

# The China Quarterly

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CQY>

Additional services for *The China Quarterly*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## Factional Conflict at Beijing University, 1966–1968

Andrew G. Walder

The China Quarterly / Volume 188 / December 2006, pp 1023 - 1047

DOI: 10.1017/S0305741006000531, Published online: 21 December 2006

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0305741006000531](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0305741006000531)

### How to cite this article:

Andrew G. Walder (2006). Factional Conflict at Beijing University, 1966–1968 . The China Quarterly, 188, pp 1023-1047 doi:10.1017/S0305741006000531

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

# Factional Conflict at Beijing University, 1966–1968\*

Andrew G. Walder

**ABSTRACT** For two years after the summer of 1966, Beijing University was racked by factional conflict and escalating violence. Despite the intensity of the struggle the factions did not express differences in political doctrine or orientation towards the status quo. Nie Yuanzi, the veteran Party cadre who advanced rapidly in the municipal hierarchy after denouncing both the old Beida Party Committee and the work team, fiercely defended her growing power against opponents led by several former allies. Compromise proved impossible as mutual accusations intensified, and interventions by national politicians served only to entrench the divisions. The conflicts were bitter and personal not because they expressed differences between status groups, but because the rivals knew one another so well, had so much in common, and because the consequences of losing in this struggle were so dire.

From 1966 to 1968 China was torn apart by factional struggles that escalated into armed conflict and persisted until the imposition of martial law. The ubiquity and intensity of these conflicts suggested that they were deeply rooted in China's political and social structures. Factions were typically distinguished by their reputed orientation towards the status quo. "Conservatives" presumably viewed existing political and social arrangements more favourably, and considered the Party's traditions and institutions to be basically sound. "Rebels" or "radicals," on the other hand, presumably viewed these institutions more critically.<sup>1</sup> Some, noting that these struggles often seemed to be about power rather than doctrine or policy, have balked at the distinction.<sup>2</sup>

\* I am grateful to Michael Schoenhals for his generous help with sources and critical comments on an earlier draft.

1. See Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), and Tang Shaojie, "Qinghua daxue liangpai kan 'wenhua da geming' zhong qunzhong zuzhi de duili he fenqi" ("Antagonisms and splits among mass organizations during the 'Cultural Revolution': the case of the two factions at Qinghua University"), in Zhang Hua and Su Caiqing (eds.), *Huishou "wenge": Zhongguo shinian "wenge" fenxi yu fansi (The "Cultural Revolution" in Retrospect: Analysis and Reflections on China's Ten-year "Cultural Revolution")*, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1999), pp. 774–788.

2. Xu Youyu finds the distinction meaningless after the rebel factions split in early 1967. See his *Xingxing sese de zaofan: Hongweibing jingshen suzhi de xingcheng ji yanbian (Rebellion of All Hues: The Formation and Evolution of Red Guard Mentalities)* (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1999).

Many observers suspected a social basis for factions: conservative factions should have appealed to those in favourable positions, while rebel factions should have attracted those in less favourable positions.<sup>3</sup> The idea was elaborated in studies of particular groups, and had obvious validity in certain well-known cases.<sup>4</sup> The Shanghai Scarlet Guards, for example, mobilized workers through the official trade union structures to defend the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee against rebel attacks in the autumn of 1966.<sup>5</sup> The early high school Red Guards were dominated by students from revolutionary cadre households, and resisted escalating attacks on senior officials.<sup>6</sup>

Beijing University (Beida 北大) was at the epicentre of the Cultural Revolution, and it also experienced severe internal factionalism. Yet the course of this two-year struggle remains unexamined to this day. Only recently has it been possible to reconstruct the origins of the factions, the identities of their leaders, the nature of the dispute between the two sides, and the course of their escalating conflict.<sup>7</sup> To a surprising extent, the two sides were similar in their leadership and political orientation. They disagreed vociferously about political tactics and personalities, but there were no doctrinal or programmatic differences that would mark either faction as conservative or radical. Once the Beida factions allied with other groups across the city and became embroiled in the manoeuvrings of national-level politicians, the stakes for the two sides escalated, divisions hardened and violence ensued. This micro-history suggests that violent factionalism could be a competitive struggle between similar claimants to power rather than an expression of structural cleavages in Chinese society.

3. See Ezra Vogel, *Canton Under Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 339–340, and Lee, *Politics of the Cultural Revolution*, pp. 1–6.

4. See Gordon White, “The politics of *Hsia-hsiang* youth,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 59 (1974), pp. 491–517, and “The politics of demobilized soldiers from liberation to Cultural Revolution,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 82 (1980), pp. 187–213; Andrew G. Walder, “The Chinese Cultural Revolution in the factories: party-state structures and patterns of conflict,” in Elizabeth Perry (ed.), *Putting Class in its Place: Worker Identities in East Asia* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1996), pp. 167–198.

5. Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), Andrew G. Walder, *Chang Ch'un-ch'iao and Shanghai's January Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1978).

6. Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen and Jonathan Unger, “Students and class warfare: the social roots of the Red Guard conflict in Guangzhou (Canton),” *The China Quarterly*, No. 83 (1980), pp. 397–446, and Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution* (Canberra: Contemporary China Centre, Australian National University, 1976).

7. For a survey of the new sources that make this research possible, see Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz and Andrew G. Walder, “The Chinese Cultural Revolution as history: an introduction,” in Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz and Andrew G. Walder (eds.), *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 1–28.

*The Wall Poster of 25 May 1966*

On 25 May 1966, in an act that is often viewed as the opening salvo of the Cultural Revolution, Nie Yuanzi (聂元梓) and six philosophy department colleagues denounced Beida Party secretary Lu Ping (陆平) and two municipal Party committee officials – Song Shuo (宋硕) and Peng Peiyun (彭珮云) – for obstructing the Cultural Revolution at Beida. Although this wall poster is considered the precursor of the Red Guard movement, none of the authors was a student. All of them were cadres or instructors of Marxism-Leninism, and all but one were veteran Party members.<sup>8</sup>

Nie Yuanzi, the most senior of the group, was in fact a middle-aged cadre with extensive elite connections. Sitting on the university's Party committee, she was among the school's top 30 officials. At the time, she was 45 and married to an official in the Central Discipline Inspection Commission 23 years her senior.<sup>9</sup> She and her husband regularly socialized with officials of ministerial rank.<sup>10</sup> Her brother Nie Zhen (聂真) was vice-Party secretary of People's University and married to an ex-wife of Liu Shaoqi. Nie's elder sister worked in the CCP north China bureau's propaganda department, where her husband was vice-head.<sup>11</sup> Nie joined the Party as a middle school student in 1938 and spent the war years in Yan'an (延安). Although she never completed high school, she attended a series of cadre schools in later years. In the 1950s she served in several Party posts in Harbin, and was married to Wu Hongyi (吴宏毅), a vice-mayor on the standing committee of the Harbin municipal Party committee. After their divorce in late 1959, Nie transferred to Beida, serving as vice-chair of economics until 1963, when she was promoted to the post of general branch secretary in the philosophy department.<sup>12</sup>

The famous wall poster revived an intra-Party split that appeared during the Socialist Education Movement (SEM). In July 1964 Kang Sheng (康生) ordered Zhang Panshi (张磐石), vice-head of the CCP propaganda department, to investigate the school.<sup>13</sup> After interviewing a number of disgruntled cadres and instructors who had been

8. Mu Xin, "'Quan guo diyizhang dazibao' chulong jingguo" ("How the 'nation's first wall poster' was cooked up"), *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* (*Materials on Chinese Communist Party History*), No. 75 (2000), pp. 166–67, and Wang Xuezheng, Wang Xiaoting, Huang Wenyi and Guo Jianrong (eds.), *Beijing daxue jishi (yibajiuwuyijiuqi)* (*Beijing University Chronology (1898–1997)*) (2 vols.) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), p. 640.

9. Wu Gaizhi, who joined the Party in 1924, attended the Whampoa Military Academy, took part in the Northern Expedition, Nanchang uprising and Long March: Nie Yuanzi, *Nie Yuanzi huiyilu (Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs)* (Hong Kong: Shidai guoji chuban youxian gongsi, 2004), p. 94.

10. For example, with the head of the CCP Organization Department, An Ziwen; *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, pp. 95–99.

11. *Ibid.* pp. 18–19, and *Xin Beida bao*, 30 August 1967, p. 3.

12. *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, pp. 69–71, 74–79.

