

## CHAPTER 2

### *From Mass Campaigns to Managed Campaigns: “Constructing a New Socialist Countryside”*

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#### *Campaigns: A Relic of the Revolutionary Past?*

It is often said that one of the most important differences between the Mao and post-Mao eras is the replacement of “revolutionary” campaigns by “rational” bureaucratic modes of governance. With the death of Mao Zedong and the gradual but steady substitution among the political leadership of younger engineers for elderly revolutionaries, China appeared to have settled into post-revolutionary technocratic rule. Hung Yung Lee wrote in 1991, “[D]uring the Mao era the regime’s primary task — socialist revolution — reinforced its leadership method of mass mobilization and its commitment to revolutionary change . . . . [T]he replacement of revolutionary cadres by bureaucratic technocrats signifies an end to the revolutionary era in modern China.”<sup>1</sup> A decade later, Cheng Li’s study of the current generation of Chinese leaders reaches a similar conclusion, observing that “the technocratic orientation in the reform era certainly departs from the Mao era, when the Chinese Communist regime was preoccupied with constant political campaigns and ‘mass line’ politics.”<sup>2</sup> This assertion that revolutionary campaigns have given way to rational-bureaucratic administration fits comfortably with comparative communism variants of modernization theory, in which the inexorable ascendance of “experts” over “reds” as a result of industrialization ensures that radical utopianism will give way to a less ambitious “post-revolutionary phase.”<sup>3</sup>

Most China scholars (and surely most Chinese citizens) welcomed Deng Xiaoping’s 1978 declaration that the campaign era had ended. A sound

market economy, it seemed, would require a more orderly, less convulsive mode of policy implementation. Deng enjoined his comrades henceforth to “rely on the masses, but do not launch campaigns.”<sup>24</sup> Over time, however, some scholars and citizens have detected certain problems with this presumed transformation in governance. In a recent book, Minxin Pei points to an “erosion of the CCP’s mass mobilization capacity” in the reform period as symptomatic of a precipitous decline in the regime’s ability to rule effectively. In sharp contrast to the Mao era, when “the CCP had an unusually strong capacity of mass political mobilization,” Pei argues that the loss of its campaign capacity in the reform era has meant that the contemporary party-state “no longer can build broad-based social coalitions to pursue its policies and defend itself.”<sup>25</sup>

Some Chinese villagers, mindful of the days when corrupt officials could be threatened with mass criticism, have even called for a revival of campaigns. In 1997, a Communist party journal reported a “cry [*busheng*, 呼声] for mass campaigns that at times is intense.”<sup>26</sup> Kevin O’Brien and Li Lianjiang, writing two years later, observe that “many villagers remain nostalgic for a type of mobilization common in the Maoist era but little seen lately — vigorous mass campaigns. . . . More specifically, they say they yearn for agents of higher levels appearing in their villages to clean things up.”<sup>27</sup> O’Brien and Li stress, however, that “[t]o this point, there is no indication that China’s top leaders are considering anything approaching a large-scale mass movement (or even a focused, open-door rectification).”<sup>28</sup>

Whether one regarded post-Mao technocratic authoritarianism with relief or with reservation, it was generally agreed that campaigns had largely vanished from the contemporary Chinese political landscape. The one consistent exception appeared to be in the area of population control, where, as Tyrene White demonstrates, campaign methods continue to be employed.<sup>9</sup> The other notable exception was as a mode of “crisis” management, when the leadership drew upon campaign techniques to cope with sudden and unexpected challenges, such as during the Tiananmen protests of 1989, the Falun Gong protests of 1999, and the SARS epidemic of 2003.<sup>10</sup> Population control and crisis management involved the mobilization of grassroots party networks alongside an intensive propaganda blitz in an effort to enlist mass participation in overcoming what were deemed to be severe societal problems. In the arena of economic development, however, it was widely assumed that campaigns had been supplanted by technocratic approaches to policy implementation.

