

# The CCP's Institutes of Socialism as Petrol Stations: The Decline of Communist Ideology and the Problems of United Front Work in the 1990s

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*This paper traces the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) political education of representatives and other intellectuals targeted by its united front work. The socialist transformation of the 1950s required all united front allies to undergo extensive political reeducation in a system of political schools which evolved into the Institutes of Socialism. This "education" required complete assimilation and acceptance of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. The anti-Rightist struggle marked the effective end of most united front work, including the institutes. In 1978, the CCP revived its united front as part of its economic reforms and began rebuilding the institutes in 1983. However, the paucity of resources allocated to the institutes at all levels indicates the CCP's continued unwillingness to work with any outside groups. While united front work provides a precedent and a means of increasing political representation, the experience of the institutes indicates that a meaningful expansion of the united front is unlikely.*

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This paper details the history of China's little known Institutes of Socialism (*Shehui zhuyi xueyuan*, IOS), the political education section of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) United Front Department (UFD). The political education of official non-Party allies is a crucial aspect of united front work within China.<sup>1</sup> In the 1950s, the CCP demanded that, in addition to participation in mass political campaigns, these representatives had to also undergo political education in special political schools which would later become the Institutes of Socialism.

The Institutes of Socialism have experienced two major phases. Originally established in 1956, they ceased operations in the early 1960s, but were revived in the early 1980s. By examining the differences in content, methods, and goals of the IOS in these two periods, we can assess and compare the CCP's relative power. We can also assess the Party's commitment to united front work and, to some degree, judge the success of its political indoctrination. This particular comparison serves as an example of the decline of both the Party's legitimacy and its socialist ideology. It also reveals problems influencing political education and discusses their implications for the future success of united front work as the CCP attempts to cope with China's rapid socioeconomic change.

Between 1949 and 1957, on the basis of its extensive experience since 1935, the CCP developed and modified united front work to meet the needs of its transition to socialism. As the CCP consolidated power, however, it hastened the pace of socialist transformation and increasingly emphasized class struggle. United front work, which is based on compromise and cooperation, went into decline. By the onset of the Cultural Revolution, many aspects of it had ceased completely. After Mao Zedong's death, the Party began to reform its economic and social policies, and the revival of united

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<sup>1</sup>For an excellent history of the CCP's united front work, see Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends: The United Front in Chinese Communist History* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1967).

front work and the United Front Department were important parts of these reforms. The CCP launched a "new era" united front in which erstwhile allies such as non-Party intellectuals and the minor, so-called "democratic" parties and groups (*minzhu dangpai*, DPGs) again played a part.<sup>2</sup>

The united front is based on a simple principle of using common goals and interests as a basis for forming alliances with different classes, strata, groups, political parties, and individuals. Such fronts can be used to defeat common enemies or overcome common difficulties.<sup>3</sup> They strengthen the leading party in the alliance by broadening its political support and isolating its enemies. The extent to which China developed and maintained a united front system as part of its political system is unique in the socialist bloc.

As Antonio Gramsci points out, small revolutionary parties need alliances.<sup>4</sup> To win allies and to justify radical change, they need to exercise leadership, not only on political and social issues but also on moral, ethical, and intellectual issues of national interest. The alliance builder consolidates the coalition by rewarding or making concessions to its allies. Gaining consent and winning legitimacy in this way helps create what Gramsci called "hegemony." While this hegemony justifies and supports powers of coercion, those who rely on coercion alone soon lose legitimacy and allies. As enemies become isolated, they lose the ability to function effectively. Gramsci's hegemonic alliances require using allies to train the managers, teachers, scientists, officers, and the other intellectuals (defined in very broad terms) which the alliance builder needs to rule in its own right. When enough such politically reliable (i.e., communist) intellectuals have been created, the allies render themselves redundant. Allies can then be eliminated or can be turned into revolutionaries by political and ideological in-

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<sup>2</sup>Other important targets of united front work include Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Macau compatriots, overseas Chinese, religious believers, Chinese returned from overseas, and former Kuomintang members.

<sup>3</sup>See Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong], "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism" (December 27, 1935), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. 1 (Peking [Beijing]: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 162-65.

<sup>4</sup>Quintin Hoare and Geoffery Nowell Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

doctrination based on criticism.<sup>5</sup>

Though there is no evidence that the CCP's theorists were indebted to Gramsci, the Party's united front theory and practice developed along the very lines he postulated. The Party adopted a similar "unity and struggle" educational principle in 1939,<sup>6</sup> and by 1945, Mao was stressing the need to "unite with and re-educate all the useful intellectuals already available." At the same time, the Party had to systematically "develop all kinds of intellectually equipped cadres from among the ranks of the people."<sup>7</sup> However, the supreme principle of united front work was that the leadership and independence of the Party must remain uncompromised.<sup>8</sup>

The Party's ability to educate its allies through means such as political schools—i.e., acting as a "petrol station" and filling its allies with new ideology—depends on prevailing circumstances.<sup>9</sup> The greater its degree of hegemony, that is, the degree of consent and acceptance of its rule as "common sense" (supported by its forces of coercion), the more the Party can demand of allies. Conversely, when its hegemony is weak or declining, it must make more concessions to win and retain allies and the less it can demand of them. This principle is borne out clearly by the differences between the CCP's united front policies and practices of the 1950s and those pursued since 1978. During the former, the Party's growing power allowed it to demand a complete change in thinking on the part of its allies. This is no longer the case in the 1990s, and this change reflects a major decline in the Party's power and legitimacy. These problems are also reflected in the IOS.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>6</sup>Mao Zedong, "Introducing *The Communist*" (October 4, 1939), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* 2:290.

<sup>7</sup>Mao Zedong, "On Coalition Government" (April 24, 1945), *ibid.* 3:255.

<sup>8</sup>For a full elaboration of many of these principles, see Liu Shaoqi, "Leadership Is the Crucial Issue of the National United Front" (November 1936), in *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 57-64.

<sup>9</sup>In 1992, one institute described its role in terms of acting as a petrol/gas station (*jiayou zhan*) by educating and filling its students with inspiration and motivation for united front work. See Luwan District Institute of Socialism, "Strengthen the Training of the Two Ranks—Exploring a New Road for Organizing Classes for the Institute of Socialism," *Shanghai tong-zhan lilun yanjiu* (Shanghai United Front Theoretical Research, hereafter *STLY*), 1992, no. 2:47.