13. Beijing University Party History Office, "Beida shejiao yundong de shishi jingguo" ("The course of the socialist education movement at Beida"), *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, No. 81 (2002), pp. 90–91.

involved in a series of conflicts with the Beida Party leadership since the late 1950s, they concluded that there were many “politically impure elements” and “foreign spies” active in the university.<sup>14</sup> By January 1965 Zhang was holding public struggle sessions against alleged class enemies, including numerous Party secretaries and standing committee members who had bourgeois backgrounds or family members with overseas or Nationalist connections.<sup>15</sup> The campaign seemed excessive to many on the work team and in the Beijing and central Party apparatus, and a heated debate ensued, with Beijing Party secretary Peng Zhen (彭真) strongly criticizing the work team. Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) agreed. He criticized Kang Sheng, certified Beida and Lu Ping as politically sound, and ordered a rectification campaign.<sup>16</sup>

The tables were turned on militant work team members and their Beida supporters, now criticized for “leftist errors.” Beida’s SEM activists were forced to make self-criticisms: Nie Yuanzi, philosophy department instructors Kong Fan (孔繁), Yang Keming (杨克明), Zhang Enci (张恩慈), Sun Pengyi (孙蓬一) and others.<sup>17</sup> Their most forceful critics were Chang Xiping (常溪萍), work team vice-head and Party secretary of East China Normal University,<sup>18</sup> Song Shuo, vice-head of the education and cultural department of the Beijing municipal Party committee, and Peng Peiyun, who worked in Song’s department.<sup>19</sup> Beida’s “leftists,” now disgraced, began transferring elsewhere.<sup>20</sup>

Nie’s challenge to Lu Ping in May 1966 was orchestrated by Kang Sheng. Zhang Enci, who had recently transferred from Beida to Kang’s central theoretical research group, submitted a report on 5 May 1966 calling for a reversal of the SEM verdicts. Kang sent the report to Mao, who was away from Beijing during Politburo meetings at which Peng Zhen and other ranking leaders were purged. On 11 May, Mao had it reprinted and circulated to the Party leadership.<sup>21</sup> Three days later Kang Sheng sent a task force to Beida to instigate denunciations of Lu Ping. His wife, Cao Yi’ou (曹轶欧), chaired the group, which included anti-Lu Ping members of the SEM work team and their supporters.<sup>22</sup>

14. See *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 614. These earlier conflicts are described in *Xin Beida*, 22 and 27 September 1966, *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 79–89, and Yang Xun, *Xinlu: Liangzhi de mingyun (Tolerance: The Destiny of Knowledge)* (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2004), pp. 115–147.

15. “The course of the socialist education movement at Beida,” pp. 90–92.

16. *Ibid.* pp. 94–95, and *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 621–27.

17. *Youguan Chang Xiping tongzhi zai Beijing daxue shejiao zhong de yixie cailiao (Some Materials on Comrade Chang Xiping during the Beida SEM)*, “Xin xiang dong” Huadong shifan daxue zhandou dui, 5 October 1966, pp. 19–39; *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 88–89.

18. See *Some Materials on Comrade Chang Xiping*, pp. 10–19.

19. Peng’s efforts are detailed in *Dazibao xuan (liu)* (*Selected Wall Posters*, 6), Beijing daxue gongzuozu bangongshi, 1 July 1966.

20. Nie was herself preparing to transfer; *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 89 and 100.

21. *Ibid.* p. 89; *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao, Di shier ce (Mao Zedong’s Post-1949 Manuscripts, Vol. 12)* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1987), p. 57.

22. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 642, and *Materials on Chang Xiping*, pp. 19–25.

The group initially approached Chen Shouyi (陈守一), member of the Beida Party standing committee, who declined.<sup>23</sup> Cao's group then turned to Nie and the instructors in her department.<sup>24</sup> Nie was a likely candidate: in late 1965 she had submitted a report to Mao, protesting at the way the SEM activists had been used by the work team and then betrayed.<sup>25</sup> Coincidentally, only weeks before she had established a direct relationship with Kang Sheng after meeting him to report her suspicions that An Ziwen was leaking state secrets to his mistress, whom Nie suspected of being a spy. Kang instructed her to keep an eye on the couple and submit regular reports.<sup>26</sup> Mindful of her SEM experience, Nie agreed to denounce Lu Ping only after seeing the 16 May circular and receiving assurances from Cao.<sup>27</sup>

Lu Ping's supporters initially denounced Nie's group as anti-Party conspirators.<sup>28</sup> The school's top leaders split. Two powerful figures – first vice-Party secretary Ge Hua (戈华) and standing committee member Cui Xiongkun (崔雄崑) – sided with Nie. They wrote to the Central Committee accusing Lu Ping of an attempt to “suppress revolution,” and demanded that another work team be sent to Beida.<sup>29</sup> The issue was settled on 1 June when Mao abruptly ordered nationwide publication of the wall poster.<sup>30</sup> Zhang Chengxian (張承先), member of the Hebei provincial Party committee secretariat, was hastily appointed to head a new work team. He arrived that evening to announce that Lu Ping was out and a work team was on its way.<sup>31</sup>

23. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 642; and Beida dangshi xiaoshi yanjiushi dangshi zu, “Kang Sheng, Cao Yi'ou yu 'di yizhang dazibao'” (“Kang Sheng, Cao Yi'ou and the 'first wall poster'”), *Bainian chao*, No. 9 (2001), pp. 32–38. See also Chen Shouyi, “Lishi shi gongzheng de: Beida jiaoshou yi 'wenge'” (“History is impartial: a Beida professor's memoir of the 'Cultural Revolution'”), *Zhongguo yanjiu (China Studies)*, No. 1 (1995), pp. 161–184.

24. See *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 642, and Mu Xin, “How the 'nation's first wall poster' was cooked up,” pp. 167–68.

25. She submitted the report to Mao's secretary, Tian Jiaying, through her older sister, who knew him; *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, pp. 88–89.

26. *Ibid.* pp. 101–104. Nie and her husband played mah-jong regularly with An and his mistress.

27. *Ibid.* pp. 111–18, *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 642. Recent accounts disagree about Nie's role in writing the wall poster and whether Cao initiated it. A critical overview of the extant accounts is Liu Yigao, “Cong quanguo 'di yi zhang dazibao' he xiaogang 'hongshou yin' tanqi” (“About the nation's 'first wall poster' and the Xiaogang village 'red handprint'”), *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, No. 87 (2003), pp. 144–160.

28. “Beijing daxue wenhua da geming dashiji, 1966.5.25–1966.8.8” (“Chronicle of major events of Beijing University's Cultural Revolution, 25 May–8 August 1966), in *Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming dazibao xuan (yi)* (*Selected Wall Posters of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1*), *Wenhua geming weiyuanhui dazibaozu bian*, 20 September 1966, pp. 43–44, *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, pp. 122–128, and *Renmin ribao*, 5 June 1966.

29. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 643.

30. Mao wrote to Kang Sheng and Chen Boda, “... it is absolutely essential to circulate this in newspapers nationwide. Now we can start to smash the stronghold of reaction at Beijing University.” *Mao Zedong's Post-1949 Manuscripts*, Vol. 12, pp. 62–63.

31. Zhang Chengxian, “‘Wenhua da geming' chuqi de Beida gongzuozu” (“Beijing University's work team in the early stages of the 'Cultural Revolution'”), *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, No. 70 (1999), pp. 17–18.

*The Beida Work Team*

This was a complete victory for the Nie group. Cao Yi'ou became the work team's vice-head, and was its liaison with the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG), where she also headed the staff office.<sup>32</sup> Liu Yangqiao (刘仰峤), an anti-Lu Ping member of the SEM work team, was in its leading group along with Ge Hua and Cui Xiongkun, the Beida Party standing committee members who sided with Nie over the wall poster. Nie became director of the work team's staff office, and Zhang Enci vice-director. Yang Keming, who helped draft the wall poster, became vice-director of the staff office in charge of propaganda. Kong Fan, philosophy department instructor and a Nie ally in the SEM, joined the work team's policy research group.<sup>33</sup>

The work team implemented the agenda of the SEM dissidents. It targeted prominent administrators and faculty for impure class origins or foreign connections, and anyone who sided with Lu Ping in earlier battles.<sup>34</sup> By early July the Beida leadership was devastated. Only one out of 20 general branch secretaries (Nie Yuanzi) was judged reliable, and 16 were judged to be class enemies. Fewer than 8 per cent of all the cadres were judged to be without error, and two-thirds were said to have committed errors serious enough to remove them from their posts.<sup>35</sup> Only one-third of the cadres emerged from this ordeal unscathed.

Despite its militance, the work team was abruptly withdrawn at the end of July and its leader, Zhang Chengxian, was denounced for its efforts to curtail student violence. Having declared open season on the Beida Party and faculty, the work team found it difficult to control the students. During proliferating struggle sessions, the accused wore tall hats, placards were hung from their necks, they were shoved about violently on the stage, their hair pulled, arms fixed behind them while kneeling in the "jet plane" position, big character posters pasted on their bodies, and sometimes were beaten severely. By 17 June the work team counted 178 cadres, teachers and students who were treated in this manner; after one session a vice-chair of the history department committed suicide.<sup>36</sup>

32. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 645 and 647, and Guo Yingqiu and Wang Houyi, "Guo Yingqiu linzhong koushu: 'wenge' qinliji" ("Guo Yingqiu's deathbed testimony: a personal account of the 'Cultural Revolution'"), *Yanhuang chunqiu*, No. 128 (2002), p. 49.

