountain and cut trees. In the context of the GLF, they were asked to cut as much wood as possible to contribute to socialist construction. They had to work in pairs, and complete work targets (in some cases, at least eight cubic meters per day) with hand saws. Unable to properly handle manual lumbering and forced to work extra hours at night, they frequently suffered sudden injury and death—for example, being crushed by falling trees, as cited by Huang Wu at the beginning of this chapter. In his lumber team of fifty-six people, two were killed by falling trees and one was badly injured during the winter of 1958-59.\(^{311}\) Dai Huang also recalled that four of around one hundred of his campmates died in lumbering

\(^{309}\) Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi* (The True Stories of My Twenty-Two Years of Laogai Experience) (Unpublished work), 85. What Chen describes here happened in the aftermath of the GLF; the intensive use of weak laborers was definitely the key reason for their deaths.

\(^{310}\) Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 225-232. This mass death in Yunshan is also documented by Yin Yi, *Huishou canyang yi han shan* (The Setting of the Sun over the Mountain) (Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2003), 87-89, and Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 133-134. Dai Huang believes that more than one year of prolonged hunger made rightists in his branch farm extremely weak and pale, which, compounded with intensive labor in vile weather, caused this mass death.

\(^{311}\) Huang Wu, *Mahuatang waiji*, 37, 59. Deaths also occurred in daily farm work. Chen Fengxiao recalls that in the *laogai* branch farm where he stayed, accidental casualties occurred every year when convicts were unable to properly handle electric threshing machines or other farm machines. Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 80-81.
While the unfamiliarity of the exiles with their newly assigned manual work led to casualties, the root cause rested with the Party’s policy of herding urban people and intellectuals into the rural world, and the indifference of camps authorities towards human life. Tragic deaths of the exiles was inevitable when camp authorities made unrealistic and unproductive work plans and forced the exiles to complete them regardless of bad weather and their poor physical condition, as indicated by Dai Huang, Huang Wu and others. Furthermore, the camp authorities often failed to provide timely relief even when people were in danger and death was imminent. The tragic death of seven rightists in the Yunshan Branch on October 13, 1960 was to a great extent due to the farm cadres’ refusal to send out a rescue team at night on the grounds that “tomorrow’s work is not to be affected”; they did not even bother to call a doctor. Thus, the rightists were indignant to learn that their lives were less important than those of the local draft horses.

In both Xingkaihu and the army farms, cases of death and injury were handled perfunctorily. The dead normally did not receive proper mourning nor did their families get any compensation. Often, the bodies of the dead would be buried right away, and their families would then be notified, without any offer of compensation. If maimed, inmates in Xingkaihu were still not released from labor, but had to continue working in their barracks after treatment, performing lighter work such as weaving baskets or straw ropes.

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312 Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 141-143. Some of exiles died tragically in efforts to save tools, handsaws or spades for instance, when danger was perceived. Since the camp leaders promoted the notion that “one must give higher priority to public properties than one’s own life,” inmates would be severely condemned for the loss of tools. In this circumstance, some died from falling trees or landslides when trying to show their commitment to “saving public property.” See Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 90; Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 141; Xingkaihu changshiban, *Xingkaihu nongchang shi* (Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm) (Mishan: No pub., 1988), 359.

313 Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 231, 233. According to Dai, when the “Oct 13 tragedy” happened, the heads of the Yunshan branch did not even bother to send for doctors to rescue those in danger at night, so that the rightists had to perform first aid for their fellow inmates.

314 Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 80-81. There is no indication that mourning ceremonies were provided in army farms. Wu Yongliang recalls that when one of his friends died in lumbering, his team leader refuted requests for a ceremony on the grounds that “Chairman Mao told on us that the death for the revolution is perfectly normal, so there is no need to make a fuss.”
Death by overwork and the authorities' indifference towards human life, although astonishing, were less threatening than other conditions. Starvation, disease, and the lack of medical care were more critical and fundamental to the loss of human life in Beidahuang. All too often, death was a manifestation of these combined forces. The old and the weak who were unable to stand up to a torrent of adversities were especially prone to death in the years 1959-61.

**Hunger**

For the majority of the offenders (both political and criminal) sent to Beidahuang, hunger was the most unforgettable aspect of their experience. Since their banishment coincided with the three successive years of famine caused by the GLF, their lot, as outcasts of society, was particularly miserable.

During most of the 1950s, hunger was not a major threat for political offenders, as long as they remained in prison and obeyed prison rules. Wu Yue and Chen Fengxiao indicate that political prisoners received adequate food in the Caolanzi Detention Center in Beijing before they were sent to laogai camps; before October 1957, no food limits were set for them. Certain influential prisoners or former high ranking officials were even served lavish food (by contemporary standards)—four dishes and one soup (*sicai yitang*). Pan Hannian, the former-deputy mayor of Shanghai, for instance, even enjoyed milk, eggs, tea, and high-grade cigarettes while he served his fifteen-year sentence in the Tuanhe Laogai Farm.

During the early part of their stay at Beidahuang, neither the rightists in army
farms nor the inmates in the Xingkaihu labor camps felt much threat of hunger, mainly because the authorities had to ensure that they were physically capable of heavy work. “Upon arrival at the army farms,” recalls Liu Meng, “rightist laborers were allowed to eat as much as they could due to the heavy workloads,” although some complained about coarse food such as corn gruel. The situation was the same for inmates in Xingkaihu.

From the summer of 1959, however, hunger crept in quietly. In Farm 850, “grain rations were set and dropped rapidly, from 72 jin to 63 jin, and later went down to 54 jin, 48 jin, 40 jin a month (1 jin is equal to 1.1023 lbs). Our stomachs became increasingly empty,” Dai Huang recalls. During the worst period of 1960, in Farm 853, a rightist worker had only an 8 jin monthly ration of grain. Wu Yongliang recalls that the feeling of hunger became increasingly acute after the second half of 1959, but grain rations were replenished by vegetables. As time passed, however, without a trace of meat or oil, the exiles had to depend solely on grains for nutrition, and their stringent daily rations, in the forms of corn buns and watery vegetable soup, hardly alleviated the hunger pangs of those who were forced to perform heavy manual labor. Their diet was thus far from sufficient for subsistence.

While Philip Williams and Yenna Wu are convinced that the PRC’s rationing of food to laogai inmates exerted a thoroughgoing control over prisoners and won

317 Liu Meng, interview. Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei, 33. Sources from other rightists also indicate there was enough food for them during the early part of their stay in the army farms.
318 Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 157; Bawusan nongchangzhi bianxian weiyuanhui, Bawusan nongchangzhi (Gazetteer of the Farm 853) (Beijing: No pub., 1986), 132. Whether the exiles received their designated rations is doubtful. Some exiles complained that their limited rations were subject to frequent appropriation by farm leaders and managerial personnel. Yang Congdao and Wang Keqin recalls that while ordinary workers including rightists were fed with food substitutes and thin porridge in dining halls, the farm leaders ate in a “small kitchen” (xiaozao) enjoying special food. Yang Congdao and Wang Keqin, interviews. Dai Huang recalls that when grain rations per person dropped to 30 jin per month from December 1959, a rightist in Yunshan only received two small wotous (Wotou is a bread-like bun, mainly made of corn flour, corn chaff, or in some rural areas of Manchuria, rough sorghum). It is eaten for breakfast and lunch, and very little porridge for dinner, which was far less than what they should have been allocated. Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 174.
319 Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei, 114.
320 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 84.
their submission to its authority more efficiently than other forms of torture, they also note that "the problem of hunger among laogai inmates varied greatly in intensity according to the historical period, the region, and the rationing policies of the local camp cadres." In the case of Xingkaihu, inmates found that food rations differed considerably between different branches. According to Han Dajun, who was transferred between three branches during August and September 1960, grain rations were 60 jin of corn flour per person per month in Branch 2, 45 jin in Branch 8, but only 30 jin in Branch 7. The implication of these differences is that the heads of branches had considerable autonomy in deciding levels of rationing for their inmates, and thus the degree of hunger the inmates suffered.

Closely related to variations in food rationing was the extent of grain shortages in Beidahuang at this time. Although rationing at low levels might not be seen as a conscious design of the CCP authorities to inflict suffering upon the "class enemies," decreasing food supplies did not necessarily stem from a lack of grain in this farming region. Barns were often full of grain, according to Han Dajun, Yin Jiliang and Dai Huang, but farm authorities intentionally cut food rations of inmates as well as other farm workers (demobilized soldiers and newly recruited farmers from the interior, for instance), trying to show their commitment to the state and to build up their good image. Liu, the head of Branch 7 of Xingkaihu, was particularly honored by his superiors for his success in "economizing" (jieyue) on grain.

Recollections of individual inmates are echoed by official sources. When ordinary workers, including rightists, were rationed a starvation diet of 8 jin per month, the Farm 853 leaders voluntarily turned over significant amounts of grain to the higher authorities, twice in 1960—the first time five million jin and the second time 630 jin.

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322 Han Dajun, interview. In the worse period of 1960, food supplies in the Xingkaihu labor reform complex generally seemed better than in army farms, and grain rations for inmates were more than that for camp cadres. Liu Junying, a former camp cadre in Branch 5, says: "When the convicts in our farm were rationed more than 30 jin, I was just given 28 jin." So Liu argues that the complaints of inmates about their hunger were no more than a "psychological effect." Liu Junying, interview. But the recollections of Chen Fengxiao, Yin Jiliang and Liu Naiyuan all indicate more severe hunger among the inmates than the camp cadres in Xingkaihu, simply because inmates had to perform heavy labor.
323 Han Dajun and Yin Jiliang, interviews.
thousand jin, thus the farm leadership was praised by the Ministry of Land Reclamation for their "Farm 853 revolutionary spirit."\textsuperscript{324} The political activism of farm leaders exacerbated grain shortages in their own units.

With work strenuous and food rationed, the life of the exiles became increasingly difficult. As Huang Miaozì wrote in a letter home in June 1959, rightists in his team normally had three meals a day, "two porridge and one solid, or alternatively, two solid and one porridge when work is heavy; the meals are mostly corn gruel, corn breads and cabbage leaves with no or little dietary oil."\textsuperscript{325} Like many other rightists, who tried not to inform their families of suffering in Beidahuang unless it was too unbearable, in the summer of 1959 Huang did not explicitly tell of his hunger. Three months later, he began to suffer serious dropsy as the result of malnutrition.\textsuperscript{326}

Overwhelmed by hunger, inmates in both the army farms and in Xingkaihu had to make whatever effort they could to search for food to fill their stomachs. The vast fields of Beidahuang were a ready source of wild food. After work, famished exiles flocked out of their barracks searching the fields for edible weeds, wild herbs and grasses, collecting bird eggs, digging up plant roots, and even searching rat holes for caches of grain stored underground by rats.\textsuperscript{327} When nothing was left, people

\textsuperscript{325} Li Hui, \textit{Ren zai xuanwo: Huang Miaozì yu Yu Feng} (People in the Eddy: Huang Miaozì and Yu Feng) (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 1998), 322.
\textsuperscript{326} \textit{Ibid}, 324-326, Xin Suwei, \textit{Ding Cong zhuan} (Biography of Ding Cong) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1993), 186, 191. In the general context of hunger, exceptions existed in Beidahuang. It seems that those who were not involved in strenuous manual labor suffered less hunger. Ding Cong and Wu Zuguang, who were asked to work on a local magazine \textit{Literature and Art in Beidahuang}, did not suffer as Dai Huang did, and some laojiao inmates in Xingkaihu did not indicate hunger either. For example, being assigned to work in a cultural and educational team (wenjiao dui) and free from manual labor, ex-movie director Ba Hong admits that he was very lucky. "I did not suffer edema, nor did my friends in wenjiao dui". Ba Hong, interview. Hui Peilin, a female laojiao inmate in a wild life raising team in Xingkaihu recalls that no food ration was set for female inmate workers in her unit of estimated hundred of people, and that they could even eat fish, chicken and fresh vegetable, since her team director treated the female inmates nicely. Hui Peilin, interview.
\textsuperscript{327} Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 213; Liang Nan, "Chaozheng zhe" (Pilgrims), in Liu Meng, ed., \textit{Huishou rensheng} (Reflections on Our Life) (Beijing: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 9. Wu Yongliang also recalls that once upon a time he and three of his fellows were sent to dig rat holes for soy beans stored by field rats, and their six days' work brought back more than ten bags of soy beans as important additions to food. Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei}, 112-113.
foraged in the trees. In the winter of 1960, in the Yunshan Branch, all the bark of elm trees was peeled off and eaten.\textsuperscript{328} Tree leaves were ground into flour, which was mixed with plant stalks and stem, chaff, nut kernels and seed as food substitutes. Wild animals also became targets. Some exiles dug the ground to catch field rats to eat. There are many recollections by Yin Jiliang, Dai Huang, Liu Meng and Yin Yi about their experiences in devouring field rats, which for many became a normal dietary fixture and an important source of nutrition.\textsuperscript{329} Intellectuals' picky eating habits and humanitarian concerns in normal time entirely disappeared.

In hunger and malnutrition, people also tried to entice snakes out of their lairs. Tang Zunwen, a former opera actor, was famous for his skill in capturing snakes with simple tools. “At times in that summer he went out to the river side and came back with couple of snakes. He took out their poison gland (in the case of venomous snakes), washed them, cut them into pieces, and cooked them in an iron barrel with a bit of salt to make a tasty snake soup…. Even those who hated snake could not help coming to try it.”\textsuperscript{330} During the years of famine, rightists were among the first in Beidahuang who tried snakes.

Famished exiles who gorged on various wild species risked getting poisoned. In the Qinghe camp in north China, laojiao inmate Lu Fengnian felt happy when he caught a snake, a frog, a toad and a rat in a field. He cooked them all together in a

\textsuperscript{328} Liang Nan, “Chaosheng zhe”, in Liu Meng, ed., Huishou renseng, 16.
\textsuperscript{329} Liu Meng, Cuntian de yu quitian qing, 141; Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 75-76; Yin Jiliang, interview; Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 242. Dai Huang describes how they devoured voles: “After work that day, we began to prepare these voles—skinning them, cutting open their bellies, and putting them in an iron washbasin. We got 81 in total. …We put in water, mixed these voles with salt and chili powder, and boiled them. When they were cooked, we all devoured them very fast. …When we could not find voles, we started to pick up raw corn to eat.” However, searching for rats to eat sometimes was disapproved of by camp cadres. Yin Yi recalls that one of his fellow exiles caught rats to cook but was condemned by farm cadres for “trying to discredit socialism.” Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 76.
\textsuperscript{330} Huang Wu in his Mahuangtang waiji (25) and Wang Zheng in his “Menghui huangyuan” both recall Tang’s excellent performance in catching snakes to make soup for his fellows. Hongda Harry Wu, an inmate in Qinghe camp, also describes how he caught hibernating snakes in the winter of 1961 and enjoyed them himself. See Hongda Harry Wu, Bitter Winds, 134-135. Philip Williams and Yenna Wu have noticed that Mao era prisoners often ate field mice, crickets, locusts, toads, grasshoppers, insect larvae and so on. See Williams and Wu, The Great Wall of Confinement, 90. In Beidahuang, however, the exiles mainly focused on field rats and snakes, which were bumper sources in the wilderness.
pot and ate them all with the soup. In the middle of the night, however, he suffered terrible diarrhea and fever. The prompt arrival of a camp doctor saved him from death.\(^{331}\) Regarding Xingkaihu, an official source admits that accidental death frequently happened when inmates tried poisonous wild herbs. In the spring of 1960, 13 convicts in Branch 4 died of poisonous wild herbs.\(^{332}\)

When starvation and physical suffering was prolonged, exiles looked scarcely human even though they were still alive. Dai Huang recalls that due to a lack of nutrition, “people in my team became either badly emaciated or suffered terrible edema; night blindness, obtuseness, and suddenly falling down on the frozen ground became common occurrences.”\(^{333}\) When Liu Nanyuan chanced to look at himself in his campmate’s mirror he was startled to confront a literal skeleton which he simply could not identify with himself. “By early 1962, I was reduced to 90 pounds, about half of my former body weight, literally a bag of bones.”\(^{334}\)

When Hongda Harry Wu, himself a laojiao inmate, first met the inmates transferred from Xingkaihu to Qinghe labor camp in 1962, he was astonished:

The brow bones above their eyes protruded under tightly stretched skin. Their mouths hung slightly open below hollowed cheeks. Their gaunt necks seemed unnaturally long. Their blank faces gave no sign that they had noticed our arrival.\(^{335}\)

Driven by an empty stomach and obsessed with food, the exiles scarcely behaved as humans. In Beidahuang, they stole, robbed, and fought for food, which in turn not only escalated abuse by camp cadres, but also exacerbated their relationships with each other. All too often, they stole raw grains—rice, wheat and soybeans—from the fields. Chen Fengxiao recalls:

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\(^{331}\) Cong Weixi, *Zouxiang hundun* (Going towards Chaos) (Beijing: Zhongguo shenhui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 161.

\(^{332}\) Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 404; Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 84. Some rightists in the Farm 850 found that garbage dumps close to farm cadres’ living compounds might have chicken and fish bones or rotten vegetable. Dai Huang and some of his friends at times visited these garbage dumps. Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 248, 259.

\(^{333}\) Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 173.


During the fall harvest of this year (1960), it was very common that convicts in Xingkaihu stole raw rice. ... We pulled out grains off rice ears, scrubbed them in our hands, blew away the shell, and chewed them carefully before swallowing, so we might avoid appendicitis. I was stealing rice too. Many of us also snuck raw rice back to dormitories and ate it at night.\footnote{Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 88-89. Hongda Harry Wu also describes his personal experience in northern China. When he was confined in a labor camp, he was assigned to work delivering chemical powder within the camp area, which provided him an opportunity to pass a vegetable garden run by the camp police. He recounts: "Several times a day I would stare at the cabbages and cucumbers, warning myself not to take risk, but one night when I was hungerier than I had ever felt, the smell of cucumbers overwhelmed my caution. For the first time in my life, I stole....Four or five more times in the next two weeks I visited the police garden." Hongda Harry Wu, *Bitter Winds*, 58-59.}

Sometimes they snuck into public kitchens to steal wotou, vegetables, or soup. In Yin Yi’s branch farm, when food in the public kitchens was stolen, there was no way for farm cadres to determine guilt if nobody was caught, since the rightists who thought of nothing but their stomachs desperately defended their hard-come-by food. Some in extreme hunger even stole food from their campmates. Yin Yi himself had the experience of having biscuits sent from his family in Beijing stolen.\footnote{Yin Yi, *Huishou canyang yi han shan*, 66-67.} “Of ten rightists, nine were thieves,” said Liu Meng. “If you refused to lift something to eat in that circumstance, there would be only one way awaiting you—death.” Liu Meng confesses that he once stole a jar of honey that his friends entrusted him to purchase from a nearby town.\footnote{Liu Meng, interview, and his *Cuntian de yu qitian qing*, 134.} When their stomachs ruled their minds, their sense of shame was put aside. In army farms even though some were caught thieving, there was normally no punishment other than a harsh scolding; but in Xingkaihu, stealing from public kitchen could lead to severe punishment such as solitary confinement, as in the case of Ren Hongshuo.\footnote{Yin Yi, *Huishou canyang yi han shan*, 76. Han Dajun recalls, when interviewed, that his campmate Ren Hongshuo crept into a team kitchen at night trying to lift wotou but got caught in the act and was sent to solitary confinement.} Li Chao, a former university teacher, snuck out at night to take swill to eat, for which he was publicly rebuked by a camp cadre as “less than a pig.”\footnote{Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 88.} It was difficult for the political exiles to retain their integrity and self-
esteem when driven by the instinct for survival. Their experiences, like those in the Holocaust, reconfirm that human beings subject to horrible maltreatment will do things they would not normally do.

Philips Williams and Yenna Wu note that “even well-educated PRC inmates would often jostle and fight with other prisoners over the little bit of gruel left at the bottom of the vat, and rummage through rubbish heaps in search of something edible.”

This image, a reflection of the CCP’s long-term malnourishment and mistreatment of this group of educated people, is confirmed by events in Beidahuang. Yin Jiliang recalls,

My friend Mr. Li was one of the most prestigious horticultural experts in China, but in Xingkaihu he did not display any self-esteem at all. He often fought for food with others, just for a little bit gruel or a corn bun, for instance. He was always the loser in the end as he was very thin. One day when he was in charge of distributing vegetable soup, he reserved for himself a bit more. As the result, he was beaten black and blue.”

Obsessed with food, some rightists in army farms even fought for a space watching over the dead in the night in order to earn one extra wotou. Under the immense pressure, Chinese intellectuals displayed a nature that is no different from that of commoners or even abject people. Going through years of hellish banishment, they increasingly lost status as role model for ordinary Chinese.

While limiting the food supply, the authorities of both the army farms and Xingkaihu made efforts to keep hunger and starvation at a minimum. In some camps, workdays were reduced to six hours, and no compulsory work quota was required.

