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The Spread of Lawlessness in Communist China

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THE SPREAD OF LAWLESSNESS IN COMMUNIST CHINA

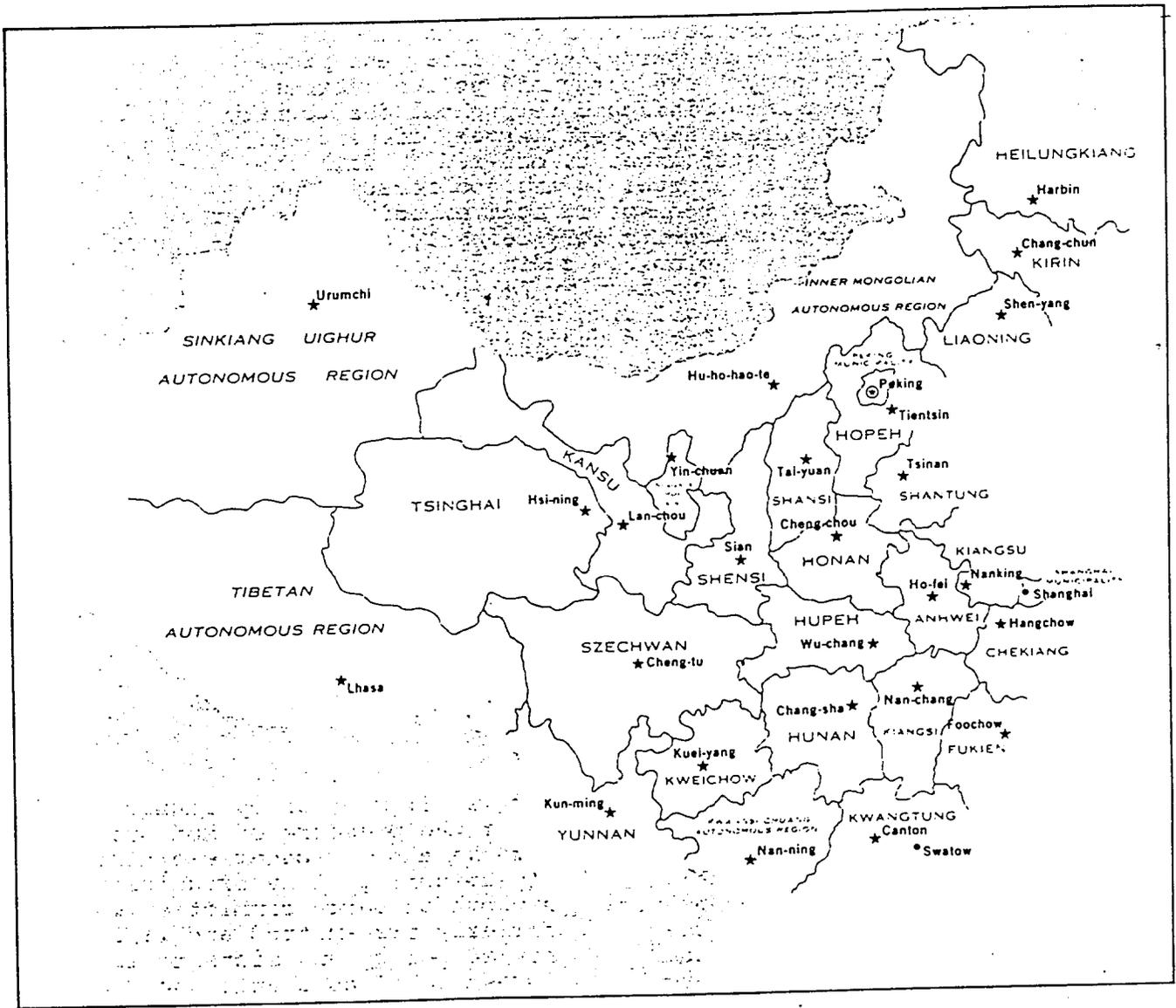
During the past two years the Cultural Revolution has wrought havoc with the "instruments of dictatorship"--the party, the police, and propaganda machinery. The party and police systems have fallen into disrepute throughout the country and in some areas have been largely dismantled. The military establishment, ordered to fill the gap, has proved unequal to the job because the armed forces are too small, lack experience in the kind of public security work formerly done by millions of party and police cadre, and have not been given unequivocal backing by Peking. As a result, lawlessness and civil disorder have reached a level unmatched at any time since 1949. Achievements in suppressing petty crime, black marketeering, prostitution and other "bourgeois institutions" have been largely wiped out. In fact, a major result of the attempt to "steel" the population with revolutionary zeal has been a new growth of the social evils of the pre-Communist era. Local authorities are employing a variety of stop-gap measures in an effort to cope with the problem but have made little headway. Until the leaders in Peking reach agreement on a concerted course of action, particularly with regard to the unruly Red Guards who are at the root of the trouble, there is little prospect for improvement in the situation. Even then it will take a considerable period of time to build new and effective machinery of control.