33. See *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 647–49, *Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming dazibao xuan (si)* (*Selected Wall Posters of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, 4), *Wenhua geming weiyuanhui dazibaozu bian*, 1 March 1967, pp. 31–34, *Dazibao xuan, zengkan (ershi) zhiyi* (*Selected Wall Posters, Supplement 12, Part 1*), Beijing daxue wenhua geming weiyuanhui dazibaozu bian, 28 November 1966, pp. 7–11, and Zhang Chengxian, "Beijing University's work team," p. 22. Nie contradicts the last two sources cited above, and denies that she ever held a formal position on the work team: *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, p. 145.

34. Detailed descriptions of the accused and the charges are in *Dazibao xuan (ershi)* (*Selected Wall Posters*, 20), Beijing daxue wenhua geming weiyuanhui (chouweihui), bangongshi, 14 August 1966.

35. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 647–48.

36. *Ibid.* p. 645.

The leaders of the work team tried to limit the violence. At a mass meeting of political activists on 13 June, Zhang Chengxian called for restraint.<sup>37</sup> Violent struggle sessions nevertheless broke out across the campus on 18 June. Around 70 cadres and teachers were dragged on to platforms, faces smeared with black ink, and were beaten and kicked while accusations were screamed at them. Six were members of the Party standing committee, and 41 were Party committee members, general branch secretaries or general branch committee members.<sup>38</sup> The work team fanned out across campus, shut down the struggle sessions, rescued the victims and treated their wounds.<sup>39</sup>

Zhang Chengxian broadcast a speech that evening blaming the day's violence on four "bad elements" who had used students' revolutionary enthusiasm to lead them astray, and he promised further investigations.<sup>40</sup> The next day the work team submitted a report about the "18 June incident," condemning the "counter-revolutionary conspiratorial behaviour of such bad people." On 20 June the report was transmitted to Party committees nationwide as a central Party document, with the Secretariat's comment that the work team's actions were "correct and timely."<sup>41</sup> Some CCRG members urged a harsher line. Cao Yi'ou transmitted a second report on 21 June that blamed the incident on a conspiracy of enemies inside and outside the school.<sup>42</sup> Chen Boda (陈伯达), head of the CCRG, pushed this conspiracy theory during late June visits to Beida, leading to further investigations that implicated another 24 students.<sup>43</sup>

The 18 June incident took on new meaning after Mao returned to the capital on 18 July, immediately after his famous swim on the Yangtze River, and expressed anger at the work teams.<sup>44</sup> Mao offered a new view diametrically opposed to Chen Boda's: the work team had

37. *Ibid.*, p. 645, and "Chronicle of major events of Beijing University's Cultural Revolution," p. 46.

38. *Dazibao xuan (shisan)* (*Selected Wall Posters, 13*), Beijing daxue wenhua geming weiyuanhui (chouwei hui) bangongshi bian, 18 July 1966, pp. 1–64. See also *Dazibao xuan (ershi)* (*Selected Wall Posters, 20*), Beijing daxue wenhua geming weiyuanhui (chouwei hui) bangongshi bian, 14 August 1966, pp. 8–15.

39. Zhang Chengxian, "Beijing University's work team," pp. 28–30, *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 645–46, "Chronicle of major events of Beijing University's Cultural Revolution," pp. 46–47, and Chen Huanren, *Hongweibing riji (Red Guard Diary)* (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2005), pp. 29–32. Chen Huanren was a student in Beida's philosophy department and his book is based on the detailed diary he kept at the time.

40. Only two of the four were students. One of them had torn the clothes off female Party secretaries and humiliated them by fondling their breasts and forcing his hand into their pants to grope their genitals. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 645–46, Zhang Chengxian, "Beijing University's work team," pp. 28–30.

41. "Zhongyang zhuanfa Beijing daxue wenhua geming jianbao (di jiu hao)" ("Party centre transmits bulletin on the Beijing University Cultural Revolution, no. 9"), 20 June 1966.

42. Zhang Chengxian had not seen the report, but Cao signed it with words of praise: *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 636. Zhang Chengxian, "Beijing University's work team," p. 31 assumed that Cao directly expressed Kang Sheng's views.

43. *Ibid.* p. 31, and *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 646.

44. *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1949–1976 (xia)* (*Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976, Vol. 2*) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2004), pp. 1421–22.



over-reacted in suppressing the students. Mao held a series of meetings over the next few days, explaining his views and ordering the work teams' withdrawal on 21 July.<sup>45</sup> News of this reversal reached Beida immediately, and Zhang Chengxian broadcast a self-criticism to the school on 18 July. It was too late: the next day Nie Yuanzi, using the school's loudspeaker system, denounced Zhang Chengxian for "severe errors of orientation and line."<sup>46</sup> Only afterwards did large numbers of wall posters critical of the work team appear.<sup>47</sup>

Within days, the CCRG intervened publicly. Jiang Qing (江青) and Chen Boda visited Beida on 22 and 23 July, meeting Nie and her supporters and praising their stand. Jiang Qing declared that the work team should stand aside. Chen Boda (reversing his earlier position), declared that "in his personal opinion," the 18 June incident was not counter-revolutionary, and that the work team's verdict was mistaken.<sup>48</sup> Jiang and Chen returned on 25 July with Kang Sheng and other members of the CCRG for a mass meeting to criticize the work team.<sup>49</sup> An even larger delegation returned the next evening for a struggle session against Zhang Chengxian.<sup>50</sup> Chen Boda called for the withdrawal of the work team, and Jiang Qing suggested that a committee headed by Nie Yuanzi should replace it.<sup>51</sup> Two days later a Cultural Revolution preparatory committee was elected with Nie as chair.<sup>52</sup>

45. Mu Xin, "Guanyu gongzuozu cun fei wenti" ("On the question of whether to withdraw the work teams"), *Dangdai Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, No. 2 (1997), p. 59. Mao Zedong, "Mao Zhuxi tong zhongyangju he zhongyang wenge xiaozu chengyuan de jianghua" ("Chairman Mao's talk with members of the Politburo and Central Cultural Revolution Group"), 21 July 1966, *Dazibao xuan (di er ji)* (*Collected Wall Posters*, No. 2), Yiyuan dazibao xuanbian xiaozu, December 1966, pp. 20–21.

46. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 649; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 60–61. Nie did not openly dissent from the work team's course prior to 19 July: "Chronicle of major events of Beijing University's Cultural Revolution," p. 50. The first wall poster critical of the work team appeared on 13 July and attracted widespread attention, but at department meetings Nie chaired she made no comment on it. After her 19 June speech Nie assured students in her department that the CCRG backed her; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 54–57, 63.

47. *Ibid.* pp. 60–61; *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 648–49, Zhang Chengxian, "Beijing University's work team," pp. 33–34, "Chronicle of major events of Beijing University's Cultural Revolution," pp. 49–50, and *Dazibao xuan (zengkan er)* (*Selected Wall Posters, Supplement 2*), Beijing daxue wenhua geming weiyuan hui (chouweihui) bangongshi, 1 August 1966, and *Dazibao xuan (zengkan san)* (*Selected Wall Posters, Supplement 3*), Beijing daxue wenhua geming weiyuan hui (chouweihui) bangongshi, 28 July 1966.

48. *Wuchan jieji wenhua geming zhong zhongyang fuze tongzhi jianghua chaolu (di yi ji)* (*Speeches by Central Leaders during the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1*), n.p., October 1966; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 64–67.

49. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 649, Zhang Chengxian, "Beijing University's work team," p. 37, and *Speeches by Central Leaders, Vol. 1*.

50. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 650, Zhang Chengxian, "Beijing University's work team," pp. 39–42, "Chronicle of major events of Beijing University's Cultural Revolution," pp. 51–52, Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 69–75.

51. *Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming cankao ziliao 1 (Reference Materials on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1)*, Beijing jingji xueyuan wuchan jieji geming zaofantuan, 1966.

52. See *Xin Beida*, 22 August 1966, p. 2.

*Nie Yuanzi's Cultural Revolution Committee*

With strong elite backing, Nie consolidated her position at Beida. She organized mass struggle sessions on three consecutive days against Zhang Chengxian. Kang Sheng and Jiang Qing attended the 4 August session at which he was dragged onto the stage, wearing a tall hat, bent at the waist with arms extended in the “jet plane” position, and beaten with leather belts by students from Beida’s attached high school.<sup>53</sup> During August, Nie frequently met Cao Yi’ou, Jiang Qing and especially Wang Renzhong (王任重), the CCRG vice-chairman who was assigned to oversee the movement at Beida, and Kang Sheng sent her written instructions.<sup>54</sup> During this period she also had an audience with Mao, after which he provided his calligraphy for the masthead of the school newspaper, *Xin Beida* (新北大).<sup>55</sup> House searches intensified at Beida, and suicides were more frequent.<sup>56</sup> After considerable delay, a Red Guard organization was finally established at a mass rally on 19 August at which Nie presided.<sup>57</sup> Like most of the original Red Guards, it was to be formed from descendants of revolutionaries.<sup>58</sup>

On 9 September 42 people were elected to Beida’s Cultural Revolution committee. Nie and her philosophy department comrades took six of the seats. Nie became chair and Kong Fan the first-ranking vice-chair.<sup>59</sup> Administrative posts were dominated by philosophy department stalwarts: Yang Keming was head of propaganda and editor of *Xin Beida*, which put out its first issue on 22 August.<sup>60</sup>

As Nie consolidated power she found herself in an awkward position. At other universities in Beijing, a rebel movement grew out of the minority of students who had led a rebellion against their campus work teams. From August to October 1966 they fought to overthrow “majority” factions that had co-operated with work

53. *Speeches by Central Leaders, Vol. 1*; Zhang Chengxian, “Beijing University’s work team,” pp. 42–43; *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 650, Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 83–88.

54. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 650; *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 154–58.

55. Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 95–96.

56. Five deaths were reported between 25 August and 6 October; *ibid.* pp. 651–52.

57. Note that this was after the 18 August Red Guard rally in Tiananmen Square, where Mao greeted Red Guards who had formed their groups weeks before. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 651.

58. *Selected Wall Posters, 1*, pp. 40–41. On a visit to the Beida campus on 24 August, Chen Boda was asked whether Red Guards should be “primarily” or “exclusively” made up of students from “red” family origin, and Chen was non-committal: “you talk it over” (*nimen taolun taolun*), *Reference Materials 1*, p. 8–75.

59. Among the other philosophy department delegates were Yang Keming, Sun Pengyi and Zhao Zhengyi, veterans of the earlier battles. *Xin Beida*, 13 September 1966, p. 2.

60. Out of 44 committee members, 12 were work team members, 18 were appointed department head by the work team and 29 were certified as reliable by the work team. Ten of the 14 Standing Committee members had actively supported the work team; *Xin Beida bao*, 5 November 1967, p. 3.

teams.<sup>61</sup> At Beida, by contrast, there was no significant opposition to the work team until days before its withdrawal, and Nie Yuanzi and her comrades had worked closely with the work team. Nie never led a rebel movement: the CCRG simply came to the campus, removed the work team and put her in charge. During the long fight by the rebel “minority” on other Beijing campuses, Nie and her comrades stood awkwardly on the sidelines.

*The Rebellion against Nie Yuanzi*

Two separate developments converged into an anti-Nie movement in October. The first was resistance to her attempt to control the Red Guards. The second was a split among the veteran Beida leftists. Disaffected Red Guards joined with old leftists who split with Nie to challenge her control of the school. Here the paradox of Nie’s position became fully apparent. She criticized Zhang Chengxian’s work team for suppressing the student movement, yet as she moved to consolidate power she faced the same charge. After Nie established the Beida Red Guards in mid-August, rival organizations proliferated. By mid-October there were three large Red Guard organizations on campus, and some 3,000 Beida students had formed a total of 92 separate Red Guard groups large and small.<sup>62</sup> By this time they had conducted 536 house searches and untold numbers of interrogations and struggle sessions.<sup>63</sup> To assert authority, Nie created a hierarchy of departmental Cultural Revolution committees and a unified Red Guard command. She appointed Sun Pengyi, a cadre and political instructor in her own department, to lead the Red Guards.<sup>64</sup> All groups were ordered to unify under Sun’s leadership; new leaders would be chosen and political activities across department lines must cease.<sup>65</sup>

This attempt to control the Red Guards was immediately challenged by two of the larger groups. They objected to unity that was forced from above and refused to join.<sup>66</sup> This was the first sign of a gathering wave of opposition. In early October a wall poster by two physics students criticized Nie’s leadership and called for her to resign. They charged that the elections had been worthless, the candidate lists had been manipulated, more than 3,000 people were off campus and

61. See Andrew G. Walder, “Beijing Red Guard factionalism: social interpretations reconsidered,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 61 (2002), pp. 437–471.

62. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 652; see also *Xin Beida*, 13 September 1966, p. 3.

63. Over half the homes of professors and 80% of the homes of cadres at middle rank and above had been searched by Red Guards. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 652–53.

64. Sun was a Korean War veteran from a poor peasant/revolutionary martyr household who had been criticized along with Nie after the SEM. *Xin Beida*, 26 March 1968, p. 4; *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 88 and 169; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, p. 309.

65. *Xin Beida*, 27 September 1966, p. 1.

66. *Ibid.* p. 1.

unable to vote, and the leaders unrepresentative. They accused Nie of using the school's propaganda apparatus to pump up her own reputation by celebrating the famous wall poster.<sup>67</sup> They belittled her "rebellion," pointing out that the wall poster appeared ten days after the 16 May circular, when it was already clear that Peng Zhen was purged and the SEM verdict had changed. Finally, they accused Nie of ignoring dissenting views and suppressing criticism.<sup>68</sup> A "great debate" ensued in the following weeks, with one side supporting Nie's Cultural Revolution committee, and the other accusing her of "suppressing the masses," behaving like the work team, and carrying out a "covert bourgeois reactionary line."<sup>69</sup>

A long critical essay by Yang Xun (杨勋), an instructor in economics, expressed the frustrations with Nie Yuanzi of many in the school.<sup>70</sup> Yang Xun was a pre-liberation Party member who had served with the Eighth Route Army. She was familiar with Nie Yuanzi from her earlier stint in economics. Moreover, Yang had been an SEM activist on the same side as Nie, taking a critical stand against Lu Ping, and was elected to the earlier Cultural Revolution preparatory committee.<sup>71</sup> Yang charged that Nie's leadership group had engaged in self-worship, ignored criticism, attacked those who express dissenting views and bureaucratized the movement. Yang pointed out that Nie had fully co-operated with the work team's "right-wing opportunist line," and had been one of its primary architects, yet she acted as if she bore no responsibility for this and saw no need to examine her own errors.

The publication of such criticism in *Xin Beida* showed that the opposition had sympathizers on the Cultural Revolution committee – in particular Kong Fan, first-ranking deputy chairman, and Yang Keming, editor of *Xin Beida*, both of whom were involved in the 25 May wall poster. A final split occurred on 24 October, when Nie convened the standing committee in the absence of several opponents, adding new supporters to the group and putting Sun Pengyi in charge of all Cultural Revolution activities.<sup>72</sup> The next week Yang Keming was fired as editor of *Xin Beida*, and the "great debate" about Nie's leadership ended. Yang Xun was denounced as an "opportunist" in the 5 November issue, leading Nie's opponents to invade the editorial offices and shut down the paper for more than a week.<sup>73</sup>

This split among these "old leftists" crystallized factional alignments: Kong Fan and Yang Keming joined the dissident Red Guards, while pro-Nie forces assembled under the Cultural Revolution

67. The last of these charges was accurate. See *Selected Wall Posters*, 1.

68. *Xin Beida*, 18 October 1966, p. 2.

69. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 652, Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 151–55. The debate began in *Xin Beida*, 8 October 1966, p. 1, and continued in the next two issues. Wall posters arguing both sides were published in *Selected Wall Posters*, 3.

70. *Xin Beida*, 8 October 1966, p. 3.

71. See Yang Xun, *Tolerance*, introduction and p. 134.

72. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 653.

73. *Xin Beida*, 21 November 1966, p. 2.

committee and Sun Pengyi's Red Guards. Several opposition groups were founded, and a loyalist organization was formed to defend Nie.<sup>74</sup> Opponents accused her of carrying out the work team's "bourgeois reactionary line" – suppressing mass organizations, punishing critics, and seeking to control and restrict the mass movement. Loyalists, in turn, accused the *opposition* of following the "bourgeois reactionary line": Nie was a "genuine revolutionary leftist" and "to oppose Nie Yuanzi is to oppose the CCRG."<sup>75</sup>

Just as Nie faced a mounting rebellion at Beida, her ties with the CCRG strengthened. In mid-November, at Mao's request, she led a Beida delegation to Shanghai to support the growing rebellion against the Shanghai municipal Party committee, and instigate attacks on Chang Xiping, Party secretary of East China Normal University, an adversary on the SEM work team.<sup>76</sup> Nie remained in Shanghai for almost a month, returning to Beijing in mid-December and reporting on her activities to members of the CCRG.<sup>77</sup>

Upon her return, Nie moved to crush her opponents. On 12 December her supporters seized Yang Xun, her younger brother Yang Bingzhang (杨炳章) and Qiao Jianwu (乔兼武), a student in the eastern languages department, as "counter-revolutionaries."<sup>78</sup> Nie linked her opponents with a wave of criticism against the CCRG – the "December black wind" – and had the leaders of the opposition captured and subjected to mass struggle sessions; within days the offices of her opponents were forcibly closed.<sup>79</sup>

Nie's close ties to the CCRG ultimately permitted her to fend off those who opposed her as a "conservative." On 29 December 1966 her Cultural Revolution committee organized a mass struggle meeting at the Beijing workers' stadium against the entire leadership of the old Beijing municipal Party committee.<sup>80</sup> During this period she met Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng several times, and they restated their support

74. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 652–53.

75. *Xin Beida* 12 December 1966, pp. 5–7.

