

(Published by the Propaganda Department of the Middle School  
Students Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters.)

"Origin Theory" (*Ch'u-shen Lun*)

The Peking Research Group on the Problem of Family Origin

[The article is prefaced by editorial comments in fine print, much of which was blurred and unreadable. Therefore only a paraphrase of the introductory section is provided. The article itself is translated verbatim.]

[Editorial comment: In spite of the efforts of the rebel faction, the mass movement in Peking's middle schools is still not in full swing. The main obstruction is the continuing influence of the reactionary theory of only [stressing class] origin (*wei ch'u-shen lun*). Advocates of this theory are trying to split the student body into grades and create a new privileged stratum. This leads to feelings of "natural redness" (*tsu-lai hung*) on the part of the children of revolutionary parents and an inferiority complex and pessimism on the part of others. The theory must be smashed!

We hail the appearance of this article since it demonstrates the bankruptcy of "only origin theory." Of course, some people think it's a poisonous weed, but Chairman Mao teaches us that, in history, new and correct things do not gain majority recognition at first and only develop and gain acceptance through struggle.]

The problem of family origins is a serious social problem of long standing.

This problem covers a wide area. If we estimate landlord, rich peasant, counter-revolutionary, bad and rightist elements to be 5 percent of the country's population, their children and close relations will be several times that number (and we are not counting the children of capitalists, elements with unclear

histories (*li-shih pu-ch'ing-pai fen-tzu*) and high intellectuals, still less the children of the employee, prosperous middle peasant (*fu-yll chung-nung*) and middle peasant strata). It is easy to imagine that the number of young people who are not of five red (*hung wu lei*) origins is large indeed. Since China is a backward country, there were only 2,000,000 industrial workers before liberation. As a result there are very few youth from really proletarian family backgrounds. This large group of young people whose [family] origin is not good cannot, in general, join the armed forces and they cannot work on secret projects. As a result, if we look concretely at individual units, people of non-five red origins constitute the absolute majority.

Because of the influence of a reactionary line which is 'left' in form but right in essence, they have often been unable to enjoy equal political treatment, particularly those youths from so-called "seven black" (*hei ch'i lei*) origins, those "sons of bitches" who have already become objects of dictatorship. They are seen as "criminals" by birth. Under the influence of this line, origin is used to decide nearly everything. Youths whose origins are not good are one cut below everybody, even to the point of being deprived of their rights to repudiate their [reactionary] families, to defend the Party centre and Chairman Mao and to join the Red Guards. At this time, there are many innocent youths who are dying a premature death, drowning in the deep waves of only origin theory. In the face of this kind of serious problem, anyone who cares about the nation's fate cannot but confront and investigate the issue. Those viewpoints which appear dispassionate and universally flexible are really callous and hypocritical. We must use the methods of unmasking and criticism to protect Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. Below, seeking solutions from Chairman Mao's works and from social practice, we convey our viewpoint by dividing the question into three sections:

#### 1. The Problem of Social Influence and Family Influence

Let's begin with a couplet which spread poison far and wide:

When the old man's a hero, the son's a good chap;  
 When the old man's a reactionary, the son is a bad egg;  
 This is basically the case.

The process of debating this couplet was actually a process of insulting youths who were not of good origins. In this kind of debate, the best outcome for a person was merely if he could avoid being considered a bad egg, that's all. There were very few in the beginning who dared to offer a refutation. Even if anyone dared, it was often very timidly. Actually the upper half of this couplet was borrowed from the Great Mountain King Tou Erh Tun of feudal times. Surely it doesn't require much guts nowadays to criticise Tou Erh Tun. Other people say that this couplet played a positive role. Is that so? Chairman Mao says: "That which is true serves the people's interests; that which is false does not serve the people's interests." To judge whether the couplet has played a good role or not, we must see whether it is true - i.e. whether it conforms to Mao Tse-tung Thought.

This couplet is not true. It's absolutely false. Its error derives from the assumption that the influence of family is more important than the influence of society. It cannot see that social influence plays the decisive role. In plain terms, it only recognises the father's influence and holds that the father is all important.

Practical experience happens to provide a totally opposite conclusion: social influence far exceeds family influence; family influence is subordinate to social influence.

From the time a child is born he experiences simultaneously these two types of influence. When his intellect develops a little, he enters the big gate of school. The words of the teacher convey more weight than those of his parents; the resonance of collective education is stronger than that of individual tuition; he spends more time at school than at home; the rain and dew of the Party and the bright sunlight of Mao Tse-tung Thought nourish this new born sprout. The influence of society becomes the main factor.

The influence of friends, instruction from the leadership, information in newspapers, books, literature and art, the force

of habit, the moulding impact of work environment, etc. - all have an ineradicable influence on a person. We call these collectively "social influence." There is no way for family influence to compete with this.