Breakdown of Party and Police Controls

Since Mao issued the call in August 1966 to bring down "people in authority following the capitalist line," the party and its intricate network of control organizations have been virtually eliminated as a viable governing force. The majority of party officials who ran the provinces were

removed from power by January 1967 under the pressure of Red Guard attacks and no longer exercise any authority. The organizational network of party committees which formerly transmitted and implemented policy decisions to the lowest level apparently now is inoperative.

The propaganda system has also lost much of its potency as



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an instrument for persuasion and control, largely because propaganda statements are no longer backed up by a strong and unified party apparatus. Moreover, during the past year and a half, provincial radiobroadcasts and newspaper reporting have become increasingly suspect and in many cases appear to represent only the factional line being taken by one group of leaders in a particular province.

The law enforcement system known throughout China as the Kung-chien-fa, an abbreviation for Public Security bureaus, procuratorates, and people's courts, has been officially denounced by the Peking leadership as an instrument of the former party apparatus. In December 1966, Madame Mao criticized the law enforcement units for their close past association with discredited party officials. In February 1968, Hsieh Fu-chih, the minister of public security, complained that the majority of the public security personnel had supported conservative and less revolutionary Red Guard factions. He admitted that during 1966, "probably all" Kung-chien-fa units did what they could to protect local party officials and suppress militant Red Guards. Finally, Hsieh stated that in line with Chairman Mao's directives, the Kung-chien-fa should be "thoroughly smashed." The actual status of public security bureaus varies from area to area. All have been weakened, however, and some have been shut down. The typical bureau apparently is now controlled

and partly staffed by People's Liberation Army soldiers.

The Military Takes Over

To fill the void created by the deterioration of the party and police apparatus, the Peking leadership called upon the only viable instrument of power left intact, the People's Liberation Army. In February 1967, military officers were ordered to take over the administration of the provinces and consequently the enforcement of law. So-called "Military Control Committees" were created to replace defunct party committees and were often headed up by professional rather than political military leaders. Soldiers were sent in to replace party functionaries in industry and agriculture; other soldiers assumed some of the authority of the Public Security officials and became responsible for policing China's cities and towns.

The army's record over the past year has not been impressive. The military has been hard put to prevent an even higher level of lawlessness and has made almost no progress in moving toward the reestablishment of civil order.

Army forces have not brought an end to factional fighting because militant Peking leaders have refused to give the military a clear mandate to take action against lawbreakers. Unruly Red Guards responsible for the violence in the streets as well as in the factories and schools

continue to enjoy the protection of key leaders in Peking, including Mao himself. Throughout the Cultural Revolution these leaders have been intent on forcing the military to remain neutral in factional disputes. This policy lies at the root of the numerous accounts of clashes in which army troops have stood on the sidelines and taken no punitive action against either faction.

The military establishment has been prevented from performing effectively the newly assigned political roles by its sheer lack of size. As of 1965, the Communist Party had 20 million members. The army's strength does not exceed three million, even according to the most generous recent estimates. Moreover, the military system is not organized to handle the numerous civilian responsibilities which have fallen to it by default during the past year, and military personnel are mostly without experience in this area.