The authorities also promoted various food substitutes (daishipin) to counteract food shortages. In September 1960, the Mudanjiang Reclamation Bureau, the top army

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342 Yin Jiliang, interview.
343 Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 260.
344 Wu Yongliang remembers that in the fall of 1960 when he was transferred to the Branch One of Farm 850, he and his fellow exiles were allowed to work from eight a.m. and to knock off at two p.m. to save energy. After a meal of thin gruel at five p.m. they all went to bed to sleep. Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 139-140.
farm authority in Beidahuang, issued an instruction requiring the use of corn stalks, wheat straw, sorghum stalks, oat straw, bean stalks, corncobs, acorns, grass seed, and tree leaves as food substitutes. Such substitutes, with very low starch, provide little nutrition and could obstruct the digestive system.³⁴⁵ In Xingkaihu, the camp authorities ordered food substitutes of raw rice or raw corn mixed with chaff for the convicts. They also promoted the method of “double steam baking”, to steam buns of wheat, corn, or sorghum twice in order to add more bulk and to give the stomach a fuller feeling.³⁴⁶ Finding that the rightists could hardly subsist on these food substitutes and that there was no way to increase their grain rations, some sympathetic cadres in army farms managed to purchase better food for the rightists through personal connections outside the farms.³⁴⁷ In the worst period of 1961, the Qinghe labor camp announced a new initiative—allowing family members or relatives to deliver food parcels to the inmates—to show the Party’s “revolutionary humanitarianism.”³⁴⁸

All of these measures, however, turned out to be merely temporary relief in the context of the massive man-made food shortage. With stringent food rations and a forced labor system in place, hunger continued in Beidahuang. Death—as the ultimate consequence of starvation and its related malnutrition—eventually descended upon these exiles.

**Death and Death Watch**

Malnutrition, as the root cause of the mass death of exiles, manifested itself first in forms of related diseases, edema for instance. In Beidahuang, countless exiles (political and criminal) died of edema, as well as from tuberculosis and fever,

³⁴⁶ Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 84-85.
³⁴⁷ Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 181. Dai recalls that one of his political instructors collected money from the rightists and managed to purchase biscuits and bean powder for them from elsewhere. However, that was an exception rather than a rule in the army farms.
which were also the side effects of prolonged malnutrition. The primary symptom of hunger was edema, as described by Hongda Harry Wu.

For the first time I saw a person with one leg swollen and the other as thin as a stick. I began to recognize the symptoms of edema. First someone’s foot would swell so that he could not wear his shoe. Slowly, the swelling would move up through the ankle, the calf, the knee, the thigh. When it reached the stomach and made breathing difficult, a person died quickly.

This terrible sight approximated the situation prevailing among the political exiles in Beidahuang. The first rightist documented as dying of starvation-induced edema was Tang Wenyi, who in June 1960 perished on the road after searching for food in a nearby farm with seriously swollen legs. In his work *Jiusi yisheng*, Dai Huang describes how six of his fellow exiles died of edema within a month in the fall of 1960. Some died on the road while searching for food, and some died at night after work. It was very common for an edema-stricken inmate who had worked in the fields in the daytime to be found dead in bed the next morning.

In Xingkaihu, people also died of fever, diarrhea or dysentery caused by contaminated food and a lack of medical care. Mo Guixin, a famous singer who came back from the U.S. in 1951 to serve the New China, died of dysentery. With malnourishment and a lack of adequate medical care, diseases like dysentery were almost incurable.

Yin Jiliang provides a gloomy scene of his own experience in Xingkaihu:

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349 Seriously weakened by long-term hunger, according to the experiences of many inmates, their bodies were particularly susceptible to various diseases. The smallest cut brought tetanus, and a minor cold turned to tuberculosis, which could be fatal for the exiles in the wilderness.


351 Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 123.

352 Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 244-247. Dai recounts that some rightists died in carrying chicken foods, millet for instance, while they themselves were denied these foods.

353 Liu Naiyuan recalls that “Soon after the new prisoners settled down, No. 7 Branch Farm became epidemic of acute enteritis, also said to be dysentery...practically all of the 200 plus inmates were affected and some died. Mo Guixin’s case was not so bad at the beginning. He was one of the few who were hospitalized as a special favor. Before long he complained of belly ache which quickly worsened into acute agony. The doctor diagnosed gastric perforation and could do nothing.” Liu Naiyuan, *Mirror*, 226.
In the winter of 1961, agricultural work was rather light because of food shortages. During that period we got up at nine a.m. and went to bed at three p.m. to save energy. Two meals a day... That winter I fainted several times. One was on December 12th when I fell down on the way back from the fields. When I woke up I found myself in the mortuary. On that day, twelve of us fell unconscious, and only I came around. I remember clearly that day. At that time people died everyday like flies. For the people sent into the mortuary, few of them left alive.\footnote{Yin Jiliang, interview.}

Watching their campmates perish and be buried was a heartbreaking experience for many exiles. In October 1960, Luo Xiangcheng, a thin, sick rightist who was denied food by his team leader for his inability to work, died in Farm 850. His friend Dai Huang, who was with him at the end, recounts the emotional strain with great sadness.

I fed Luo half of my lunch and carried him home on my back in the blizzard. But soon I found that I was so weak that my leg could not stop trembling. ... It was impossible for the two of us to return to our barracks. Luo said to me: ‘Leave me behind, Dai, just go and save yourself.’ Nobody was around, so I put Luo by a heap of soybeans, covered him with pods and stumbled to a team barrack nearby for help.... When we came back with lunch and a cart, Luo had lost consciousness, with his eyes closed and his lips blue. ... Three days afterwards Luo died.\footnote{Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 239-240. A similar experience tortured Ba Hong when he saw his friend Mo Guixin for the last time at the medical center of Xingkaihu. “I called him again and again but he still could not recognize me even though his eyes were open... I had to leave for work. I knew that was probably the last time I could see him.” Ba Hong, interview.}

Dai Huang was deeply traumatized by Luo’s death, and by seeing many lives so needlessly snuffed out one after another.

For political exiles, being asked to bury their campmates was also a heartbreaking experience, a form of torture through body disposal:

The bodies of the seven dead were put onto a cart, bound together with a single thick rope and then were sent to the Yunshan foothills. No body bag was provided for them, let alone coffins.... It was freezing cold and the blizzard was heavy. Those sent to bury the dead had no energy to dig graves at all.... Finally they found a natural depression, put in the bodies all
together, and piled on them a mound of snow. That way a grave mound was made for the seven dead. No mourning ceremony, no wreaths. When they left with great sadness, they only heard the swirling snow and howling wind that swept the white hill.\(^{356}\)

During the famine years, the dead were unlikely to get buried in a timely fashion either, especially during the winter season. If convicts died in winter, authorities of some branches of Xingkaihu did not bother to make arrangements for a prompt burial, partly because it was too difficult to dig graves even though forced laborers could be used, and partly because the coldness of the Manchurian borderland serves as an open freezer, so that the camp directors normally let corpses pile up outside for natural freezing.

If the stick-like frozen corpses accumulated to thirty or forty, they were to be sent by carts to the wilderness somewhere for disposal. The soil in winter was frozen so hard that it could not be dug up with spades or picks. In this situation, explosives were put into use. After a big pit was blasted, the cart drew close, and the bars were pulled out. When the carts were tilted, all of the bodies were dumped into the pit.\(^{357}\)

Some camp directors foresaw deaths in the coming winter, and arranged preparation of as many grave pits as possible in the warmer season. Former-movie director Ba Hong and his fellow campmates spent several months digging graves on the Sun Mount (taiyang gang).\(^{358}\) A daily quota of three graves was set for each worker in his team. Mo Guixin was among many who died in the freezing winter of

\(^{356}\) Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 233-234.


\(^{358}\) The Sun Mount, notorious for being the main graveyard for countless dead in Xingkaihu but ironically given an impressive name, is a water-made ridge at the north end of the Xingkai Lake. Ever since the establishment of the Xingkaihu labor complex, and especially during the three bad years of 1959-1962, numerous inmates died and were buried there. The side of the mount that faces the Xingkai Lake was thickly dotted with numerous graves, some of which were placed a small stone or wooden tablet with the words “the grave of XXX”. When deaths increased rapidly, the camp authorities did not bother to make tablets; instead, they simply used red bricks with the names of the dead written in chalk stick. After a rain shower, the words in chalk were washed away, and the dead became unknown. The Sun Mount was synonymous with death in Xingkaihu labor reform complex since the early 1960s. Cong Weixi, \textit{Zouxiang hundun}, 157-158; Liu Junying, interview.
1959 and was buried in a grave that Ba Hong’s team had prepared in advance.  

The lack of medical care was another contributing factor to death. In Xingkaihu, one or two camp doctors, normally inmates too, were responsible for medical services for one branch, or approximately 2,000 to 3,000 inmates. Although they were helpful and saved lives, as indicated by Liu Naiyuan, in many cases they could hardly provide timely medical care. Han Dajun recalls that “in the summer of 1958, our whole living quarters were infested with flies and serious gastroenteritis spread. The only doctor in our branch did nothing to help us since there was simply no proper medicine at all. People died one after another like flies.” In army farms, while doctors were dedicated and helpful to the rightists, as experienced by Dai Huang, some farm cadres did not take human life seriously and were slow to provide the necessary rescue, as evidenced in the Yunshan death of October 13, 1960. In Qinghe farm of North China, according to Hongda Harry Wu, inmates who had reached an advanced stage of starvation would be sent to a different compound, which was named the “Prison Patient Recovery Center.” Four medical workers were employed there. However, “their primary job was not to treat our illness, as they had no medicine to dispense, but to report which prisoners drew close to death and then to record the cause of death in the person’s file.”

Death records of the political exiles in Xingkaihu are lacking. The main reason is that neither Chinese police organs in Beijing nor the Xingkaihu authorities are willing to disclose detailed information about prisoners’ death. In the Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm compiled in 1988, details of natural calamities and difficulties Xingkaihu confronted are provided, in terms of the amount of crops destroyed, financial deficits the camp suffered, and even the death toll of pigs and chickens; but there are no definitive death figures for the inmates who died during the famine.

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359 Ba Hong, interview.
360 Han Dajun, interview. Whereas Han Dajun complained about the poor performance of his camp doctor in Branch 7, Liu Naiyuan was grateful to his camp doctor Li in Branch 8 as he saved Liu’s life when Liu contemplated suicide through an intentional effort to contract pneumonia by catching cold. See Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 246-247.
361 See Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 210-211, 231.
While official records are lacking, individual accounts—narratives by political prisoners about the death around them—give insight to the severity of death in various labor camps. Chen Fengxiao recalls that among the 75 convicts who were sent to Team One of Branch Four in Xingkaihu in April 1959, only 29 were still alive in January 1967 when Xingkaihu was disbanded; the majority of the others died in the years of 1960 and 1961.

Regarding the death toll of rightists in the army farms, official statistics are highly dubious and inconsistent. While the gazetteer of Farm 850 states that “during the serious famine period of 1959-60, 8 rightists in all the farms died of edema,” the gazetteer of its Yunshan Branch indicates 10 deaths in this branch. All these figures are contested by rightist inmates. According to Yang Congdao, from May to November of 1960 alone, 29 Beijing rightists, whose names are recorded by Yang, died of starvation and related illness in Yunshan. The official figures of death on the farm seem to be dramatically underestimated.

The deaths of rightists can be compared with the mass deaths in the Beidahuang army farms in general. Its severity was disclosed in a self-criticism...
report by the Mudanjiang Reclamation Bureau, as submitted to the Ministry of Land Reclamation in 1961. While the reliability of the statistics the report provides is hard to identify, it reveal something about death in the whole land reclamation region of eastern Heilongjiang. The report reads: “from October of last year (1960) to February of this year (1961), 491 staff, workers and their families in our reclamation region died for abnormal reasons... 68 died of edema, 190 of edema combined with other chronic diseases, 133 of coldness, hunger, food poisoning and intestinal obstruction, 70 of reasons unknown.” This report did not specify the death rate of the Beijing rightists.

It should be noted that despite invaluable accounts, most of those with direct experience of banishment find it difficult to pinpoint the precise death toll of those around them, let alone in the broader sphere, which makes accurate calculation of death during banishment almost impossible. When interviewed, Tan Tianrong, Yin Jiliang, Liu Meng, Zheng Xiaofeng and others expressed their inability to accurately assess death rates in their team, although they did provide a vivid account of everyday happenings in their farm/camp. Living in a specific location and overwhelmed by human woes, they were hardly cognizant of anything beyond their direct world, or as Paul Cohen puts it, individual participants in historical events “do not have the entire event” in their minds. In both Xingkaihu and the army farms, when death became perfectly normal, an inmate did not even know whether his cellmates were alive or dead, or he himself might live in a state of paralysis. When Shen Mojun was sent to the medical center of Farm 850 for edema, he could not remember how many dead were removed or how many new patients were brought in; his wardmates experienced the same numbness. Just as Harry Wu described his labor camp experience in Qinghe,

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367 Zheng Jiazhen, Zhongguo dongbeijiao, 161. It is reasonable to speculate that the deaths of political offenders in Beidahuang labor reform regime were not the most serious among the labor reform camps in Manchuria. According to journalist Dai Huang, by the end of 1960, 1001 of more than 1200 inmate laborers died of starvation in Jinxī laogāi coal mine in Liaoning, and the survivors ate frogs, grasshoppers and butterflies. See Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 266.


369 Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 250.
Inside the 585 barracks it became more difficult to distinguish the dead from the living. At a glance there seemed no difference. Much of the day and night we lay in a state of near stupor. No longer did we pay attention when someone reached the end and went into last gasps or tremors... The only sign that a prisoner had died was that he failed to sit up at mealtime... I don’t know how many sick prisoners died that October. I don’t even know how many died in my squad. The number in my room fluctuated too much to keep track. Dead bodies went out and live bodies came in almost daily. I paid no attention. I never even learned their names.370

In the circumstance where death became daily routine, the death rate seemed meaningless to the exiles, and awareness of death likely gave away to the concern for self—those who were still alive.

Physical Abuse

The most serious physical abuse suffered by political exiles in Beidahuang occurred in the Xingkaihu labor complex. As for the rightists in the army farms, so far there have been no recollections indicating physical torture, although many remember that those who could not finish their work targets were at times denied food or rest by some farm cadres.371

In Xingkaihu, there was a differentiation in terms of the severity of physical abuse between those in labor reeducation branches (laojiao) and those in labor reform branches (laogai). For labor reeducation inmates, physical abuse seemed less pervasive because their civil rights had not been taken away and they were still under administrative discipline rather than criminal sanction. Tan Tianrong recalls that in the labor reeducation branch where he stayed those who suffered physical beatings were mainly those who stubbornly refused to “draw close to the government” (kaolong zhengfu) and those who did not get along well with their

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370 Hongda Harry Wu, *Bitter Winds*, 122-123.
371 Dai Huang, *Jinsi yisheng*, 197-198. Wu Yongliang recalls that in Yunshan, certain heavy but meaningless work, such as transporting wood planks on one’s back for long distances, was particularly designed as punishment for the rightists who were believed to be less dedicated to remolding themselves through labor, as enforced by his farm cadre Zhu. Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 56-57.
campmates. “I did not show much activism in drawing close to the government but I got along well with others in my team. So I never suffered a physical beating.”

Since camp cadres could not always dominate the lives of inmates, getting along well with other inmates, especially the duty inmate, might free a political offender from physical abuse. The recollections of other labor reeducation inmates such as Liu Naiyuan, Wu Ningkun and Han Dajun do not indicate physical abuse either.

Corporal punishment in labor reform branches (laogai), however, was much more common, as experienced by Chen Fengxiao and Liu Qidi. It was mainly imposed upon those who showed disobedience towards the camp cadres, to inflict physical pain through which to break one’s spirit. According to Chen Fengxiao, physical punishment was imposed when camp cadres wanted to resolve discipline problems, to crush the will of inmates or to extort confessions. When a convict behaved or spoke defiantly against an individual cadre, physical abuse was also very likely to happen. Corporal punishment included the use of handcuffs, leg irons, tiger benches, cigarette burning and placing victims in solitary confinement cells. The suffering of Chen Fengxiao, featured in Chapter Three, reveals how brutal physical abuse could be.

Another case is Liu Qidi, who was sentenced to 15 years for defending the literary dissident Hu Feng. When Liu was sent to Branch 5, Xingkaihu, in 1961, according to his campmate Meng Fuwu, he was very ill and often coughed up blood.

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372 Tan Tianrong, interview.

373 Physical punishment has been officially forbidden in China. See “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo laodong gaizao tiaoli” (Regulations of the PRC on Reform through Labor), in Guowuyuan fazhiju, ed., Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianxing falu xingzheng faqun huibian (The Comprehensive Collection of Current Laws and Administrative Regulations of the PRC) (Beijing: Zhongguo falu chubanshe, 1995), 66. However, the same document stipulates that in some situations the jieju (disciplinary equipment) could be used when it is necessary to preempt insurrections of convicts. See Ibid, 68.

374 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 52, 86, 109, 129-130. Certain disciplinary measures, including use of handcuffs and leg irons, were permitted by the Ministry of Public Security. According to its “Guanyu dui fanren shiyong jieju de tongzhi” (Instructions on the use of disciplinary equipment on convicts) enacted on January 29, 1957, however, the use of handcuffs and leg irons was not allowed to exceed one week. See Wang Mingdi, et al., Zhongguo yuzheng falu wenti yanjiu (Studies on Legal Problems in Prison Administration of China) (Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 1995), 51. Chen Fengxiao’s experience indicates, however, that in Xingkaihu laogai branches the use of such equipment could exceed one month. See Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 86.
Because of his obstinate attitude toward admitting his "crime," Liu was hung up and beaten many times by camp police. After numerous bouts of torture, Liu had a mental breakdown and was put in solitary confinement where he died. Solitary confinement, in a small concrete cell, was used to punish intractable prisoners. The cell in Xingkaihu, according to Chen Fengxiao, was about one meter tall and wide, and 1.5 meters long. According to Hongda Harry Wu, the one he saw was about six feet long, three feet wide, and three feet high, slightly larger than a coffin. Locked in this tiny cell, one was unable to sit or stand or lay down in a comfortable position; one had to take food with the mouth, and lie trapped in one's own excrement.

The exposure of inmates to mosquitoes was another source of physical abuse. In the marshland of Xingkaihu, the mosquitoes were allegedly more poisonous than those in other parts of Beidahuang. Flying swiftly in swarms, they became a major source of distress for those who worked in the fields, since "any area of exposed skin would be soon blackened with a layer of mosquitoes." Wang Jinquan, a historical counterrevolutionary in Branch 4, was victimized by this inhuman treatment. Because he spoke back to the camp police, he was tied up and thrown into a ditch that was full of grass. When he was released at evening after work, Wang was found bitten almost to death by mosquitoes, his white prisoner clothes bloodstained and his whole face swollen. Three days afterwards, Wang died.

Since inmate beating was (and is) officially forbidden in China, camp cadres in Xingkaihu tried to deal with the inmates they disliked in more insidious ways, for instance, instigating a group of prisoners to beat up the targets. When a convict was believed to be insufficiently deferential, a cadre might order other prisoners to "give

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375 Chen Fengxiao, unpublished essay “Nanwang de jiyi” (Unforgettable Memories), 3.
376 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 86; Hongda Harry Wu, Bitter Winds, 180-182.
377 Kate Saunders in her Eighteen Layers of Hell describes the experience of a juvenile offender who was put into a cage. This kind of cage, which measured 2.5 meters by 1 meter and held twenty people, was certainly more horrible than solitary confinement used in Xingkaihu and northern China in terms of its crowdedness. See Saunders, Eighteen Layers of Hell: Stories from the Chinese Gulag, 20.
378 Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 238.
378 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 70. At times, inmates abused each other by the means of exposure to mosquitoes. Liu Naiyuan tells a story about how an unpopular labor reeducation inmate was stripped, tied up and left outdoors by his campmates for the night. "The next morning they went out to release him, when he was already breathless, swollen all over beyond recognition." Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 239.
him a lesson,” or “give him a help” (bangzhu ta). Then his minions would jump at the victim.\textsuperscript{379} Yin Jiliang said that in his branch camp, the camp cadres never beat inmates themselves but always instigated others to do it. After having instigated the abuse, the cadre would normally leave in order not to take responsibility if the target was badly injured or beaten to death.\textsuperscript{380}

Suicide

Even before they were banished, intellectuals in Beijing used suicide as a means to protest their persecution or to avoid further persecution. In June 1957, when the Anti-Rightist Campaign had just started, Qi Xueyi, a journalist of the Beijing Daily, killed himself in public by suddenly jumping from the fourth floor of the assembly hall where a meeting to condemn Liu Binyan was being conducted. His suicide was explained by the anti-rightist activists as “sacrificing himself for the rightists” and “choosing to alienate himself from the people.”\textsuperscript{381} Qi is among the first ones known to die symbolically as a protest against the Anti-Rightist Campaign.