I would like to question this common assumption by proposing that the legacy of mass campaigns has remained an integral — and underappreciated

— instrument of rule in post-Mao China not only for population control and crisis management, but even in the realm of economic development. The tendency to dismiss campaigns as a discarded relic of the revolutionary past has, I believe, hindered our understanding of the ways in which the post-Mao engineers have both retained and reconfigured the revolutionary tradition. Maoist campaigns encompassed a wider variety of activities, objectives, and outcomes than is sometimes remembered, offering attractive resources for today's technocrats to rework this particular revolutionary mode of governance. The contemporary program to “construct a New Socialist Countryside” provides telling evidence of the manner in which post-Mao Chinese leaders, by means of what I call *managed campaigns*, adopt and adapt revolutionary campaign methods to current reformist agendas.

### *Maoist Campaigns*

As many scholars have observed, the campaigns for which Mao's China is justly famous can be traced back to the years of revolutionary struggle. Although the origins were already visible in the Jiangxi Soviet,<sup>11</sup> it was during the Yan'an period that mass mobilization became a defining feature of Mao's revolutionary strategy.<sup>12</sup> In the wartime base areas, “the Chinese Communists launched a series of organized and planned campaigns with a view to mobilize the entire people in support of the Party leadership and its policies.”<sup>13</sup> The Chinese Communist Party sponsored several different types of mass campaigns in the 1930s and 1940s: production campaigns intended to improve the economy; cultural or educational campaigns designed to combat illiteracy and heighten political consciousness; and so forth. Despite their diverse aims, all of these campaigns unfolded through a succession of more or less uniform stages.<sup>14</sup>

Typical of the campaigns of the wartime period was the to-the-countryside (*xiangxiang*, 下乡) movement in which cadres and cultural workers were sent down to base area villages to “squat on a point” (*dundian*, 蹲点) in order to promote economic development and raise literacy levels.<sup>15</sup> This kind of campaign, which combined economic and educational objectives, was continued and greatly expanded after the establishment of the PRC with the Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside program that sent some 1.2 million youths to the countryside between 1956 and 1966 and another 12 million between 1968 and 1975.<sup>16</sup> The program in many respects was costly, yet a Western economic analysis in 1975 observed that “agriculture is benefiting from the broadening of education and training in the rural areas,

the increased experience of the work force with fertilizers and machinery, and the assignment to the countryside since 1968 of nearly 10 million middle-school graduates from urban areas.”<sup>17</sup> In his comprehensive study of this campaign, political scientist Thomas Bernstein concurs that the program — despite evident inefficiencies — “undoubtedly” brought benefits to the rural sector.<sup>18</sup>

The Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside movement, although especially important for understanding today’s effort to construct a New Socialist Countryside, was only one of numerous campaigns that punctuated the Maoist era. As John Gardner noted in his 1969 study of the Five-Antis Campaign in 1950s Shanghai, “the implementation of policy by means of mass mobilization is one of the most distinctive features of the Chinese Communist political process. Since 1949 the Chinese masses have participated in over one hundred mass movements, all of which, to some degree, have been designed to assist the revolutionization of society.”<sup>19</sup> Gordon Bennett, in his monograph on the subject, offered the following definition of the seemingly ubiquitous Maoist mass campaign: “A Chinese *yundong* is a government-sponsored effort to storm and eventually overwhelm strong but vulnerable barriers to the progress of socialism through intensive mass mobilization of active commitment.”<sup>20</sup>