Even where Revolutionary Committees have been endorsed by Peking as replacements for Military Control Committees and Revolutionary Committee Preparatory Groups, the leading members-- usually the same army officials previously in charge of the province--have not been clearly authorized to stop lawlessness and disorder. In fact, significant factional fighting has continued in many provinces following the establishment of Revolutionary Committees. This suggests that the basic hostility between factions was merely papered over,

not resolved. Moreover, the continuance of fighting and of reported disagreements within the Revolutionary Committees supports the conclusion that conflicts between political leaders themselves have not been resolved.

Spread of Lawlessness and
Civil Disorder

As a result of the breakdown of the "instruments of dictatorship" and the failure of the People's Liberation Army to fill the void, lawlessness and disorder have spread throughout the country. Popular willingness to break the law has intensified in the past three months. This decline in social order has been directly related to the severity of factional fighting in a given area. In major trouble spots, black marketeering, gambling, juvenile delinquency, petty crime, and prostitution have flourished during the past year.

One of the ironies of the Cultural Revolution is that in attempting further to "steel" and infect China's population with revolutionary zeal, it has actually reopened the Pandora's box of social evils that prevailed in China before the Communist take-over. Before 1966 the party had achieved great success in controlling widespread crime. Since the advent of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent discrediting of the party and police control networks, these social ills have once again appeared.

Precise information on the extent and character of lawlessness

is not available for China as a whole. The most extensive and specific reporting comes from travelers who have visited the three coastal provinces in South-east China: Fukien, Kwangtung, and Kwangsi. All three current types of governmental organization are to be found in this area. Fukien is under a Military Control Committee, a Revolutionary Committee Preparatory Group is functioning--after a fashion--in Kwangsi, and a full-fledged provincial Revolutionary Committee has been operating in Kwangtung since last February. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that public security problems and the methods used in attempting to cope with them in this area are fairly representative of conditions elsewhere. When reporting has been available from other parts of China, it has tended to indicate that the situation in the rest of the country does not differ significantly from the pattern observed in the southeast.

Black Marketeering

Black marketeering was an immediate outgrowth of the weakening of police authority. According to residents of cities in Chekiang, Fukien, and Kwangtung provinces, the deterioration of social order brought about by the Cultural Revolution facilitated the expansion of black market activities.

A man in Swatow, Kwangtung, who had been a peddler since 1957, reported that before the Cultural Revolution his operations had been tightly curtailed by

Public Security and Market Control Committee officials. From 1967 onward, however, the peddler indicated that he had been able to carry on his transactions openly and was not bothered by local officials who appeared to be more concerned with Cultural Revolution matters. In addition, army troops patrolling the Swatow area did not interfere; the source had the impression that they were northerners unfamiliar with local black market deals.

In many areas of China, black marketeering has mushroomed because of the need for basic commodities no longer available through normal channels. Violence and fighting have disrupted regular production in factories and farms throughout the country.

Wenchow, Chekiang
[redacted] as a result of such struggles local factories were unable to produce and there was a shortage of commodities.

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widely separated areas complained that certain foodstuffs, cloth, drugs and medicines, cooking oil, sugar, soap, cigarettes and matches were virtually unobtainable on the state-operated market. Black market prices for such commodities no doubt vary from area to area; [redacted] Swatow [redacted] black market prices for most items were 50 percent higher.

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3.4(b)(1)

Reappearance of Petty Thievery

Until 1966, foreign travelers in China would often write in detail about the extensive efforts made by the Chinese people to return items left behind by

forgetful travelers. The visitors would report how they could leave valuables unconcealed in any hotel and return to find them undisturbed. In contrast, foreign travelers now often tell of being robbed in daylight along city streets by insolent Red Guards or opportunists taking advantage of existing license to flout the law. In many cities most people apparently refuse to go out at night, fearing they may be robbed and beaten.