When labeled a bourgeois rightist and thus treated as a class enemy, individuals were torn by a question—to live or to die, since one could not predict the political pressure and hostile environment generated afterwards. Those who were relatively optimistic chose to live and went to labor camps to redeem themselves; those who were pessimistic chose to die or contemplated death in order to avoid further torment. At Peking University, a history professor Ding Zeliang drowned himself in

\textsuperscript{379} Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 28.
\textsuperscript{380} Yin Jiliang, interview.
\textsuperscript{381} Liu Binyan, Liu Binyan zizhuan (Autobiography of Liu Binyan) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban qiyue youxian gongsi, 1989), 110. Cong Weixi recalls that “when the high pitch of condemnation echoed around the hall, a man a couple of rows in front of me suddenly stood up. Before I realized what would happen, he quickly dashed onto the balcony of the fourth floor and jumped down like a diver...Blood! I saw red blood when I looked out. I covered my eyes and had no guts to see anymore... Then I heard someone shout downstairs: “This guy sacrificed himself for rightist Liu Binyan.” Cong Weixi, Zouxiang hundun, 5-6.
Weiming Lake near the university campus when he heard his designation as a rightist.\textsuperscript{382}

For many labeled as rightists who had the courage to continue their lives, life was sheer torture, and some attempted committing suicide then. “It is better to die than live,” an ex-doctor Ye Songtao told his friend Wang Zhiliang, who saved him from suicide. After Ye had been labeled and forced to do cleaning work, almost anyone in his work unit could punch him, scold him and spit on him at will. He was asked to live in a cell right next to an X-ray room, from which he contracted blood cancer. He did not know how to survive the ordeal.\textsuperscript{383} Bi Fangfang, an former junior researcher at the Chinese Academy of Science, also tried to die by swallowing sleeping pills before she was sent to Beidahuang.\textsuperscript{384}

For the exiles in Beidahuang, when the sense of isolation and humiliation was hard to overcome, when bad news arrived from their families, or when they found incessant political pressure or physical hardship in labor camps insurmountable, many chose suicide. The death of Tong Aicheng, Dai Huang’s campmate, had its roots in his deep desperation and sadness. After he was sent to Farm 850, his wife divorced him and left their two children without proper care in Beijing. Tong did not have sufficient money to support them from his 32 yuan RMB allowance, and there was no way he could return to take care of them. An unbearable workload also daunted him. In the end, Tong hung himself on a tree after work.\textsuperscript{385}

Another rightist who committed suicide in Farm 850 was an overseas Chinese who returned to serve the motherland when the “New China” was established. Driven by hunger in Beidahuang, he wrote to his father in Britain to ask for milk powder, for which he was repeatedly condemned by farm cadres as “having disgraced the socialist motherland.” In the conviction that “a gentlemen prefers

\textsuperscript{382} Zhang Jiqian, interview. According to Zhang (Ding Zeliang’s colleague), Ding, as a former CCP member, had quit the Party before its victory in 1949, and thus was severely condemned in various political campaigns in the early 1950s. Grave fear of being “struggled” again seems to be the root cause of his suicide.

\textsuperscript{383} Wang Zhiliang, interview.

\textsuperscript{384} Huang Wu, Mahuatang waiji, 5.

\textsuperscript{385} Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 192-193.
death to humiliation,” he drowned himself at night.\textsuperscript{386}

Some exiles committed suicide after being badly humiliated and physically abused in labor camps. Yin Jiliang recalls,

In a job placement camp at Suiling, I had a campmate, Mr. Qi, who was a very knowledgeable person. There was once a famous saying “The East Wind Prevails over the West Wind,” which was considered as coming from Chairman Mao and having strong anti-imperialist undertones. One day Qi pointed out in casual talk that this saying originally came from a classic novel the \textit{Dream of Red Chamber}, for which he was accused for viciously attacking the great leader. He was forced to make endless self-condemnations in struggle sessions for more than twenty days. One day, when he was ordered to stand on a discipline bench facing the audience and to condemn himself, one activist dashed into him, slapped him on his face and kicked over the bench. He fell down heavily and his glasses were cast off. With a bleeding mouth, he crawled on the ground fumbling for his glasses. He could not see anything, and nobody went up to help him. Several days later, he committed suicide by cutting his stomach open with a sickle, probably in the hope to die as quickly as possible…. His body was thrown into the swamp without burial.\textsuperscript{387}

One case of suicide was distinguished from many others. Lin Cheng, a laojiao inmate as well as a medical graduate, chose to die in defense of his self-esteem that he highly valued. As a labor camp doctor, Lin was often asked to provide medical services for camp cadres, for which he was offered benefits other inmates could hardly dream of—a single room, special meals and an exemption from manual labor. The hunger and abuse experienced by others did not bother him either. Although his expertise made his life easier, Lin Cheng was deeply sickened by the humiliation of intellectuals in Xingkaihu. One day on his medicare tour to the fields, he ended his anguish by cutting open an artery with a scalpel.\textsuperscript{388} Suicide turned out to be the last means for Lin to show his resentment and protest against an inhuman world.

Three points can serve as a conclusion for this chapter. The first is that the political offenders in Beijing were banished to Beidahuang during the Great Leap

\textsuperscript{386} \textit{Ibid}, 247.
\textsuperscript{387} Yin Jiliang, interview.
\textsuperscript{388} Cong Weixi, \textit{Zuoxiang hundun}, 164; Ba Hong, interview.
Forward period of 1958-59, and stayed there through the worst time of the great famine in the early 1960s. The intensive forced labor and starvation that characterized these two stages of the PRC history also inevitably constituted dual threats for these hapless exiles, making their lives extremely miserable.

The second is that, authorities of the labor reform regime (in Xingkaihu as well as the army farms) tended to show their commitment to the Party’s Great Leap policies and strove to fulfill or surpass designated production targets in particular, which made manual labor in Beidahuang sheer physical tortures. Their devotion to the state in terms of “saving grains and supporting the country” spelt a dramatic reduction of the food supply for their own workers, including the political exiles. The local activism of the labor reform regime exacerbated human suffering and entailed a heavy loss of life there.

The third is that the political exiles in Beidahuang, as in other parts of China, were deemed antagonists of the Party and socialism, and were thus deeply demonized. Any maltreatment, including physical abuse, depersonalization and undernourishment of this underclass was generally not seen as excessive. It was unlikely that any lenient treatment that was conferred on other farm workers was extended to them. In times of economic hardship, they were the last group to receive humane care.
Chapter Five
Looking for a Way Out: the Inner World of the Political Exiles

Xixin gemian, tuotai huangu
To change one’s heart and face, and thoroughly remold oneself
(traditional Chinese proverb)

Political exiles in Beidahuang were tortured by harsh physical conditions, heavy workloads and prolonged hunger, and maltreated by labor reform authorities. Sources show, however, that at the same time they were also victimized and traumatized by their sincere efforts to pursue self-redemption and ideological advancement. This chapter shows how the political exiles, especially the rightists in the army farms, adopted the Party’s ideology and were submissive to the labor reform arrangements. While feeling wronged and sad, the majority of the rightists still expressed loyalty to the governing party, and showed endorsement for the Party’s policy of reform through labor in particular.

This chapter will also examine internecine strife among the persecuted and banished. In order to survive, to show their commitment to reform through labor, and to be released early, some political exiles reported and denounced their fellow exiles, betrayed their friends, and tried hard to eliminate their rivals at the instigation of the authorities. The political exiles were unable to develop collective consciousness in face of a repressive regime. Loss of conscience was tremendous and trauma deep in later years.

Commitment to Labor Reform

When the Anti-Rightist Campaign came to an end and the fate of the rightists was sealed, the feelings of those labeled were complex. While many were feeling sad, disgruntled and depressed for being wronged, many sincerely acknowledged their “sin.” The long-lasting indoctrination they had received convinced them that it must be individuals rather than the Party that committed faults or made mistakes,
and individuals had to search their souls for what was wrong with them. Many of the persecuted, therefore, admitted the charges against them at least in public. Lu Gang, who was once sent to the Hulan farm of Heilongjiang, recalls,

I was trying to positively understand the significance of the campaign even if I was given a hard time. An editorial of the People's Daily stated that the rightists were the running-dogs of the western imperialists. Through a hard ideological struggle in my mind, I eventually realized that during the Hundred Flower period I did speak for the interest of the imperialists. Like me, the majority of my fellow rightists admitted that we were wrong and the Anti-Rightist Campaign was right... With this belief in mind, all of us worked very hard in the farm.”

Some rightists who had had experience in dealing with the CCP quickly admitted their “crimes” in order to avoid more trouble, such as the case of Zhang Bojun; but many others were sincere. The post campaign propaganda and mass criticism were so powerful that they created a climate that made those labeled dig into their very souls to such an extent that they finally realized they were truly wrong—they had been poisoned by bourgeois ideas and degenerated in to anti-Party elements, and their criticisms during the Hundred Flower period were reactionary in nature. With this self-abasing mentality, many admitted that they deserved the punishment imposed on them.

389 Lu Gang, interview. Mr. Gu recalls that “at that time I was really convinced that I fell short of the expectations of the Party and committed faults; it was right for the Party to brand me as a rightist because I wrote down something harmful to the Party. Stripping me of my Party membership meant the purification of the Party. I was willing to accept it. So I did not hold a grudge against either the Party or the people who designated me as rightist.” Mr. Gu, interview. Wang Zheng also says that he and his fellow exiles in the Farm 853 tried hard to cultivate the “correct understanding” of the Anti-Rightist Campaign all the time. See Liu Meng, ed., Lishi zai shenpan (Retrial by History) (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1996), 342.

390 As a top rightist, Zhang Bojun later explained his submission to the false accusation against him as trying to make a quick end to the campaign and to save others from being implicated. See Zhang Yihe, Wangshi bingbu ruyan (Do not Let Bygones be Bygones) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2004), 291.

391 It is difficult to pinpoint how many Beidahuang exiles had this mentality, but some such as Wang Zheng and Huang Miaozhi clearly revealed this point in their memoirs. Some felt a degree of grievance for being labeled though, but still recognized the necessity of changing their world outlook (shijieguan). See Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan (The Setting of the Sun over the Mountain) (Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2003), 27.
Many rightists continued stating their commitment to the Communist Party, and the revolutionary cause. Lu Gang says: “Although I was labeled a rightist, I was absolutely loyal and submissive to the Communist Party and Chairman Mao.” Dai Huang, too, had similar faith. He convinced himself that “even being insulted and humiliated, we should still pump up our revolutionary spirit, to enrich and improve ourselves with this brand new life, and to seek for light in darkness.” In the labor team where Dai lived, “even though many of us had been expelled from the Party, we still saw the Party as our mother.” Ding Ling recalls in her memoir that when they first arrived in Beidahuang, “my husband Chen Ming and I agreed that we should stick to our belief and ethics as communists, to ignore what we had suffered, to share weal and woe, and to break a new path in the cold northern frontier of our motherland.” This statement perhaps should be treated as real feelings rather than affectation.

The acknowledgement of their faults and their continuing endorsement to the Party led to their positive attitudes toward labor reform. The rightists sent to Beidahuang were led to believe that they needed to take labor reform as an opportunity to wash away their evil thinking, to achieve political and ideological perfection, and to reach spiritual growth; sending them to physical labor in a difficult location was a necessary measure the Party designed to save them through trials and tribulations. Thus some such as Huang Miaozi and Ding Cong “happily” accepted the imposed labor reform when asked to go.

This attitude is perhaps related to Mao’s promise of benevolent treatment of the rightists. In a speech made on October 13, 1957, for instance, Mao asserted that the rightists “are a antagonist force. But we do not treat them as landlords or counterrevolutionaries; let them remold themselves through labor...once they have rectified themselves, they would be allowed to return to the rank of the people.”

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An announcement of this sort was instrumental in calming down the frustrated rightists and letting them readily accept labor reform. Therefore, some rightists sang the Hymn of Communist Youth League on the journey to Beidahuang.\textsuperscript{395} Even realizing that laboring in the wilderness was a punishment, many treated it positively.

Arriving in Beidahuang, accordingly, considerable numbers of the Beijing rightists showed high enthusiasm and activism in the manual work assigned to them. Sources available so far overwhelmingly point to this, even though some counter proofs exist. Huang Miaozi recalls that in order to construct a reservoir that was designed to be dedicated to the 37th anniversary of the Party, he and his fellow rightists tirelessly worked for a week almost without rest.\textsuperscript{396} For the banished intellectuals in Dai Huang’s team, work in a hydraulic project and grass-cutting was daunting, and living conditions were appalling, “but none of us complained; we all labored hard cheerfully;” some even demanded more work that was not assigned to them, with their laboring process accompanied with joyful work songs.\textsuperscript{397}

From the recollections of these rightists, it seems that labor in army farms and labor camps was not only enforced by the powers that be but was also self-imposed. Some extolled their lives in the army farms and the labor that they engaged in. For instance, Huang Miaozi in his letters home positively described the sent-down life and job satisfaction that the physical labor brought to him.\textsuperscript{398} It is reasonable to assume that in the case of Beidahuang, forced labor imposed by the authorities on one side and the rightists’ commitment to labor reform (at least during the early period) on the other were two props to the forced labor arrangements. The high morale of the rightists collapsed later mainly because they were worn down by the

\textsuperscript{1977}, Vol. 5, 491.
\textsuperscript{395} Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 95.
\textsuperscript{396} Li Hui, \textit{Ren zai xuanwo: Huang Miaozi yu Yu Feng} (People in the Eddy: Huang Miaozi and Yu Feng) (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 1998), 298-299.
\textsuperscript{397} Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 121; Yin Yi, \textit{Huishou canyang yi han shan}, 36; Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei: Beidahuang shenghuo jishi} (Floating Rain and Snow: True Stories of Life in the Great Northern Wilderness) (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2002), 40. This work enthusiasm was also manifested in labor reeducation camps. In Cong Weixi’s labor team, some rightists even refused to take a rest when they were injured or fell ill. Cong Weixi, \textit{Zouxiang hundun}, 139.
\textsuperscript{398} Li Hui, \textit{Renzai xuanwo}, 310-311. Huang also stated that through physical labor and the major changes it brought about, he realized that “labor create the world; only under the leadership of the Party could the wilderness turn to metropolis and poverty to richness.”
prolonged daunting work and food shortages during the famine years.

The degree to which the rightists were committed to serious ideological remolding varied during their banishment. Memoirs of Yin Yi, Wu Yongliang and Liu Meng mention little about their consciousness or effort in self-remolding. However, letters of Huang Miaozi reveal his piousness in “digging deep to very soul.” In a political session of “opening one’s heart to the Party,” Huang made a confession about his “dirty and evil mind” such as hoping to return to Beijing soon, a lack of interest in agricultural technique, holding grudges against certain farm cadres, etc. Huang stated in a letter that “I have always achieved ideological growth through such sessions. It is worthwhile to do the self-exploration although I feel bitter going through it.” This mindset was by no mean cooked up due to the fact that after being restored Huang frankly admitted that “these thoughts came from my heart indeed.”

Cong Weixi believes, however, that this soul-searching was actually an adaptation to the surroundings in which the rightists was situated.

In study sessions, all of the rightists expressed with earnest faces that they would sincerely correct their rightist thinking and standpoints. This piousness did not necessarily involve any affectation. Once situated in that environment, it seemed we truly sensed our guilt and crimes. With everybody trying to get a word in, our self-examinations and self-criticisms were profound and deep.

Sincere as these expressions sounded, there were something fishy behind them. Behind their efforts were the rightists’ attempts to impress the farm authorities with their dedication to labor reform and, consequently, their hope to redeem themselves. With the physical environment so harsh, the work so daunting and their families left far behind, the rightists by no mean intended to remain in Beidahuang any longer than they had to, despite their heated rhetoric. As indicated in Chapter Two, when

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399 Li Hui, Renzai xuanwo, 312, 324. In 1997, Huang told the writer of his biography Li Hui that “in retrospect this self-cheating expression was only cure for the wound when human nature and feelings were deformed.” Li Hui, Renzai xuanwo, 324.
400 Cong Weixi, Zouxiang hundun, 42.
the rightists left Beijing, many were told or given hints by the bosses of their work units that their stay in the wilderness would be likely a short period if they showed a good performance in labor reform. In Beidahuang, speeches of farm cadres also followed the line of “removal of your ‘hats’ and return to Beijing depends on your performance in work.”

Trying to redeem themselves by good work in Beidahuang, the rightists hoped their efforts, as a sign of repentance, self-renewal, devotion and political progressiveness, would be appreciated, and consequently their banishment would be shortened. Liang Nan recalls, “the vast majority of the labeled labored with all their might, even ventured their lives, in order to get their ‘hats’ removed and to improved their situation... I was not an exception either.” Some, such as Ding Cong, expected that they would probably be called back in a year or two. Their dedication to physical labor, blending with their practical calculations, precisely reflected their desire to terminate the labor reform.

The mentality of the laojiao inmates in Xingkaihu seemed similar to that of rightists in the army farms, but was not exactly the same. When they were rounded up by police and sent to labor reeducation, no fixed period of internment was announced. Although their penalty spelled forced labor, the camp authorities also stated that their detention period depended on their individual performances, and that whoever labored hard and behaved well could be released earlier than others. Therefore inmates such as Han Dajun and Wu Ningkun spared none of their strength, “hoping like everybody else that my exertion at physical labor would put me in the

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401 Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 158; Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 53.
402 Exceptions existed, however, in the case of Ding Ling, for instance. She did not make much effort to leave Beidahuang even though an opportunity appeared later; rather she and her husband Chen Ming seemed to be satisfied with life there, and, in her words, “tried to make a new start in the wilderness.” As will be indicated in Chapter Six, She and Chen Ming went on living in Beidahuang army farms until 1966 when the Red Guards put them into incarceration.
403 See Liu Meng, ed., Huishou rensheng (Reflections on Our Life) (Beijing: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 2; Xin Suwei, Ding Cong zhuoan (Biography of Ding Cong) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1993), 187. Liu Meng recalls: “No sooner had we arrived than we started to hope to return to our original work units.” See Liu Meng, Chuntian de yu qiutian qing (The Whisking of Rain in Spring, the Clearing Skies in Autumn) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2003), 96.
good graces of the officers and bring closer the day of release.”

The key issue here is admitting crimes (renzui). In the Chinese tradition, Confucian doctrine emphasized self-examination or introspection (zixing). Willingness to examine self thrice a day (san xing wu sheni) was in theory a criterion to show oneself a gentleman (junzi). In Communist’s labor camps, “crime-consciousness” was a major criterion of virtue by which to judge the inmates’ behavior. Oral recognition of crime was necessary but far from enough. One had to convince the camp authorities of one’s “crime-consciousness” with a good performance in work, since, as Liu Naiyuan recalls, camp cadres always linked physical labor with sincerity in admitting one’s faults and even “identified desperate physical exertion with a proof of such sincerity”; those with poor work records were singled out for condemnation. Under tremendous pressure, political inmates in laojiao camps tried to show camp authorities their good performance.

The problem arose that the work the political exiles engaged in was exactly what they were not good at. Many branded as rightists and counterrevolutionaries had for long before their banishment been engaged in academic or managerial work as writers, teachers, journalists, scientists, engineers, officials, clerks, etc. Tilling land, cutting trees or digging earth was not their expertise, even though they tried

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404 Han Dajun, interview; Wu Ningkun, A Single Tear: A Family’s Persecution, Love and Endurance in Communist China (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993), 89. Han and Wu’s narratives were confirmed by an official document, the Resolution on Reeducation through Labor promulgated in August 1957. According to the resolution, “The labor reeducation personnel could be reassigned to other jobs with the approval of labor reeducation organizations, provided that they behave well during the period of labor reeducation.” See, Guowuyuan fazhiju, ed., Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianxing falu xingzheng fagui huibian (The Comprehensive Collection of Current Laws and Administrative Regulations of the PRC) (Beijing: Zhongguo falu chubanshe, 1995), 104.

405 Liu Naiyuan, Mirror: A Loss of Innocence in Mao’s China (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2001), 223-224. The situation of political convicts in laogai branches was different from those in laojiao branches, however. As sentenced criminals, their term was fixed, from varying terms to life sentence. The adequate performances merely secured their punctual release and freed them from additional penalty. Only those with “eminent contribution” could have their term reduced. See Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 104; Xingkaihu changshiban, Xingkaihu nongchang shi (Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm) (Mishan: No pub., 1988), 397. Recollections of both Chen Fengxiao and Yin Jiliang (both were counterrevolutionaries) did not provide any record of motivation or dedication of the laogai inmates to manual work.

406 Exceptions did exist, however. As showed in Chapter Three, a laojiao inmate Xuan Shouzhi stubbornly refused to work and was thus interned in a solitary confinement cell and crippled.
their best. Great inputs of effort and physical exertion might temporarily satisfy farm or camp cadres but they could not sustain the level for long, and thus could not meet mounting requirements. Memoirs of Liu Naiyuan, Dai Huang, Yin Yi and Wu Yongliang all indicate cases where the exiles could not finish assigned work thus were insulted by camp cadres, and felt untold bitterness. Furthermore, the overall evaluation of the rightists in the army farms was not good despite their efforts. An official report regarding rightists' performance in the army farms criticizes that the rightists “were afraid of cold, of hardship, and of fatigue.” Their effort in physical labor was poorly appreciated.

Put in surroundings where almost everyone tried to show his or her best, political exiles also found it not easy to make themselves stand out. For some, good work achievement, despite an indication of repentance, was insufficient to show their political commitment or progressiveness. Instead, more active gestures such as “drawing close to the government” (kaolong zhengfu), or “drawing close to the organization” (kaolong zuzhi) were shortcuts, which meant active responses to the authorities’ calls for “thought report” (sixiang huibao) and, for some political exiles, running down others as an important step to build themselves up and thus to assure various benefits. Accordingly, internal strife, betrayal, reporting and denouncing other inmates constituted conspicuous parts of the Beidahuang banishment.

Internecine Strife in the Pre-Banishment Context

Anne Thurston, presenting the Cultural Revolution as a failure of morality, provides an insightful interrogation of the Chinese human conscience in the post-revolutionary period. Under the Communist, she believes, many Confucian norms have been destroyed. People forget loyalty, honesty and respect for others people. They attack others in order to get ahead, to climb higher on the ladder of political

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407 See, for instance, Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 132; Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 53; Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 219, 224. Liu and his campmate Gan were frequently humiliated for their slowness in work. The camp cadre in charge of Liu’s team even used worksite struggle meetings to exert pressure on inmates. Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 243-244.

success, and to avoid being attacked by others. People act out of expediency rather than morality.\textsuperscript{409}

The experiences of the persecuted intellectuals in 1950s verify Thurston’s arguments. An overview of their psychology and their internal strife before their banishment helps understand the psychology and behavior of the exiles during their banishment.