## The "New Democratic" United Front, 1949-57

Mao's "New Democracy" program of 1939 was a set of united front policies designed to convince China's bourgeoisie and intellectuals that their interests would be protected when the CCP came to power. New Democracy stipulated that there was to be a bourgeois-democratic stage of transition between the seizure of power and the socialist stage of development. The political system was to be a "people's dictatorship" whereby power was nominally shared by a long-term four-class alliance of the proletariat, the peasantry, and the national and petty bourgeoisie. The economy would be a mix of state, collective, and private ownership, with complete state ownership of resources and the abolition of private property and social classes goals for the future.<sup>10</sup> Mao made it clear in "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship" that aspects of capitalism, albeit limited and regulated by the Party-state, would be permitted, if not welcomed, as being necessary for reviving and expanding industrial production, and as vital prerequisites for the eventual socialist transition. Nevertheless, Mao indicated that when the time came to realize socialism and nationalize the remaining private enterprises, "we shall carry out the work of educating and remoulding [the bourgeois classes] a step further."<sup>11</sup>

The progressive elements of the bourgeoisie and their intellectuals were represented in government by the minor parties and groups: the China Democratic League, the Jiusan Society, the China Association for the Promotion of Democracy, the China Democratic National Construction Association, the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the Chinese Peasants' and Workers' Party, the Zhigong Party (Party for Public Interests), and the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League. Also of major importance were the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce and individual non-party politicians. These groups were the formal and symbolic manifestations of the new democratic united front. Yet, always implicit in this united front was the fact that after the conditions for

<sup>10</sup>Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy" (January 1940), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* 2: 339-84.

<sup>11</sup>Mao Zedong, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship" (June 30, 1949), *ibid.* 4:419.

socialism had been created, the need for the classes these organizations represented, and for the organizations themselves, would be eliminated.

The transition to socialism, however, came much earlier than the CCP had implied. Soon after taking power, the CCP launched successive campaigns against private business in the form of the "three-anti campaign" (1951) and the overlapping "five-anti campaign" (1951-52) which bankrupted firms or, through the levying of heavy fines, forced their transfer into state or cooperative control.<sup>12</sup> As their economic independence disappeared, the bourgeoisie, including its united front representatives, became increasingly dependent on the Party-state for housing, employment, and welfare. They were also increasingly being "educated" to accept CCP leadership through political study sessions.<sup>13</sup>

The CCP's political education of its united front allies intensified as soon as it grasped national power. In 1949, Democratic League members were urged to reform, admit to numerous ideological failings, and use criticism and self-criticism to "correct" their shortcomings.<sup>14</sup> Famous minor party leaders were attacked during the three- and five-anti campaigns and the Democratic League organization was also investigated.<sup>15</sup> Minor party leaders were also included in the first nationwide thought reform campaign for intellectuals of 1951,<sup>16</sup> and this was soon extended to also include all DPG members. While the CCP conceded that many DPG members had already accepted Marxism, it declared that many "still retained feudal views requiring eradication."<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly, these "eradication" measures

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<sup>12</sup>The nominal targets of the "three antis" were: waste, corruption, and bureaucratism. In the "five-anti" campaign, the targets were: bribery, tax evasion, theft of government property, fraud, and theft of state secrets. For an account of this period by a minor party leader and businessman, see Robert Loh, *Escape from Red China* (London: Michael Joseph, 1963).

<sup>13</sup>Theodore Hsi-en Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960).

<sup>14</sup>"Political Report of the China Democratic League's First Full Session of the Fourth Central Committee" (December 8, 1949), in *Zhongguo minzhu tongmeng lishi wenzhai, 1949-1988* (Selected historical documents of the China Democratic League), ed. Zhongguo minzhu tongmeng zhongyang wenshi weiyuanhui (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), 1:11.

<sup>15</sup>Chow Chingwen, *Ten Years of Storm; The True Story of the Communist Regime* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1960), 129-31.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 135-38.

<sup>17</sup>"Opinions on Continuing to Strengthen the Thought Reform Study Movement of All Dem-

were bitterly resented and many DPG leaders seized the opportunity of the Hundred Flowers campaign of 1956-57 to air their grievances about them. Their anger at their treatment by the CCP was something that Mao and other Party leaders had not expected and could not tolerate.<sup>18</sup> During the rectification campaign which followed, minor party leaders became prime targets of attack and the Institutes of Socialism became forums for intensifying and completing the ideological transformation of DPG members and other united front target groups. This was to be the last step in their transition to socialism: they were now integrated into a socialist economy and would henceforth be taught to think like socialists.

### The Establishment of the Institutes of Socialism

In 1956, the CCP Central Committee United Front Department declared that most intellectuals could be considered as part of the working class.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, to further the "destruction of capitalism and the establishment of socialism," it called on the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the peak united front body, to set up political schools. Night and short-term political study schools were organized and an Institute of Socialism was established in Beijing.<sup>20</sup> Attendance by those who "did not fully understand socialism," and the "small minority" who opposed socialism and needed transformation, would result in their acceptance of Marxism-Leninism and thus allow socialist construction to proceed.<sup>21</sup>

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ocratic Personages" (June 1952), in *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi gaikuang he wenxian* (Historical summaries and documents of past national united front work conferences), ed. Ren Tao (Beijing: Dang'an chubanshe, 1988), 119-20.

<sup>18</sup>Chen, *Thought Reform*, 152-70.

<sup>19</sup>"Central United Front Department: Opinions on Helping the Democratic Parties and Groups" (March 26, 1956), in Ren, *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi*, 257.

<sup>20</sup>"On Helping Democratic Personages and Bourgeois Elements Implement Methods of Political and Theoretical Study" (April 1956), *ibid.*, 263-64. This document was issued jointly by the United Front Department and the Propaganda Department.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 258.

Established at Beijing's People's University in April 1956,<sup>22</sup> the first Institute of Socialism began accepting students in October 1957.<sup>23</sup> A Shanghai Municipal Institute of Socialism was also soon established outside the city in Jiading County. Student categories were eventually expanded to include all united front target groups. In 1961, the People's University Institute of Socialism was named the Central Institute of Socialism and all other political schools run by the CPPCC were renamed "Institutes of Socialism."<sup>24</sup>

After December 1957, the 430 Institutes of Socialism were made the major focus for the implementation of the CCP's rectification and class struggle policies.<sup>25</sup> Between 1958 and the mid-1960s, when these schools closed, six batches totalling 1,800 students passed through the Central Institute of Socialism and 140,000 through lower-level institutes.<sup>26</sup> Although these numbers are not great in the context of China's population, the individuals they represented were seen by the Party as having a disproportionately large social and political influence, especially among China's intellectual elites. Their symbolic and practical importance thus made their full acceptance of Party ideology vital to the CCP.

### *Course Content and Teaching Methods*

Courses were focused on basic aspects of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought and included compulsory texts such as Historical Materialism, Dialectical Materialism, Political Economy, and the History of the Chinese Revolution.<sup>27</sup> Teaching methods were supposedly guided by Mao's admonition that political education should employ "competitive

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<sup>22</sup>"Opinions on Gradually Creating a Good Institute of Socialism" (November 22, 1990), in *Tongyi zhanxian zhengce xuanbian* (Selections of united front policies), ed. Research Office of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (Shanghai: 1992), 19.

<sup>23</sup>Jia Ping'an and Hao Shuliang, eds., *Tongzhan xue cidian* (Dictionary of united front study) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 1993), 367.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>"The Ninth United Front Work Conference" (December 1957), in Ren, *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi*, 362-63.