Petty thievery has become a particularly widespread problem in Canton and apparently in other major cities. During the past two years travelers to Canton have often reported being robbed of money, watches, and other valuables. A woman who passed through Shanghai in early May said that many pickpockets were at work among the crowd at the Shanghai railway station.

Gambling a Favorite Pastime

The Cultural Revolution has resulted in numerous industrial shutdowns and agricultural slowdowns. Consequently, workers and peasants in many areas of China now have much more free time. [redacted] traveler reports indicate that many Chinese, when not caught up in some political campaign, have returned to gambling, the main prerevolutionary pastime. Students, farmers, and workers alike are occupying their free hours in games of chance. In early May, a traveler who visited Hsingning, Kwangtung, observed that farmers spent more time gambling than working. A refugee from Swatow reported in

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February that gambling had become more open in the city and that men could be seen playing cards and dice for money outside the military headquarters. Army sentries in the area made no attempt to stop the games.

In some areas, these games appear to be well organized. According to one traveler, gambling establishments have been set up by cadres and production brigade leaders in the Cheking city of Ning-po. The stakes used are either yuan or rice ration tickets. Many farmers have lost their life savings and have been forced "to migrate to Shanghai to become beggars and criminals." Commune leaders in the Ning-po area allegedly are aware of the situation but dare not interfere. They refer the matter to army authorities but each time military personnel are sent to investigate they find the gambling establishments closed.

Similar establishments have apparently been formed in the troubled province of Fukien.

[redacted] Chuan-chou [redacted] private gambling clubs had sprung up in the area and were operating from early evening until far into the night. Students, with no classes to attend and consequently no studying to do, have also turned to gambling.

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[redacted] many students were degenerating fast; "they are doing nothing but eat, sleep and play poker."

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Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency has also become a serious problem in

China's major cities as a result of the Cultural Revolution. Aside from the youth in Red Guard factions who are officially sanctioned in their lawlessness, other groups of young people are taking advantage of the current disorder for their own ends. Many youths sent to rural areas following the completion of their schooling have migrated back to the major cities during the past year. A central committee directive of 8 October 1967 ordered "intellectual youths" to remain in the villages and assist in the fall harvest. In many cases, however, the young people have not heeded this directive, are refusing to return to their former farm positions, and are petitioning their cases to city officials.

In Canton the Youths from the Countryside organization claims its members will fight to the death rather than be sent back to the farm. Recent broadcasts by Shanghai authorities have urged similar youths in Shanghai to return to their assignments in such places as Sinkiang but these pleas have met with little response from the youths, who continue to evade arrest. Although some of the young people appear to be living off their relatives, many more are apparently surviving by petty thievery, black market trading and other illegal practices.

Prostitution

Prostitution has been on the increase since early 1968, particularly in China's port cities. Reports from Shanghai, Swatow and Canton suggest that local authorities are once again turning their back on this activity, which before the Cultural Revolution was punish-

able by law. The Communists had taken pains to suppress it because they felt it was a blot on the Chinese image tolerated by the "bourgeois" Nationalists. A traveler in Swatow in late March observed that prostitution was flourishing there. He reported that the preliminaries were being conducted openly in the main public park in the city. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Canton [REDACTED] relatives had been leading a degenerate life traveling between Canton and Swatow and keeping company with many prostitutes in these two cities.

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Population Dislocation

One of the most serious effects of the Cultural Revolution has been the massive dislocation of the urban population. Some major cities in almost every province have had street battles and conflagrations serious enough to produce a refugee problem.

In the spring of 1967 residents poured out of Honan Province as local People's Liberation Army authorities clashed with Peking Red Guard emissaries in Chengchow. In June 1967, a similar exodus took place when Nanking residents fled their city to avoid becoming embroiled in the violent struggle. In July the triple city of Wuhan in central China was the site of massive violence and large numbers of residents fled to safety.