Internal strife among the political exiles could be seen as the result of manipulation by the governing party. The CCP publicly encouraged mutual surveillance, secret reporting and mutual denunciation, and suggested redemption as a reward for this behavior.\textsuperscript{410} This strategy worked even before 1957. When Ding Ling and her former \textit{Literary Gazette} colleague Chen Qixia were attacked as an Anti-Party Clique, Chen Qixia broke first under political pressure. On August 3, 1955, when he confessed to various anti-Party crimes, he handed over all the correspondence he and Ding Ling had exchanged over the previous years, and accused Ding of attempting “to seize the leadership of literary circles.” Denunciations of Ding Ling also came from many of her colleagues. Lao She and Mao Dun, for instance, actively joined in attacks on her.\textsuperscript{411}

In the early summer of 1957 when the political wind shifted to the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the massive persecutions loomed large, many intellectuals chose to expose and attack their colleagues and friends politically in order to assert their loyalty or to save themselves. False accusations, denunciations and betrayal were widespread, based on the survival instinct, and under the encouragement of the


\textsuperscript{410} See “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo laodong gaizao tiaoli” (Regulations of the PRC on Reform through Labor), in Guowuyuan fawuzi, ed., \textit{Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianxing falu xingzheng fagui huibian} (The Comprehensive Collection of Current Laws and Administrative Regulations of the PRC) (Beijing: Zhongguo falu chubanshe, 1995), 70. In June of 1957 Mao Zedong in an internal instruction admitted that “We skillfully push those in the left wing and the middle elements to attack the rightists, which turns out to be very effective.” Mao Zedong, \textit{Mao Zedong xuanji}, Vol. 5, 432. Chen Fengxiao recalls that one of his Hundred Flower Society friends was free from being sentenced because of his exposure of “crimes” of Chen and other members of the society. Chen Fengxiao, \textit{Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi}, 40, 43.

Party authorities. Almost all the rightists featured in this thesis had once suffered denunciation and betrayal from their colleagues and friends. While some scathing attacks came from people who lacked clear political judgment but merely followed political trends, and from those who naively put faith on the Party and thus responded to the Party’s call to attack whoever was accused, the vast majority denounced their colleagues and friends out of a desire to show their political correctness or need for self-protection. The behavior of many of the most revered intellectuals was less than exemplary. The well-known playwright Tian Han managed to label his colleague Wu Zuguang to save himself. The famous writer Lao She also joined in the attack against Wu. Wu Han, historian and a leader of Beijing branch of Chinese Democratic League, was a leading activist during the campaign and labeled sixty-seven of his league members as rightists. During the campaign, intellectuals were led to incriminate their friends.

The reason for actively denigrating others, even betraying friends, was mainly self-defense or self-redemption. When the campaign started, the Party called on people to show their political correctness by pointing out the problematic or reactionary ideas of others, or they themselves would risk being criticized or labeled. For the purpose of self-protection, silence was less useful than finding a scapegoat. Artist Sun Chengwu (also a Party member) kindly reminded a colleague to be cautious since he (that person) was on the verge of being labeled. To his surprise, Sun’s colleague sold out Sun to the Party branch. When Sun was adversely labeled for “disclosing Party secrets” and sent to Beidahuang, his colleague became an Anti-

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412 For instance, many of those who joined in framing Dai Huang were his comrades in arms—who had once fought with him on battlefields, worked closely and held dinner parties together. Dai Huang, *Jiushi yisheng*, 77.


414 Ye Yonglie, *Fan yu pai shimo*, 326; Li Xin, interview.
rightist activist. The goal to “atone for one’s crime by doing good things” was achieved.415

For those who tried to find scapegoats, close friends, colleagues and comrades turned out to be more suitable targets than others, since the accusers had had more access to their lives and minds, and they were fully aware of the weak points of these targets. When political pressure remained high and labeling quotas were set, many were badly scared, and thus the survival instinct outran friendship and ethical principles. Targeting their closest colleagues and friends, exposing the most confidential information about the victims and raising trivial issues to political levels were best ways to assert the political loyalty of accusers, and thus provide them a better chance to survive the campaign. For a well-known rightist Luo Longji, the most vicious attack came from his girlfriend of seventeen years, who made use of Luo’s personal life to frame and slander, and accused Luo as a “wolf covered with a sheepskin.”416

The story of writer Liu Shaotang is also illuminating. According to Liu, the most vicious attacks on him came from a female colleague, a sister-like person, whom Liu had treated with extreme confidence and she had treated Liu well. “We almost had nothing secret between each other,” Liu said. When Liu was designated a rightist, she was also on the verge of being labeled. In her desperate effort for self-redemption, Liu became her easy target. She accused Liu for trivial issue—allegedly, failing to pay as much in Party dues as he should, which offered additional materials for other attackers. Probably, Liu would still have been labeled without her attack, since the main charge against Liu was “taking a stance against Chairman Mao’s literary thoughts.” However, her betrayal was a fatal blow to Liu. “It made me heart broken.” Liu recalls.417 In a perilous situation, or at a point of life or death, kind people became more vicious than could be expected by others, or even by

416 Zhang Yihe, *Wangshi bingbu ruyan*, 282-283. Even more heart broken was the betrayal of families. When Dai Huang underwent denunciation from his colleagues and comrades, his wife joined in and put up a wall poster, accusing Dai for plotting to organize an anti-Party clique within the CCP. Dai Huang, *Jiushi yisheng*, 61.
417 See Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., *Jingji lu*, 334.
themselves.

Nevertheless, the goal of self-protection was not always successfully achieved by unscrupulous attacks on others. Once somebody was internally selected as the target, his/her fate was, in most cases, sealed, and he/she stood little chance to be set free to clear themselves. The labeling quotas were set and thus needed work to get people to fit them. Thus the Party organizations seldom freed the targets. The revolutionary lady who denounced Liu Shaotang, for instance, was not exempt from being labeled, and she died miserably several years later.418 Deng Youmei, a writer in Beijing, is another example. On October 11, 1957, when the Writer’s Union of Beijing convened a mass condemnation meeting against Liu Shaotang, Deng had not been labeled yet. Thus he lodged a sharp denunciation against Liu. Ironically, right after Deng concluded his speech and enjoyed the warm applause of the audience, the Chairman denounced Deng a rightist on the spot.419 The discussion by Liu Naiyuan about this situation is illuminating.

It happened that people who had criticized the Party more sharply (during the Hundred Flower period), or those whose history was “complicated”, were eager to vindicate themselves by coming out with vigorous attacks on Rightists, and ironically these were apt to become Rightists themselves. As a result, there were cases in which a very eloquent defender of the Party and the cause of socialism stood crest-fallen a few day later on the stage a few meters aside of the rostrum he had just taken. Ironically, again, critics of these ill-fates warriors could find themselves in their shoes in no time.420

False accusations and betrayals of friends left many anti-rightist activists mentally tortured. Some felt guilty and displayed a degree of repentance later on. Novelist Ba Jin painfully admits in his memoir that when he harshly condemned Ding Ling and Ai Qing, he actually “threw stones toward those in dire strait.”421 In 1961 when Wu Zuguang returned from Beidahuang, Cao Yu, his friend and fierce

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418 See Ibid, 334.
419 Cong Weixi, Zouxiang hundun, 32.
421 Ba Jin, Sui xiang lu (Random Thoughts) (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1979), Vol. 1, 161.
attacker in the campaign, came to see him and asked for his forgiveness. Nevertheless, it seems that few people openly repented their behaviors in the immediate post-campaign period. Furthermore, since considerable numbers of victims of 1957 were also the perpetrators of denunciations against others at the same time, this behavior was brought to locations of their banishment including Beidahuang.

**False Accusations and Internecine Strife in Beidahuang**

Several Beidahuang rightists still remember that warmness existed among their exile communities. Friends within same team helped each other with work, collected donations for needy families of fellow exiles, and in some cases shared hard-to-come-by food. When the farm authorities were slow to provide rescue of those in emergency in the Yunshan incident, some rightists volunteered to search for their lost fellows even though they were physically very weak. However, many found that in their communities there were no lack of informants, who tried to show their political activism by watching and exposing others for their "inappropriate" deeds. As Hongda Harry Wu puts it, "Those who reported to the police in exchange for special benefits hoped that by demonstrating the progress of their reform, they could secure an early release."

Some activists fingered issues that seemed rather political. In Farm 853, Huang Wu and couple of friends in a casual talk joked out an idea of gathering all the rightists of the country in Beidahuang, which was reported by a certain Pan with the

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422 Li Wenhui, *Shiji laoren de hua Wu Zuguang juan*, 101. In some cases repentance was expressed even during the heated labeling period. Yin Jie recalls that “Yu Engui, my roommate and my good friend, was forced to expose me. One night when she finally returned from a political session, she cried and cried on my shoulder, and begged my pardon. She said that she would not be allowed to go home for food or sleep unless she came up with something against me.” Yin Jie, interview. According to the available sources, however, such apologies during the period of campaign were rare.


424 Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 228-231.

distortion that the rightists were trying to establish a “rightist kingdom” to confront the Communist government.\textsuperscript{426} Another case happened in Dai Huang’s team: a Chinese poetry specialist Hou Delin gave a negative rating of a verse of Mao’s poem, which was instantly reported by a rightist squad leader. The result was that Hou was publicly scolded as a “stubborn reactionary”, repeatedly denounced afterwards and forced to do extra work.\textsuperscript{427}

Other issues picked up were trivial. Practicing drawing (in the case of Ding Cong), reading history chronologies, singing English songs were all subjected to being reported although these activities were never explicitly banned by the farm authorities.\textsuperscript{428} In some branch farms, as indicated in the previous chapter, even catching field mice to eat during famine years was fussed over as “disgracing socialism.” When Ding Cong, Huang Miaozzi and Gao Fen, long-time friends, happened to be assigned to the same labor team in Farm 850, some of their fellow rightists informed the farm leader that they had once formed an “anti-Party cliques” in Beijing, and suggested a split of them apart.\textsuperscript{429}

In the army farms, as discussed in Chapter Two, thousands of rightists were organized along military line, headed by demobilized PLA officers (the farm cadres). Direct contact between these officers and the rightists was mainly limited to work time, and the officers did not have much interest in the personal issues of the rightists, or what they said or what they thought. It was the informants among the banished that made things fester, especially those appointed by farm authorities as squad leaders or platoon leaders (\textit{ban pai zhang}). Many of these rightist headmen were those who seemingly wished to “draw close to the organization” and were enthusiastic in public affairs.\textsuperscript{430} In daily life, they showed little difference from other rightists except for assisting farm cadres with the arrangement of agricultural work.


\textsuperscript{427} Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 172.

\textsuperscript{428} Ding Cong, interview; Huang Wu, \textit{Mahuatang waiji}, 37; Liu Meng, \textit{Cuntian de yu qiutian qing}, 124-125; Yin Yi, \textit{Huishou canyang yi han shan}, 75.

\textsuperscript{429} Li Hui, \textit{Renzai xuanwo}, 299.

\textsuperscript{430} Huang Wu, \textit{Mahuatang waiji}, 47; Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 124-125.
During work routines, meal and rest periods, they were all together and chatted and joked with others as normal. Some of them, however, in attempts to take chances to build themselves up, would memorize what their fellow rightists said and did, and quietly reported what they believed as problematic. Platoon leaders Zhang and Jiao in Yunshan, for example, were said to be such persons. Repeated condemnations Dai Huang suffered from camp cadres were due to their reports.\footnote{Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 172-173. In his memoirs, Dai Huang boldly exposes names of the informants in his teams, whereas Wu Yongliang, Yi Yi, and Liu Meng merely narrate the cases without reference to any names, and Huang Wu uses nickname to the informants. It also needs to be noted that not all the rightist headmen were informants; some were nice and popular among the ordinary rightists. For Wu Yongliang, his platoon leader Hao Qixin and squat leader Xiao Wang turned out to be conscientious and protective rightist headmen by shunning off heavy work demands from above at times and helping others with work. See Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei}, 58, 119.}

Based on the secret reports, many of which were farfetched, scary charges would be lodged on the target(s), and other rightists would be mobilized against their fellow campmates. The repertoire went like this: after farm cadres had made major condemnations, all the other rightists in the team concerned were asked to participate in mass denunciations against the one(s) regarded as having committed faults. Rightists in this situation were hardly able to keep silent. Some jumped forward with great activism, and some followed the trend. In the political sessions over "the incident of rightist kingdom" of Farm 853, some rightists analyzed the reactionary nature of the incident, charging these people (the targets) with trying to establish a rightist kingdom of millions of people against the Party and the People's Republic; some disclosed the daily behavior of these people, raising every small issue to match the political line; and some even strongly demanded severe punishment for these people. The condemnation sessions lasted for several evenings, the atmosphere was tense, and everybody was scared.\footnote{Liu Meng, ed., \textit{Lishi zai shenpan}, 345.}

Living in such a milieu, those who were reluctant to join in attacks were also obligated to say something against the selected targets. Dai Huang and Wu Yongliang acknowledged that many of these people joined in condemnations merely to get by under false pretenses, to muddle through, or just for the sake of appearances. Their criticism, therefore, would likely be less harsh; it normally took...
the form of persuasion and suggestions, and was combined with self-criticism, in the hope of satisfying the camp authorities and at the same time minimizing the hurt to their fellows. In very unusual cases, some refused to make accusations and kept silent.433

The farm cadres were fully aware of the internal strife amongst the banished intellectuals. A team cadre Li Fuchun (Farm 853) recalls that “There were so many conflicts among those intellectuals. Everybody wanted to get above the others. Some liked to drop small reports (secret reports) in order to show their activism, and drew everything to political line.” At times, even farm cadres did not bother to make fuss of the small reports. Bored with heated political rhetoric caused by “the incident of the rightist kingdom” in the Farm 853, the chief farm leader finally stopped the escalating condemnation sessions, just treated this issue as a joke, and did not make severe punishment of those involved in it.434

Nevertheless, it was sad for the rightist targets to hear ferocious denunciations coming from their campmates, some of who might have chatted in a friendly way the day before their criticism. Dai Huang recalls that several campmates were quite sympathetic to him and supportive of his opinions such as on the Great Leap myth, which turned out to annoy a camp cadre Zhu. However, when Zhu decided to condemn Dai and ordered these rightists to join in, most of them changed their tone and began to condemn Dai or stated to draw a line between themselves and Dai.435 Betrayal by close friends caused Dai and other victims enormous spiritual trauma. Yang Taiquan, Dai Huang’s campmate, even refused to talk in the army farm. “During labor, meal and rest, he always expressed himself with eye contacts, gestures, nods, and shakes of the head, rather than saying anything. When someone

433 Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 146-147, 166; Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei, 100-101. In Ding Cong’s narrative, the less harsh criticism made by his fellow rightists were statements to that they would draw a political line between themselves and Ding and be free from his negative influences. Ding Cong, interview.
435 Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 146.
chatted and joked, he sometimes could not help but smile; but he smiled very
transiently, and swiftly turned his back to conceal his feelings.” 436

Phony activism also existed in Xingkaihu and other labor camps. Compared to
the army farms, Xingkaihu was a more formal labor reform regime, in which
political study sessions were structured in a more formal way. In Chen Fengxiao’s
laogai team, political instructors openly encouraged “small reports” and mutual
denunciation in the name of “mutual surveillance and mutual help.” In the evening
after dinner inmates “had to sit down and join in life examination meeting
(shenghuo jiantaohui), in which inmates were encouraged to bite each other like
dogs.”437 In the laojiao camp where Wu Ningkun lived, “every three months there
was a two-day political campaign supposedly designed to speed up the reform of the
inmates. We would be enjoined to inform against each other and confess old crimes
we had concealed or new crimes we’d recently committed.”438 This kind of political
arrangement was often a good chance for activism. Chen Fengxiao recalls that every
part of his daily life, including chatting with other political convicts, or keeping
silent during political study sessions, was subject to being reported and denounced
by his campmates.439

Internecine strife among the persecuted intellectuals would at times lead to
physical abuse, which partly reflected grudges or retaliation against others. In the
labor camp Harry Wu stayed, fights often occurred over trivial issues. Those who
were too weak and cowardly to engage in fights would act out their rivalries and
resentments in political setting. These people would be active in offering false
accusations and joining in the prearranged struggle against the inmates they hated. A

436 Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 255. In Beidahuang, as happened during the Anti-Rightist Campaign,
some who denounced their friends or campmates felt guilty and came up to apologize afterwards. Xin
Ruoping was designated by camp cadres to condemn Dai Huang’s “anti-Great Leap” poison in a
political struggle session, and later on came to Dai to express his apology. Ibid, 147.
437 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 89.
438 Wu Ningkun, A Single Tear, 97.
439 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 74, 81. False accusations were also widespread
in other labor camps in Manchuria. In Zhenlai Labor Farm where Hu Xianzhong were incarcerated,
when a rightist prisoner Liu used a piece of newspaper that happened to have Mao’s portrait on it to
wrap shoes, his campmate Bi reported it to the camp cadre, with the implication that Liu had
“inveterate hatred” for Chairman Mao. Hu Xianzhong, interview.
story told by Harry Wu was daunting. In Qinghe Farm, when two rightists Guo and Wang were denounced as active-counterrevolutionaries, the attacks from four activists were horrible.

To my horror, the four activists, themselves fellow rightists, began viciously to strike and kick their captives, shouting for them to confess... Then before our eyes two activists stripped off the helpless men's clothing. One of the men being struggled against slumped to the floor... Soon the two victims were strung by their wrists from the crossbeam in the roof. I saw someone come in with a belt dipped in water and began beating one of the men, against whom I knew he held a grudge.  

Political exiles acknowledge the human weakness shown in relentless attacks upon rightists by other rightists, and some also admit their inability to avoid such weakness. From a struggle session Cong Weixi personally experienced, he realizes that “the Anti-Rightist Campaign suggests to me that attacks on intellectuals by intellectuals are extremely ferocious; this struggle session reveals again that when rightists lacking in conscience attack their like, it is ten-time crueler than other ordinary intellectuals.” The story Cong told was about his friend, artist Li Binshe, who was condemned for using cartoons and traditional Chinese painting to defame socialism. During the condemnation session, almost all the rightists in Li’s labor group, including his former colleagues and friends, tried to bring all their skills into play to condemn him in order to show their own piousness. Even Li’s fainting did not stop them from yelling at him. Interestingly, Cong confides that he...

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Hongda Harry Wu, *Bitter Winds*, 203–204. This story is also told by Meng Bo. See Xiao Ke, et al., *Wo qili guo de zhengzhi yundong* (The Political Campaigns That I Have Experienced) (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 1998), 116-123. According to Meng, some of those who were actively joining in the beating had actually suffered before at the hands of Guo and Wang.

Cong Weixi, *Zouxiang hundun*, 57. In contrast to the uneasy relationship among intellectuals, the banished found that kindness and consolation came from rural folks rather than from their colleagues. During his years of “labor under supervision,” Cong found peasants with whom he performed labor very friendly—they never took advantage of their superior political status in dealing with the hapless intellectuals. Cong Weixi, *Zouxiang hundun*, 40. Tan Tianrong recalls that when he was sent back to his home, a mountain village in Hunan, after completing his term of labor reeducation, local people did not show any discrimination against him. Tan Tianrong, unpublished essay “Meiyou qingjie de gushi” (Stories without Plot), 3. Many of my interviewees claim that living among the peasantry was better than among intellectuals.
did not say anything against poor Li not because he was reluctant to do so, but simply because he did not get a chance when so many attackers spat out speeches one after another.\(^{442}\)

The reward for these attackers for their activism was their promotion as rightist group leaders in the case of the army farms, or cell bosses in the case of labor camps in Xingkaihu. Sometime they were provided with a little more food and a lighter workload than others, and could, in both army farms and Xingkaihu, wield considerable power over their fellow inmates, and even enforce physical penalties. In Xingkaihu, many cases of physical abuses were perpetrated by cell bosses; in Yunshan, Dai Huang witnessed some rightist platoon leaders orally and physically abuse other rightists or deny them food.\(^{443}\) Phony activism also played a role in early release from the army farms. By reporting on their fellows and seeing them disgraced, opportunities for the activists to acquire early release seemed to increase. According to Dai Huang, those appointed as platoon and squad leaders found it relatively easy to get their rightist “hats” removed earlier than others. “Some got their rightist hats removed in the first wave of ‘label-removal’ precisely because they were active in reporting others.” \(^{444}\) These informants were much more abhorred by the rightist communities than the camp cadres they dealt with.

Nevertheless, putting others down hardly played a role in early release for laogai or laojiao inmates in Xingkaihu. Firstly, for the laogai inmates, their sentence was fixed and the decision to reduce a sentence was based on their work record rather than on political denunciations against others. In November 1959, 14 convicts got their sentences reduced. All of them were due to their good performance in agricultural production or for saving public property. As Liu Naiyuan puts it, in the struggle sessions in China’s prison system “no political shows would bring any benefit or reward.”\(^{445}\) Secondly, for the laojiao inmates, poor political performance would likely get their internment extended, but good deeds did

\(^{442}\) Cong Weixi, *Zouxiang hundun*, 54-57.
\(^{443}\) Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 73; Han Dajun interview; Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 188, 238.
\(^{444}\) Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 172.
\(^{445}\) Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, 44; Liu Naiyuan, *Mirror*, 197.
not guarantee early release. Neither Tan Tianrong, Han Dajun, Liu Naiyuan or Wu Ningkun (all were laojiao inmates) provide any cases of early release for whatever reason during their internment in Xingkaihu. Furthermore, for laojiao inmates, whether to be granted release on time was more decided by national politics than by their political performance in the labor camps. When the Xingkaihu laojiao inmates were transferred to Qinghe, many were told that they would serve a maximum three-year term starting from May 24, 1961. Yet when the date of expiry of the laojiao term came in 1964, many inmates were kept on in internment because of the tightening of political control in the context of the Socialist Education Movement. "446 Political activism could not improve the fortunes of those in labor camps.