<sup>26</sup>Jia and Hao, *Tongzhan xue cidian*, 368-69.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*



methods, criticism, self-criticism, and again encouraging more criticism—criticism is the main method of struggle."<sup>28</sup> Students engaged in independent study, informal group discussions, and formal classes. Students were expected to raise, analyze, and solve their own questions (the "three selfs") and to "combine theory with reality." Outside experts and DPG leaders (most probably those with dual DPG-CCP membership) also gave classes with the goal of "raising the students' socialist consciousness" and contributing to "consolidating and developing the united front."<sup>29</sup> If the institutes were in fact successful in educating their charges to the degree the Party desired, then such individuals would become communists in all but name.

Thought reform methods at the institutes and those of the CCP's own Party schools both aimed to create the same socialist consciousness and used the same methods.<sup>30</sup> The reform process has been described as consisting of three stages: togetherness, closing in, and, finally, submission and rebirth.<sup>31</sup> Togetherness meant that new students would be warmly welcomed then organized into small groups to discuss and criticize the old order. Lectures and self-directed discussion stressed ridding oneself of the negative influences of the past. Communist theory was studied and discussed with group leaders who then reported the students' progress to their superiors. Tension gradually replaced friendliness as group pressure increased, and opinions expressed freely after arrival were suddenly used to attack their authors. Each person had to criticize others to demonstrate sincerity and goodwill, and failure to participate brought more criticism. Ultimately succumbing to the pressure, students wrote increasingly elaborate and incriminating confessions which were also often used against them. Accompanying physical labor, justified in terms of providing *effete bourgeoisie* intellectuals with proletarian experience, physically weakened students and reduced their resistance to the indoctrination process. Final

<sup>28</sup>Li Weiham, "Speech at the National United Front Work Conference" (April 4, 1957), in Ren, *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi*, 337.

<sup>29</sup>Jia and Hao, *Tongzhan xue cidian*, 368-69.

<sup>30</sup>For an account of the Party school system, see Richard L. Walker, *China Under Communism: The First Five Years* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), chap. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Robert J. Lifton, "Thought Reform in China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 16, no. 1 (November 1956-August 1957): 77.

submission was marked by elaborate and often humiliating confessions listing personal weaknesses and problems requiring further reform. This submission often required the denunciation and renunciation of family and friends, acts which sometimes brought about emotional collapse or even suicide. Those who survived this ordeal promised to continue self-reform and to serve the state and the CCP.<sup>32</sup> The CCP's eventual acceptance of the final confession resulted in great emotional relief that the student had "weathered the thought reform ideal, renounced his past, and established an organic bond between himself and the government."<sup>33</sup>

The reward for reform was a sense of being readmitted into the fold and joining in "the great moral crusade" of reforming society and building communism. At its best, thought reform created zealous converts. Others were resisters or only partially convinced. Some adapted without undergoing significant change.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the intent of thought reform was to erase bourgeois and feudal thinking and replace them with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. In this sense, thought reform truly was "brainwashing." The ability of the CCP to demand this complete transformation, and its apparent success, served as proof of the Party's hegemony. Those who survived indoctrination to the CCP's satisfaction were promised participation in the building of what it promised would be an egalitarian, prosperous, and strong communist China.

The major public manifestation of the "success" of the CCP's reeducation processes was the "giving of hearts" (*jiao xin*) campaign of 1958. Aimed specifically at the DPGs, this campaign culminated in 10,000 DPG members demonstrating in Beijing's Tiananmen Square and some 30,000 parading in other cities. As proof of their final conversions, they pledged publicly their allegiance to Mao, socialism, and the CCP and they vowed to continue self-reform.<sup>35</sup> This act was yet another symbol of the elimina-

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<sup>32</sup>For example, confessions by DPG leaders such as Zhang Bojun, Zhang Naiqi, Luo Longji, Chu Anping, Chen Mingshu, and others, although these were not necessarily made in Institutes of Socialism. Chen, *Thought Reform*, 184-88.

<sup>33</sup>Lifton, "Thought Reform in China," 77-81.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>35</sup>This little-known movement is now regarded as a disaster for united front work. Ma Yulin,

tion of China's bourgeoisie.

### The End of the United Front

The transition to socialism, the rectification campaign, and the CCP's final thought reform efforts marked the end of its efforts aimed at uniting with the bourgeoisie. Mao's 1957 calls to combat "Rightists" and his increasing emphasis on class struggle, and the need for "enemies" upon which to base it, denied the cooperative basis of united front work and allowed open attacks on many previously labelled as allies.<sup>36</sup> Yet, although Mao reaffirmed the Party's policy of unity and struggle with the bourgeoisie, struggle came to dominate and unity disappeared.

By 1962, the United Front Department was preoccupied with salvaging what it could of its work. Complicating its work was Zhou Enlai's declaration that the reeducation of intellectuals was more or less complete and that "without doubt, they [now] belonged to the working people," with the majority actively serving socialism, accepting CCP leadership, and continuing to voluntarily reform themselves.<sup>37</sup> Bourgeois thinking was judged to have been eliminated; the Party's hegemony, its powers of coercion, and the strength of its "leadership" were such that the desire to achieve socialism and support the Party, or at least not oppose it, became common sense. The appeal of the CCP's socialism was based on its promise of a better, richer life, and the alleged scientific authority of Marx, Lenin, and Mao had yet (despite the failure of the Great Leap Forward) to be discredited. The use of draconian thought reform methods was based on

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"'Leftist' Deviations in United Front Work in the Democratic Parties' Internal 'Rectification' and 'Giving of Hearts' Campaigns," in *Zhongguo tongyi zhanxian dashi jishi benmou* (A history of major Chinese united front events), ed. Zhang Tienan, Song Chun, and Zhu Jianhua (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1990), 464.

<sup>36</sup>In "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (February 27, 1957), Mao denied that bourgeoisie had been completely reformed and he reasserted the existence of contradictions between it and the working class. Education and study had to continue. See *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* 5:402-4.

<sup>37</sup>"Summary of the Twelfth National United Front Work Conference" (April 23-May 21, 1962), in Ren, *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi*, 389.

and justified by the promise of socialism. The Party's alleged success in eliminating the capitalist classes and even bourgeois thinking also meant that the united front, including the IOS, had become superfluous. In 1966, what little remained of the minor parties was disbanded by Red Guards, although at Mao's insistence they continued to exist in name.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Revival of the United Front, 1978-Present**

In 1978, two years after Mao's death, the CCP cautiously moved toward economic reform and political moderation as a way out of the legitimization crisis brought about by the preceding two decades of turmoil created by Mao's divisive policies of class struggle. Mao's policies had failed to deliver better lives for many; they had been enormously costly in terms of lost production, social upheaval, and personal tragedies, especially among intellectuals. China had also failed to become a modern superpower while many of its smaller capitalist neighbors were developing rapidly.