During early fall, Canton was the center of uncontrolled Red Guard violence; many local inhabitants left for the surrounding countryside where they often found conditions not much better. Numerous areas of Fukien--particularly Amoy--were under Red Guard

siege between November 1967 and the end of February 1968, and residents escaped to the surrounding provinces. Since April the Kwangsi Province cities of Wu-chou, Nan-ning, and Liu-chou have been embroiled in bitter fighting.

The problems created by thousands of dislocated persons are numerous. Many people have been forced to engage in civil lawlessness to survive in the new areas. For example, since early June a major new element in the Canton violence has been the presence of thousands of refugees from Kwangsi; a number of them have become involved in looting, stealing, and black marketeering. In Kao-yao, Kwangtung, a large number of these refugees stole firearms from the army on 1 June and a full-scale battle developed in which 20 refugees were killed.

Attempts to Curb Lawlessness

From time to time, the military authorities controlling the Revolutionary Committees and the Military Control Committees have tried to deal with the increasing lawlessness and civil disorder. Most of their efforts have met with little success because they have been prohibited from taking firm action against the chief troublemakers, the unruly Red Guards. In late March, provincial authorities began to make several largely futile attempts to stamp out lawlessness and restore order. These attempts have included public show trials, withholding wages, launching new mass campaigns, organizing informal civilian provost teams, and encouraging neighborhood citizens to form their own vigilante groups.

Public Trials

In early 1968 military authorities controlling the police system were conducting public trials of local criminals in an effort to deter unruly Red Guards and other lawbreakers in their areas. The victims of these trials have been identified as "counterrevolutionary criminals, robbers, murderers, speculators, juvenile delinquents, and enemies of the Cultural Revolution." Official broadcasts and Red Guard reporting have identified at least 11 provinces where such trials have taken place.

Shanghai has been the site of a number of highly publicized public trials since January. Following a trial of "embezzlers, thieves, and robbers" on 10 April, a "counterrevolutionary profiteer" was executed on the spot; nine others were given sentences ranging from seven years to life. On 27 April seven more "renegades and active counterrevolutionaries" were convicted and summarily put to death. In mid-May, a woman traveling in Shanghai observed the public trial of 40 criminals. Ten were sentenced as "spies" and were executed. The others were sentenced to terms of imprisonment and "reform through labor."

Similar reporting has been received on trials held in other areas. During a renewal of violence in Peking in late January, the military authorities running the police units televised a public trial of 11 men charged with murder, complicity in murder, and distributing counterrevolutionary leaflets.

Examples have also been made of a number of lawbreakers in Canton. On 8 May, five criminals were paraded through the streets wearing placards charging them with murder, rape, robbery, snatching arms, and striking soldiers. After a public trial, the prisoners were shot.

The public trials appear to have been partially successful in restraining lawlessness and assisting provincial authorities in restoring law and order. Red Guards, however, continue to be shielded by Peking radical leaders, and it seems unlikely that local authorities have dared to act against many of the real troublemakers. Consequently, the hard-core Red Guards who are the major source of serious disorder have been unscathed.

Some minor lawbreakers may temporarily have halted their activities as a result of the trials, but most reports indicate that the minor offenders have soon returned to their illegal activities because the military has failed to follow through. In some areas black marketeers, thieves, and other minor lawbreakers arrested by military police have merely been reprimanded, paraded around the city and then set free. This inconsistency in meting out punishment no doubt encourages many lawbreakers to continue their illegal activities.

Withheld Wages

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3.4(b)(1) [redacted] Fukien, Kwangtung, and Shansi reveal that military authori-

ties controlling these provinces are in some cases withholding wages to students and workers. This action is probably in part a result of restrictions in available funds brought about by the economic disruption of the Cultural Revolution. In addition, it appears that authorities are also withholding wages as a lever to halt fighting in schools and factories and to force embattled factions to unite.

In some areas, local authorities may have withheld wages despite instructions to the contrary from Peking. A central committee directive of 18 January 1968 ordered that wage allocations to students should continue to be governed by existing provisions. Where authorities were supporting economic programs which did not conform to central committee instructions, the directive stated that these programs should be canceled. There is no indication that local authorities heeded this directive.