Nevertheless, phony activism was still persistent. Even those who had little hope of redeeming themselves tried to show their political loyalty. Ding Tong, who was banished to Xingkaihu under charge as a historical counterrevolutionary and an active counterrevolutionary, actively exposed and condemned Chen Fengxiao for lack of enthusiasm in studying Mao’s Little Red Book in 1965, and joined in the physical abuse of Chen, even though he was aware that it was impossible to get his own sentence mitigated. 447 It seems that attacking others did not always serve a practical propose.

Psychological Suffering and Low Morale

Despite their efforts to extricate themselves from the abyss of their miseries, many political exiles came to realize that, with the political label (rightist or counterrevolutionary) hung over their heads like a sword of Damocles, when they would be able to leave Beidahuang was beyond their control, and whether they could see their families alive was uncertain. When their early enthusiasm for work faded and their internment was prolonged, frustration, loneliness, and the fear of dying in the great wilderness overwhelmed many exiles. When Huang Wu and his

446 Liu Naiyuan, Mirror, 275-276. For information on “Socialist Education Movement,” see Jonathan Spence, The Search for Modern China (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 590-596.
447 Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 104.
fellow rightists talked about their future, they sadly agreed that they would likely end up as forced land pioneers, stay on forever and have their “bones buried in the black soil.” In early 1960, rightist Zhu Qiping, realizing that he would probably not be able to return home, sent his only precious belonging, a watch, back to his wife in Beijing, as a sign of farewell.448

Psychological suffering was profound. In Xingkaihu and some army branch farms (such as Yunshan), when the political exiles were deprived of dignity and human treatment, and merely driven like draft animals or slave laborers, the sadness generated was untold. Some even envied livestock and field animals that had enough forage and were free from exposure to the cold.449 They used a term “boundless sea of bitterness” (kuihai wubian) to describe their misery, a feeling that eventually turned to numbness—the absence of any feeling of sorrow. When Wu Yongliang was asked to keep a night watch for four of his fellow rightists who had died of hard labor and hunger, he found that he was in a state without sadness or any other feeling:

I felt my mind empty—no fear, no sorrow, no even resentment. During the past three years, what could be called freedom, dignity, personality, or feelings—what a human being owned or should own—seemed to be entirely gone. This probably was the ideal state of “thorough remolding of oneself (tuotai huangu).”450

With this profound sense of sadness and frustration, some political exiles became increasingly depressed and withdrawn. Huang Wu’s story about his friend Wang Dahua is striking. It can be summarized as following: Wang’s banishment to Beidahuang and the death of his wife left his little daughter without proper care and eventually she was killed by a run-away truck. The reticent Wang became even more silent; his fellow exiles could only hear his soft calls for his daughter at night. One day Wang found a monkey in the forest. He brought the monkey back and treated it like his daughter and talked to it gently. Before long, however, the monkey was

448 Huang Wu, Mahuatang waiji, 56; Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei, 7.
449 Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 233; Yin Yi, Huishou canyang yi han shan, 44, 47.
450 Wu Yongliang, Yuxue feifei, 135.
secretly hung by an unpopular fellow rightist. Wang buried the monkey and resumed his silence again.\textsuperscript{451}

Tortured by psychological stress, prolonged hunger, and uncertainty about the future, some political exiles grew increasingly eccentric, intolerant, and selfish. In Yunshan, "it seemed that people only cared about their own personal gain or loss; mutual understanding, friendship, consideration and help began to wane." Quarrels and physical feuds blew up out of trivial issues. When someone failed or was believed to be failing to do an equal amount of work with others, or if someone lifted food from others, he would be hurled out, beaten, and even tied to a tree and exposed to the cold of winter.\textsuperscript{452} In Xingkaihu, the exiles communities were full of tension. Chen Fengxiao's violent eruption against his campmate Hao Zhixiang reflects his anger at his humbled situation.\textsuperscript{453}

The fact that internal feuding was the direct result of prolonged internment and frustration was also manifested in the period after the Beidahuang. When many laojiao inmates were transferred to Tuanhe Farm in June 1962, the personal relations among them were good for the first several weeks. "The atmosphere remained harmonious," recalled Harry Wu, since the inmates were given hints by the camp cadres that their fate would be improved due to the relaxation of the political climate, and thus they held deep hopes for release soon after. However,

This good will faded as the weeks of summer passed and we received no word about release. The personal tensions, the continuing fights over food, and the disputes over labor assignments reflected our mounting frustrations and our dwindling hopes."\textsuperscript{454}

In some cases, feuds and the use of force and violence in labor camps could be seen as the result of selfishness and moral degeneration, which makes the whole issue complicated. Harry Wu provides a story about how he dealt with his

\textsuperscript{451} Huang Wu, \textit{Mahuatang waiji}, 11-15.
\textsuperscript{452} Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 174.
\textsuperscript{453} Chen Fengxiao, \textit{Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi}, 86. See Chapter Three for Chen's violence against his campmate Hao.
\textsuperscript{454} Hongda Harry Wu, \textit{Bitter Winds}, 158.
campmates: Wu, as a squad leader in Qinghe Labor Farm, was once responsible for making the fire to warm the squad dormitory on winter nights. One day when he was busy with other work, he asked his fellow inmate Lu to help make the fire. But Lu refused on the grounds that this was not supposed to be his job. Feeling his authority challenged, Wu decided to implement his order by force:

“Follow my order,” I shouted, “or you’ll regret it.” Lu shook his head.
I stood up and grabbed his foot. “Do it!” I said, and twisted his foot hard.
“Let go of me, I’ll go,” Lu cried, and the tension passed. He went outside to fetch the cornstalks from the ox cart and load them into the stove.455

According to Wu, Lu also refused to provide necessary aid to a fellow prisoner, who was suffering from painful hemorrhoids, with his work assignment. “Sorry,” Lu said, “but...we all eat the same food. I won’t do someone else’s job.”456

It is hard to assume that Lu’s selfishness and submissiveness to force and Wu’s tendency to use force on his fellow prisoners as being typical of the banished intellectuals. From the sources we have consulted, however, it can be discerned that moral degradation existed widely in the post-1957 labor camps.

Conclusion

The period of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the border banishment afterwards was a significant phase of the psychological journey of Chinese intellectuals. Bound by the Party ideology and hoping to serve the country under the Party leadership, many of China’s educated elites willingly adhered to the Party line that led to their persecution, and sincerely repented their “faults” when purged. Their self-abasing mentality led to slavish obedience to the regime, and their sense of identity and dignity was shattered. During the banishment, many made strenuous efforts to offer good service in exchange of redemption.

455 Ibid, 140.
456 Ibid, 143.
Considerable numbers of political inmates were involved in or were victimized by internecine strife even while being persecuted and banished. False accusations continued, betrayal of friend reappeared, secret reporting and incrimination of their fellow exiles widely existed—all of which indicate that political exiles, especially intellectuals, were mentally damaged and deformed not only by the Communist regime but also by themselves.

Those who made efforts to redeem themselves—to please labor reform authorities in order to crawl their way out of labor camps—paid a heavy price for that. Their dignity, personality and moral value were severely eroded. Thus the experience of the banishment not only left millions of Chinese physically damaged, but also with crushed human values and defiled the sanctity of the human spirit.
Chapter Six
The End Without End

We were living in two different worlds, divided by an unbridgeable gap. Staying behind in America, he was able to reap success and honor and live a happy life in security and affluence. Returning to China, I struggled through trials and tribulation and barely made it to this day of rehabilitation.

Wu Ningkun reflects upon his life and that of his friend Lee Tsung-Dao (Li Zhengdao), a Nobel Prize winner.457

The years of 1960-1961 brought a number of significant changes to the political exiles in Beidahuang. Due to the CCP authorities’ intention to show their benevolence, and their apprehension of mass deaths, many rightists got their labels removed and were brought back from the border regions to the interiors. Some were allowed to return to their original work units. The ultra-rightists were transferred from Xingkaihu laojiao camps to Qinghe and then Tuanhe Farms in north China to continue their labor reeducation. The number of political exiles in Beidahuang drastically declined.

While the rightists from the central civilian organizations and the majority of ultra-rightists in Xingkaihu (the laojiao inmates) benefited from the temporary political relaxation in the early 1960s by being evacuated, the laogai inmates whose status was sentenced convicts and the rightists from military organizations were left behind in the Heilongjiang frontier regions. For many, the conclusion of their banishment to Beidahung did not spell the end of their status as political outcasts, or to their suffering. They had to intermittently participate in agricultural labor in local farms, were forced to go through various ideological remolding sessions and subjected to continuous harassments in ensuing political campaigns.

This chapter will look at the process of “label removal” (otherwise known as

hat removal or *zaimao*) for the rightists, the withdrawal of the political exiles from Beidahuang. It also looks at how they fared in later years.

**Mao's proposal and hat removal (*zaimao*) of the rightists**

The redemption of the rightists came from a proposal of Mao Zedong, the very person who had insisted on sending them down for ideological remolding. On August 24, 1959, Mao wrote a letter to his deputy Liu Shaoqi on the adjustment of policy regarding the rightists:

> I believe that we can convert at least 70% of those labeled rightists within a certain period of time. Within the next seven years or more, for instance, it is possible to convert 10% of them and remove their “hats” per year. Please initiate a discussion among the standing members of the Political Bureau as well as the central secretariat, and enact an instruction: at the tenth anniversary of the country, to remove “hats” of 10% rightists, i.e., 45 thousands based on the situation as to how they have remolded themselves. This would be instrumental to teach lessons to rightists, general bourgeoisies, intellectuals, and members of ‘democratic parties’.”

In the same letter, Mao also instructed that the “hat removed” rightists continue to be watched: “if they have a relapse, just put the rightist hats on them again.”

The reason for this initiative, although hard to pinpoint accurately, may be established from an analysis of national politics. Due to the seeming failure of the GLF and dissatisfaction among the general public as well as the Party members, it was necessary to rebuild confidence and display a degree of relaxation. With the coming tenth anniversary of the People’s Republic (October 1st 1959), the release of a certain number of inmates was helpful to show the benevolence of the Party and to build up a warm political environment. The “hat” removal (*zaimao*) of the

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458 See Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Jianguo yilai zongyao wenxian xuanbian* (Selected Collections of Important Documents since the Establishment of the PRC) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1996), V. 12, 528.

459 See Xiao Donglian, *Qiusuo Zhongguo: wenge qian shinian shi* (The Search for China: the Ten Years’ History prior to the Cultural Revolution) (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1999), Vol. 1, 237; Ye Yonglie, *Fanyoupai shimo* (The Whole Story of the Anti-Rightist Movement) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1995), 568. Both of these two sources point to the CCP’s attempt to relax internal
rightists reflected strategic considerations of the CCP leadership.

A bitter irony was that this program was bound up with another plan as a integrated package—the amnesty of sentenced criminals (POWs from pre-Communist regimes and penal criminals) currently detained by the CCP public security authorities. In the same letter Mao suggested the remission of the sentences of a certain number of “POWs and ordinary convicted criminals who have truly turned over a new leaf”, for the tenth anniversary of PRC. This suggestion revealed that Mao had a dual consideration in dealing with criminal offenders and those who aired different opinions, and that in the issue of state consolidation, intellectual critics in Mao’s eyes might be little different from those who fought the Communists during the civil war and the criminals who caused social disturbance.

Mao’s letter set in motion the hat removal of rightists as well as their withdrawal from rural areas and the border regions. On September 17, 1959, the Central Committee of the CCP issued an “instruction on hat removal of rightists who show real repentance”, which ordered the hat removal of a number of rightists “during the celebration of the National Day”. Despite the seeming urgency to create the desired atmosphere, it was too close to the National Day to make realistic plans or to perform careful scrutiny of individual rightists in order to identify who could get their “hats” removed and who had to keep their “hats” on. It was not until early December that the names of the first group of rightists to have their hats removed in Beijing (142 people, all from central government organs and democratic parties) were publicly announced. In terms of the whole country, the process of tension and to build up a good atmosphere for the National Day. As well, Ye mentions that amnesty was regularly used by various China’s rulers as a tactics at times of major celebrations.

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460 See Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., Jianguo yilai zongyao wenxian xuanbian, V. 12, 529. Implementing Mao’s instruction, by December 1959, the PRC central government released 33 high-rank POWs (Aisin Gioro Puyi included), and provincial authorities remitted the sentences of 12,082 counterrevolutionary offenders (fangeming fan) and criminal offenders (xingshi fan). See Ma Qibin, et al., eds., Zhongguo gongchanaang zhizheng sishi nian (The CCP: Forty Years’ in Power) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1989), 174.

461 See Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., Jianguo yilai zongyao wenxian xuanbian, V. 12, 572-574.

462 Xiao Donglian, Qiusuo zhongguo, Vol. 1, 237. Zhu Zheng, 1957 nian de xiaji: cong baijia zhengming dao liangjia zhengming (The Summer of 1957: from Hundred Schools of Thought Contending to Two Schools of Thought Contending) (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 519. The names of these people were published in the People’s Daily, December 5, 1959. The
hat removal was cautious. When the first round of the program was completed in early 1960, 37,506 people in total got their rightist hats removed, which accounted for 8.5% of all the rightists.463

The work of hat removal of Beijing rightists in Beidahuang was set in motion in October 1959. Several central observation teams (zhongyang kaochatuari) were sent to the army farms to evaluate the success of rightists’ ideological remolding. They checked files of the Beijing rightists, consulted farm leaders and determined the number of those who needed to have their hats removed.464 The result, to the dismay of the rightists, was that only a small portion of the rightists were told to get their political labels removed. Among 925 rightists sent from central civilian organizations and military units to Farm 850, for instance, only 46 got their rightist hats removed. They were allowed to leave the farm for their new posts in Beijing, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia and other better locations in Heilongjiang. Those left behind were advised to continue their efforts in reform through labor.465

Reports of death from starvation turned out to be a decisive element for the CCP government to withdraw the rightists. During their stay in the army farms in 1959, the observation teams had heard of food shortages and dropsy (a sign of

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465 Yu Shanpu and Yang Chongdao, “Beidahuang liuren mingdan” (The Name List of Beidahuang Exiles); Yang Congdao, interview. According to Yu and Yang, among more than 200 rightists sent from central civilian organs to the Yunshan Branch, only three had their hats removed in 1959.
malnutrition), but they did not take it seriously at the time. In 1960, however, frequent reports of the deaths of Beidahuang rightists reached Beijing, and gradually caused concern in the central government and, to a great extent, prompted its acceleration of the hat removal process and the evacuation of more rightists (including those still wearing hats) back to the interior.

Regarding how the central authorities made the decision on the evacuation of rightists, no official sources have been disclosed on this topic. Rather, individual recollections and biographies provide various versions, although they are yet to be verified. Some sources show that, certain well-connected rightists and their families wrote to the State Council reporting their predicament, which served as one element prompting the State Council to evacuate the rightists.\textsuperscript{466}

Another source is the journalists Zheng Xiaofeng and Dai Huang. They claim that when Zhou Enlai in the fall of 1960 discovered the discrepancy between the numbers of Beijing rightists who had been sent to Beidahuang and those who were still alive, he demanded from Wang Jingkun, the director of Mudanjiang Land Reclamation Bureau, an explanation for the mass deaths. When he found out from the ambivalent report Wang provided that the majority of deaths were from edema, malnutrition and diseases, Zhou finally realized the jeopardy of the rightists, and demanded their withdrawal.\textsuperscript{467} (These banished intellectuals convinced themselves that it was Premier Zhou saved them from jeopardy at last. Although it is implacable for people that Zhou actively saved those whom he had participated in to send away, in the post Mao context people needed to believe that Zhou was a good leader when image of Mao collapsed.)

On September 17, 1960, the CCP central authorities issued another document, which showed a degree of seriousness for the solution of the rightist problem. The

\textsuperscript{466} For instance, a well-known figure Xie Hegeng and his wife Wang Ying wrote to premier Zhou Enlai and vice Chairman of the State Dong Biwu, reporting his hardship in Beidahuang, Zhou and Dong made a quick response and arranged for Xie’s return. See Zhang Zhicai, \textit{Yongyuan zaichulian} (In Love Forever) (Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 332-333; Yao Lan and Deng Qun, \textit{Bai Congxi shenbicm de zhonggong mimi dangyuan} (The Underground CCP Member Working with Bai Chongxi) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1998), 258-259.

\textsuperscript{467} Zheng Xiaofeng, interview; Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi Yisheng: wo de youpai licheng} (A Narrow Escape from Death: My Experience as a Rightist) (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 1998), 267-268.
document demanded continuous effort to remove the hats of rightists in the coming
years, and suggested that the hat removal quota for 1960 be around 15-20% of the
total. It also read, “those who do not meet the standard for hat removal, but have
labored for more than two years and behaved properly could also be recalled and
assign suitable jobs”468 With this instruction in operation, the central observation
teams were sent to Beidahuang again in November 1960 to implement the second
round of hat removal, which was much larger in scale than that of a year before. Of
around nine hundred rightists in Farm 850, 127 were able to get their hats
removed.469

While the observation teams were doing their paper work and going through
formulaic procedures, however, the death rate accelerated in Beidahuang. Within
less than a month, according to Dai Huang, six of his fellow rightists died of
starvation and related illnesses.470 The hat removal also gave rise to unexpected
result—the sudden death of rightists due to the combined effects of surprise and
extreme physical weakness. After the central observation team announced his hat
removal and gave him permission to return to Beijing, Guo Guanjun, a young
linguist and translator, gave out his valuables as farewell presents to those still
wearing hats. That night, however, he died of heart failure. Dai Huang also revealed
other deaths during and right after hat removal days.471 The successive deaths of
rightists at the juncture of hat removal disclosed a grim picture: rightists in
Beidahuang were being swallowed by hunger, malnutrition and lack of medical care
at alarming rate when hat removal (zaimao) was going on. The fact that many were
too ill to attend zaimao meetings and that some died right after the good news was
announced indicated the prospect that the natural consumption of a life might

468 See Hua Min, Zhongguo danizhuan, 397.
469 Yu Shanpu and Yang Congdao, “Beidahuang liuren mingdan.”
470 Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 244-247.
471 Yu Shanpu and Yang Congdao, “Beidahuang liuren mingdan”; Dai Huang, Jiushi yisheng, 253-256,
265-266. A story told by Dai reads that a rightist in Yunshan was too sick to attend the hat removal
meeting. When his campmates told him that his hat had just been announced removed, he burst out
laughing and crying in delight and then fell into sudden death. Records of Yu and Yang repeatedly
show that rightists died one after another after they had their hats removed, some on the train for
Beijing.
overtake that of political redemption.

Concerned about the increase in deaths, the central authorities made a quick decision. In December 1960, the observation team in Farm 850 announced that except for those who had previously worked for the military, all the rightists coming from Beijing were to leave the army farms. "Those who have got their hats removed are to be reassigned jobs; those still wearing hats but who have behaved well are also to be given new jobs," a chief of the observation team announced. Political appraisals were made and suggestions for job assignment were provided. From December 1960 to January 1961, Beijing rightists, after having experienced disproportionate afflictions, successively left the Beidahuang army farms.

**Evacuation of the Laojiao Inmates**

While the rightists were evacuated mostly because of starvation and death in the army farms, the laojiao inmates left Xingkaihu mainly because of government concern over border stability. As discussed in Chapters Three, the Xingkaihu labor reform complex was located right next to the Soviet borer in the east. "Backed up by Soviet elder brother" had been one of important reasons for choosing Xingkaihu as the camp location, as the Chinese government anticipated efficient prevention of escape and, as alternative, successful extradition of escapees from the Soviet Union. This advantage was quickly reversed into a disadvantage in the early 1960s with the emergence of the Sino-Soviet rift and tension on the northeastern border.

The Xingkaihu camp authorities also faced difficulties in efficiently handling inmates. In 1960, for instance, the convicts it accommodated were 13,318, while the camp cadres and staff were less than 400 in total. In Branch Five, there were about

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472 Yang Congdao, interview; Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 252.
473 Yu and Yang "Beidahuang fiuren mingdan" documents valuable information about the job-assignments of many rightists. Some who were at first recalled to their original work units in Beijing were relocated to other provinces later on, such as the case of Wu Yongliang. See Wu Yongliang, *Yuxue feifei*, 10-11.
474 So far no official document has been released regarding the central authorities’ concern over border security in relation to laogai and laojiao inmates in the borderlands. However, Wu Yue recalls that there was a document issued by the public security authorities in the late 1960 that all the laojiao elements needed to be removed from coastal regions, frontier regions, principal railhead and major urban areas, and the laogai elements needed to be put under stricter confinement. Wu Yue, interview.
450 inmates with less than 20 camp cadres overseeing their work. The apprehension of the camp authorities was reflected in their action in October 1960: a new picket line (a earth dyke fence) was constructed to prevent inmates from fleeing. Although the shortage of management personnel in Xingkaihu was not the major reason for the mass transfer of laojiao inmates, the camp authorities found that in times of trouble, so many inmates were hard to handle.