The revival of the United Front Department is a generally overlooked aspect of 1978 reform. Its task in what was termed a "new era" was again to help enlist the assistance of non-Party groups to achieve the Party's goals. The core of this new united front work was to support the "four modernizations" of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense.<sup>39</sup> To achieve these aims, the Party needed the full cooperation of China's scientists, managers, administrators, and other intellectuals—precisely those who had suffered so much as a result of the CCP's past policies. Gaining the cooperation of these groups thus became an explicit task of united front work.<sup>40</sup> To assist this reconciliation, the minor parties which served as the official representatives of the intellectuals were reformed.

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<sup>38</sup>James D. Seymour, *China's Satellite Parties* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1987), 64-66.

<sup>39</sup>"Summary of the Fourteenth National United Front Work Conference" (August 1979), in Ren, *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi*, 437-38.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

They began with 60,000 members, well down from their high of 100,000 in 1956, and their initial growth was slow.<sup>41</sup>

Political education in this early period consisted of study groups and self-education.<sup>42</sup> By 1984, DPG membership had reached 137,000, and in the light of this growth, CCP members were instructed to "help" them with organization and leadership.<sup>43</sup> The growth of the DPGs and united front work in general apparently necessitated the standardization and intensification of political education and training to ensure reliability and effectiveness. In the early 1980s, in order to overcome the hitherto ad hoc nature of such training and reestablish an apparent historical continuity (a factor much favored in united front work), the CCP decided to reestablish the Institutes of Socialism.

### The Revival of the Institutes of Socialism

In August 1983, the DPGs' future and the direction of their political education were outlined in the CCP Central Committee United Front Department's policy document on reviving the Institutes of Socialism, "Instructions on the Revival of Political Schools in Each Province, Municipality, and Autonomous Region."<sup>44</sup> Daily operations were again to be managed by the CPPCC, with the "Instructions" reiterating that united front work was to support the Party's "four modernizations" program. Allies were to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought and CCP policies and principles.<sup>45</sup> The form and intensity this education would take was unclear; however, indicating a major shift from the 1950s, Li Wei-han, the former head of the United Front Department, noted that some people felt

<sup>41</sup>Seymour, *China's Satellite Parties*, viii.

<sup>42</sup>"Summary of the Central UFD Meeting on National United Front Work" (January 1982), in Ren, *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi*, 492.

<sup>43</sup>Seymour, *China's Satellite Parties*, viii; Zhang Kui, *Zhongguo minzhu dangpai shigang* (An outline history of China's democratic political parties) (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992), 129.

<sup>44</sup>*Tongyi zhanxian zhengce xuanbian*, 8-9.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

that principles of unity-struggle and unity-criticism were no longer appropriate.<sup>46</sup>

Little is known of IOS activities between 1983 and 1990 because nothing was publicly released about them. The availability of post-1990 materials reflects a much more open attitude to united front work and a desire to gain more publicity and raise the profile of such work, particularly the IOS. The fact that the Shanghai UFD, the Shanghai Municipal IOS, and almost every minor party were willing to allow visits by the author in 1993 was a significant sign of this relaxation.<sup>47</sup>

The revived IOS differed from their predecessors in several important ways. Their goal was no longer complete thought reform, but rather training and raising the standards of cadres in the minor parties, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, CPPCC representatives, and other non-Party cadres, especially those who had something to offer to the "four modernizations" program. In addition, and very significantly, the IOS brief was widened to include the training of CCP and UFD cadres in united front work. Perhaps just as importantly, they were also to appoint appropriate non-CCP persons to IOS positions.<sup>48</sup> However, at the end of the 1980s, the effectiveness of the IOS system was called into question.

The demonstrations and unrest of April-June 1989 showed that the IOS had not been as successful in educating united front allies between 1983 and 1989 as the CCP would have liked. The minor parties sympathized with the student demonstrators' criticisms of corruption, inflation, and the relative decline in the living standards of intellectuals, as well as their calls for increased democracy.<sup>49</sup> Following its crackdown on the student movement, the CCP issued the "Guidelines for Upholding and Improving the System of Multiparty Cooperation and Political Consultation" under CCP leadership. The "Guidelines" notionally refuted the calls of

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<sup>46</sup>Li Weihai, "Important Points from a Speech to a Forum on the United Front Theory of Ten Provinces, Municipalities, and Autonomous Regions," in Ren, *Lici quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi*, 548.

<sup>47</sup>Only the China Democratic League refused repeated requests for an official interview.

<sup>48</sup>*Tongyi zhanxian zhengce xuanbian*, 8-9.

<sup>49</sup>James D. Seymour, "China's Minor Parties and the Crisis of 1989," *China Information* 5, no. 4 (Spring 1991): 15.

the students for more democracy by highlighting the CCP's consultation with its united front allies, especially the minor parties. Acknowledging some existing problems, the "Guidelines" called for more financial support for both the minor parties' organizations and their political education,<sup>50</sup> as the CCP wanted to ensure a greater degree of political reliability in its united front allies while formalizing their consultative role in the political system. A purge of the DPGs in the wake of June 1989 would have alienated China's intellectuals from the CCP even further; a renewed emphasis on political education was thus judged likely to be more productive.

In November 1990, the CCP Central Committee United Front Department followed the "Guidelines" with its own "Opinions" document specifically addressing IOS issues. This UFD document laid down the formal policy for strengthening IOS ideological work aimed at increasing the political reliability of united front allies. IOS students were to assimilate a familiar curriculum featuring basic aspects of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. The CCP's "four basic principles"—support of the socialist road, proletarian dictatorship, the leadership of the CCP, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought—were to be emphasized strongly. Students also had to study Party and government policy; the theory, policies, and history of the united front; minor party history; multiparty cooperation; the international situation; and "modern scientific knowledge of professional united front work."<sup>51</sup>

The new emphasis on professional training and qualities reflected the CCP's growing realization of the need for greater professionalism in government and within the political system in general. China's society and economy were becoming increasingly complex and higher levels of expertise were necessary in order to deal with changes at the political and administrative levels. One of the Party's major problems was that it lacked enough professionals in its own ranks. In 1992, only 30 percent of China's 23 million intellectuals (including technicians) were CCP members.<sup>52</sup> The

<sup>50</sup>For the full text of the "Guidelines," see *Beijing Review*, March 5-11, 1990, 14-18.

<sup>51</sup>"The CCP Central Committee United Front Department's 'Opinions on Gradually Organizing a Good Institute of Socialism,'" in *Tongyi zhanxian zhengce xuanbian*, 19-23.