76. During this period Li Na, the daughter of Mao and Jiang Qing and a 1965 graduate of Beida, served as Mao's confidential liaison with Nie. *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, pp. 172–190; Wang Li, *Wang Li fansilu (Wang Li's Reflections)* (Hong Kong: Xianggang beixing chubanshe, 2001), pp. 758–64.

77. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 654–55.

78. *Xin Beida* 24 December 1966, p. 2. Qiao Jianwu put up a wall poster critical of Lin Biao; *Xin Beida*, 12 December 1966, p. 7, *Xin Beida*, 23 May 1968, p. 4. Yang Bingzhang penned a wall poster in December describing Nie Yuanzi as a "political whore," and wrote a series of private letters to Mao, many criticizing Jiang Qing's behaviour. Yang Bingzhang, *Cong Beida dao Hafo (From Beida to Harvard)* (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1998), pp. 136–152. Publicly, Yang was labelled an "active counter-revolutionary" for saying that the Cultural Revolution was simply a factional struggle stirred up by members of the CCRG: *Xin Beida*, 1 January 1967, p. 3.

79. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 655.

80. Nie could not have staged this rally without the co-operation of the Central Case Examination Group, which controlled access to these political suspects. See Michael Schoenhals, "The Central Case Examination Group, 1966–79," *The China Quarterly*, No. 145 (1996), pp. 88–111.

and affirmed that her opponents were counter-revolutionaries.<sup>81</sup> On 24 December Nie spoke to a mass meeting at Beida, labelled a series of opponents as counter-revolutionaries, and called for “exercising proletarian dictatorship.”<sup>82</sup> Yang Xun, Yang Bingzhang and Qiao Jianwu were arrested and sent to prison.<sup>83</sup> On 10 January *Xin Beida* charged that Nie’s two former allies, Kong Fan and Yang Keming, were “representatives of the bourgeois reactionary line.”<sup>84</sup> Jiang Qing declared them followers of the “Liu–Deng reactionary line and called for “smashing their social base.”<sup>85</sup> On 17 January, her critics now crushed, Nie formed a committee formally to “seize power” at Beida.<sup>86</sup>

### *Heaven and Earth: City-wide Opposition to Nie*

Despite these interventions, opposition to Nie soon revived. Other members of the CCRG grew impatient with her unwillingness to compromise, and as 1967 wore on, her relations with key leaders began to fray.<sup>87</sup> Student rebels at other universities also found Nie objectionable. Jiang rallied support for her at meetings with leaders of rebel groups in late January; she warned Qinghua’s Kuai Dafu (蒯大富) about his sympathy for Nie’s Beida opponents, and stated that Nie retained their support. Jiang acknowledged Nie’s shortcomings and errors, but stressed that in the overall struggle they were really on the same side.<sup>88</sup>

Jiang Qing’s support for Nie had a broader strategic purpose: Nie was to help seize power in Beijing in imitation of Shanghai’s January

81. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 655. On 3 January Jiang and Kang named several critics and personally branded them as counter-revolutionaries, including Yang Xun and her younger brother Yang Bingzhang. See *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua 1 (Central Leaders’ Speeches, 1)*, Beijing boli zongchang hongweibing lianluozhan bian, March 1967, pp. 17–20. When Kang Sheng heard the criticisms of Nie, he reportedly called her Beida colleagues together and said, “This Nie Yuanzi person isn’t so great. I already knew this in Yan’an. But now, even if she’s a bastard and an s.o.b. (*huaidan, wangbadan*), we still have to support her.” Beida Party history group, “Kang Sheng, Cao Yi’ou,” p. 36. During the Yan’an rectification movement in 1942, Kang Sheng charged that that Nie was a member of an underground traitor group with strong ties to Wang Shiwei; the charges did not stick; *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 54–55, 109. In his memoirs, CCRG member Wang Li reports that both Kang Sheng and Cao Yi’ou strongly disliked Nie and preferred Yang Keming, the primary wall poster author, over her: *Wang Li’s Reflections*, pp. 603, 721–22.

82. *Xin Beida*, 1 January 1967, p. 2.

83. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 656, Yang Xun, *Tolerance*, pp. 159–167, and Yang Bingzhang, *From Beida to Harvard*, pp. 166–170.

84. *Xin Beida*, 10 January 1967, pp. 5–7.

85. Jiang made this statement on 3 January. *Central Leaders’ Speeches, 1*, pp. 17–18.

86. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 655.

87. Wang Renzhong was particularly critical of Nie’s attempts to monopolize power, and expressed openness to dialogue with Kong Fan and Yang Keming. *Central Leaders’ Speeches, 1*, p. 18. Wang was dropped from the CCRG in January. See *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 656, *Central Leaders’ Speeches, 1*, p. 140, *Xin Beida*, 24 January 1967, p. 1.

88. *Central Leaders’ Speeches, 1*, pp. 236–240.

power seizure. The effort began on 18 January when Nie met leaders from other universities to prepare for power seizures in central ministries and the municipal government by establishing an organization known as Beijing Commune.<sup>89</sup> As part of this effort, Beida groups that supported Nie were merged into a new organization, New Beida Commune.<sup>90</sup> Instead of a unified effort, however, the various Red Guard leaders simply rushed off to seize power at defenceless government offices, and confusion reigned.<sup>91</sup> Clearly unworkable, the Beijing Commune initiative was dropped in February in favour of a revolutionary committee that combined students with military officers and “revolutionary” cadres.<sup>92</sup> The first step was to create the Capital Red Guard Congress on 22 February, with Nie as head.<sup>93</sup> Now the Red Guard movement was to be unified under new organs of power in schools that united students, teachers and cadres.<sup>94</sup>

The effort to unite rebel factions under a single command faced a fundamental contradiction. An effort to build an alliance structure *across* schools inevitably ran foul of factional conflicts *within* schools. From the beginning, Nie and New Beida Commune were drawn into conflicts with rebel groups when they seized power in other units. In January her forces seized power at the ministry of higher education, but another rebel group, headed by Tan Houlan (谭厚兰) of Beijing Normal University, arrived to seize power and an argument ensued over which ministry faction to support. Tan supported a ministry cadre who led a rebel group, but Nie’s group charged that the cadre had serious historical problems. Unfortunately for Nie, Tan Houlan was expressing the viewpoints of her *Red Flag* and CCRG sponsors, Lin Jie (林杰), Wang Li (王力), Guan Feng (关峰) and Qi Benyu (戚本禹), who had encouraged this cadre all along. Nie soon was pressured by aggressive phone calls from these figures, but she refused to back down. She eventually yielded only after the intervention of Chen Boda.<sup>95</sup> A similar clash occurred with the same figures over the 15 January seizure of secret Party archives at the CCPs United Front

89. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 657. See the founding proclamation in *Xin Beida*, 28 January 1967, signed by rebel groups from 21 large state enterprises and nine universities.

90. On 15 February. See *Xin Beida*, 17 February 1967, pp. 1–2; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 270–272.

91. “At the time, seizing power was a matter of who ran the fastest; power went to whoever got there first and captured the official seal. So Kuai Dafu’s people all ran off without telling us.” *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, p. 196.

92. See the instructions relayed by Qi Benyu and Xie Fuzhi on 13 and 15 February in *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua 2* (*Central Leaders’ Speeches, 2*), Beijing boli zongchang hongweibing lianluozhan fanyin, March 1967, pp. 104 and 109–110.

93. *Xin Beida*, 1 March 1967, p. 1. Nie’s speech at the organization’s founding was broadcast nationwide. *Xin Beida*, 4 March 1967, p. 1.

94. “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu dazhuan yuanxiao dangqian wuchan jiejie wenhua da geming de guiding (cao’an)” (“Decision of the CCP on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the Universities [draft]”), 7 March 1967, *Xin Beida*, 14 March 1967, p. 1.

95. *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 199–202.

Work Department.<sup>96</sup> These clashes, and the rivalries they expressed, would eventually be crystallized in the conflict between two wings of the Beijing rebel movement – “heaven” and “earth.”<sup>97</sup>

These cleavages had been forming since the abortive efforts to create the Beijing Commune, and they continued after the formation of the Capital Red Guard Congress in late February.<sup>98</sup> Shortly after establishing the Capital Red Guard Congress, national officials were already worrying that the organization was an empty shell and its leading group deeply divided.<sup>99</sup> These tangled alliances led to an open breach after a battle that erupted at the Central Nationalities Museum on 8 April. One of the factions called on the support of their allies from the Geology Institute East is Red, a large rebel faction. The other side was reinforced by their allies from New Beida Commune, and there were casualties on both sides.<sup>100</sup> That evening, Nie Yuanzi and Kuai Dafu issued an order in the name of the Capital Red Guard Congress, calling for an end to hostilities and the withdrawal of all outside organizations.<sup>101</sup>

The battle brought to a head simmering resentment against Nie in the city’s rebel ranks. Geology Institute East is Red immediately denounced the Red Guard Congress order because it had not been discussed in the organization’s leading body.<sup>102</sup> On 11 April, along with allies from Beijing Normal Jingtangshan and other rebel organizations, they sent contingents to Beida for two days of demonstrations against Nie, calling for her expulsion from the Capital Red Guard Congress. New Beida Commune called in reinforcements from their allies at nearby Qinghua and skirmishes erupted.<sup>103</sup> On the evening of 12 April the minister of public security, Xie Fuzhi (谢富治), issued an urgent announcement in the name of the CCRG ordering all outsiders to leave campus.<sup>104</sup> The skirmish

96. *Ibid.* pp. 202–204.