In December 1960, the majority of ultra-rightists in laojiao camps were evacuated to Qinghe Farm in north China, and in the following year, around 600 laogai convicts were also sent back to the interior. The camp authorities explained the motive of the transfer as kindness and leniency to these detainees. Zhang, a director of Branch Eight, told Liu Naiyuan and his campmates that this “was the result of a lenient policy towards us criminals which was meant to better help us in our reform,” recalls Liu Naiyuan. The Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm, too, stresses care of the “weak and sick”, and their need to receive better food and medical care in better locations. However, those transferred insist that this evacuation merely reflected the government concern for border security. Liu Naiyuan recalls that “we later learned that the purpose of the relocation was to prevent secret collaboration between bourgeois rightists and the Soviet revisionists across the border. Zhang’s version of leniency was therefore irrelevant.” Camp cadre Liu Junying also admits that those who were sent back to the interior “were actually ‘dangerous elements’,” and that “our chiefs were trying to keep the inmates here at a minimal level.”

Although in 1960 the inmates half-dead from starvation showed no sign of

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475 Mishan xianzhi bianweihui, *Mishan xianzhi* (Gazetteer of Mishan County) (Beijing: Zhongguo biaozun chubanshe, 1993), 146; Liu Junying, interview. Chen Fengxiao also recalls that in Branch 4, around 30 camp cadres oversaw 250-300 convicts. Chen Fengxiao, interview.

476 Xingkaihu changshiban, *Xingkaihu nongchang shi* (Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm) (Mishan: No pub., 1988), 45.

477 Wu Ningkun, *A Single Tear: A Family’s Persecution, Love and Endurance in Communist China* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993), 109; Liu Naiyuan, *Mirror*, 248; Ba Hong, interview. For the transfer of laogai convicts, see *Gazetteer of Xingkaihu Farm*, 404. As well, some female inmates from Xingkaihu were transferred to the women team of Beiyuan farm in northern Beijing. See Niu Weina, unpublished work “Cuowei: wo he wojia jidai zhishu fenzi de gushi” (Disjunction: the Stories of Intellectuals in My Clan), 148.


disobedience, the government was still wary and tried to preempt them from making trouble in case of a possible frontier conflict.

Those left behind—the military rightists and Laogai convicts

When a host of rightists from the central civilian organizations were withdrawn from Beidahuang, almost all of those from military units (such as the General Political Department of the PLA, the National Defense Industry Commission, or Navy Headquarter) were left behind, unable to return to their original work. According to a central directive of November 2, 1959, the former rightists were not allowed to resume their posts in key departments; all those who had served in the military were kicked out. In Beidahuang, the military rightists were mostly relocated to the nearby farms or to local enterprises, getting their position changed from agricultural laborer to industrial worker, office employee or school staff. Their wages was raised. Many worked there for more than ten years. After getting his label removed in 1961, ex-lieutenant Wang Keqin found his lot improved but not significantly. He continued to work in Farm 850 as a lumber worker and then a coal miner with his salary going up to 62 yuan RMB, still much lower than his original pay. In 1965, he managed to find a better job in a nearby lumber team as a truck dispatcher. It was not until 1976 that he was allowed to return to Beijing, only because his wife was employed there.

The most common work for the military rightists left behind in Beidahuang was in local schools, which was in accordance with the principle established by the center—“providing them appropriate job but not important posts.” Chen Erzhen, a former engineer at the Bayi Movie Studio of the PLA, was reallocated to a middle

480 See “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhaidiao youpai maozi de renyuan de gongzuo fenpei he shenghuo daiyu de guiding” (Stipulations of the CCP Central Committee on Job Replacement and Remuneration of the ex-Rightists), in Hua Min, Zhongguo danizhuan, 395-396. According to Wang Keqin, a navy lieutenant, his relocation was decided based on a document issued by the Central Military Commission in the end of 1959, which stipulated that all the ex-military rightists were to be assigned to jobs in regions close to where they were performing thought reform. Wang Keqin, interview.
481 Wang Keqin, interview.
482 See Hua Min, Zhongguo danizhuan, 395.
school in a nearby county seat, where he at first worked as an odd-jobman, cleaning things, boiling water, and ringing the school bell. When the school head happened to find with surprise that Chen was actually an American trained student who had graduated from the University of California, and that he had traveled and worked in ten or more countries around the world, Chen began to be given teaching work---math, physics, history, drawing, English and Japanese, etc., whenever regular teachers were on leave. While he was still treated as a politically unreliable person, he gradually came to be seen as a good teacher.483

Like military rightists, the laogai convicts, including the sentenced political prisoners, were retained in Beidahuang when the majority of laojiao inmates left, although their treatment was different from the remaining military rightists. Confined separately in Xingkaihu, it seemed that the laogai inmates were not aware of the mass evacuation of the laojiao in 1960; the fact that 600 of their fellow convicts were transferred to the interior in 1961 did not catch much of their attention either.484 Life kept going on, bitter and hopeless. The only good thing they remembered was that their situation got better when the summer of 1962 came. Improved harvests brought an end to the three successive years of nation-wide famine. While grain continued to go to the national granary from Xingkaihu, some branches acquired a degree of freedom in planting more vegetable, and thus vegetable supplies for the inmates were increased.485 Hunger was mitigated and gradually came to an end. The most difficult years had passed.

Many laogai convicts felt the pressure that resulted from the intensification of China’s external relations. In the spring of 1962, Taiwan GMD leader Jiang Jieshi

483 Chen Erzhen, interview. Like Chen, some remaining rightists managed to work in their areas of expertise to limited degree. During his service as a language arts teacher in an elementary school, playwright Shen Mojun went to local people to collect war hero stories. The result of his efforts was a well-know revolutionary play Red Lantern (Hongdeng ji), which, as a model play, was a huge success for all the years of the Cultural Revolution. See Dai Huang, Jiusi yisheng, 249-250.

484 When interviewed, neither Chen Fengxiao nor Yin Jiliang were able to recall the out-transfer of these people. However, Hui Peilin noticed that in the livestock farm where she worked, three Christian believers among around one hundred female laojiao inmates were sent to the interior. Hui Peilin, interview.

485 Chen Fengxiao, unpublished work Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi (The True Stories of My Twenty-Two Years of Laogai Experience), 101.
actively made plans for a military attack on the Mainland’s southeast coast, which gave rise to the Taiwan Straits Crisis. While its ramification varied by locality, the political convicts in Xingkaihui labor reform complex were adversely affected: all the historical counterrevolutionaries were concentrated in Branch 2, and all the active counterrevolutionaries were put into a special brigade, supervised and escorted to their work sites by armed PLA soldiers, a situation which was different from normal times. Working hours were reduced and the convicts were herded back before dark to their closely watched quarters to prevent possible riots. As well, because of the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet relationship, Xingkaihui as a labor reform complex began to contract. Branch 1, located very close to the border river, was evacuated and its convicts were sent to other branches. No new inmates were sent to Xingkaihui after 1963 because of the precarious situation of the Sino-Russian border.

Nevertheless, it was developments in national politics rather than external factors that terminated the Xingkaihui labor camp regime and changed the fortune of the remaining political convicts. With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, the CCP’s Beijing Municipal Committee and other municipal authorities were heavily pounded by the Red Guard movement, thus the Beijing Public Security Bureau found it difficult to manage the Xingkaihui labor camps anymore at long distance. In September 1966 Xingkaihui was transferred to the Heilongjiang Provincial Public Security Bureau; in February 1967 it was put under military control. By September 1967 all the existing inmates, both the laogai convicts and jiuye (forced job placement) elements had been transferred to other labor camps managed by the Heilongjiang provincial police authorities. Chen Fengxiao was at first transferred

486 Han Dajun, interview; Chen Fengxiao, Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi, 91-92. In normal time, the inmates were supervised by camp cadres in plainclothes when they went to work, and their working hours normally extended well late after dark.
487 Gazetteer of Xingkaihui Farm, 409; Liu Junying, interview.
488 Gazetteer of Xingkaihui Farm, 46-47. Heilongjiang, with its widely scattered labor reform facilities and its remote geographical location, has still been functioning as an important region for forced laborers. Hongda Harry Wu estimates 52 labor farms in present day Heilongjiang. See Hongda Harry Wu, Laogai— the Chinese Gulag (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 150. According to the transferred inmates, the most notorious ones among Heilongjiang provincial labor farms were Changshuihe Farm
to Changshuihe Farm, in Bei’an County, and then to Wulan Farm, in Zhalaite County until he completed his term in 1972. Yin Jiliang, as a forced job placement element, was transferred to the Suiling Farm. Hui Peilin, also a forced job placement element, was sent to a weaving mill in Yinhe Farm and then to a nearby commune.\(^{489}\) Xingkaihu had completed its role as a labor reform regime.

With most political exiles being relocated to Beijing or other provinces in the early 1960s, the post-1957 frontier banishment to Beidahuang came to an end. For the victims of the 1957 persecution, however, their withdrawal from the great wilderness did not necessarily spell the end of their internal exile. Rightists all too often had to perform their ideological remolding through labor in local farms; as well, those inmates transferred away from Xingkaihu had to continue their forced labor in dozens of other labor camps in Heilongjiang or in north China until they were rehabilitated at the end of 1970s.

Qinghe and Tuanhe: *Laojiao* Inmates in North China

In the winter of 1960, political offenders among the *laojiao* elements in Xingkaihu were transferred to Qinghe Farm, in eastern Tianjin. Tan Tianrong, Liu Naiyuan, Wu Ningkun and Han Dujun were among them.

Qinghe farm, located in Ninghe County (Tianjin), was another labor reform complex established by the Beijing Public Security Bureau outside the Beijing Municipality. Starting from the early 1950s, various political outcasts including landlord elements, officials of the former GMD government and other counterrevolutionaries were sent to perform forced labor in this marshland of around 300 square kilometers. With the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, several thousand rightists from Beijing were punished to reeducation through labor and sent to Qinghe, followed by various pretty criminals arrested in Beijing.\(^{490}\) From late 1960 to mid 1961, *laojiao* inmates from various locations of north and northeast China

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\(^{489}\) Chen Fengxiao, *Ershier nian laogai shengya jishi*, 111, 146; Yin Jiliang, Hui Peilin, interviews.

\(^{490}\) For detail information about Qinghe Farm, see Hongda Harry Wu, *Laogai—the Chinese Gulag*, Appendix 3, 218-223.
began to congregate in Qinghe, in which the lives of Xingkaihu inmates and of others from north China such as Hongda Harry Wu and Cong Weixi crossed.\footnote{Shortly after the Xingkaihu inmates, Hongda Harry Wu was transferred to Qinghe from a labor mine in Yanqing, and Cong Weixi from Tucheng detention center, both north of Beijing. See Hongda Harry Wu, \textit{Bitter Winds}, 98-99; Cong Weixi, \textit{Zouxiang hundun}, 153.}

Upon arrival, the Xingkaihu transferees found themselves entrenched in a more scary world that featured "high walls that were topped by electrified wire." As Wu Ningkun notes, "We were taken into the monstrosity by sour-faced officers, through an entrance guarded by several soldiers holding rifles with fixed bayonets. Above them in the turrets were other soldiers holding submachine guns."\footnote{Wu Ningkun, \textit{A Single Tear}, 127. Han Dajun, who was put in the same branch farm with Liu Naiyuan, recalls that "We were taken by truck to Branch 3, which was encircled by a high square wall, and reinforced by electrified barbed-wire entanglement and four watch towers at the corners. A row of one-storey cells had been built close to the wall, which accommodated the laogai teams, laojiao teams and juvenile teams. We entered the worst famine period that was marked by 16-18 jin of sweet potato flour as monthly ration, without food oil and vegetable." Han Dajun, interview.} The grim scene as well as the treatment they received afterwards shattered the hope of the laojiao rightists who expected better food and better treatment in the interior.\footnote{As Wu Ningkun recalls, the laojiao inmates originally "hoped that Qinghe state farm's close proximity to the national capital would bring more humane treatment and better food", as well as "better hopes of release." Wu Ningkun, \textit{A Single Tear}, 109, 127. Some, such as Han Dajun, hoped that it would be easier for their families to visit them. Han Dajun interview.}

The first thing they encountered in Qinghe was continuing deterioration of food supplies. As discussed in Chapter Four, inmates in Xingkaihu were officially rationed 45 jin or at least 30 jin grain when they performed heavy labor. Soon after they arrived at Qinghe, their grain rationed dropped to 18 jin of sweet potato flour, which was at times replaced by "food substitutes" made of powdered corn cobs, bean stalks, elm bark, rice grass, and so on.\footnote{Liu Naiyuan, \textit{Mirror}, 252-253.} The inmates were driven by hunger to search everywhere they could for anything edible. Qinghe was haunted with hungry ghosts during late 1961 and early 1962. The death rate, according to the personal experience of Wu Ningkun, was probably higher than in Xingkaihu. The grave pit of an inmate he buried bore the number 61301.\footnote{Wu Ningkun, \textit{A Single Tear}, 136.} For those coming from Xingkaihu,
the years in Qinghe was another horrible period of their tribulations. Those still alive felt their lives withering away in a hapless numbness.\textsuperscript{496}

During their confinement in Qinghe, a major issue that made \textit{laojiao} rightists indignant was the official explanation of the period of reeducation through labor. According to the \textit{laojiao} regulations promulgated on August 3, 1957, as discussed in Chapter Five, the \textit{laojiao} inmates who displayed real repentance and behaved well in the labor camps could be released. Although many ultra-rightists fell into police custody and began their internment shortly after the Anti-Rightist Campaign, in early or mid 1958, and many tried their best for release as early as possible, none of them were released until May 24, 1961 when the camp authorities suddenly announced that this day was the beginning of their labor reeducation.\textsuperscript{497} Resentment among the \textit{laojiao} rightist was tremendous since their three years of internment and suffering had gone in vain. Few dared to question the logic behind the decision, however, instead they “all appreciated the favor of the socialist legal system, were grateful for the leniency shown by Chairman Mao and the Party.”\textsuperscript{498}

The camp authorities did not provide an explanation for the decision, and no official record has been found regarding whether the decision was merely applicable to the inmates in camps close to Beijing or applied to those in the whole country. Nevertheless, a CCP document enacted afterwards in June 1962 might help reveal the intention of the Party and state to prevent \textit{laojiao} inmates from returning to urban areas. The document reads: “With regard to the rightists and the hat removed elements who have completed their labor reeducation and need to be sent back to urban areas, it is necessary to hold them for a period, and to make effort to support

\textsuperscript{496} Liu Naiyuan describes how the surviving inmates in the 1962 winter killed their time in a cold, dead silent cell after a meager dinner. “Each climbed up to his part of the long wooden bed the length of the room, leaned against the wall, tucked each hand in the opposite sleeve, his feet wrapped in the quilt, and closed his eyes. This was the posture the two dozen of us remained in from 5 to 9 p.m....The burial chamber in an Egyptian pyramid could not be more quiet, nor any mummy more still than the two dozen seated figures in uniform posture and apparel. I was one of these seated statues....I was aware that time was passing while my life was being drained away. I knew that we all were aware of these.” Liu Naiyuan, \textit{Mirror}, 257.


\textsuperscript{498} Liu Naiyuan, \textit{Mirror}, 255.
them on the spot.”\textsuperscript{499} The basic tone of this document was that while efforts needed to be made to resettle rightists, all the dubious elements had to be kept far away from urban areas.\textsuperscript{500}

The newly established \textit{laojiao} terms ranged from half year to three years based on the individual cases. Many political offenders coming from Xingkaihu were given more severe verdict than others. Han Dajun was given a two-year term, Liu Naiyuan three-years, Tan Tianrong at first two years and a half, and then an extra one-year because of his irreconcilable temperament.\textsuperscript{501} Those given shorter terms were almost all non-political inmates. For political inmates, even the designated term was not observed. Many such as Liu Naiyuan were kept in \textit{laojiao} camps until 1969 when they were released and sent to \textit{jiuye} camps.

In summer 1962, around 400 survivors of \textit{laojiao} internment were transferred again from Qinghe to Tuanhe Farm in the southern suburbs of Beijing.\textsuperscript{502} The Tuanhe period was probably the best period these \textit{laojiao} rightists had experienced so far. The three lean years had passed, food rations increased gradually from 18 \textit{jin} grain supplement to 45 \textit{jin} “real grain” per month. Finding these \textit{laojiao} inmates extremely weak, the camp cadres in Tuanhe treated them leniently. Workloads were light, management was loose, and political pressure was little. They were allowed to read literature and academic works, and some even began writing novels or doing translations.\textsuperscript{503} During the Cultural Revolution, the camp cadres of Tuanhe made considerable efforts to protect the inmates under their charge from unauthorized

\textsuperscript{499} See Hua Min, \textit{Zhongguo danizhuan}, 400.

\textsuperscript{500} In alignment with this policy, in 1962, Peng Zhen, mayor of Beijing, raised a slogan: “To build our capital Beijing into a purified, crystal-like city, from which all dregs of society would be cast out.” Ex-rightist Xu Ying believes that relocation of her family into Anda county of Heilongjiang was based on this scheme. Xu Ying, interview.

\textsuperscript{501} Han Dajun, interview; Liu Naiyuan, \textit{Mirror}, 254; Xiao Ke, et al., \textit{Wo qili guo de zhengzhi yundong} (The Political Campaigns That I Have Experienced) (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 1998), 82.

\textsuperscript{502} Due to the prolonged hunger in Qinghe, the rightists were so frail that when they were relocated to Tuanhe in May 1962, many could hardly get off the train because of their swollen legs. Some, such as Tan Tianrong, were carried out of the train on stretchers. Xiao Ke, et al., \textit{Wo qinli guo de zhengzhi yundong}, 143.

\textsuperscript{503} \textit{Ibid}, 70-71, 144-146.
violence of Red Guards.\footnote{Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 325-326.}

In 1969, the \textit{laojiao} rightists eventually ended their labor reeducation. Some of those who were natives of rural areas, such as Tan Tianrong, were allowed to return to their native places, but most were transferred to forced job placement camps close to their \textit{laojiao} camps, such as Liu Naiyuan; still others were used as manual laborers in iron or coal mines.\footnote{Liu Naiyuan, \textit{Mirror}, 313-314. Tan Tianrong interview. In December 1969, Hongda Harry Wu and other 1200 forced job placement inmates were transferred from Qinghe to Wangzhuang Coal Mine in Shanxi. See Hongda Harry Wu, \textit{Bitter Winds}, 233.} While they still trapped in China’s extended penal system and subject to continuous discipline, the post-1957 \textit{laojiao} rightists as a group eventually vanished.

\textbf{Beijing rightists afterwards}

After their release from Beidahuang, Beijing rightists in the interior fared better during the period 1961-1964, as will be shown individually in this section. The Party claimed to grant the former rightists suitable jobs in non-rural areas and to make their life relatively easier than in the border regions. Although the full implementation of this policy was subject to question, the rightists, at least, did not have to be driven to physical exertion anymore as in Beidahuang, and they were sufficiently fed. Family reunion was achieved, the old and weak were treated better, and some professionals and artists were restored to the posts close to their expertise although at lower ranks and with lower pay than in the pre-1957 period.

The changes, however, were modest in degree even though they were not insignificant for the languishing intellectuals. Politically and socially, they remained an underclass, and were still obsolete and marginalized. According to the documents enacted on September 17, November 2, 1959 and August 17, 1962, removal of the rightist label did not mean rehabilitation, nor was it to be universalized; only those who truly repented and behaved well could have their labels removed. For those who had their label removed, newly assigned jobs would have to be lower in rank than their original ones; the ex-rightists would not to be put into key organizations,
nor could they get promotion without long-term observation and scrutiny. Even if their labels had been removed, ex-student rightists who were deprived of their student status were not allowed to resume their status, nor were the ex-Party member rightists restored to their Party membership; they could be relabeled if necessary; and their children were not allowed to study important fields in school or work in important work units.\textsuperscript{506}

With these directives in place, it was apparently difficult for the returned political exiles to be reestablished in the society or resume their normal life. During a long period after their return, the former rightists never received equal treatment with others and were frequently subjected to political and social discrimination. As will be shown below, even though some were reassigned jobs in their fields of expertise, they had little chance to work at their full strength; their basic needs for subsistence were met, but they still felt uneasy economically and were essentially denied job options. While a small number of influential figures led relatively peaceful lives, political winds swirled around most of the former rightists in later years. Even those whose labels had been formally removed were frequently grouped together with landlord, rich peasant, counterrevolutionary, and bad element as \textit{heiwulei} (five black elements),\textsuperscript{507} always being watched, distrusted and spurned; they led abject lives. The following are cases of individuals of different types.

\textbf{Ding Cong, Huang Miaozi and Others}

Coming back from a favorable job—the local magazine \textit{Literature and Art in Beidahuang}, the artist Ding Cong returned home to Beijing in the fall of 1960 and got himself re-registered as a Beijing resident. Unable to resume his original position as executive editor of \textit{People's Pictorial}, he was reassigned a job in the promotion section of the International Bookstore of China (\textit{zhongguo guoji shudian}), with his main work designing calendars for publicity for the bookstore. It was not

\textsuperscript{506} The three documents are respectively located from Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., \textit{Jianguo yilai zongyao wenxian xuanbian}, Vol. 12, 572-575; Hua Min, \textit{Zhongguo danizhuan}, 171, 395-396.