[redacted] Yang-chun, Shansi 1.5(c)
[redacted] high-level 3.4(b)(1)
authorities were not issuing wages because the two factions in his school refused to agree to an alliance. A similar report from Foochow in May indicated that since April money certificates issued in certain factories and schools were not negotiable without the official seals of both factions printed on the certificate

The reaction of workers and students throughout the country who are being refused their wages is probably similar to that of a

group of Canton workers in mid-June. On 18 June, workers in the electric torch factory in the Honan district of Canton reacted vehemently when the management announced wages would not be paid for another month. After being refused an audience with the factory manager, the workers damaged or destroyed most of the machinery on the premises. Army troops finally had to halt the melee and arrest the participants.

There has been no evidence to indicate that withholding wages has forced an end to factional fighting in any areas. Rather, it seems only to have increased the antagonism between local people and the authorities and served as a source for increased lawlessness. Lack of funds has in fact forced some normally law-abiding people into a life of crime.

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One of the most desperate of these acts has been the selling of children, as recently reported from Fukien. On 11 May [redacted] in Fuching [redacted] conditions were so dire that peasants were being forced to sell their young children for money to buy food. Another Fuching resident [redacted] was "facing imminent starvation" and that he had no alternative but to sell his youngest son at the going rate of \$45.

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Twelve-Force Typhoon Campaign

During April and May, military authorities in a number of provinces launched another campaign against lawlessness called the "Twelve-Force Typhoon." This campaign was first reported in

Kwangtung in mid-April; since then reporting has indicated that it is also being conducted in Kwangsi, Hupeh, Kiangsu, Shanghai and presumably a number of other provinces. The best reporting on the Twelve-Force Typhoon has come from Kwangtung travelers telling of the areas they visited.

Local People's Liberation Army officials have been primarily responsible for carrying out this campaign. The former Public Security bureau officials' role is not clear. Although many have been officially denounced and presumably removed from their posts, some Public Security personnel may be guiding the workers' and students' provost corps recently created by army officials to implement the Twelve-Force Typhoon campaign.

The main targets have been local criminals such as black marketeers, beggars, gamblers, prostitutes, and other "class enemies." The more unruly Red Guards have not been included as "lawless elements." Thus the primary source of disorder has continued to remain outside the authority of the military law enforcement officers.

Some reporting from Canton, however, has suggested that local officials may have used the Twelve-Force Typhoon campaign to suppress certain political factions. At a meeting attended by Canton Trade Fair visitors in early May, Canton Revolutionary Committee leaders announced that the campaign would be aimed at six categories of people. These included not

only black marketeers and other ordinary criminals, but also "rightists" and persons who criticized Mao or the Canton Revolutionary Committee.

The reaction of radical Canton Red Guard groups to the campaign suggested that local authorities may have threatened to include radical factions in the preceding categories. In late May several members of the radical "August 1 Fighting Corps" were arrested as part of the campaign but were apparently quickly released. At the same time, members of the Red Flag faction charged that only their enemies, the conservative East Wind Party, had been assigned leading roles in carrying out the campaign.

Canton residents reported in May that the "Typhoon" had been partially successful in curtailing black marketeering and gambling in the city. Since early June, however, the campaign has been virtually suspended as a result of renewed violent fighting between the two major Red Guard factions in the province.

In areas where factional fighting has been largely resolved--by Peking's endorsement of one or another faction--local officials appear to have been more successful in cleaning up minor criminal elements. One such case is Kwangtung's port city of Swatow. In January and February black marketeering, gambling, prostitution, and other illegal activities apparently were rampant. In late March, army authorities in Swatow launched the

Twelve-Force Typhoon campaign, and traveler reports since then indicate that it has been relatively successful. By late April, over 3,000 black marketeers, hooligans, and looters had been arrested, and robbery and pilferage had been reduced.