Even if we take family influence, that too is a part of social influence. One cannot decide the nature of a person's family influence by looking mechanically at his father. If he has a heroic father and a reactionary mother, the [family] influence is not necessarily good. If the parents are both heroes but the children are allowed to run wild, sometimes they turn out even worse. The mother's thought may be good, but if her methods of education are too simple and strict, the effects may also be the opposite of those intended. Similarly, even if the father is bad, it doesn't necessarily mean that the family influence is definitely bad. Lenin is an example of this. In sum, one cannot judge the nature of a person's family influence by mechanical reference to his origin. Origin is merely a piece of reference material for evaluating family influence.

Generally speaking, the influence exerted by our society is good. This is because our social system is incomparably superior, because our Party has consistently emphasised politics and has paid the greatest attention to the growth of the younger generation. The overwhelming majority of our people love the new society. Of course, we cannot neglect the sharp and complex nature of class struggle as well, nor the fact that we still exist in a vast ocean of petty bourgeoisie. Our culture and education system are in need of thorough reform. Sometimes, moreover, the influence of society is not wholly beneficial. Any youth, no matter what his origin, who is subject to continual bad social influence, will generally give in to the bad influence, making this or that kind of mistake. But if he is guided to deal with the problem, he can quickly cast off old things and return to the correct standpoint. Thus to deliberately make young people carry the burdens of their family or their history on their backs is cruel and reflects an incorrect line. Since the influence of society is incomparably strong and yet is not totally beneficial, it is wrong for a youth of *any* origin to abandon the task of remoulding his

thought. In transforming one's thought, youths of good origins have no advantage over youths who are not of good origins.

Whether we talk of family influence or social influence, they are both external factors. If we overemphasise the idea of influence, this is an expression of mechanically disregarding the factor of subjective initiative. Men can choose the direction before them. This is because truth is always more powerful and more inspirational. Do you really believe that Marxism-Leninism is incomparably correct? Do you really believe that Mao Tse-tung Thought is an invincible ideological weapon? Do you really recognise that internal [subjective] factors play the decisive role? If you do, then you shouldn't maintain that influence exerted by a father is more powerful than any other. Otherwise, you can only show that your thinking is hopelessly muddled.

## 2. The Question of Putting Stress on Behaviour (*piao-hsien*)

If you have no arguments against the assertion that the influence of society is greater than the influence of family and if you cannot deny that the beneficial influence of contemporary society is the major factor and if you cannot but agree that [family] origin and family influence have no necessary connection, then we can go on to look into some problems of "put the stress on behaviour."

At the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, many people said that "put the stress on behaviour" was a revisionist viewpoint. Afterwards, when they heard that it was Chairman Mao who originated the policy, they hurriedly changed their tune. It's clear that they just don't understand this policy. If you make them explain this policy, they can't avoid arbitrary distortion. Confining ourselves to a brief analysis here, we shall examine three types of propositions to see whether or not they conform with Mao Tse-tung Thought.

### (i) Origin and *Ch'eng-fen* are Totally Different:

Superficially "fair and just" comrades often say this to youth whose origin is not good: "One, we take *ch'eng-fen* into consideration; two, we don't only take *ch'eng-fen* into

consideration; three, we put the main stress on political behaviour."<sup>1</sup> This is missing the real point.

Comrade Chiang Ch'ing has explained this expression. She said: "This is spoken of individuals who have turned their back on their own class." What does Comrade Chiang Ch'ing's explanation mean? To take an example, Engels was himself a capitalist, but he turned his back on his class and became a first generation communist citizen and a brilliant leader of the working class. In the Paris Commune, moreover, some of the committeemen were themselves bourgeois elements, but they were publicly recognised representatives of the working class. We had this kind of people during our own country's revolution. Can we erase their historical achievements because their *ch'eng-fen* was bad? No! We must stress political behaviour. This is called "not putting exclusive stress on *ch'eng-fen*." We think that this principle also applies to the opposite situation. If a person of minor *ch'eng-fen* betrays the proletariat and the revolution, we must also put the main stress on political behaviour. There is no reason at all to restrain our anger at his crimes. To put the matter in a nutshell, Li Su-ming was a landlord element, but he made the good suggestion of "less troops, simpler administration" to the border region government. Chairman Mao praised him, saying: "No matter what kind of person you are...if the methods you propose are beneficial to the people, then we will act as you say." This implies that we should not let the identity of a man obscure what he says and it is another example of not laying exclusive stress on *ch'eng-fen*.