97. The “heaven faction” (*tian pai*) included Nie Yuanzi, Kuai Dafu’s Qinghua Jingtangshan, and Han Aijing’s Aeronautics Institute Red Flag, and its name was a reference to the latter institute. The “earth faction” (*di pai*) included Tan Houlan’s Beijing Normal Jingtangshan and Wang Dabin’s Geology Institute East is Red, and its name derived from the latter institute. See Bu Weihua, “Guanyu ‘wenge’ zhong Beijing de ‘tianpai’ he ‘dipai,’” (“The ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ factions in Beijing’s Cultural Revolution”), *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, No. 73 (2000), pp. 100–126.

98. Rebel groups from the Ministry of Education, the United Front Work Committee, the Naval Academy and several other military academies demonstrated against Nie Yuanzi on the Beida campus every day from 23 to 26 January. See *Xin Beida*, 31 January 1967, p. 2.

99. See the talks by Xie Fuzhi and Qi Benyu on 4 March in *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua 3* (*Central Leaders’ Speeches*, 3), Beijing boli zongchang hongweibing lianluozhan bian, April 1967, pp. 42–44.

100. Bu Weihua, “Heaven and earth,” pp. 107–108; *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 206–208.

101. *Xin Beida*, 13 April 1967, p. 6.

102. *Ibid.* p. 7.

103. Bu Weihua, “Heaven and earth,” pp. 109–111, Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 304–306. A detailed account of the clashes is in *Xin Beida*, 13 April 1967, pp. 6–8.

104. *Ibid.* 13 April 1967, p. 2.



was over, but the fissures in the Red Guard movement had hardened. The Red Guard Congress was now openly split.

Nie nevertheless continued her activities on behalf of the CCRG. In mid-April, Kang Sheng had her lead investigations of purged officials from the old municipal Party committee, and she staged several large public struggle sessions against them.<sup>105</sup> She was named vice-head of the Beijing municipal revolutionary committee (under its head Xie Fuzhi) when it was formed on 20 April. Anticipating her assumption of permanent political power, she had already begun to rebuild Beida's administrative structure. In early March, she held meetings where "cadres who had made errors" were asked to declare their support for the revolution by pledging loyalty to Nie's Cultural Revolution committee. At the end of March two prominent members of the former Beida Party standing committee, Cui Xiongkun and vice-president Zhou Peiyuan (周培源), pledged their support.<sup>106</sup>

Despite her political ascent, Nie was unable to quell organized opposition. The split between "heaven" and "earth" rekindled the Beida opposition by providing it with strong allies outside the school. There was plenty of fuel for the opposition. On 3 March, during a campaign to reinforce allegiances to Nie, new splits appeared in the Cultural Revolution committee. Philosophy department instructor Guo Luoji (郭罗基) put up a wall poster criticizing Nie for her dictatorial behaviour since assuming power, and demanded that any rectification of leading organs begin with her.<sup>107</sup> Two figures promoted to the standing committee a few weeks earlier – Hou Hanqing (侯汉清) and vice-chairman Xu Yunpu (徐运朴) – sided with Guo.<sup>108</sup> In late May and early June four new anti-Nie alliances appeared.<sup>109</sup>

The new anti-Nie wave was encouraged by signs that CCRG support for Nie was wavering. After the new splits on the school standing committee in late March, Chen Boda and Qi Benyu went to Beida and told students that it was mistaken to say that "to bombard so-and-so is to bombard the proletarian headquarters." Chen said "you cannot just casually say that to oppose you is counter-revolution."<sup>110</sup> After Chen and Qi left Beida, Nie challenged them in a handbill that duplicated Chen's talk (ineptly ensuring that opponents would be encouraged by it), and held meetings to criticize this "new black line."<sup>111</sup> After the armed battles on the Beida campus

105. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 659.

106. Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 296–99. Zhou earned a PhD in theoretical physics after studying at the University of Chicago and California Institute of Technology before 1949, and later become Beida's president.

107. Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 280–85. Guo had stood with Nie since the SEM; *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, p. 88.

108. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 658. Both figures had been promoted in February to replace Kong Fan and Yang Keming.

109. *Ibid.* pp. 660–61.

110. *Central Leaders' Speeches*, 3, p. 272.

111. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 658.

in April, Jiang Qing called for Nie Yuanzi to make a self-criticism for her role in the conflict and for her resistance to Xie Fuzhi's attempts to mediate, which had incurred Xie's anger.<sup>112</sup> Nie's clashes behind the scenes with Xie Fuzhi would continue into the next year, because she was convinced that he was part of a cabal – along with Qi Benyu, Wang Li and Guan Feng, who supported Tan Houlan and the “earth” faction – who were behind the aggressive attacks against her by Red Guards city-wide and at Beida.<sup>113</sup> As Nie's position deteriorated, Chen Boda returned to Beida on 5 June to qualify his criticisms of Nie, and several days later he phoned her to explain that he was not offended by her attacks on him.<sup>114</sup> Xie Fuzhi urged Nie to exercise diplomacy: the present task was to unite rebel organizations, not crush rivals. In response, *Xin Beida* called for a rectification campaign to correct errors of line that had recently been committed by certain leaders on the Cultural Revolution committee.<sup>115</sup> The paper published a criticism of Nie's recent actions by a group from the philosophy department: she had used the organization to pursue factional struggles and had created deep splits among leftists.<sup>116</sup> Subsequent issues of *Xin Beida* welcomed criticisms from fellow leftists – but they denied that a “second revolution” was needed.<sup>117</sup>

Instead of accepting this olive branch, the opposition stepped up their attacks. On 3 July anti-Nie organizations formed an alliance and soon published the first issue of their newspaper, *Xin Beida bao* (新北大报).<sup>118</sup> It carried news of a major defection of “revolutionary cadres”: an open letter signed by Zhou Peiyuan and 134 others, who charged that the Cultural Revolution Committee had committed errors of line since March 1967, and praised the opposition groups.<sup>119</sup> Too late to undo the damage, Chen Boda issued a statement on 10 July

112. *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua 4* (Central Leaders' Speeches, 4), Beijing boli zongchang hongweibing lianluo zhan bian, May 1967, pp. 116–122. Sun Pengyi had led a mass meeting at Beida on 12 April that had challenged Xie Fuzhi's leftist credentials and called him a “double-dealer” who took political credit for others contributions, Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, p. 306.

113. *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, pp. 206–210; 216–224. Nie apparently never considered the possibility that these figures were simply losing confidence in her ability to unify the rebel forces at Beida, which made her a serious political liability and an increasingly quarrelsome one at that. Her memoirs make clear that she felt that her back was against the wall – the earth faction repeatedly attacked her on her home turf, and she was convinced that they were acting on behalf of Qi Benyu and with the acquiescence of Xie Fuzhi.

114. Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 344–47. Nie's insecurity was reflected in the pages of *Xin Beida*, 24 May, which devoted an entire issue to glorifying the first anniversary of the 25 May wall poster. The front page carried a large photograph of Nie's meeting one year before with Mao, Kang Sheng and Cao Yi'ou. The 30 May issue was devoted entirely to praise for Jiang Qing's inspiring contributions to the arts.

115. *Xin Beida*, 10 June 1967, p. 1.

116. *Xin Beida*, 14 June 1967, p. 2.

117. *Xin Beida*, 17, 21 and 24 June 1967. Sun Pengyi made a self-criticism in a mass meeting on 29 June but it was openly ridiculed by opposition members in attendance; Nie gave her self criticism on 4 July; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 363–65.

118. *Xin Beida bao*, 12 July 1967.

119. *Ibid.* p. 3.

explaining that his criticisms of Nie did not mean that he no longer supported her. Stung by the losses, Nie dropped her conciliatory line in mid-July, and accused the opposition of “creating public opinion for a plot to seize power” from the “proletarian headquarters.”<sup>120</sup>

### *Stalemate*

Instead of fostering compromise, elite interventions had hardened factional divisions. At the end of July, 39 rebel organizations created a new anti-Nie alliance and set up offices at seven other campuses. On 17 August five large anti-Nie groups formed the New Beida Jingtangshan Corps, and the next day it was admitted to the Capital Red Guard Congress.<sup>121</sup> At a mass rally to celebrate its founding, a proclamation of support was read out from 45 organizations in the Red Guard Congress, the Capital Workers Congress and the Capital High School Red Guard Congress. Li Xingchen (李醒尘), a co-author of the 25 May wall poster, spoke at the rally.<sup>122</sup> Nie’s two most important allies in the “heaven” faction – Kuai Dafu of Qinghua Jingtangshan and Aeronautics Institute Red Flag – also sent letters of congratulation.<sup>123</sup> None of this would have happened if Nie were not seriously out of favour with key figures on the CCRG.