As in the wartime era of guerrilla struggle, so too in the post-1949 Maoist period campaigns were carried out through a progressive series of identifiable stages: experimentation with competing policy proposals, designation of tasks summed up by catchy slogans, a draft of points distributed to all concerned agencies, and the establishment of keypoints (*zhongdian*, 重点) and representative models (*dianxing*, 典型). (For further discussion of this Maoist legacy of experimentation, see Sebastian Heilmann’s chapter in this volume.) Cadres were dispatched to these keypoint and model sites for intensive training in the new movement, after which they were expected to implement the campaign in their own jurisdictions. Regular party organizations managed the majority of the campaigns, but in especially important campaigns detached cadres were temporarily transferred outside of their jurisdictions as “work teams” (*gongzuodui*, 工作队) that joined with local party leaders to form an ad-hoc leadership group. “Activists” (*jiji fenzi*, 积极分子) and “backbones” (*gugan*, 骨干) were selected from among the masses in the course of the campaign to facilitate “breakthroughs” (*tupuo kou*, 突破口) in grassroots implementation and to replenish the party ranks.<sup>21</sup> The aim was to prevent bureaucratic inertia by recruiting grassroots enthusiasts to augment (and in some cases override) local party and government cadres so as to advance the central leaders’ agendas.

Although today we look back upon Mao's mass campaigns as a destructive style of governance that disrupted and nearly derailed China's development effort, an earlier generation of scholars was less negative in its assessment. In his 1977 book on Mao-era mobilization campaigns, Charles Cell identified three major types of campaigns: economic, ideological, and struggle. According to Cell, economic campaigns — in which “leaders talk of ‘socialist construction’” — exhibited better results than the other two types. With the notable exception of the Great Leap Forward, Cell credits economic campaigns with a productive emphasis on construction, solidarity, and development.<sup>22</sup> In a similar vein, Gordon Bennett argued in 1976 that not only were Maoist campaigns an “effective vehicle for political participation,” but they also “contribute more to economic development than they take away.”<sup>23</sup>

Michel Oksenberg, in his 1969 dissertation on the mass irrigation campaign of 1957–58, provided a similar description of the goals of Maoist campaigns, although offering a less sanguine view of the actual results. In Oksenberg's account, campaigns shared one or more of three aims: to establish new or reorganize old organizations, to change the attitudes of leaders and masses, and to stimulate production. Oksenberg presents the Maoist campaign as posing a radical challenge to the claims of modernization theory: “In a fundamental sense, the Chinese experience under Mao is a litmus test of the relationship between modern bureaucratic practice and economic development. Need the former accompany the latter?” In the case of the water conservancy campaign, however, he concluded that “on balance, the campaign retarded the development of China's water resources.” The revolutionary campaign style, Oksenberg argued, caused a deterioration of the reporting system and a denigration of the value of technical expertise, both of which “proved disastrous.”<sup>24</sup> Although there were surely economically more efficient means of implementing water conservancy measures than the mass campaign, China's achievements in this realm — even during the devastating Great Leap Forward — were impressive nonetheless. In the three years from 1958 to 1960, more than 16.5 million additional *mu* of land were reportedly brought under irrigation through such means.<sup>25</sup>

A Chinese specialist in party history and rural issues has recently summarized the achievements of Maoist campaigns as follows:

From the collectivization campaign through the Cultural Revolution, the construction of a New Socialist Countryside made certain advances. For example, the emergence of a whole group of models represented by Dazhai, together with

“new socialist peasants,” represented by Chen Yonggui, Wu Renbao, Xing Yanzi, and others, and the promotion of ideas, such as “hydrology is the lifeblood of agriculture,” “mechanization is the way forward for agriculture,” the “eight character constitution” for agriculture, and the like . . . gradually put in place a support system that included labor insurance, poverty subsidies, livelihood subsidies, social relief, and the village “five guarantees” as well as rudimentary social protective organizations, such as old-age homes and cooperative medical care.<sup>26</sup>

In this view, mass campaigns to construct a New Socialist Countryside during the Maoist era laid a solid infrastructural foundation for the subsequent gains of the reform period.<sup>27</sup>

### *Constructing a New Socialist Countryside in Historical Perspective*

Considering that many campaigns of the Mao era were directed toward economic development and moreover that they evidently attained at least some modicum of success, it is perhaps not surprising that the engineers now responsible for managing China’s economy have launched a “construction” initiative that bears a notable resemblance to earlier to-the-countryside campaigns. Although the current leaders, adhering to Deng Xiaoping’s dictum to avoid “campaigns,” do not use that particular term to characterize their comprehensive effort to transform the Chinese countryside, the parallels to Maoist campaigns are quite striking.