<sup>52</sup>"Directing United Front Work at Non-Party Intellectuals Is an Important Aspect of United

Party had little choice but to use united front work to gain access to the bulk of intellectuals outside of its own ranks, and minor parties were one means to achieve this.<sup>53</sup> In 1992, two events promoted this change in emphasis. One was Deng Xiaoping's tour of the South (*nansun*) and the other, influenced by the tour, was the UFD's issuing of the "Outline of United Front Department Work in the 1990s."<sup>54</sup> Although not always explicitly stated, this major policy document contained three important decisions: the lifting of recruitment restrictions or substantially raising the limits; expanding the potential recruitment base; and allowing the DPGs to establish their own enterprises. Not only were the DPGs to grow, but the broadening of recruitment criteria demanded that they recruit up to 30 percent of their new membership outside of their traditional areas.<sup>55</sup>

Until 1992, the professional or interest group constituencies of the minor parties had been strictly controlled by the CCP through the UFD. After 1992, the DPGs were each allowed to expand into new areas:

1. *The Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang*: Primary constituency—former members of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party, KMT) who did not go to or returned from Taiwan after October 1949. Their membership in 1993 totalled 42,000, and post-1992 recruitment was expanded to include relatives of former KMT members or those who had Taiwanese relatives as well as the newly emerging private entrepreneurs, particularly rural ones. Famous members of this DPG have included the warlords Li Jishen and Feng Yuxiang and the KMT's Shao Lizi.

2. *The China Democratic League*: Primary constituency—mid- and high-level intellectuals such as university teachers and researchers. Membership in 1993 totalled 110,000, and post-1992 recruitment was expanded

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Front Work," in *Zhongguo tongyi zhanxian jiaocheng* (A course on China's united front), ed. Ren Tao (of the CCP Central Committee United Front Department Policy and Theoretical Research Office) and the Central Institute of Socialism (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1992), 224.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 224-25.

<sup>54</sup>Research Office of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee United Front Department, ed., *Jiushi niandai tongyi zhanxian bumen gongzuo gangyao: Xuexi fudao cailiao* (Outline of united front department work in the 1990s: Tutorial study materials) (internal reference material, December 1992).

<sup>55</sup>Interviews with leaders of all DPGs carried out in Shanghai in late 1993.



to include more technocrats. Perhaps the League's most famous living member is the rural Sociologist Fei Xiaotong. Another famous League academic, Qian Jiaju, fled to Hong Kong after June 1989 (he later returned).

3. *The China Association for the Promotion of Democracy*: Primary constituency—primary and secondary school teachers and principals, publishing, scientific research and cultural circles. Membership in 1993 totalled 53,000, and recruitment now includes private entrepreneurs, although attempts to expand in television and radio circles were stopped by the CCP. This DPG's most famous personality is Shanghai sociologist Deng Weizhi.

4. *Chinese Peasants' and Workers' Party*: Primary constituency—health professionals such as doctors (particularly practitioners of Chinese traditional medicine) and nurses. Membership in 1993 totalled 48,000, and recruitment was expanded to reestablish links with private entrepreneurs lost in the 1950s. This DPG's most famous past leader was Zhang Bojun.

5. *The Zhigong Party*: Primary constituency—returned overseas Chinese and/or their relatives. Its membership in 1993 totalled 10,000, with no changes to its interest-based constituency.

6. *The Jiusan Society*: Primary constituency—scientists, doctors (primarily practitioners of Western-style medicine). Membership in 1993 was 50,000, with post-1992 recruitment expanded to include lawyers and managers of private enterprises.

7. *The Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League*: Primary constituency—persons born in Taiwan. Its membership in 1993 was 1,700. This DPG faces severe problems as a result of an easing of travel restrictions out of China which has allowed many young people with Taiwanese relatives or connections to emigrate.

8. *The China Democratic National Construction Association*: Primary constituency—those who were businessmen or capitalists before 1949. Its membership in 1993 was 56,000, and it did not need to expand its business-based constituency, as it already included this as its target group.

9. *The All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC)*: Though not strictly a DPG, the ACFIC too has a vital united front role. In 1991, it was reorganized to concentrate on recruiting the rapidly growing numbers of private entrepreneurs and township and village enterprise sectors. The ACFIC and the Democratic National Construction Association

have longstanding ties and often overlapping memberships, often being mentioned together. Their most prominent member was the "red" industrialist Rong Yiren.

10. The other major category of united front targets and workers is that of non-party personages (*wudangpai renshi*). In official notices, non-party personages are normally mentioned in the same breath as the DPGs although the former (by definition) lack an organizational structure and are organized directly by UFD cadres and united front organizations, such as the CPPCC, where they carry out their representative roles. Non-party personages can also include representatives of other united front target groups, such as religious and ethnic minority leaders.

By late 1994, DPG membership totalled 411,484 and membership of the ACFIC passed 700,000.<sup>56</sup> All non-party personages, DPG members, leaders, and cadres, as well as cadres and official representatives of all united front-related organizations, must attend political education classes. This requirement also includes new united front work representatives recruited from the private and township and village enterprise sectors, i.e., ACFIC representatives. All these individuals have to be inculcated with the official political line and faith in the Party as Party and government policy shifts. These individuals, and indeed the UFD's own cadres, need training to maximize their effectiveness in working to rally their target groups behind the CCP and promoting modernization and economic development. There was, however, an inherent contradiction between trying to recruit united front allies in these new areas while simultaneously demanding more conformity.

### **Course Content: The Rise of Deng Xiaoping Thought**

The Institutes of Socialism's broader subject range indicated by the "Opinions," particularly the references to professional united front work,

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<sup>56</sup>*Ren-min zhengxie bao* (Peoples' Political Consultative Conference Paper), April 19, 1994, 3.

was reinforced by CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin, who in 1992 called on the IOS to build their own character and reputation as united front organizations in order to "attract" non-Party people to its "education and training base."<sup>57</sup> This change to enticement rather than coercion to ensure IOS attendance was an important reflection of the decline in the CCP's power and ideology, and indicated that compulsion was no longer an option.

The requirement for allies to undergo complete thought reform had been omitted when the Central Institute of Socialism was revived in 1983, but actively attracting students required a major downgrading of another previously vital aspect of IOS education, that of communist political theory. Significantly, the revived Central Institute of Socialism's motto was "patriotism, unity, democracy, and seeking truth from facts." References to socialism or communism were conspicuously absent.<sup>58</sup>

Pure ideology has declined and been replaced with "professional development" subjects with far greater appeal. The Guangzhou IOS model course of 1992 clearly reflects this shift. Its five subjects included: (1) Deng Xiaoping's theories of "building socialism with Chinese characteristics," (2) united front theory, (3) the history of CCP-led united front work, (4) "leadership science," and (5) administration.<sup>59</sup> Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought subjects were noticeably absent, replaced by Deng's "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

Changes in the curriculum of Shanghai's district institutes resembled those in Guangzhou. Teaching Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought was still officially required, but district institute courses were short, lasting only several days to a few weeks. In the wake of the CCP's Fourteenth Congress in 1992, Shanghai IOS principals pragmatically decided that Marxism-Leninism could be reduced to Deng's theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics and basic united front theory.<sup>60</sup> This continuous

<sup>57</sup>"Jiang Zemin's Letter of Congratulations to the Central Institute of Socialism," *Shanghai tongyi zhanxian* (Shanghai United Front), 1992, no. 12:2.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup>Liu Fengrui, "High Standards, Rigorous Demands; Create Our Own Uniqueness," *STLY*, 1992, no. 4:52. Liu Fengrui was the head of the Shanghai Municipal Institute of Socialism in 1993.