Punishment for those arrested during the campaign has generally been mild. In most cases, the arrested persons have been paraded through the city streets, publicly criticized and humiliated, and then released. More serious offenders have been sentenced to terms of "reform through labor." Residents of Swatow reported the local criminals were being sent to a labor reform camp in Mei-hsien, Kwangtung. Similar sentences of "reform through labor" have been pronounced against local criminals in Hainan Island and in a number of other cities in Kwangtung.

Provost Teams

Since early April, new ad hoc institutions called worker and student "provost teams" have been organized by army authorities to assist them in their efforts to restore order and control lawlessness. In a number of provinces, these corps have been used to assist in carrying out the Twelve-Force Typhoon campaign.

Provincial broadcasts from Shanghai, Kwangtung, Kiangsi, Hupeh, Anhwei, Honan, Kiangsu, and Inner Mongolia have reported that provost corps were emerging in these areas to perform routine

police work similar to that formerly done by the Public Security personnel. The creation of this new apparatus further reflects the degree to which the Public Security system itself has been discredited.

The broadcasts state that these new security units have been formed of workers and students by municipal and provincial Revolutionary Committee leaders. It is likely that because of their experience and training, some former Public Security personnel have played a part in organizing and directing the activities of these new units. According to a broadcast from Canton on 8 May, the provost corps is divided into battalions, companies, platoons, and squads--the same way Public Security units had been organized.

The provost teams, mostly poorly organized groups of underemployed workers, have not made an impressive record in restoring order anywhere. Reports of their operations suggest that at most they have only been authorized to perform low-level police functions. In Kwangtung during May the corps were responsible for such tasks as confiscating stolen bicycles, directing traffic, and guarding the Canton Trade Fair.

Since June, official publicizing of the activities of provost corps has declined, possibly reflecting official awareness of their incompetence and tendency to become embroiled in factional fighting. In mid-May radical Red Flag youths in Canton announced in posters that they were with-

drawing from their provost corps because it was a partisan instrument of unacceptable "power-holders in Kwangtung." Residents of Canton reported numerous incidents during late May in which provost teams had been attacked by radical Red Guard factions while performing such duties as pulling down posters and breaking up clashes. The authority of provost teams has no doubt been undermined by their involvement in Red Guard factional conflict.

Vigilante Groups

The People's Liberation Army has sometimes, as a last resort, urged residents of key trouble areas to organize their own protection. Thus during the height of violence in Wuhan during the summer of 1967, citizens formed vigilante squads to cordon off areas of the city from factional strife. Similar groups have sprung up during the peak periods of factional fighting in Canton, such as the fall of 1967 and most recently in May and June 1968. Residents of Canton reported in late May that the local street committees were organizing vigilante squads to patrol at night and prevent robbers or burglars from infiltrating certain areas. As of mid-June, street committees for mutual protection reportedly had organized young people to patrol the streets at night to give warning of impending trouble.

Effectiveness and Prospects

Despite public trials, the Twelve-Force Typhoon campaign and civilian provost team, the army

attempts to bring an end to civil disorder and lawlessness in China's cities have been generally ineffective. Each new wave of violent factional fighting has brought a return of civil disorder. For this reason it seems likely that social order cannot be restored in China until the political infighting--both at the national and local levels--is resolved. As long as Red Guards continue to receive protection from Peking leaders, military officials governing China will be unable to make significant progress toward restoring order.

Even if Peking does cut off its support to the Red Guards and authorizes military officials controlling China to bring an end to the upheaval engendered by the Cultural Revolution, it will be difficult to restore order quickly. Defiance of authority

has been officially encouraged and commended in the past two years, and the breakdown in established norms of conduct and living patterns is likely to have lasting effects. Moreover, although the more obvious forms of violence and criminality can be brought to a halt by strong-arm methods, more subtle forms of lawlessness and evasion of directives will probably continue. Building a new apparatus of command and control to replace the now discarded "instruments of dictatorship" will probably require a considerable period of time. At present, however, Peking leaders have given no sign that they are prepared to take any action. Thus, the prospects for the immediate future point toward a continuation and possibly an expansion of lawlessness and civil disorder. ~~(SECRET NO FOREIGN DIS~~

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