\textsuperscript{507} Regarding the term “five black elements” or “\textit{heiwulei},” see Lowell Dittmer and Chen Ruoxi, \textit{Ethics and Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution} (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1981), 59.
until two years later that he was assigned a new job in the Art Gallery of China; thus his career as an artist continued. Being alert to the ever-changing political climate and fearing unexpected accusations, Ding avoided employing his satirical style in cartoon drawing which he was good at; rather he strove to portray things “positively” in his works and to sing praise for new achievements in the socialist state. Anti-American imperialist themes were one of his motifs. His cautious style was fruitful so he earned a relatively peaceful and easy life during the period 1961-1966. Although he was still seen as a hat removed rightist (zaimao youpai), ineligible to listen to Party documents or to be appointed to important position, he still retained membership of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and thus was rationed special supplies, including egg, meat, and cigarettes of better quality. His happy go lucky temperament and his distance from national politics enabled him to lead a life much better than many other rightists.508

The circumstances of Huang Miaozì were slightly different from Ding Cong. Huang, luckily enough, returned to his previous work unit—the People’s Art Publishing House - as an ordinary editor. Before 1966 when the Cultural Revolution broke out, the most significant work he participated in was a project the Chinese Art History Monograph Collection. Like Ding Cong, Huang cautiously avoided involvement in any form of political activity but immersed himself in research on Chinese literature and art history. His house became a salon of famous artists in China.509

Not many returning rightists were able to lead such a peaceful life and to live on their expertise as Ding and Huang. Most of them could not resume their previous jobs even though they were allowed to return to their original work units. Dai Huang, for example, was never given a chance to resume his job as a journalist when he returned to the New China News Agency, since he was deemed to have given a poor

508 Xin Suwei, Ding Cong zhuang (Biography of Ding Cong) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 1993), 194-198, 203-204, 209-210; Ding Cong, interview.
performance in Beidahuang.\textsuperscript{510} He was at first sent to tend an orchard in a forest station close to the Great Wall, to carry water and to be a vegetable delivery person for his fellow workers. With his work and attitude there being considered acceptable, he was reassigned back to his work unit as a copyist, and did newspaper collecting, clipping and pasting in scrapbook.\textsuperscript{511}

The arrangement for Dai Huang indicated the suspicion of the authorities toward the former rightists especially those whose former occupations were seen as highly political (such as journalist). Compared to artists Ding Cong and Huang Miaozi who were valued and thus resettled in Beijing, many of those whose expertise was in the humanities and social sciences were given less trust and appreciation, and finally relocated to the provinces. Wu Yongliang's case bore testimony to this point. When he went back to the Dagong Daily, all he could do were odd jobs that others did not like to do. In the summer of 1961, Wu was believed inappropriate to live in Beijing, so he was sent down again with his family—to a county secondary school in Guizhou, where his work, rather than teaching, was ringing the school bell, as well as mimeographing and block-printing.\textsuperscript{512} Major cities and reasonable jobs were out of the question for the majority of returned rightists.

\textbf{Ding Ling and Chen Ming}

Ding Ling was the only high-rank Beijing rightist who did not leave Beidahuang in the early 1960s. Despite her sincerity in manual work and her personal connections with the high official Wang Zhen, Ding Ling was unable to get her rightist label removed either in 1959 or 1960, thus she and her husband Chen

\textsuperscript{510} Dai Huang, \textit{Jiusi yisheng}, 252, 263.
\textsuperscript{511} \textit{Ibid}, 273.
\textsuperscript{512} Wu Yongliang, \textit{Yuxue feifei}, 10-11. Many returning Beijing rightists fared similarly during 1961-1962. In addition to Wu Yongliang and Xu Ying mentioned before, both Liu Meng and Yin Yi were relocated to Inner Mongolia, with Liu becoming a telecommunication worker and Yin a bookstore staffer. Liu Meng recalls that his group relocated to Inner Mongolia from Beidahuang included more than ten rightists. See Liu Meng, \textit{Cuntian de yu qitian qing} (The Whisking of Rain in Spring, the Clearing Skies in Autumn) (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2003), 175, 189-190; Yin Yi, \textit{Huishou canyang yi han shan} (The Setting of the Sun over the Mountain) (Beijing: Shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2003), 110-111.
Ming were left behind when most of the rightists were withdrawn from the army farms.\textsuperscript{513} Although the rightist label of her husband was removed in 1961, it seems that the couple did not have much desire to return to Beijing. In 1963, the Central Propaganda Department and the Writer’s Union of China, which had labeled Ding Ling a rightist, expressed the intention of calling Ding and Chen back. Ding Ling declined the offer on the grounds that she still needed more time to have access to the grassroots.\textsuperscript{514}

Thus Ding Ling and Chen Ming stayed put, with Beidahuang continuing to be their refuge from political harassment as well as an ideal place to fulfill their ideological commitment at the same time. While her basic needs of subsistence were met, Ding showed substantial enthusiasm in local affairs—eliminating illiteracy for local forks, sponsoring street cleaning, writing wall newspapers, and promoting local revolutionary plays, etc. She also helped farm workers with writing family histories, which were used to condemn old China and eulogize the new China. Although she continued to be under the rightist hat, it seems, she and her husband did not feel uncomfortable because they allegedly saw their lives closely integrated with the masses.\textsuperscript{515}

Despite the relatively peaceful period before the Cultural Revolution, the returning rightists were vulnerable to frequent political changes. Significant numbers of them suffered renewed attacks during various political campaigns afterwards, typically the Socialist Education Campaign and the Cultural Revolution, even though they were not made main targets of these campaigns. Starting from 1962 when Mao reemphasized class struggle and socialist education, considerable

\textsuperscript{513} Ding Ling’s case was mainly in the hand of the Writer’s Union of China headed by her rival Zhou Yang, thus even her patron Wang Zhen could not decide her political fortune. Chen Ming, interview (August 21, 2003); Ding Ling, Fengxue renjian (The Blizzard World) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987), 123.

\textsuperscript{514} Zheng Xiaofeng, Ding Ling zai Beidahuang (Ding Ling in the Great Northern Wilderness) (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1989), 29-30; Chen Ming, interview (July 5, 2004).

\textsuperscript{515} Although it is hard to fathom her innermost thoughts, Ding Ling in public always said that living among the masses made her to feel better during the years of persecution. Zheng Xiaofeng, Ding Ling zai Beidahuang, 61, 67.
numbers of former rightists featured in this thesis were once again facing various groundless charges, many being sent to labor camps or simply put into jail.

Dai Huang's story illustrates the unpredictability of communist politics and an intellectual's naivety about politics in that he foolishly repeated what he had done during the Hundred Flowers Movement. In the summer of 1962, in the context of a transient political thaw initiated by the Party center, and under the warm encouragement of his work unit heads, Dai wrote a lengthy report, *Review of My Road*, in which he reiterated his main point of "taking a stand against the privilege mentality of the Party", recollected his three year experience in Beidahuang, and discussed the roots of the setbacks China had suffered since 1957.\footnote{Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 276-283. Mao in January 1962 promoted “telling the truth,” “developing people’s democracy” and “letting people air their different opinions,” (see, for instance, his speech on January 30, 1962, in *Mao Zedong wenji*, Vol. 8, 289-311) which contributed to a short political relaxation. The relaxation ended, however, in September when Mao changed his mind by raising a slogan “The conception of class struggle must be stressed every year, every month and every day,” and by his condemnation of “the wind to reverse verdict (*fan’an feng*).” See Ma Qibin, *Zhongguo gongchandang zhizheng sishinian*, 222.} A couple of months later, however, Dai again found himself in a political trap: his report was regarded as a poisonous weed and "a new sign of class struggle", thus he was again under severe condemnation as had happened in 1957. In April 1964, Dai was sent to a labor reeducation camp. For the next 14 years, Dai spent most of his time in labor reeducation camps and, when released, in forced job placement camps in Qinghe, Tuanhe, and several locations in Shanxi.\footnote{Dai Huang, *Jiusi yisheng*, 304-344.} Dai's experience sharply contrasted with those of Ding Cong and Huang Miaozhi in that he failed to draw a lesson from 1957 but still tried to follow the Party' suggestions with regards to politics thus ended up being purged again.

**The Cultural Revolution**

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) saw renewed attacks on the 1957 victims. Almost all the rightists went through various forms of tribulations—labor reeducation camps, "cowsheds" (make-shift accommodations used to intern those who were deemed as "class enemies" and other politically unreliable elements) and
jails. Indeed the Cultural Revolution chiefly targeted newly produced enemies, i.e., the capitalist roaders—the power holders within the governing party considered to have implemented the capitalist line. While the Party apparatus, including thousands of government officials who had perpetrated the persecution of the rightists in 1957 nowadays took the shoes of their former victims and bore the brunt, the powerless and marginalized ex-rightists for the most part were seen as “dead tigers.”

However, since they were categorized as one of the five black elements, rightists were still seen as an antagonist force, or “ox-ghosts and snake spirits” (niu gui she shen) and thus risked repeated assault. In many places, after capitalist roaders had gone through premeditated attacks, it was a time for rightists and others in disfavor to receive condemnation in public struggle sessions. Ritualized humiliation might involve “hatting”, face painting, and mass condemnation, which might be followed by and culminate in physical abuse, home searches, “cow shed” internment, being driven from urban areas to rural area, or sent to labor camps.  

The degree to which individual rightists suffered varied, and depended on local politics. While Wu Yongliang and Liu Meng were free from physical abuse, they were still scared into burning all their diaries, photos and correspondence. Ding Ling suffered escalating denunciations and physical abuse from the farm Red Guards. Her spine and one leg were badly injured, her home was searched and her manuscript and clothes were confiscated.

Some former rightists were put in jail during the Cultural Revolution. After returning to Beijing in 1962, Nie Gannu spent a great deal of his time writing poems, which he exchanged with his friends. Fearing possible detection of these poems by the Red Guards, Nie had them delivered to his friend Hu Feng, who he mistakenly believed had been rehabilitated. The result was his immediate arrest and then a life

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518 Hu Ping, *Chanji: kunan de jitan*, 701.
519 Ye Yonglie, *Fan youpai shimo*, 577. As Ye points out, together with those still under “rightist hats,” the former rightists were called “the rightists without hats” (zaimao youpai), those criticized during the Anti-Rightist period yet not labeled were called “escaped rightists” (louwang youai).
sentence, which was the second time he was put into jail by the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{521} After a year of life in a “cowshed” and menial labor, Ding Ling and Chen Ming were both arrested and put in the notorious Qincheng Prison in Beijing. They were released in 1975 but it was not until 1979 that Ding’s status was reclassified and her sentence revoked.\textsuperscript{522} The stories of Nie, Ding and others show that the rightists were repeatedly victimized by political upheavals in PRC history.

Ironically, imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution when political turmoil engulfed the whole country seemed to be a pretty good experience to some. As formal dictatorship organs with armed soldiers on guard, prisons were not allowed to be assaulted by the Red Guards, which was quite different from the situation in the labor farms. For some political prisoners exempt from the death sentence, imprisonment was perhaps the best way to save their lives.\textsuperscript{523} During the first two years of his imprisonment, Nie Gannu was detained in Banbuqiao Prison in Beijing, where personal safety was ensured, medical care and food supplies were fairly good (even eggs and meat were served), there was not much physical work to do, and reading newspapers and reciting Chairman Mao’s Little Red Book constituted the major part of daily life of the prisoners.\textsuperscript{524} When Ding Ling suffered terrible abuse in Baoquanling farm, Beidahuang, she saw the military cadres sent to arrest her as “live savers;” her husband Chen Ming acknowledges that their experience in Qincheng Prison was fairly good.\textsuperscript{525} Although it is difficult to know whether the prisons Nie and Ding lived in were typical in China of those years, it is generally known that prison as a refuge protected many political outcasts from brutal

\textsuperscript{521} Zhou Jianqiang, \textit{Nie Gannu zhuan}, 234-239; Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., \textit{Yuan Shang Cao: jiyi zhong de fan youpai yundong} (Grass on the Plains: the Anti-Rightist Campaign in Memory) (Beijing: Jingji ribao chubanshe, 1998), 307. Nie was released in 1976 as he was mistaken for a former GMD general and thus granted amnesty.\textsuperscript{522} Ding Ling, \textit{Fengxue renjian}, 124-126.\textsuperscript{523} During the first two years of the Cultural Revolution, the five black elements were exposed to immense danger of being murdered without any excuse. In Daxing County, Beijing, for instance, 325 five black elements and their families were executed, including 22 complete households exterminated, within less than a week. See Xiao Ke, et al., \textit{Wo qinli guode zhengzhi yundong}, 100-101.\textsuperscript{524} See Zhou Jianqiang, \textit{Nie Gannu zhuan}, 234. In Linfen Prison and Jishan Transit Prison, Shanxi where the elderly received special care, Nie was able to take time to go over many major works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engles. Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., \textit{Yuang shang cao}, 296-300.\textsuperscript{525} Ding Ling, \textit{Fengxue renjian}, 155; Cheng Ming, interview (July 5, 2004).
treatment by the Red Guards. While those imprisoned, such as Ding Ling, Nie Gannu and Ge Peiqi (see Chapter One), saved their lives, some other famous rightists such as Huang Shaoxiong, Chu Anping and Fu Lei were brutally treated by the Red Guards and forced to suicide.\textsuperscript{526}

Despite their perilous situation, there were still numbers of young rightists who stood out during the Cultural Revolution in condemning the evil things unleashed by the totalitarian system, and thus were maltreated in prison or were executed. A woman student rightist Lin Zhao was executed in 1968 due to her condemnation of the CCP leadership. Dismissed from school in 1958, Lin Zhao was sent to a labor reeducation camp in Beijing for two years. Allowed a sick leave in 1960, Lin returned to her native place, where she and two other former-student rightists started an unofficial journal Spark (\textit{xinghuo}) to air their dissenting voices. Lin Zhao also wrote to the CCP central committee asserting her different opinions on a wide range of political issues such as the GLF and China’s foreign policy, for which Lin Zhao was sentenced to 20 years. In jail, Lin raised her protest by the ways of hunger strike, writing in her own blood, chanting poems and shouting slogans, and kept condemning Mao’s personality cult and “totalitarian tyranny.” Lin was executed in Shanghai on April 29, 1968, after which a policeman visited her family and charged them 5 cents RMB for the bullet.\textsuperscript{527}

Like Lin Zhao, the rightists executed during the Cultural Revolution were sentenced under new political charges, such as “anti-Mao Zedong thoughts” or “attacking proletarian dictatorship,” etc. In 1970 when the Strike Counterrevolutionary Campaign was under way, four rightists were labeled active counterrevolutionaries and executed in Nanjing. Rightist Zhang Xikun was executed

\textsuperscript{526} For the deaths of Huang and Chu, see Zhang Yihe, \textit{Wangshi binghu ruyan}, 73-75. After being badly insulted and tortured by the Red Guards, the ex-rightist, famous translator Fu Lei and his wife hung themselves at home in September 1966. Ye Yonglie, \textit{Fanyoupai shimo}, 493. They were the parents of the pianist Fu Cong.

\textsuperscript{527} Hu Ping, \textit{Chanji: kunan de jitan}, 702-704; Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., \textit{Jingji lu}, 466-467. According to the documentary “Seeking for the Spirit of Lin Zhao” (\textit{Xunzhao Lin Zhao de Linghun}) made in April 2004 by Hu Jie, a Chinese independent filmmaker, Lin Zhao in prison wrote more than 200,000 words of protest essays.
in a labor camp in Sichuan in 1976 under the charge of “trying to organize group escape.”\textsuperscript{528} Old charges for rightist crimes were less useful in renewed purges.

**Rehabilitation**

With the advent of the reform period starting from 1978, victims of the Anti-Rightist Campaign were rehabilitated. Thanks to the effort of Hu Yaobang, the director of the Central Organization Department, the CCP central committee issued two documents in April and September 1978, which respectively demanded complete label removal for all the rightists and careful rectification of the wronged cases during the Anti-Rightist Campaign.\textsuperscript{529} The central decrees opened the floodgate for massive rectification in the general context of the post-Mao political thaw. As a result, all the rightists (including those who had passed away) had their labels removed, and by 1980, the verdicts on more than 540,000 rightists, out of 552,877, had been reversed.\textsuperscript{530} Survivors were informed by their work units that had labeled them twenty years ago that the charges against them were erroneous, and that the wrong judgments would now be corrected.

Compared to the Party officials who were purged during the Cultural Revolution, however, rehabilitation of the rightists was not complete in political terms. The Party formally announced that the Anti-Rightist Campaign per se had been necessary because there were genuine rightists trying to overthrow Communist rule, but it had given rise to excesses and harmed too many people.\textsuperscript{531} In sharp contrast to the rehabilitated officials, who were compensated for their lost salaries in the Cultural Revolution, the government refused to compensate the 1957 victims for

\textsuperscript{528} Hu Ping, *Chanji: kunan de jitan*, 708; Chen Fengxiao, unpublished essay “Namwang de jiyi” (Unforgettable Memories), 5.
\textsuperscript{529} “The Instruction of the Central Committee of the CCP [No. 11, 1978]” and “The Instruction of the Central Committee of the CCP [No. 55, 1978].”
\textsuperscript{530} Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu* (Recollections on Several Important Policies and Events) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1991), Vol. 2, 619. Before the Cultural Revolution, around 300,000 rightists had already had their labels removed. See Xiao Donglian, *Qiushuo Zhongguo*, 237.
\textsuperscript{531} Both documents officially referred to the campaign as a “great socialist revolution in political and ideological front.” Deng Xiaoping, too, declared in March 1980, that “the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 per se was not wrong...the problem was excess.” See Deng Xiaoping, *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan 1975-1982* (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, 1975-1982) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe), 258.
their financial losses. For the majority of rightists, no apologies were expressed by the relevant authorities when they announced the correction of wrong verdicts that had devastated individual’s lives for more than twenty years. For some, a degree of blame or criticism was retained in the “reevaluation conclusions” handed to them, even though they were cleared of major charges.  

With their happiness mixed with sighs of relief, and with a desire to serve the revitalized country, rehabilitated rightists entered the era of reform and opening up that has been characterized by fewer political campaigns and more individual freedom. Many of them had reached their forties or fifties, thus social stability and personal security were more important for them. Recalled to urban centers, many of them settled well with their jobs—their previous professional jobs or similar positions – where their expertise was highly valued. Chen Fengxiao, Tan Tianrong, Liu Naiyuan and Wu Ningkun were all appointed by universities, colleges or high schools as teachers; Dai Huang, Yin Yi, Zheng Xiaofeng and Wu Yongliang returned to their previous jobs as journalists or editors; Ding Ling came back again as a famous writer, traveling around the country propagating her faith in the Party and a bright future of socialism in China. Many of those dismissed from the Party were invited to return. The Party promoted the concepts of “correctly handling historical issues” and “looking forwards” in order to mobilize people for the country’s reconstruction. In the sense that the cases of the wronged rightists were rectified and they were willingly to serve the country in the new era, the goal of the Party has been achieved.

But for the ex-rightists, their post 1957 experiences—twenty more years of persecution and banishment—have left devastating impacts upon their lives. In

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532 Wu Ningkun recalls that when he was at first pronounced rehabilitated, he was told by his work unit that his offenses were grave but in consideration of his progress in thought reform over the years the Party had decided to be lenient with him and had his verdict corrected. Wu Ningkun, *A Single Tear*, 340. Yin Yi and Liu Meng all mention that “reevaluation conclusions” issued to them contained no word of apology. Yin Yi, *Huishou canyang yi han shan*, 218; Liu Meng, *Cuntian de yu qiutian qing*, 352.

533 The accounts of the ends of these former rightists are based on their recollections or relevant chapters of their memoirs cited in this thesis. For Ding Ling’s political activism in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, see Zheng Xiaofeng, *Ding Ling zai Beidahuang*, 67-69.
addition to the deep and long-lasting psychological wounds discussed in Chapter Four and Five, and their disappointment in the CCP, they felt a strong sense of loss—the loss of the best years of their lives, and the waste of human talent, which nothing could make up for. One day in 1978 Wu Ningkun had the chance to meet Dr. Tsung-Dao Lee (Li Zhengdao), the 1957 Nobel Physics Prize winner, his classmate at the University of Chicago who in 1950 saw Wu off in San Francisco on his way back to the motherland. During their fifteen-minute talk, Wu sensed a big gap, social and intellectual, that separated them because of their sharply differing journeys.

I quickly sensed we were living in two different worlds, divided by an unbridgeable gap. Staying behind in America, he was able to reap success and honor and live a happy life in security and affluence. Returning to China, I struggled through trials and tribulation and barely made it to this day of rehabilitation. Secure in the “imperialist fortress of America,” he was hailed as a patriot in Communist China, feted by every top leader of the Party and the government, and whisked about in a chauffeur-driven Red Flag limousine as an honored guest of the state. Recalled to serve the motherland, I was denounced as an enemy of the people and had survived labor camps, starvation, and proletarian dictatorship.534

During his talk with Lee, an amusing thought flashed through Wu’s mind: “What would have happened if I had been the one to see him off back to China on that July afternoon in San Francisco?” Wu did not speculate about the answer (perhaps he did not even bother with that) as he had not been able to foresee what was awaiting him when he returned to the “New China” more than twenty years before. What he was convinced of was that “God forbid he should ever have been in my accursed shoes.”535

534 Wu Ningkun, A Single Tear, 341.
Conclusion

During the period since the 1949 revolution, China’s frontier regions have been used by the Communist government to facilitate its agenda of state consolidation and economic development. In the case of Beidahuang, by banishing thousands of political offenders there, the government aimed to crush real or imagined forces of opposition, to remove undesirable elements from the hinterland, to facilitate land reclamation, and, allegedly, to help the ideological renewal of offenders. The stories told in this thesis are first and foremost about the experiences of large numbers of political exiles in this desolate northern wilderness and, as a secondary purpose, the thesis deals with the operation of the massive program of banishment. In this conclusion, I would like to go further and look at several more general questions.