<sup>60</sup>"Institute of Socialism Teaching Trends" (back page column), *ibid.*, 1993, no. 2.

simplification was a far cry from the 1989 call to strengthen ideological education in reasserting control of united front allies, and an admission that such education was now subject to real limits.

The CCP's introduction of the concept of the "socialist market economy" and its emphasis on economic development compounded the institutes' need for course simplification.<sup>61</sup> For example, in 1991 the Luwan District Institute dropped Marxist philosophy and replaced it with political education "using economic construction as the key."<sup>62</sup> Even when the Hongqiao District Institute reopened in 1988, it was with a course on the relationship between united front work and economic activity. While Hongqiao claimed to teach Marxism-Leninism, the latter was "not to be restrictive" and the institute emphasized Deng's theories.<sup>63</sup> The declining emphasis on Marx, Lenin, and Mao was also reflected in UFD textbooks, such as *A Course on China's United Front* where basic communist political theory was relegated to only forty pages out of almost four hundred.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the progressive abandonment of much of the political theory underlying past CCP practice, two of the "four basic principles" remain resolutely upheld: those of Party dictatorship and Party leadership. Whenever these are threatened, the CCP moves to reinforce them. After June 1989, for example, the United Front Department quickly reasserted Party dominance over the minor parties. The IOS organized special classes to reinforce the official Party line to minor Party members.<sup>65</sup> The UFD claimed success both in ridding IOS students of confusion over the meaning of the events in Tiananmen Square and for reconfirming their faith in cooperating with the CCP.<sup>66</sup> For instance, one UFD cadre declared that these emergency courses reaffirmed students' faith in socialism and raised their con-

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 1992, no. 2:48.

<sup>63</sup>Dai Chenggui, "How to Organize Good Short-Term Classes," *ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>64</sup>See *Zhongguo tongyi zhanxian jiaocheng* (cited in note 52 above).

<sup>65</sup>Cai Yiming, "Work Hard to Create an Institute of Socialism with Its Own Characteristics," *STLY*, 1993, no. 1:46.

<sup>66</sup>Liu Shuceng, "Founding Courses at a District-Level Institute of Socialism," *ibid.*, 1992, no. 2:46.

sciousness of its "tortuous advance in a complex and changing world."<sup>67</sup> However, the question of what this socialism now consisted of, apart from CCP dictatorship and united front theory, was and remains unaddressed.

### Inside IOS Classrooms in the 1990s

While some methods of current IOS political education resemble those of the 1950s, there are profound differences. For example, the "three selves" policy remains a basis of class interaction but there is now also an explicit "three no's policy": "no pulling of pigtaails" (seizing on mistakes); "no making people wear hats" (assigning persons a bad label); and "no coming down on someone with a big stick" (prohibiting deliberate exaggeration of mistakes, framing them for crimes, or subjecting them to political and organizational attacks or persecution).<sup>68</sup> Many of the methods used to facilitate indoctrination in the 1950s have thus been explicitly forbidden. Tutorials now occupy one-third of attendance while the remaining time is divided between independent study, group discussions, excursions, and inspections,<sup>69</sup> without any physical labor.

Like the 1950s, student assessments remain based on student performance and written materials produced in classes, such as their introductory speeches about their successes and shortcomings.<sup>70</sup> There are still competitive group sessions which "lead to genuine emotional involvement and often to heated discussion."<sup>71</sup> However, the emphasis is now very different, as these methods are used to assess the participants' reasoning and communication skills. Confessions have been replaced by evaluation forms which "reflect all aspects of ideological demands" and students' sum-

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<sup>67</sup>Wu Shuxiang, "Maintain Direction, Stress Characteristics, and Serve on Initiative," *ibid.*, 44.

<sup>68</sup>Cai, "Work Hard," 47.

<sup>69</sup>See note 67 above.

<sup>70</sup>Zhu Guoying, "Use Study Class Forms to Do Cadre Examinations Well," *STLY*, 1991, no. 3:8.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

maries of their experience. Students' work units can also be contacted to update the IOS files.<sup>72</sup>

It appears that personal revelations made by students in the course of classes are no longer used directly against them in struggle or criticism sessions. Nevertheless, as the maintaining of files suggests, the IOS have continued to investigate their students' attitudes and, by implication, their political reliability by seeking to "observe and understand" their political thinking. In doing so, they can also assess their abilities and work standards as the basis for possible selection as government and united front organization cadres and leaders.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the 1950s, however, inappropriate political attitudes seem merely to result in students being dropped from consideration for promotion within the united front system.

### **The Institutes of Socialism and the Problems of United Front Work in the 1990s**

There have been several important reasons behind the IOS declining to instill their students with communist tenets. The immediate reason was the CCP's limited commitment to united front work and the predicament of the IOS reflected this. When the IOS were revived in 1983, the UFD was to retain overall control, while the CPPCC was to manage their day-to-day operations, with all former IOS premises to be returned or provided with compensation.<sup>74</sup> However, as of 1989, only 27 institutes of the 1950s' total of 430 had been fully or partially revived,<sup>75</sup> and the 1993 total of 85 institutes was still less than 20 percent of the 1956 total.<sup>76</sup> For instance, Zhe-

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>*Tongyi zhanxian zhengce xuanbian*, 21.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>76</sup>IOS interview, Shanghai, 1993. The capitals of all provinces except Tibet have at least one Institute of Socialism. Although Inner Mongolia may not have an official institute, it does have a political school with identical functions. See "New Phenomena in the Work of Training the Two Ranks of the United Front in Inner Mongolia," *Zhongguo tongyi zhanxian* (China's United Front), 1994, no. 4:46. Shanghai has the most extensive district system.

jiang, a province rich in united front targets, only reestablished an institute in Hangzhou 1991.<sup>77</sup>

The slowness in reestablishing institutes in Zhejiang reflects a common ambivalence toward the institutes even within the UFD itself. The Central UFD has implied that some of its cadres have often preferred to direct their resources elsewhere. Central authorities have frequently issued clear injunctions promoting the development of the IOS but the UFD has admitted that these have regularly been ignored.<sup>78</sup> There has also been friction within the united front system. For example, the Beijing Municipal Institute continued to be run by the Beijing CPPCC despite calls to hand it directly to the UFD.<sup>79</sup> Problems of finance were further acknowledged in 1989's Guidelines when the CCP's central leadership called for more money for DPG political education.<sup>80</sup>

As the United Front Department is a CCP department, it relies on Party organizations at each level of its hierarchy to fund and support united front work. Interest and support for such work, and particularly the IOS, vary greatly between provinces, cities, and levels despite the importance the Beijing leadership claims to accord it. Interviews of DPG leaders in Shanghai in 1993 revealed that the success of united front work depended far less on the publicly expressed attitude of the CCP's Central Committee than the attention paid to it by Party leaders at lower levels. However, lower-level leaders were usually much less enthusiastic than those at the center, and united front work was generally a low priority.<sup>81</sup>

In its internal documents, the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee United Front Department, reputedly among the best in China, has also conceded many problems. While the Shanghai Municipal Institute had been relocated in Shanghai, in the mansion of a former Kuomintang general, it

<sup>77</sup>Zhong Jinhe, "Work Hard to Create a Good Institute of Socialism and Strengthen the Construction of the Two Ranks," *Qingxi Zhonghua* (Love for China), 1994, no. 4:39. *Qingxi Zhonghua* is a Zhejiang provincial UFD magazine.