Origin and *ch'eng-fen* are two totally different things. The father's *ch'eng-fen* is the son's origin. It is correct to talk of the family in feudal society as being a social unit with

---

1. When "Origin Theory" was published, we had to phrase it this way. Now we have seen that "the people who appear just and fair" - Li Hsüeh-feng, who said this in a speech to the Ninth Plenum of the Youth League Central Committee in July 1966, and people like him - have now become representatives of the bourgeois reactionary line.

the son inheriting his father's position. But, with the advent of capitalist society, this was no longer wholly correct. Family ties had already been loosened and the younger generation had already been integrated into society. When we get to socialist society, however, most children and youth receive proletarian education and are prepared to serve or already are serving the cause of the proletariat. If we still view the father and son as identical, then we'll be "out of step with present trends."

In 1939, Chairman Mao stated in "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" that the intellectuals of that time belonged to the petty bourgeoisie. He did not make distinctions and assign intellectuals of different class origins to different categories.

Chairman Mao again pointed out in 1957 in "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People": "Although many of our university students do not come from labouring class families, yet, apart from a small minority, they are all patriotic and support socialism...." This is another case to prove the point.

Thus we can see that members of the same family are clearly not members of the same class. Even class enemies are clear on this point. For example, during a [political] movement, a middle-level people's court in Peking reported in a verdict that a counter-revolutionary rich peasant element took a weapon to his three sons and hacked them to death in the night because they had reported him. Again, according to a leaflet, the secretary of a commune factory in the city - a degenerate turncoat element - drowned his own child with his own hands before committing suicide. In his will he said that, if his son had grown up, he would not have sought revenge for him.

Origin and *ch'eng-fen* cannot be treated as equal. There is a bit of dialogue which is worth your attention: A: (a student) "What origin are you?;" B: "What about you?;" A: "I'm a five red; my father's a worker;" B: "Well I'm well ahead of you. I *am* a worker."

If we regard only *ch'eng-fen* theory as unreasonable, how is it that only origin theory is still with us?

Some people make use of Chairman Mao's words to refute us, saying: "In a class society, every person lives in a fixed class status and different types of thinking cannot but impress different class stamps." This is 100 percent correct. Landlords and capitalists who have lived for a long time as members of an exploiting class must bear the ideological imprint of their class. As a result, if they want to become a person again, they must change themselves radically - this is the basis of our [policy of] "pay attention to *ch'eng-fen*." But one cannot view their children in the same way. Particularly in the case of youths who have grown up in the new society, can we say that they have lived as members of an exploiting class? Where on earth is there an exploiting class that has not exploited? There's no such thing. It is not merely the family which leaves an ideological imprint on a person but, more importantly, the society. Our society of today is a great school of Mao Tse-tung Thought. The class status of youth is either that of a labourer or on the way to becoming a labourer. To continue to describe them in terms of "*ch'eng-fen*" is to drive them into the realm of antagonistic classes.

We must draw a clear and unmistakable line between origin and *ch'eng-fen*. Anyone who erases this dividing line, however "left" he might appear, is in reality effacing a class boundary.

(ii) There is Little Connection between Origin and Behaviour:

Comrades on the "fair and just" side don't talk about *ch'eng-fen*. "We look at origin," they say, "and we also look at [political] behaviour." This is a reprint of "the theory that origin equals *ch'eng-fen*." If we compare the two, it's a case of a lesser and greater evil. There's not much difference between them. Origin is dead, behaviour is living. If we use a dead and a live standard simultaneously to evaluate a person, can we reach the same conclusion? We've already analysed this in the first question raised by our article: origin is one



determinant of family influence and family influence is one determinant of behaviour, but only a subsidiary one. The main factor in determining behaviour is social influence. As a result, origin and behaviour are not identical in any way. One can only find out whether a person has been subject to good or bad influence from practice. By practice we mean a person's political behaviour. If he behaves well, then the influence was good; if he behaves badly, then the influence was bad. This has no connection at all with origin.

Putting the matter in context, if we must take into account both origin and behaviour, then we may ask the following: if a person's origin is not good and his behaviour is good, does that mean we can wipe out his achievements? If his origin is good and his behaviour is bad, does that mean we can gloss over a person's defects? If his origin is bad and his behaviour bad also, does that mean we should make his crime one notch more serious? If his origin and behaviour are both good, does that mean we should exaggerate a person's merits? Surely this kind of action is unreasonable.

"Look at origin and look at behaviour also" in reality cannot avoid slipping into the mire of "only look at origin, don't look at behaviour." It's very easy to check on origin. One flip of the file, the problem's solved and all's well. Alternatively you can meet a person on the street, ask him "What origin are you?" and thereby know everything about him. It's really simple and convenient. Checking a person's [political] behaviour is rather bothersome, particularly for that impossible group of doubters who don't believe either your everyday behaviour or your behaviour in times of turmoil; who doubt both your past and your present behaviour and even prepare to doubt your future behaviour; who doubt until you die and only then, when the coffin lid is closed, give a final verdict. Finally even they feel that they've been too suspicious. What if you look at origin? You can solve a big problem in two seconds. Some people, moreover, have no fixed criteria for evaluating behaviour. People who like being buttered up regard flattery as the best form of behaviour. People who like fake humility regard the *kow-tow* as the best form of behaviour.