As a recent monograph on China’s rural development policy observes, “the concept of a ‘new countryside’ dates back to the early days of the Communist revolution in the 1930s . . . previous attempts to revitalize rural China . . . have provided many of the lessons learned that are now finding their way into practice; and it is with those lessons in mind that China’s leadership has developed both a long-term vision and plan and a menu of many urgent goals and immediate tasks.”<sup>28</sup>

At the Fifth Plenum of the Sixteenth Party Congress in October 2005, the CCP announced its “great historic mission” of “constructing a New Socialist Countryside” (*jianshe shehuizhuyi xin nongcun*, 建设社会主义新农村). The announcement came five months after President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao delivered separate speeches in which they invoked these phrases as part of an action plan for resolving the problem of the “three rurals” (*sannong*, 三农), i.e., agriculture, farmers, and villages. The following year, Central Document No. 1 of 2006 highlighted the construction of a New Socialist Countryside as the “struggle target” and “action plan” for socioeconomic development in the upcoming five years. A year later,

Central Document No. 1 of 2007 reiterated this commitment, noting that “developing modern agriculture is the chief task of New Socialist Countryside construction.”<sup>29</sup> As party organs hastened to explain, although the “phrasing” (*tifa*, 提法) harked back to the 1950s, the current initiative was being launched under new historical conditions and under “a completely new conceptual direction.”<sup>30</sup>

The government’s worry that the new construction program might be mistaken for a Maoist throwback was understandable. The 1956–67 National Program for Agricultural Development, personally drafted by Mao Zedong in late 1955 and officially promulgated in October 1957, outlined ambitious goals for a New Socialist Countryside that included improvements in agricultural production, especially grain production; water conservancy and road building; new rural housing; public health and sanitation; and education.<sup>31</sup> In June 1956, the National People’s Congress (NPC) embraced as its “struggle target” the goal of constructing a New Socialist Countryside. Mao’s program became an integral part of the General Line for Socialist Construction with which the Great Leap Forward was launched in May 1958. Constructing socialism, it was emphasized, involved not only economic progress but also the cultivation of a “new socialist person” with “socialist consciousness.” Two years later, at the height of the terrible famine, the National Program for Agricultural Development was formally adopted by the NPC. Vice Premier Tan Zhenlin, who played an important role in encouraging the excesses of the Great Leap Forward, praised Mao’s National Program as imbued with “mass character for constructing a New Socialist Countryside.”<sup>32</sup>

The late 1950s saw the start of a massive relocation and reeducation effort in which a large number of both students and cadres were sent down-to-the-countryside. In August 1957, for example, the city of Nanjing assigned hundreds of recent primary and middle-school graduates to serve as “new-style peasants” in remote villages as part of the effort to construct a New Socialist Countryside.<sup>33</sup> With the launching of the Great Leap Forward the next year, successive waves of party cadres were dispatched to rural areas to engage in labor and carry out intensive agit-prop among the peasants.<sup>34</sup> What these sent-down cadres actually accomplished during their rural sojourns is not entirely clear. Many of them were reportedly overly zealous in pushing the ill-conceived policies of the Great Leap in hopes that such displays of radicalism would expedite their return to the cities.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the horrendous consequences of the Great Leap famine, when several tens of millions of Chinese starved to death, the Communist

leadership's commitment to New Socialist Countryside construction continued to reverberate in the years that followed. In December 1963, the party center announced a resolution to mobilize urban youth to participate in the construction of New Socialist Villages. Over the next decade, millions of young people, praised as the "newborn force" of the campaign, left the cities to head "up to the mountains and down to the countryside."<sup>36</sup> The initiative was accompanied by considerable cultural and propaganda effort. In 1964, for example, three new Peking operas were staged (in the cities of Changchun, Nanjing, and Nanchang) to celebrate the building of New Socialist Villages around the country.<sup>37</sup>