<sup>78</sup>Tongyi zhanxian zhengce xuanbian, 19-20.

<sup>79</sup>Liu, "High Standards, Rigorous Demands," 53.

<sup>80</sup>"Guidelines," 18.

<sup>81</sup>Liu, "High Standards, Rigorous Demands," 51.

lacked heating, the number of courses declined in winter, and teachers and teaching materials were in short supply.<sup>82</sup> Bureaucratic rankings of teachers have also been a serious cause of complaint, as these determined benefits and entitlements and varied greatly, even between levels of the IOS hierarchy itself.<sup>83</sup> Although there was a core of specialist teachers, especially at the higher levels of the system, the part-time teachers who supplemented them were often inexperienced and few in number. The supply of experienced UFD cadres to supervise IOS work has also been in doubt, as many are retiring or transferring, while new, younger cadres lack necessary knowledge and experience.<sup>84</sup>

The IOS problems indicate that they have been unable to provide many united front allies with much of a political education at all. From the Central Institute on down, there has been an increasing emphasis on short-term courses to cope with student loads. At the Central Institute this may mean one-month courses, but at district levels it might entail only three-day courses. Between its reopening in 1985 and the completion of dormitory facilities in early 1995, the Beijing Municipal Institute trained 3,400 students, an average of only 340 per year.<sup>85</sup> The UFD's minimum requirement is attendance at one course every three years, a minimum standard that was all many district institutes could manage. Between 1985 and June 1992, Shanghai's Jingansi Institute trained 2,800 students in 50 batches from a potential pool of 3,500; this left 700 DPG, CPPCC, and other united front workers without any such education. Course attendance was therefore determined by official ranking, with the institute attempting to influence the remaining students through one-off lectures or "hot topic" classes.<sup>86</sup>

An even more significant reason for the decline in the importance of the Party's socialist ideology lays in the loss of the ideology's credibility. It

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<sup>82</sup>*Jiushi niandai tongyi zhanxian bumen gongzuo gangyao*, 8.

<sup>83</sup>Liu, "High Standards, Rigorous Demands," 51.

<sup>84</sup>Information based on a series of interviews with all of the Shanghai DPG organizations except the Democratic League. These interviews were conducted in late 1993. See also Wang Zhaoguo, "The Central Task of the 1990s Is to Thoroughly Strengthen the Two Ranks of the United Front," *Zhongguo tongyi zhanxian*, 1994, no. 5:10.

<sup>85</sup>*Guan gming ribao* (Guangming Daily) (Beijing), June 9, 1995, 2.

<sup>86</sup>Cai, "Work Hard," 46.



had failed to deliver what it promised: a prosperous, stable, egalitarian, happy, and free society. The CCP's attempt to boost its legitimacy with its economic reforms has also undermined the philosophical basis of its socialism, with each successive retreat from the old dogmas compounding the problem. This was recognized early on in united front work, as the term "revolutionary patriotic united front" was altered in 1979 to become the more appealing "patriotic united front."<sup>87</sup> Rekindling memories of revolution was plainly not conducive to enlisting the help of those who had suffered greatly as a result of revolutionary actions such as thought reform, rectification, class struggle, and the Cultural Revolution.

As the legitimacy of socialism has declined, so the importance of patriotism has increased. The CCP defines "patriotism" as love for the socialist state and support for the "four basic principles,"<sup>88</sup> and increasingly depends on invoking this narrowly-based patriotism and the success of its economic reforms. Legitimation through economic development has come to dominate the Party and therefore the united front agenda. This trend has become even more pronounced since Deng Xiaoping's tour of South China in early 1992, with economic construction becoming the CCP's central task. Even before Deng's tour, the meaning of "socialism" was being gradually reinterpreted to justify this economic development.<sup>89</sup>

With the Party's inadequate commitment to united front work and the decline of its ideology, it is little wonder that the IOS have a "student problem" in getting people to attend their political education classes, as even those professing some commitment to united front goals have been reluctant to attend. As Gramsci points out, even appeals based on emotions as strong as patriotism need to be supported by material rewards and concessions. In the 1980s, membership of a minor party provided material benefits in the form of preferential treatment, such as in the allocation of work, housing, and medical treatment. United front activities provided some status to those involved and allowed many intellectuals opportunities for

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<sup>87</sup>"Summary of the Fourteenth National United Front Work Conference," 438.

<sup>88</sup>*Jiushi niandai tongyi zhanxian bumen gongzuo gangyao*, 4.

<sup>89</sup>Charles Burton, "China's Post-Mao Transition: The Role of the Party and Ideology in the 'New Period,'" *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 431-46.

travel and collegial fraternity they otherwise lacked.<sup>90</sup>

Yet the introduction of capitalistic elements into the economy has freed many people from total dependence on the state for their material well-being. For the technically skilled, well-educated, and well-connected, the rapidly developing market economy has provided rapidly growing opportunities for economic independence. These groups of people were exactly what the United Front Department has sought to co-opt; therefore, material or other rewards for cooperating with the state would have to increase to win or maintain cooperation. In practice, however, material rewards have apparently not increased, and the status and importance of united front work has seen little growth.

### **United Front Work in the 1990s**

The general tasks of the united front as outlined by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 remain:

The tasks of the united front and of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in the new period are to mobilize all positive forces, strive to form all negative forces into positive ones, and unite with all forces who can be united so that all can work in harmony and to maintain and strengthen political stability and unity in China and make it a modern, powerful socialist country.<sup>91</sup>

The United Front Department has recognized the increasing diversity of all "positive forces" and the increasing complexity of uniting with them in its "1990s Work Outline."<sup>92</sup> To unite with these new groups, co-opt their political support, symbolically represent them in the political system, and harness their skills and resources, the CCP needs to be able to offer them leadership in the form of causes behind which they can rally, material re-

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<sup>90</sup>These started almost immediately upon the revival of the DPGs and were guided by UFD instruction on solving problems of working conditions and providing favorable treatment. See Zhang, *Zhongguo minzhu dangpai shigang*, 129.

<sup>91</sup>"The United Front and the Tasks of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in the New Period" (June 15, 1979), in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping 1975-1982* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 194.

<sup>92</sup>*Jiushi niandai tongyi zhanxian bumen gongzuo gangyao*, 1.

wards, and/or concessions to their vital interests.

United front work will have to address two problems to meet Deng's call. It must recruit among the emerging new social groups, and reorient the United Front Department and train its cadres to cope with China's rapidly changing circumstances. Even in established united front organizations, such as the minor parties, there is an urgent need for generational change by recruiting younger members and leaders to replace older ones.<sup>93</sup> The UFD is now targeting new socioeconomic groups such as individual business people (*getihu*), private employers, Chinese representatives of foreign investors, managers, engineers, and technicians employed by foreign firms.<sup>94</sup> These non-state business representatives can then help further develop both the private sector and the failing state enterprises,<sup>95</sup> and can also be incorporated into existing UFD organizations such as the DPGs.