People who cling to an erroneous line think that perpetual repentance on the part of youths of bad origins is the best kind of behaviour. What can compare with origin? All you need is "if the old man's a hero, the son's a good chap; if the old man's a reactionary, the son's a bad egg; if the old man's just average, the son's a fence-sitter" - just three phrases and your problem's solved.

Let's see what Chairman Mao taught us. Chairman Mao said: "To distinguish finally between revolutionary, non-revolutionary and counter-revolutionary intellectuals, one must see whether or not they are willing, in mind and action, to unite with the worker-peasant masses. We are proposing a standard here. I consider it the only standard." Is this one and only standard that of origin?

Chairman Mao also said: "Any person who stands on the side of the revolutionary people belongs to the revolutionary side...." Did he mention origin here?

Do the five conditions for revolutionary successors proposed by Chairman Mao include origin as a condition?

Point 15 of the Sixteen Points firmly implements the Party's class line and discusses whom to rely on, whom to unite with and whom to oppose. Is this based on origin?

Is there any mention of origin as a criterion among the three criteria for joining the revolutionary left? None at all! What connection is there between the question of whether a person has a good or bad origin and whether he is revolutionary or not? Even if his origin is not good, he can still join the revolutionary left, and become a successor to the revolutionary cause and a bulwark element of the revolution.<sup>2</sup> In the face of

---

2. Soon after "Origin Theory" was posted up, the space beside these words was filled with phrases such as "great poisonous weed," "nonsense" and the like, venting the cheap outrage of T'an Li-fu and his ilk. They were pretty smart because this is the essential part of "Origin Theory." Nevertheless, history is impartial. Today, a large number of Red Guards are taking this statement as part of their organisational programme. One Red Guard organisation has written: "In the past only so-called "five reds" could join Red Guard organisations. This does not conform to Mao Tse-tung Thought so we oppose it." We convey revolutionary respects to these organisations for their brave conduct.

performance, all youths are equal. Youths who are not of good origins don't need to be granted their place in the revolution through the generosity of others, they cannot be kept behind the sidelines. Who constitutes the backbone? This can't be decided in the fetus. We do not recognise any right that cannot be attained through individual effort. The most determined revolutionaries are those who behave the most superbly. Nobody can say that Wang Chieh's glory was below that of Lei Feng.

Talking of how to view [political] behaviour reminds us of a story by an ancient thinker. He said that very fast horses were a common occurrence but experts who understood fast horses were few and far between. Usually when people examine a horse, they judge its quality by its mother, its external appearance, the area where it was bred or its price. Unfortunately they forget to try the horse out by letting it gallop to see if it can in fact run fast. This way, they cannot tell which horse is a very fast one. Aren't some people today just like that? They only consider dead materials such as origin or social relations and forget altogether the true basis of evaluation, [political] behaviour. Over a long period, this has not only spoiled the fast horses, but has turned even ordinary horses into "sons of bitches."

We must put origin and behaviour in their proper perspective. Origin is no criterion for judging whether or not a youth is revolutionary. The only standard is behaviour. The broad majority of youth with both good origin and good behaviour should not oppose this statement. If you really think good origin means good behaviour, then you may have outdone the behaviour of youths from bad origins as well. It is only those with awful behaviour who raise the great banner of origin and use it as a tiger skin; they take their father as their trademark and expect others to appreciate them. We say this: if you behave badly, for example, by stubbornly sticking to a reactionary line or by not studying and using Chairman Mao's works, etc., then the fact that your origin is one of the first three of the five reds (revolutionary cadre, revolutionary armyman, revolutionary martyr) won't help you at all.

Things such as origin or social relations can only count as reference materials. But if we want to gain a clear understanding of a youth's political behaviour, then these two factors don't even have reference value.

(iii) Origin and Reliability Have Nothing in Common:

Comrades of the "just and fair" group have changed their tune this time: "Of course, the children of the five black elements are not entirely the same as their parents...." Reading between the lines, they mean that they are of course not the same as five red children. Why? Because "they are not reliable" (this time they use utilitarianism as their magic charm).