Against mounting odds, Nie fought back, and survived only with the support of Jiang Qing. Jiang spoke to the Beijing revolutionary committee on 1 September and criticized Nie’s accumulating errors, but affirmed that Nie should keep her posts, and she labelled Nie’s opponents “bad elements.” On 16 September she went further, and charged that Nie’s opponents were “old conservatives” who were trying to “overturn verdicts.”<sup>124</sup> *Xin Beida bao* countered that Nie was a reactionary who had suppressed the revolutionary masses.<sup>125</sup> This view received validation from rebels elsewhere in the city: a proclamation issued by old Third Headquarters rebels stated that Nie’s opponents were revolutionary, not counter-revolutionary, as Nie had charged.<sup>126</sup> Jingtangshan threw the accusation of harbouring “old conservatives” back at Nie, reminding everyone of her role on the work team and the questionable political backgrounds of the many cadres who had aligned with her.<sup>127</sup>

120. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 662.

121. *Ibid.* p. 663.

122. *Xin Beida bao*, 25 August 1967, pp. 1–2.

123. *Ibid.* p. 1. Kuai reportedly called Beida Jingtangshan the true rebel faction. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 663. At the time, Beida students heard that Kuai was secretly supporting one of the anti-Nie groups, and Nie’s supporters openly praised Kuai’s factional opponents on several occasions; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 326–27.

124. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 664.

125. *Xin Beida bao*, 7 September 1967, pp. 5–8.

126. *Xin Beida bao*, 16 September 1967, p. 1.

127. *Xin Beida bao*, 5 November 1967, p. 3, 7 November 1967, p. 4, 22 December 1967, p. 3, 6 January 1968, p. 4 and 15 January 1968, p. 4.

Although Nie charged that her opponents were simply “old conservatives,” trying to “reverse verdicts”<sup>128</sup> both sides were in fact actively recruiting former cadres to their side. Nie had started the process in March when she encouraged “revolutionary cadres” to declare their support for her. The opposition took the upper hand with the defection of Zhou Peiyuan and 134 other leading cadres. In the ensuing months each faction would praise their supporters as “revolutionary cadres” and denounced those pledged to the other side as “old conservatives” and “reactionaries.”

The similarity of each side’s stance is vividly illustrated by Ge Hua and Cui Xiongkun, the two members of the old Beida Party standing committee who sided with Nie Yuanzi over the 25 May wall poster. Cui Xiongkun sided with the Cultural Revolution committee in March 1967 and by the end of November he was vice-head of a small group that was preparing to restore Beida’s Party organization.<sup>129</sup> Ge Hua joined the opposition and was now celebrated by them as a “revolutionary cadre,” as were Nie’s old leftist comrades Kong Fan and Yang Keming.<sup>130</sup> In early October the Nie faction issued a call to “drag out” Ge Hua and demanded his surrender for struggle sessions, denouncing him as the “black hand” behind Jinggangshan.<sup>131</sup> On 3 December they finally captured him for interrogation and struggle sessions.<sup>132</sup> In retaliation, Jinggangshan captured Cui Xiongkun and staged a mass struggle session against him as an architect of Beida’s capitalist road.<sup>133</sup>

By late 1967 higher authorities had lost patience with the splits in the rebel movement and pushed the factions to put their differences aside. The Beijing garrison command organized “Mao thought study classes” where factional leaders were to be re-educated and their differences reconciled.<sup>134</sup> At Beida, however, the two sides tangled over the terms of participation. Nie demanded that her opponents first recognize her Cultural Revolution committee as Beida’s official organ of power.<sup>135</sup> The opposition countered that the Cultural Revolution committee must first be re-organized to represent both factions.<sup>136</sup> The municipal revolutionary committee tried to break the

128. *Xin Beida*, 10 September 1967, p. 7.

129. *Xin Beida*, 2 December 1967, p. 1. Nie Yuanzi was the head, and Sun Pengyi was the other vice-head.

130. On 28 November the latter two were added to Jinggangshan’s core leadership group. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 665, and *Xin Beida bao*, 30 November 1967, pp. 1–2.

131. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 664, *Xin Beida*, 7 October 1967, pp. 5–8, and 15 October 1967, pp. 3–4.

132. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 666. *Xin Beida*, 9 December 1967, pp. 2–3, 14 December 1967, p. 4.

133. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 667. *Xin Beida bao*, 6 January 1968, pp. 3–4, and 15 January 1968, pp. 1–3.

134. Bu Weihua, “Heaven and earth,” pp. 118–19.

135. *Xin Beida*, 23 September 1967, pp. 1–2, 19 October 1967, p. 1, and 22 October 1967, p. 2.

136. *Xin Beida bao*, 23 October 1967, pp. 1–4.

impasse on 23 November by ruling that the Beida Cultural Revolution committee was the official organ of power and that New Beida Commune had the permission to absorb Jinggangshan into its ranks.<sup>137</sup> Shortly thereafter *Xin Beida* announced plans to restore the Beida Party organization.<sup>138</sup>

These interventions had no visible impact. The two sides escalated their mutual accusations into February 1968, when the Beijing garrison command sent in a propaganda team to mediate. They insisted that Nie drop her charges of counter-revolution against her former comrades and recognize the legitimacy of their complaints. Li Zhongqi (李钟奇), vice-commander of the Beijing garrison, dictated the terms of compromise: Jinggangshan must accept Nie's Cultural Revolution committee as the official organ of power; the Cultural Revolution committee must acknowledge Jinggangshan as revolutionary; a Beida revolutionary committee would be formed through consultations between the two sides; and the army supports neither faction.<sup>139</sup>

Jinggangshan accepted these principles, which finally gave them a share of power enforced by the army. Nie, however, complained to the Party centre about Li Zhongqi's proposal, questioning whether it represented central policy.<sup>140</sup> She insisted that disunity was created by the counter-revolutionary schemes of her opponents.<sup>141</sup> Nie's stance was encouraged by Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng, who continued to undermine efforts at compromise. In talks with Red Guards in mid-March, Kang Sheng stated that the factional conflict was a continuation of the struggle between the Nationalists and Communists. Jiang Qing called for the "heaven" faction to "drag out" the "bad elements" behind the "earth" faction.<sup>142</sup> The impasse remained.

#### *Warfare: The Escalation of 1968*

The stalemate exploded on 20 March 1968. Late that evening members of the "earth" faction marched on to campus, denouncing Nie Yuanzi as a counter-revolutionary and Sun Pengyi as a "climbing insect," and Beida Jinggangshan joined in. In response, Nie organized a militia to "defend with force." Three days later over 1,000 members of Agricultural University East is Red demonstrated against Nie and Sun at Beida. They were joined the next day by some 10,000 from other campuses. Battles erupted across the campus. Xie Fuzhi and

137. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 665.

138. *Xin Beida*, 2 December 1967, p. 1.

139. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 668.

140. *Ibid.* p. 668. Transcripts of the two reports, dated 6 March, were printed in *Xin Beida bao*, 22 March 1968, p. 4. Other articles in that issue praise the decisions of Xie Fuzhi and the Beijing garrison command, and attack Sun Pengyi as a traitor and spy for opposing them.

141. *Xin Beida*, 7 March 1968, p. 2.

142. *Xin Beida*, 23 March 1968, p. 1.

Wu De (吴德) arrived to broadcast demands for the withdrawal of outsiders and for the two Beida factions to unite under Nie. Several hundred members of Geology East is Red, armed with clubs, nevertheless arrived the next morning and further violence followed.<sup>143</sup>

On 28 March another armed battle between the two Beida factions erupted just after midnight and continued until dawn, when vice-commander Li Zhongqi of the Beijing garrison broadcast a demand for an immediate truce and negotiations. When Li accompanied Nie to the Jingtangshan headquarters to barter a truce, they were attacked – Li was clubbed over the head and Nie bled profusely from a scalp wound.<sup>144</sup> The attack apparently changed the authorities' attitude toward Nie's opponents. When the two sides finally sat down for negotiations late the next morning, Xie Fuzhi demanded an immediate halt to all hostilities, and he criticized Jingtangshan for their stubborn opposition to Nie.<sup>145</sup>

This finally turned the tide in Nie's favour. On 8 April *Xin Beida* denounced Jingtangshan for violating CCRG directives, and on 11 April the charge was repeated in a joint declaration with the Beijing revolutionary committee and ministry of public security.<sup>146</sup> Finally enjoying the unequivocal backing of the authorities, Nie gave a keynote speech at a city-wide rally on campus on 24 April; the two top commanders of the Beijing garrison and rebel leaders from across the city spoke in support. Kuai Dafu, whose support for Nie had wavered repeatedly in the past, praised her and declared that New Beida Commune represented the proletarian revolutionary left.<sup>147</sup>

Jingtangshan held out behind its defence works, but they were no longer able to publish *Xin Beida bao*, whose last issue appeared on 22 March. Nie's forces began to seize and interrogate members of Jingtangshan,<sup>148</sup> and public struggle sessions were held against captured Jingtangshan leaders.<sup>149</sup> Near the end of April, Nie and Sun formed special case groups to prosecute them. They detained teachers and students from the other side and tortured them to confess their crimes, and established a prison where inmates were regularly beaten. Ordinary members of Jingtangshan were told they would be treated leniently if they turned over their leaders for the severe punishment their counter-revolutionary crimes demanded.<sup>150</sup>

143. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 668–69, Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, p. 514; *Xin Beida*, 26 March 1968, pp. 1–2.