The selection of united front representatives is based on criteria such as patriotism, "representativeness," and social influence among groups where CCP influence is weak.<sup>96</sup> They represent their interest groups in their respective united front organizations, the CPPCC or peoples' congresses from the national down to local levels. In addition to being symbols of CCP inclusivity, they can use their expertise to carry out the united front function of mutual supervision: commenting on CCP proposals or raising suggestions of their own. They may also be appointed as special advisers or investigators on behalf of the CCP.<sup>97</sup>

Yet, despite this slowly increasing visibility and growing nominal importance—both significant moves toward a broadening of political representation within the political system—the representation of non-Party people in government has remained minimal. Moreover, while being held jointly responsible for the fate of the nation as part of the political system, these representatives have not been given any real power, and are also re-

<sup>93</sup>"Actively Train and Select Non-Party Representatives," *ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>94</sup>Ren Tao, Hua Yi, and Li Yanling, eds., *Tongyi zhanxian jiben duwu* (The united front basic reader) (Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 1990), 53.

<sup>95</sup>*Jiushi niandai tongyi zhanxian bumen gongzuo gangyao*, 3.

<sup>96</sup>Comrade Li Ruihuan's Speech at the National United Front Work Conference," *Zhongguo tongyi zhanxian*, 1994, no. 1:10.

<sup>97</sup>See note 50 for an overview.

quired to undergo political education at Institutes of Socialism. Participation in the united front is not rewarded with political influence; the reasons for participation are therefore less than straightforward, with potential costs seemingly outweighing benefits.

## **Conclusion**

The differences between the circumstances of the IOS in the 1950s and the 1990s are dramatic. In the 1950s, they were essentially prisons for ideological indoctrination, with compulsory attendance. However, by 1993, students, especially those whom the CCP sought most, had a choice. They were no longer dependent on the state for employment and other benefits and had nothing to gain from political indoctrination. Nor could the Party offer them a substantial political ideal, as it had itself recanted key aspects of the very communist theory which it had stressed in the 1950s. Moreover, apart from relying on nationalism, it had yet to devise adequate replacements.

The institutes have attempted to cope with the problems created by the change in CCP-potential ally power relations in a number of ways. They have tried to shed their old image, provide a pleasant environment, and create an esprit de corps among united front activists.<sup>98</sup> For instance, the Shanghai Municipal Institute was reestablished in an attractive old mansion boasting a (privatized) restaurant and karaoke bar. Courses for elderly DPG and other non-Party cadres were sometimes even held in more comfortable hotels.<sup>99</sup> Compulsory political theory subjects were reduced in number and length while the content was watered down. More attractive (or less unattractive) "practical" courses were offered, partly as inducements. For example, the Shanghai institute's most popular course was Cantonese language lessons.<sup>100</sup> Classes were sometimes organized after hours to minimize disruption to the students' jobs and prevent their units

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<sup>98</sup>Seen as part of the task of building an Institute of Socialism with its own characteristics.

<sup>99</sup>IOS interview, Shanghai, 1993.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*

from becoming hostile to participation.<sup>101</sup> In 1993, to overcome the major disadvantage of institute courses going unrecognized outside of the united front system (and therefore unable to be used for promotions), the Shanghai Institute and Shanghai Normal University established a joint course to award official status.<sup>102</sup>

By 1994, the Institutes of Socialism were very different from those of the 1950s. They no longer aimed to completely alter their students' ways of thinking and help eliminate social classes; rather, they were trying to co-opt emerging new ones. These facts alone reveal the failure of many of the CCP's past policies and the decline of its legitimacy and hegemony. Changes in the content of Institute of Socialism education also reflect this decline. The emphasis on Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought has been reduced to the point where students, while still learning the "four basic principles," effectively concentrate on only two: proletarian dictatorship and CCP leadership. This serves solely as a justification of the status quo, and reflects a two-way process: the growing loss of legitimacy combined with an increasing need to attract students. This has resulted in a further reduction of the ideological content and its replacement with material of professional relevance.

In addition, students in the 1990s can effectively refuse IOS indoctrination, an impossibility in the 1950s. The form of education is also far from the draconian methods of the past, as institutes have attempted to make their classes more palatable. In short, the CCP needs to attract, rather than demand, attendance. Yet the IOS concessions to students have remained essentially token and have apparently failed to overcome the "student problem," a difficulty unimaginable in the 1950s.

The CCP has lost most of its 1950s ideological legitimacy based the moral superiority of a successful revolutionary party building a prosperous, united, egalitarian socialist nation; in effect, a communist future is now fur-

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<sup>101</sup>Some work units in Hangzhou sometimes refused to support employees who attended the Hangzhou Institute. Ma Baoshun, "Vigorously Build a Good Institute of Socialism and Strengthen the Construction of the Two Ranks" (Report on the Hangzhou Institute of Socialism), *Qingxi Zhonghua*, 1994, no. 7:39.

<sup>102</sup>IOS interview, Shanghai, 1993.

ther away than ever. Patriotism is supposed to fill the gap, but in an era when the basis of remaining legitimacy is being shifted to economic development, the use of patriotism is both limited and potentially a double-edged sword. Moreover, the emphasis on patriotism is not being supported by other real concessions. It is clear from the problems of the IOS that the CCP has remained reluctant to invest enough resources to even implement its principle of "educating" existing allies, and can only attract those who are already committed to united front goals. Even sections of the United Front Department have been neglecting IOS work, and the Central United Front Department appears unable to rectify the situation. This in itself is a significant organizational weakness.

Moreover, the CCP is also unwilling to offer commensurate rewards or concessions to make potential allies compromise their growing independence from the state, despite already having admitted the need to recruit new allies. With no material rewards, no important concessions to their interests or even any significant social status, let alone real political power or responsibility, these groups have very little incentive to cooperate with the CCP or to subject themselves to political education.

Consequently, the ideal of the Institutes of Socialism acting as "petrol stations" infusing students with motivation and enthusiasm for united front work has been far from realized in the 1990s. Without an appropriate appeal, real concessions, and commitment to united front work, the CCP is not likely to be able to attract new allies from China's new socioeconomic groups of managers, businessmen, technicians, and others. It will thus be more difficult to use their skills and talents to help manage an ever more complex state. Without recruiting from these groups, the CCP may well compromise its remaining legitimacy by inhibiting its ability to continue delivering economic growth. It will also be increasingly unable to claim that it represents the overwhelming majority of the people, and will become isolated, illegitimate, corrupt, and unable to function. The united front is a proven strategy for overcoming or preventing these problems, but without more commitment from the CCP, particularly in the form of that most difficult of all concessions, the delegation of even a little power, its united front vehicle will not go very far and the Institutes of Socialism are unlikely to be very successful.