But why are they not reliable? "In one way or another, they have been subject to bad influence!" say the proponents of the theory that external factors are decisive. But they don't mention that a bad family origin doesn't necessarily mean a bad influence, or that family influence is subordinate to the influence of society. Well, is it true that, if a person's family influence is rather bad but the influence of society is good, his behaviour will be rather bad as well? This is not a question of an algebraic but a dialectical relationship. Chairman Mao says: "There is no construction without destruction." He adds: "When destruction comes to the fore, the seeds of construction lie within it." If one doesn't struggle with non-proletarian thoughts in one's own brain, how can proletarian thought be firmly established? We often describe those youths who have only undergone red education without experiencing a testing process of ideological transformation as hothouse flowers. They can't stand stress and pressure, they are quick to waver and change their position and are an easy prey for evil men. Isn't that so? Take those good chaps of rather enviable origin who advocated "If the old man's a hero, the son's a good chap" at the beginning of the Great Cultural Revolution. Didn't they carry out a revisionist line afterwards and become spokesmen for the bourgeoisie? Were they "reliable"? The origins of those great teachers and leaders of the great revolutionary cause of the proletariat,

Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao, were all bad. This reality is certainly not accidental. The crux of the problem lies not in origin, but in ideological transformation.

People who are heavily affected by the family concept claim that "the children of revolutionary cadres have no thought of restoration; they could not revolt against their fathers." Often, restoration is brought about without people being aware of it. The powerholders in the party taking the capitalist road who have been uncovered in this movement and the people they have promoted over the past few years are generally of good origin. Have they been reliable? Afterwards came the work teams, 'left' in form but right in essence, which publicly decreed or secretly promoted policies which discriminated against youths who were not of good origin. Those elected to revolutionary committees at that time were mostly of good origin. As a result, they mostly became promoters of the work teams' reactionary line. Were they reliable? A certain responsible person of the Peking Middle Schools Red Guards had two secretaries, one male and one female, and a chauffeur. On top of this, he had a small car, a motor-bike, a watch, a camera, a tape recorder, etc. Comrade Ch'en Po-ta called him a phoney Red Guard. It is clear that the danger of restoration cannot be removed by sole reliance on people of good origin. In ancient times there was an empress called Wu Tze-t'ien who put to death the great official Shang-kuan Yi but made the official's daughter stay as her personal secretary. Some people were concerned for her safety. She replied: "All you need is good administration and people will naturally become contented and faithful. So why the fuss?" Look at those who pushed the reactionary line: they fear Mao Tse-tung Thought and have failed to carry out the Party's policies. How can they be considered revolutionary youth? Ridiculous! They are more myopic than even a feudal empress on this point and yet they call themselves "proletarian warriors!" Our great leader Chairman Mao would never have included origin among his conditions for successors. Under his leadership, youths are the most reliable since his policies are the most correct and his lines are the most clear. Otherwise, even if

all young people have good origins, as in the Soviet Union where the exploiting classes were expelled after the victory of the revolution, the situation is still not secure.

A lot of people advocate the theory of reliability, but they have no decent arguments. Could this be the "class viewpoint"? Nothing like it! This is "class prejudice." It has nothing to do with the proletariat and is pretty close to the petty bourgeoisie. These people have not established the idea of "public" in their minds. Their consciousness is permeated with selfishness, so when they evaluate themselves and others, they cannot avoid distortion. According to their viewpoint, if the old man is reactionary, the son's a bad egg. But if the sons continue to be bad eggs for generation after generation, then mankind can never be liberated, communism can never succeed. So these people are not communists. In their view, the son takes after his father and they are unaware that human thought comes from practice. So they are not materialists. In their view, if a person's mother and father are good, then his thought is certain to be good, without need for tough ideological transformation and ideological struggle. Thus, they are not revolutionaries. They are not revolutionary themselves and they won't allow youths whose origin is not good to become revolutionary. They dub themselves "naturally red" but who would have thought that their "natural redness" is nothing more than filling for stale mooncakes.<sup>3</sup>

We must trust the broad masses of youth brought up under Mao Tse-tung Thought, first and foremost those with good political behaviour. We cannot use a traditional theory to demean one section of men and elevate another. This is an inferior type of political method which is completely unreasonable. We will not allow bourgeois class prejudice to replace the proletarian class viewpoint. Of course any youth with prospects ought to resolve to remould himself. In this way, even if he is subject to evil influences, he can change bad things into good and obstacles into advantages....

---

3. "Natural redness" is the name given to a type of mooncake in Peking.

### 3. The Question of Victimisation

In 1961 a certain leader\* remarked as follows: "There should be no uncrossable chasm between youths of different origins."

It shouldn't exist, but unfortunately it does. What has caused it?

Remember the first stage of this movement. The problem of victimisation was raised first by some trendy individuals. After that, everybody was saying that they'd suffered at the hands of the revisionist clique. The revisionist clique was so reactionary that one could hardly count as a revolutionary if one had not only not been victimised but on the contrary had received favours from them. Thus even T'an Li-fu said he'd been victimised. Economic victimisation? During the period of hardship, he feasted on Dutch condensed milk. Political victimisation? With a mind as reactionary as his, he still got into the Party. How could he resemble a young gentleman who has suffered injustice? The newly reorganised *Peking Daily* gave a great deal of space to articles on the complaints of five red origin youth. They said they were victims of the revisionist line carried out by the former municipal committee. It should be pointed out that *all* young people were victimised. Why just mention youth of good origin? Let us look at what they suffered.