I identify the banishment of political offenders in the late-1950s as an important part of a long-lasting movement that reflects a ruling technique of the CCP government: it banished not only criminal or political offenders, but also other groups such as demobilized soldiers, secondary school graduates, the urban unemployed, etc. The massive scale of sent-down was a unique phenomenon in China’s social landscape. I also treat the 1957 purge and the punitive exiles afterwards as an integral part of ceaseless persecutions that reflects the apprehension of the CCP government over its power consolidation, given the fact that it purged not only real political opponents, but also those who were suspected as having the potential to pose threats. Campaigns, political crackdowns and labor camps were distinctive features of the Communist politics in the Maoist period.

Let me briefly go over the 1957 purge and look at its social consequences. Although suspicions against the educated elite in the Communist period began right after the birth of the People’s Republic, their massive persecution did not come into full force until 1957 when the Communist Party suddenly encouraged them to speak

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536 According to aggregate statistics released by the Chinese government, for instance, around 12 million urban youths were sent down to rural areas from 1968 to 1975. See Thomas Bernstein, Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 2-3.
out against abuses within the Party. However, since Communist politics did not make a place for free expression, the criticism from intellectuals was not legally guaranteed. Therefore once the supreme leader Mao Zedong changed his mind, a purge was inevitable. The crackdown came overnight, and more than half a million Chinese were arbitrarily persecuted. Indeed the aim of the senior leaders of the CCP was to suppress dissidents; when the distinction between dissidents and non-dissidents was not clear-cut, the Party preferred to round up all the dubious elements, and label them as rightists. The consequences of labeling were demotion, banishment and imprisonment. Hundreds of thousands of people became forced laborers in various forms of labor camps, and were subject to maltreatment by camp officials. Daunting labor, starvation, death, suicide, physical and psychological abuse became their daily experiences.

This research primarily focuses on Beidahuang. Actually Beidahuang can be seen as a window to look at broader issues of the post 1957 persecution in the PRC. The social consequences of the persecution and the banishment were devastating. They caused tremendous suffering to the political exiles and adversely affected the lives of their family members. Personal contamination was widespread. When an individual got into trouble, it immediately led to damage to families and friends. Many Chinese families were destroyed, with their children being adrift and suffering discrimination. Victims of the purge and banishment were not limited to the direct targets. The persecuted or their families who survived those years lived under suspicion for decades and were victims of psychological depression for even longer periods.

The waste of human talent of China's well-educated elite is obvious as well. More than a half million were labeled rightists and forced to leave their professional posts, many languished and perished in the labor camps. Their intelligence and creativity were wasted. Among those who survived the harsh years, many suffered intellectual death. Considering that these terrible waste and human suffering were caused by the conscious application of Party policies of maltreatment against the
people the country most needed during the stage of national reconstruction, the loss is tremendous, tragic, and hard to make up.

The destruction of human values by the persecution is also remarkable. When talking about the Cultural Revolution, Anne Thurston says that the Cultural Revolution not only left thousand of Chinese dead, it also crushed humanitarian values and defiled the sanctity of the human spirit. In terms of its socio-psychological impact, the persecution and the banishment in the late-1950s came after the Cultural Revolution in damages. It saw a striking display of moral degeneration under the pressure of the ruling party. In order to survive persecution and banishment, Chinese including intellectuals learnt self-protection and survival at the expense of others in many cases. They fought for the chance of survival, security and advancement. Political advancement became central to their social life, and obedience to the Party was seen as a virtue. The docile and obedient figures curried favor and were appointed to important posts, while outspoken and upright people were demoted. As pragmatism, phony activism and selfishness prevailed, intellectuals lost their superiority as role models. To a large extent, the persecution that started from 1957 destroyed Chinese educated elite mentally and spiritually, and accelerated the all-out contamination of the Chinese soul.

The "politics of fear" is manifest here. The CCP used the Chinese tradition of "killing the chicken to scare the monkey" in the Anti-Rightist Campaign and many other campaigns. Once an individual was purged and sent to a labor camp far away, his/her families, friends and colleagues were frightened into compliance or silenced. An atmosphere of terror was created. By driving fear into the hearts of the people, the CCP successfully intimidated a large population.

Thus, the political development of China was negatively affected. The 1957 persecution happened during the period of CCP’s power consolidation and between two major social and economic programs—the Socialist Transformation that was completed in 1956 and the Great Leap Forward that started in 1958. By punishing the intractable intellectuals and sending them to labor camps, the government
successfully muffled any dissenting voices. After 1957 no social group said no to the CCP.

With the most vocal elements silenced, the CCP launched series of adventures including the Great Leap Forward and the People’s Commune without fearing any resistance. In this sense, the purge paved the way for further blunders by the Party all the way through the Cultural Revolution; otherwise, these people would have later become avowed opponents to these perverse acts. Moreover, just because the massive persecution and banishment of rightists did not meet any resistance, these measures were repeatedly picked up by the regime as ready means to remove unfavorable elements. The purge of 1957 set a precedent for persecutions in later years including the massive sent-down during the Cultural Revolution. Seen from this perspective, it presaged the Cultural Revolution.

There are many dimensions in which the persecution and banishment in the late-1950s can be evaluated. They could be treated as responses of the regime to real and potential threats, they could be seen as heavy-handed measures to facilitate the Party’s political and ideological control, and they could also be seen as the Party’s portentous acts to consume its own followers and undermine its social foundations.

On the last point, the 1957 purge is closely correlated to a facet of the Communist politics. Like the Russian Bolsheviks, the CCP had been in the habit of purging its own followers, which, stated euphemistically as the phenomenon of the “revolution consuming its sons,” constitutes a prominent theme in Party history and a characteristic of Communist politics. Before the victory of the Communist revolution, numerous patriotic youths joined the Party, devoting their lives to the Party’s cause - only to be brutally treated. A typical case was the “Anti-AB (Anti-Bolshevik) Group” action in 1932 in the Southern Soviet, in which an estimated two thousands and five hundreds Communist members and Red soldiers were accused of being “Anti-Bolshevik elements” and thus were killed by the Party apparatus.\(^537\)

\(^{537}\) For detailed information of this purge, see Xu Xiangqian, *Lishi de huigu* (Reflection on History) (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1984), Vol.1, 152-163.
Another example took place in the communist capital Yanan. This was the purge of a senior Communist, Wang Shiwei, in the 1940s, for his stubborn sticking to Marxist fundamentalist views, and his criticism of the false egalitarian claims of the Party and abuse of power in Yanan. Wang Shiwei was executed in 1947.\footnote{For general discussion on Wang Shiwei, see David Apter and Timothy Cheek, “Introduction” to Dai Qing’s \textit{Wang Shiwei and “Wild Lilies”: Rectification and Purges in the Chinese Communist Party, 1942-1944} (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), xvii-xxix.}

PRC history in the 1950s also provides abundant examples for discussion of the purges. In the early years of the People’s Republic, progressive intellectuals, young students and returned overseas scientists ardently showed their endorsement of the CCP government, hoping to serve the nation under the Party leadership. Many shared the pride that the revolutionary victory engendered, and identified themselves with the Communist government. Their services were valuable for China’s socialist construction. However, their downfall came quickly, in the “thought reform movement” in 1952 and the campaign of “elimination of counterrevolutionaries” in 1955. These movements culminated in the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957. If we look into the later developments, it was even more obvious that the targets of the political campaigns in the 1960s increasingly shifted to the Party rank and file, and even the revolutionary veterans.

The CCP’s constant attacks on their genuine followers remains an intriguing puzzle in Communist politics. Again, let us look at the Anti-Rightist Campaign. From this research, we find that among those banished to Beidahuang there were revolutionary loyalists who joined the CCP before the communist takeover, there were leftist writers who had stood along with the CCP against the GMD on the literary front, there were also student activists who quit school and joined the Communist army in response to the Party’s call. Many sincerely embraced the Party’s indoctrination and argued for the Party’s interest that any purge against them would be absurd. Among the many explanations of why these loyalists were purged, one could be that, as the well-known writer Wang Meng pointed out:

Deeply committed to the Party, they were fearless in speaking up to defend whatever they regarded as being morally right and logically
reasonable even at the risk of offending their designated bosses. They were bookish and naive, not hesitant to raise criticism against what they disagreed with and thus were easily singled out in campaigns. It was unjust and ironic to label them rightists because what they worried about and argued for was precisely the long-term interest of Communist Party.\textsuperscript{539}

During the course of the cleansing of deviants and unreliable elements the revolutionary credential and commitment of these loyalists were actually given little weight; instead it was their direct threats to the Party bosses that turned out to be fatal to them. This is among the crucial reasons why they were continuously victimized and consumed by Communist political campaigns. By punishing those who raised criticism but were actually supporters of the regime, the CCP damaged its very social foundation.

Another feature of Communist politics, which is closely related to the CCP persecution of its followers, is “dog eats dog” symptom, or what I prefer to call the “chain of prey” syndrome. In the context of the PRC, it refers to a phenomenon that an individual or a group in power, after involvement in persecution of others in a political campaign, could also be purged itself in another campaign.

The victims of the Anti-Rightist Campaign were undoubtedly wronged. Careful investigation of the experiences of some of them, however, reveals that they were not as benign as they are often portrayed. Take Ding Ling as an example. Biographers have generally been quite kind to Ding Ling as she had some “liberal” grains of thought and suffered arbitrary persecution in 1957. But the records from the 1940s do not always do her credit. As Tani Barlow points out, “Ding Ling had been heavily implicated in the Communist Party’s efforts to control all literary expression for many years, and she was equally involved in struggles for power inside the state bureaucracy.”\textsuperscript{540} Prior to her purge in the 1950s, Ding had herself been involved in the wrongful treatment of other intellectuals, in particular, in attacks on the liberal writers Wang Shiwei and Xiao Jun in 1940s and on Shen Congwen in the early 1950’s. A campaign against the movie “Story of Wu Xun”,

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\begin{enumerate}
\item Wang Meng, interview.
\item Tani Barlow and Gary Bjorge, eds., \textit{I Myself Am a Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 43.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
which had been seen as advocating the approach of reform rather than revolution, was also led by Ding Ling in literary circles.\textsuperscript{541} Her radical stance was firmly demonstrated before she herself became a target.

As for others wronged in the Anti-Rightist Campaign, resources show that many including the leading student rightists Lin Xiling and Tan Tianrong were actually activists in the anti-Hu Feng movement of 1955. Carefully investigation of their early careers reveals their own revolutionary aggression.

As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Five, many establishment intellectuals took advantage of the Anti-Rightist Campaign to persecute others, especially their rivals, and thus consolidated their places successfully. But what happened to these victors afterwards? It turned out that they themselves became targets of the next wave of persecution, the Culture Revolution, since the Culture Revolution primarily targeted those in power. Zhou Yang, the chief persecutor of Ding Ling, was brutally purged and barely survived. Wu Han, the very man who had a hand in labeling many intellectuals in the Chinese Democratic League, died in prison with all his family members implicated. Lao She, an active denouncer of Wu Zuguang, Cong Weixi and many other writers, was forced to commit suicide in Beijing. Numerous stories show that the end of these former activists was even worse than that of their prey in the late-1950s. As for highest echelon of the Communist leadership, many of those who argued for harsh treatment of intellectuals fell into disgrace in the Cultural Revolution. Hardliners in the Anti-Rightist Campaign such as Liu Shaoqi, Peng Zhen and Luo Ruiqing were treated badly by the Red Guards.\textsuperscript{542} They were not even given the opportunity to receive “reeducation,” but were simply put into jail, in which some died. Those treated


\textsuperscript{542} Countless works describe the fates of the CCP leaders and social elite during the Cultural Revolution, see, for instance, Jonathan Spence, \textit{The Gate of Heavenly Peace}, 346-350.
leniently were cooped up in "cattle pens," and, when released, were quickly sent to the countryside for physical labor as their prey were in 1957. Although their participation in the purge of others and their being purged does not have a logical link, their revolutionary roots, their harshness towards the "class enemies", and their professed commitment to communism did not free them from being purged when the supreme leader Mao felt it necessary and expedient.

Again, what happened to the Red Guards, who swore their absolute allegiance to Mao, violently swept over the country and purged so many innocent people under the auspices of Mao and his henchmen? They were betrayed too. With the development of the campaign, the Red Guards were seen by Mao as trouble-makers, suppressed by the military and then sent down to the countryside.

The fate of the loyalist Party members, followers and supporters of the CCP—from revolutionary writers in the 1940s to the Red Guards in the 1960s—have both sociological and political implications. In the sociological sense, these people clearly formed a chain of prey. Predators in one situation could easily turn in to prey in another, depending on changes in the social environment. In the political sense, the stories of political outcasts in Maoist China repeatedly show that those who closely followed the teachings of the Party would eventually be betrayed one after another, that those who were deeply involved in the cause of Communism eventually became its victims, and that those who actively attacked others were eventually attacked, because of the ever-changing agenda of the Party center, because of the lack of legal and institutional guarantees, or even because of the involuntary emotions of the highest leadership. In this sense, all of them were victims of Communist politics.

Following this line, the 1957 persecution and the massive banishment afterwards were merely a section, a link in the series of persecution, and the experiences of the political exiles were a few out of the millions of miserable happenings that passed unnoticed.

The effectiveness of the persecution and the frontier banishment need to be reassessed. The government boasted of its achievements in "ideological remolding
through labor," and frequently resorted to this practice. It is also plausible that the Party ideology through various "thought remodeling" devices exerted a profound shaping influence in the minds of Chinese, even those of disfavored groups. When ideological conformity is imposed from above, intellectuals shut their mouths, adhere to political guidelines, and show obedience to Party organizations. Even the banished and those confined in jail asserted their solidarity with the Communist regime, and showed moralistic and disciplined behavior. The high-handed policies were seemingly instrumental in ideological control of the CCP.

In fact, the real effects of persecution and banishment were mediocre at best, and fell short of the agenda of the Party in ideological transformation and ideological control. In the first place, persecution and banishment generated a strong sense of disillusion and resentment among many political exiles, and caused their alienation from the CCP. When the purges were implemented in 1957, intensive propaganda followed, which stressed educational goals and proclaimed that efforts would be made to bring about the ideological reform of the exiles/inmates. However, in the labor camps/army farms, as shown in case of Beidahuang, political education efforts were simply reduced to psychological abuse and "thought reform through labor" to sheer slave labor. When the political exiles realized the very nature of "punishment through labor," a strong sense of grievance was generated, even though they were physically subdued and verbally submissive. Except for forced submission and ominous silence, it seems that the governing party achieved little with the political exiles. Their allegiance to the Party as it had existed in the early PRC years waned. Many political exiles who went to the border regions with a degree of enthusiasm to remold themselves ideologically only came back with grievances against the Communist government. In this sense the Party's alleged purpose of ideological renewal of political offenders failed, and efforts to establish ideological control of the nation were undermined.

The second, real functioning of the purge and banishment showed little direct relevance to any of the political goals originally proclaimed. The goal of the Party leadership in the campaign might stress the cleansing of dissidents and focus on
controlled rehabilitation. However, for local party branches, which cared more about their own interests than the agenda of political purification, displaying the activism that the center expected, eliminating rivals, finishing labeling quotas, and completing work targets in the labor camps were their main purposes. Since local Party cadres and labor camp officials did not necessarily consider the Party’s agenda as a top priority, the real results of labeling, purge and “labor reform” were contradictory to original purpose of the Party. The large numbers of loyal communists who were purged and perished in the labor camps provide perfect illustration for this.

Most significantly, the persecution helped undermine some intellectuals’ belief in Party ideologies and fostered emergence of real dissidents in the late Mao and post Mao China. Drawing lesson from their experiences, intellectuals felt that the CCP doctrines were seriously flawed and it was a mistake to commit themselves to Communist ideologies. After the Cultural Revolution, the most courageous critics of the CCP regime came from the groups that were purged in 1957, who constituted genuine political dissidents or “liberal” intellectuals in the Deng period. Liu Binyan and Wang Ruowang were rightists, and Fang Lizhi was also stripped of his Party membership after the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Fang Lizhi criticized the CCP’s Four Cardinal Principles (the socialist line, the proletarian dictatorship, the leadership of the CCP, and Marxism-Leninism and the Thought of Mao) and rejected them in favor of free elections, free speech, free press and political pluralism. Liu Binyan condemned the essence of Maoist leftism as being “mutual destruction and mutual cruelty.” “It makes human [being] inhuman. It makes a free man unfree. It turns a person of independent personality into a submissive tool. It turns man into beast.”

Despite with exceptions, the persecuted intellectuals tended to be more and more critical towards the Party after the Cultural Revolution. In this sense, the persecution and border banishment were not only destructive for China’s educated elite, but also detrimental for the ruling party itself.

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Appendix A: Interview List*

* Except for Liu Junying, Wang Shushen, Wang Zhiliang and Zhang Jiqian, who were non-rightists, all the positions and jobs listed are what the interviewees held before the Anti-Rightist Campaign.

Ba Hong, movie director. (Beijing: July 17, 2004)
Chen Dongbai, middle school teacher. (Panjin, Liaoning: August 17, 2003)
Chen Erzhen, engineer. (Beijing: July 18, 2004)
Chen Fengxiao, university student. (Weifang, Shandong: July 3, 2004)
Chen Ming, editor. (Beijing: August 19, 2003; July 5, 2004)
Dai Huang, senior journalist. (Beijing: July 17, 2004)
Ding Cong, artist. (Beijing: August 20, 2003)
Gu, government official. (Changchun: September 22, 2003. Gu prefers his name not to be released.)
Han Dajun, scientist. (Beijing: July 5, 2004)
He Shanzhou, university department head. (Vancouver: October 22, 2003)
He Ying, literature journal editor. (Changchun: September 21, 2003)
Hu Xianzhong, university student. (Changchun: September 23, 2003)
Hui Peilin, journalist. (Beijing: July 19, 2004)
Li Xin, CCP cadre. (Beijing: October 6, 2003)
Liu Naiyuan, translator. (Beijing: July 7, 2004)
Lu Gang, Party official, college head. (Dalian: August 6, 2003)
Lu Wencai, college teacher. (Dalian: August 5, 2003)
Ma Shifu, college student. (Dalian: September 27, 2003)
Tan Tianrong, university student. (Qingdao: June 29, 2004)
Wang Hongren, junior police officer. (Changchun: September 22, 2003)
Wang Keqin, military officer. (Beijing: July 18, 2004)
Wang Li, junior clerk. (Dalian: September 29, 2003)
Wang Meng, writer. (Beijing: October 5, 2003)
Wen Zicheng, college student. (Dalian: September 18, 2003)
Wu Yue, journal editor. (Beijing: October 5, 2003)
Xu Ying, journalist. (Beijing: July 19, 2004)

Yan Tunfu, university student. (Beijing: July 8, 2004)

Yan Xueli, middle school teacher. (Dandong, Liaoning: August 12, 2003)

Yang Chongdao, military technician. (Beijing: July 11, 2004)

Yin Jie, college student. (Dalian: September 19, 2003)

Yin Jiliang, journalist. (Beijing: October 3, 2003)

Zheng Xiaofeng, journalist. (Beijing: July 6, 2004)


Appendix B: Glossary

Beidahuang  北大荒
*Beidahuang wenyi*  北大荒文艺
daishipin  代食品
dousi pixiu  斗私批修
duizhang  队长
dushe  毒蛇
fan'an feng  翻案风
fangeming fan  反革命犯
fenchang zhang  分场长
fulu  俘虏
guanjiao ganbu  管教干部
guweijinyong  古为今用
heiwulei  黑五类
huai hen zai xin  怀恨在心
hukou  户口
jiandu laodong  监督劳动
jieju  戒具
jin  斤
jiuye  就业
jiyou  极右
junfan  军fan
kaolong zhengfu  靠拢政府
kaolong zuzhi  靠拢组织
kuhai wubian  苦海无边
laogai  劳改 (*laodong gaizao* 劳动改造)
laojiao  劳教 (*laodong jiaoyang* 劳动教养)
laojiao  劳教
laotou  牢头
liangmian pai  两面派
linse gui  吝啬鬼
liufang  流放
louwang youpai  漏网右派
ming zhe bao shen  明哲保身
minzhu dangpai  民主党派
niugui sheshen  牛鬼蛇神
nonggong  农工
nongchang  农场
  —Bawuling nongchang  八五零农场
--Bawuer nongchang 八五二农场
--Bawusan nongchang 八五三农场
--Tangyuan nongchang 汤原农场
--Xingkaihu nongchang 兴凯湖农场
renzui 认罪
sanxing wu shen 三省吾身
shijie guan 世界观
silei fenzi 四类分子
sixiang huibao 思想汇报
taidu buhao 态度不好
tufei 土匪
tuoai huang 脱胎换骨
weizui zisha 畏罪自杀
wenhua tewu 文化特务
wenjiao dui 文教队
wulai 无赖
xiafang ganbu 下放干部
xiaoza o 小灶
xinghuo 星火
Xingkaihu 兴凯湖
xingshi fan 刑事犯
xinxin gemian 洗心革面
xueshupianzi 学术骗子
xunhua 训话
yexinjia 野心家
youpai 右派
you du bu fang 有害不放
zaimao 摘帽
zaimao youpai 摘帽右派
zhidaoyuan 指导员
zhongyang kaochatuan 中央考察团
zhuajiu youpai 抓阄右派
zichanjieji youpai 资产阶级右派
zixing 自省
Appendix C: Map of Beidahuang

(1) The Farm 850
(2) The Farm 852
(3) The Farm 853
(4) The Tangyuan Farm
(5) The Xingkaihu Labor Reform Complex