144. *Nie Yuanzi's Memoirs*, p. 270; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 517–18.

145. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 669, and *Xin Beida*, 30 March 1968, p. 1.

146. *Xin Beida*, 8 April 1968, p. 4 and 18 April 1968, p. 3; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 518–520.

147. The entire issue of *Xin Beida*, 29 April 1968, was devoted to the rally.

148. See the confessions published in *Xin Beida*, 17 July 1968.

149. Three students were beaten to death during this period, and in late May Deng Xiaoping's son, Deng Pufang, a student in applied physics, was put in detention and then forced to jump from the upper storey of a campus building, causing the injuries that made him a paraplegic; *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 670–71.

150. *Ibid.* pp. 671–72, and *Xin Beida*, 13 May 1968, p. 1.

By the end of June, Nie's forces claimed that a total of 1,200 members of Jingtangshan had defected; Nie welcomed them in a long speech.<sup>151</sup> On 18 July Nie held the first of a planned series of public trials of captured Jingtangshan leaders, at which the accused read out lengthy confessions.<sup>152</sup>

On 22 July Nie's forces prepared for the final battle. They cut off water and electricity to buildings occupied by the opposition, touching off a battle fought with roof tiles, spears and bricks that spread onto adjacent streets. Similar battles were under way at nearby Qinghua University, where Kuai Dafu was about to crush his opponents. A propaganda team composed of soldiers and workers was dispatched to Qinghua to separate the two sides and enforce a truce. Kuai's forces attacked them, killing five and seriously wounding 149.<sup>153</sup> Nie called an urgent meeting to co-ordinate defences and prevent a propaganda team from entering Beida. They stockpiled Molotov cocktails and other weapons and posted lookouts.<sup>154</sup> Instead, Nie was summoned to an urgent meeting at 3 am on 28 July with four other Red Guard leaders. An angry Mao criticized his guests for refusing to halt factional warfare, said that they had all committed serious errors, and told them that he had personally sent the propaganda team and they were not to be challenged. He told them that the Red Guard movement was over, and they should return to campus to welcome PLA propaganda teams.<sup>155</sup>

### *Suppression*

Things changed drastically after the propaganda team arrived on 19 August. Two hundred of its 492 members were soldiers from the 63rd field army. *Xin Beida* was immediately closed. All prisoners were released, and both sides turned in their arms and were disbanded. The leaders of both sides were treated as if they had committed serious errors, and submitted to re-education in "Mao thought study classes." Nie was charged with responsibility for the violence because she supported the armed suppression of her opponents.<sup>156</sup> She was subjected to mass denunciation meetings on several occasions. Her opponents fared even worse: seven student leaders from the opposition were declared "active counter-revolutionaries."<sup>157</sup>

Beida's Cultural Revolution was not yet over. In late September the "cleansing of the class ranks campaign" began. Ignoring all that had

151. *Xin Beida*, 20 June 1966, pp. 1–2.

152. *Xin Beida*, 23 July 1968, pp. 3–4.

153. Tang Shaojie, *Yiye zhichun: Qinghua Daxue 1968 nian "Bairi da wudou"* (*An Episode in the Cultural Revolution: The 1968 100-day War at Qinghua University*) (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2003), p. 31.

154. *Beijing University Chronology*, p. 672.

155. *Ibid.* p. 673, and *Xin Beida*, 28 July 1968 and 30 July 1968, p. 1.

156. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 674–75; Chen Huanren, *Red Guard Diary*, pp. 556–561.

157. *Beijing University Chronology*, pp. 675–76.

transpired over the previous two years, more than 900 cadres and faculty – regardless of factional affiliation – were detained on campus. After a month of grueling interrogations, the propaganda team declared 542 of the inmates “enemies of the people.” By the end of the year, 18 of them had committed suicide, including Cui Xiongkun, found floating in the university’s swimming pool in mid-October.<sup>158</sup> Nie Yuanzi was isolated for re-education for over a year, and was paroled only for a token appearance as a delegate to the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969 at which, despite her political difficulties, she was elected an alternate member of the Central Committee. In November 1969 she was sent to a state farm for labour reform, a punishment that continued after her 1972 transfer to factories in Beijing until she was tried and imprisoned in April 1978. Suffering from medical problems, she was finally released in 1986.<sup>159</sup>

### *Conclusion: The Nature of Factionalism at Beida*

Factional conflict at Beida expressed competition between rival wings of a movement against the old Party leadership that originated within the Party apparatus itself. “Old leftists” who had been comrades from the days of the SEM, worked together to write the famous 25 May wall poster, co-operated actively in the work team’s extensive purges and initially shared power after the work team’s disgrace, split into opposed factions. They did not offer rival programmes, articulate different political doctrines or exhibit different orientations towards the status quo ante. They disagreed vehemently about a series of actions taken by Nie Yuanzi as she sought to consolidate her control over the Red Guards and the Cultural Revolution committee in the early autumn of 1966, disagreements that hardened into unalterable opposition after Nie condemned her critics as counter-revolutionaries. Nie based her claim to power on the famous wall poster and the support of Jiang Qing and other figures on the CCRG. The opposition charged that Nie suppressed mass activism and crushed dissenting views – actions more characteristic of “old conservatives” on the Party establishment and the reviled work teams, than of the rebel movement that won victory in Beijing in the autumn of 1966. The issues of tactics and personality served to split the old Party leftists, the Beida Party apparatus, cadres, teachers and the student body.

Because of the way the factional split developed, neither faction could be identified as “conservative” or “radical.” Usually these differences were expressed in a faction’s stance towards the political status quo ante or “the cadre question”: how harshly the alleged errors of cadres should be judged and whether the majority of them

158. *Ibid.* p. 675.

159. *Nie Yuanzi’s Memoirs*, pp. 319–369.



should resume their former positions.<sup>160</sup> This issue plausibly resonated with individuals' pre-Cultural Revolution statuses, depending on how close they were to the former authorities. In early 1967 Nie moved to restore the Beida administration, offering "revolutionary cadres" an opportunity to pledge support and join her side. The rekindled anti-Nie opposition, however, did not adopt a different stance; instead, they competed to recruit cadres to Jinggangshan. Each side attacked cadres pledged to the other as "reactionaries" and celebrated those pledged to their own as "revolutionary." The two sides adopted similarly mirrored positions on the restoration of the Party organization. When Nie moved to re-establish the Party organization, Jinggangshan did not object in principle. They only complained that in excluding the prominent Party members in the opposition, Nie had "usurped the Beida Party organization."<sup>161</sup> In the absence of substantive political differences between the two factions it is hard to imagine how students could choose sides according to their vested interests or political values. Tellingly, although the official Beida Red Guards initially placed strong emphasis on family heritage as a criterion for membership, the debate about student "bloodline" that was so important in elite high schools and on some college campuses never divided the Beida factions.<sup>162</sup>

Was the nature of factional conflict at Beida typical of the struggles in other organizations and localities? In some obvious ways it was far from typical. Nie occupied a special position in the official hagiography of the Cultural Revolution. She achieved power without leading an opposition movement and had to defend that power during a period when the "rebel" movement in other schools was in the opposition. She enjoyed a special relationship with Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng, who intervened consistently over two years to rescue her from political blunders, albeit with increasing reluctance and an obvious sense of exasperation.

While Nie's role in Cultural Revolution politics was unique, other features of the Beida story are universal. The most important is the conflict generated in the abrupt shift from open rebellion to a power seizure and re-assertion of authority. This turning point occurred in every unit and locality during the Cultural Revolution, and similar splits among former allies were observed throughout China. Another universal feature is the way that the city-wide alliances drew rebel leaders into conflicts at the organizational level that led to splits in an initially unified city-wide rebel camp. The "heaven" and "earth"

160. This was clearly the case at Qinghua after April 1967. See Xiaowei Zheng, "Passion, reflection, and survival: the political choices of Red Guards at Qinghua University, June 1966–July 1968," in Esherick, Pickowicz and Walder, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, pp. 29–63.

161. *Xin Beida bao*, 22 December 1967, p. 2.

162. In sharp contrast to Beijing Industrial University, where it was a major – if misinterpreted – issue well into the autumn of 1966: See Andrew G. Walder, "Tan Lifu: a 'reactionary' Red Guard in historical perspective," *The China Quarterly*, No. 180 (2004), pp. 965–988.

factions grew from entangling alliances across organizations that could have occurred anywhere. These features help us to understand how factional struggles could be prolonged and violent without articulating different stances towards the status quo ante, and without adopting stances that resonated with the interests of different status groups.