1. "The university refused to admit us but threw its doors open wide to exploiting class children;" 2. "In universities, youths from good origins were scorned by the professor when their work was bad;" 3. "Some youths of bad origins were actually made cadres;" 4. "etc...." If this is what they mean by victimisation, then the victims are clearly youths of *bad* origins. A large newspaper in our august capital confused right and wrong to such an extent that it is no wonder it died a natural death! Let the facts speak for themselves!

---

\*The Research Group is referring here to Foreign Minister Ch'en Yi who made this comment in a major 1961 policy statement. By the time this pamphlet appeared, however, Ch'en was under heavy Red Guard attack and this probably accounts for the failure to cite him by name. See above, p.12.

If we think back to the period when the revisionist clique was in power, when university student enrolment was completed each year, the former Ministry of Higher Education always used to make a public announcement: "This year we are enrolling a large number of worker-peasant and revolutionary cadres' children preferentially." Quite a number of universities almost completely excluded children of the five blacks. As for the important departments within the university, there was no possibility of entering them. Schools thus took pride in establishing "worker-peasant-revolutionary cadre classes." Was this "throwing school doors wide open to exploiting class children"? The students of good origin got special treatment after they'd enrolled. A lot of universities set up organisations similar to "poor and lower-middle peasant associations" alongside the [Young Communist] League. Ever since this movement started, people have prevented seven black children from going on journeys to link up with other youth (*ch'uan-lien*), they have used origin as a weapon to attack fellow students who dared to write big character posters, they have prevented youths whose origins were not good from joining all sorts of struggle organisations, and they have used [the theme of family] origin to incite one section of the masses against another. Nobody finds this surprising. It is clear that victimisation of youth from bad origins is a common event. As for the claim that the academic work of youths of five red origin is poor, this is purely an insult to them. Why should one think that origin and study are in definite contradiction? It's the same situation in the middle schools. According to materials on research into disorderly school classes published by the former Peking Municipal Education Office, an investigation of students who "caused disturbances" showed that most of them had very good origins. (N.B.: "Causing disturbances" has nothing to do with making rebellion. The report talks mostly of sexual promiscuity and theft.) The students in disorderly classes who kept quiet while the rest made a noise tended to be of pretty bad origin. If asked why they kept quiet, the reply would be: "My origin's bad. If others make trouble, they don't get into hot water. If I make



a row, I'm in trouble." This is no lie and it applies to primary as well as middle schools. There's one case of a school principal who told his young teachers. "If two children say something reactionary at the same time, for the youth of good origin it's a matter of [external] influence, for the youth of bad origin it's a matter of their nature." Once all the Young Pioneer cadres of bad origins in certain schools were voted out - I don't know whether this was a response to a directive by the former city Youth League committee or not. In the past few years, all middle school League and class cadres have been examined from the point of view of origin. Most teachers have paid special attention to youths of good origin (especially the children of revolutionary cadres), perhaps under the influence of public opinion, or perhaps as an expression of their own feelings. They've always treated youths of good origin specially (particularly children of revolutionary cadres). The opposite phenomenon is purely exceptional. If it weren't, then teachers would soon get accused of "having no class viewpoint."

This kind of phenomenon has been very common in factories. Almost all the administrative cadres promoted over the past three or four years have been from good origins. On the list of candidates for advanced worker positions, there's a column dealing with origin. Some factories have the regulation that master workers of bad origins may not take on apprentices or may not handle secret machine tools. At the beginning of this movement, it was also laid down that "workers from bad origins have the right to vote but cannot be candidates." When the crimes committed by the powerholders in each factory were summarised, the phenomenon of so-called "calling for surrender" (i.e. promoting a certain person of bad origin to be a technical cadre) was a very important factor. One can be certain that future cliques in authority would not risk doing this again! When the factories organised Red Guards, moreover, the limitations on origin were very strict. If we search through central documents, we can only find the instructions to rely on workers. We haven't come across an instruction to the effect that we should rely on workers of good origin only. Who split workers into two factions?

There are a lot of these examples in the countryside. In places where the representatives of revisionism carried out the "four cleans [movement]," they [arbitrarily] classified *ch'eng-fen* for the children of landlords and rich peasants. If they behaved badly, their origin was made into their *ch'eng-fen*; if their behaviour was average, they became "agricultural labourers" (*nung-yeh lao-tung-che*); if their behaviour was good, they were classified as "middle peasants." Why were those who behaved well made into middle peasants? Couldn't they be counted as poor and lower-middle peasants? If poor and lower-middle peasant children behave badly, should we likewise classify them as landlords or rich peasants? Is [political] behaviour the result of origin or is origin the result of behaviour? If your origin is not good, then you can't get all sorts of administrative, financial or managerial jobs and you can't move outside your village. In rural areas without universal education, a person needs three recommendations to get to junior middle school - from a teacher, from the poor and lower-middle peasant association and from the head of the brigade. Of course, are any of these willing to support children of bad origin? The brigade head says in his introduction: "This kid has a good origin, he's obedient and hard working. Let's send him!" This is how people get into junior middle school.<sup>4</sup>

It's a similar situation in other sectors of society. In elections for residents' committees in Peking's streets over the past two years, origin has been a major qualification for candidacy. There's even a section for origin on the employment registration form for unemployed youth printed by the street office. On the employment form, there are two important sections - besides the one for origin, there is one for a brief personal history. All the people who write their brief personal histories are young, so naturally their situations are pretty

---

4. In some rural areas there was a rule to the effect that, in the transition from primary to junior-middle school, origin should count for 60 percent, behaviour for 20 percent, academic accomplishment 5 percent, other factors 15 percent.

much the same. When the employing units come to choose workers, they always choose those of good origin. Otherwise, if they ignore youths of good origin and only take those of bad origin, what kind of thought would this reflect? Thus, youths who don't get into schools and are seeking work at the neighbourhood level pile up year by year and most of them are from bad origins. They only get the chance of being allocated to a job when there's a glut of jobs available for allocation.<sup>5</sup>

"Origin oppresses people to death" is completely right. If you're a person who has overcome his "class prejudice," you can provide a greater number of typical examples than us. Who, then, has been victimised? If things continue to develop like this, how will they differ from the caste system of the blacks in the United States, the untouchables in India and the mean people in Japan?

"This is a test for them!" Away with your test! You evaluate everybody as pretty much the same as their fathers, i.e. they want restoration, they're not reliable, they're too backward. On the other hand, you make such heavy demands on people and think they can bear this impossible type of test. What a contradiction between your evaluations and your demands! Have you forgotten Marx's words? "It is very immoral to demand that unfortunates become perfect."

"Their fathers oppressed our fathers, so we're not polite to them now!" What a narrow pedigree viewpoint! In a capitalist society, if a father goes bankrupt, all the son has to do to sever relations with him is to make an announcement renouncing his right of inheritance. Who would have thought

- 
5. We suggest that comrades interested in pursuing this question should do some social research. You can investigate how many people in your own unit are of good origin. How many of bad origin? What percentage have administrative jobs? What percentage are Party or Youth League members? Are there any cases where people have been excluded from political activities because their origin was bad? Apart from this, you could examine periodicals like *China Youth* from 1964 on. Comrades will find articles in these revisionist controlled publications expressing the revisionist viewpoint on the class line. It's pretty similar to the outlook of certain people today.

that nowadays relations between father and son would have become so intimate. What a wonderful form of "leftism" this is!

Enough of this! We're not going to waste any more ink in refuting this kind of stupid thinking. Let us do some investigation into the origin of this new type of racism!

This is nothing but the handiwork of revisionist elements. Why then should bourgeois elements want to oppress children of bourgeois origin? Isn't this odd? We think not. They do it precisely because these young people do not belong to the same class as themselves. As far as carrying out their restorationist scheme is concerned, they see no difference between children of proletarian origin and children of non-proletarian origin. Perhaps those young people who are hothouse flowers, who do not understand the world and who rest on their "natural redness" laurels are of more use to them. These schemers quickened their pace particularly after Chairman Mao's great call in 1962 to "never forget class struggle." In the situation of class struggle at that time, who did the spearhead point at? The major target was the powerholders within the Party taking the capitalist road and the snakes and monsters whom they sheltered. They perverted the idea stealthily in order to change the direction of the struggle. Originally, the father's *ch'eng-fen* ought to have been the son's origin, but now they've made the father's *ch'eng-fen* serve as the son's *ch'eng-fen*. Thus, under the guise of "class struggle," they have disregarded the Centre's directives and, by visible and invisible means, they have had a field day of large scale oppression. Youths of bad origin are their shield and oppression of these innate "criminals" has become their means of passing off dog meat for mutton, a gold-plated signboard which confuses people's senses! The Party Centre correctly pointed out that this was one of the sources of the line which was "left" in form but right in essence.

In carrying out this evil design, they made use of the force of old social customs, the naive innocence of young people and especially the blind arrogance of some children of high cadres (for example, they divided themselves into three

categories since the terms "revolutionary armyman" and "revolutionary martyr" really meant the same as "revolutionary cadre" while the children of workers and peasants only qualified for categories four and five). They also made use of the defects and mistakes of a section of middle and lower-level cadres. Some cadres accepted and carried out this reactionary policy. This was an expression of theoretical ignorance, for they could not distinguish between Marxist-Leninist class theory and petty bourgeois only origin theory. In terms of their perspicacity, it shows how dim they were: they couldn't distinguish between young people's genuine [political] behaviour and their superficial behaviour. It showed their feeble workstyle: they couldn't give young people the opportunity to demonstrate their political thought through behaviour; they couldn't do political work. They used origin as a tool to further their work, to attack certain people and to encourage others. In political terms, it showed their declining enthusiasm: they didn't want to do careful investigations but were content to use origin as a slide rule. In terms of revolutionary consciousness, it showed their timidity: they didn't dare to promote people with genuinely good behaviour because they were afraid of the responsibility this entailed. Thus these factors combined to worsen the situation and created an absolutely intolerable phenomenon in our social system and alongside our Party. A new privileged stratum was created and, along with that, a new stratum suffering discrimination. However, this is a natural, unchangeable phenomenon. As Chairman Mao points out, racist oppression is in fact class oppression. These methods used by revisionist elements are also in fact the prelude to counter-revolutionary bourgeois restoration.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless we must point out that the counter-revolutionary revisionist elements have obliterated the class line from the right since they are

---

6. When we were listing the crimes of the revisionist clique in victimising youths of bad origin, some people unexpectedly accused us of whitewashing the revisionist clique. That's not strange because they still think that oppressing youths of bad origin is a good thing. If someone were described as victimising "sons of bitches," then according to their bastard logic this amounts to a whitewash!

unscrupulously sheltering landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and rightists, since they are sheltering bourgeois elements. They brought gentlemanly bourgeois authorities into the Party, they gave certain five element people high salaries and talked a lot about peaceful coexistence with them. On the other hand, however, they victimised youths of bad origins, they victimised part of the successors to the revolutionary cause of the proletariat. If this isn't a bout of sharp and complex class struggle then what is it?

When the work teams were in control, they obliterated the class line by superficially extreme "left" methods. In dealing with the question of origin, they were really indistinguishable from the revisionist clique. As a result, not only was this serious social problem not solved, but its effect was deepened; the contradiction was made wider and more public. The brutal technique of "uprooting;" the so-called debate which was an insulting charade; the friskings, detentions, assaults and other such invasions of personal rights; the variety of methods they used to destroy the normal pattern of life of this section of young people; the motley measures they used to deprive them of their political rights. All this appeared under the guise of "transcending Mao Tse-tung Thought." This has caused so many people to become depressed, to feel like criminals without crimes, humiliated and ashamed. They could not devote all of their energy to the movement. They wanted to be revolutionary but they weren't allowed to have a stake in the revolution; they wanted to rebel but didn't meet the conditions for rebellion. This has sapped the enthusiasm of so many young people. It was this reactionary line which is responsible for reducing the revolutionary ranks. It has served the purposes of the reactionary line. Objectively speaking, it has served the purposes of sheltering the powerholders taking the capitalist road who had sneaked into the Party and of setting one part of the masses against another. There is good reason for raising this question. If this movement does not thoroughly liberate that large section of revolutionary youth who have been oppressed most grievously in the past, then it can in no way attain thorough victory!

Comrades, are we going to allow this kind of phenomena to continue? Should we not rise up and thoroughly clean up all this pollution? Should we not fill in the chasm created by these people? When the reactionaries were in power, not only were youths of bad origin oppressed, but also youths of worker-peasant origin and other revolutionary youths who opposed the clique in authority taking the capitalist road. We call on all those revolutionary youths who were victimised by the reactionaries to unite and organise under the banner of Mao Tse-tung Thought! Since you suffered the most deeply from bourgeois oppression, your opposition should be the most determined. When they are being criticised, you have the greatest right to speak. Mr T'an's group, who claimed falsely that they'd been victimised while in reality they'd been favoured, have no right to speak. If we rely on them to do the criticising, it cannot be deep and penetrating. You are not bystanders. You're masters of your own fate. Only cowards wait for others to hand things to them on a plate. Revolutionaries have always relied on struggle! You should defend Mao Tse-tung Thought and the Party's class line without shirking responsibility. Don't allow the revisionist clique to subvert it from the right nor the reactionary line to attack it from the "left." You should believe in your ability to carry out this glorious task victoriously! You should not reject youth who have not engaged in oppression and who are not prejudiced. You can unite with them and struggle and rise together. Comrades, we must believe in the Party and must remember Chairman Mao's teaching: "Real materialists know no fear!"

Victory will be ours!

All revolutionary youth who have suffered oppression, rise up and battle on courageously!

First draft: July 1966  
 Finished text: September 1966  
 Revised text: November 1966