During the Cultural Revolution, the "Learn from Dazhai in Agriculture" campaign carried forward the Great Leap agenda by incorporating as one of its key objectives the building of a New Socialist Countryside. In 1966, for example, production brigades in impoverished areas of Shandong were congratulated for the spirit of "arduous struggle and self-reliance" that fueled the construction of "Dazhai-type New Socialist Villages."<sup>38</sup> The Dazhai model of agrarian radicalism remained salient throughout the Cultural Revolution decade.<sup>39</sup> The party secretary of Huaxi brigade in Jiangsu, Wu Renbao, was honored in 1975 for having constructed a New Socialist Village with "new-style peasants" imbued with "socialist consciousness" by applying the Dazhai model in his own village over the preceding ten years.<sup>40</sup> Other rural campaigns during the Mao period, from irrigation to tree planting, were framed in similar terms. In 1975, an editorial in the *Hebei Forestry Science and Technology* journal referred to Chairman Mao's 1958 call for constructing a New Socialist Countryside as the inspiration for the orchards that had been planted across the province in the intervening two decades.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of the Cultural Revolution, the language of rural socialist construction was pervasive across a spectrum of policy arenas. A student in the Physics Department at Shaanxi Normal University wrote in 1975 of his solemn pledge to form a "strike roots" (*zhagen*, 扎根) group to carry out the construction of a New Socialist Countryside and thereby "uphold Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in education."<sup>42</sup> Even after the Mao period, this discourse remained powerful. In 1977, a commune in North China was lauded as a New Socialist Village for having successfully implemented a public health and sanitation drive by a combination of "reviewing Chairman Mao's teachings" and "actual class struggle."<sup>43</sup> Although the introduction of the Household Responsibility System and the decollectivization of agriculture brought a temporary halt to this discussion, it was soon revived in the



Civilized Village Campaign: “Civilized villages are the basic form for constructing a New Socialist Countryside.”<sup>44</sup> The Civilized Village Campaign of the mid-1980s, like the earlier Mao-era campaigns, specified both objective and subjective areas for “construction”: the rural economy, ideology, culture, morals, public works, village beautification, and democracy.

In the 1990s, as the focus on economic growth favored the coastal cities at the expense of the hinterland, talk of constructing a New Socialist Countryside diminished. But it did not entirely disappear. In 1992, Fujian province was credited with advancing the cause of “building new socialist villages through common effort and unified struggle.” Over the preceding year, more than 40 percent of the villages in Fujian were said to have carried out “socialist education activities” aimed at “cultivating a new style peasant.”<sup>45</sup> Party theoreticians struggled to keep the concept alive by attributing to Deng Xiaoping the idea of “constructing a New Socialist Countryside with Chinese characteristics.” While acknowledging that Deng, unlike Mao, had never actually engaged in a systematic discussion of rural socialist construction, the theorists nevertheless argued that Deng’s pronouncements on rural industrialization and “socialist spiritual civilization” amounted to an elaboration of Mao’s pioneering efforts in this vein.<sup>46</sup>

### *Constructing a New Socialist Countryside Today*

Although contemporary proponents of the New Socialist Countryside initiative eschew the term “campaign,” they do not deny the obvious Maoist inspiration.<sup>47</sup> A policy analyst at the Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences justifies the recent initiative by explicit reference to Mao Zedong’s agricultural policies:

After many years of exploration, Mao Zedong developed a program for rural construction: namely, villages should travel the collective economic path and use “people’s communes” to systematize the collective economy. . . . After New China was founded . . . the party and state organized the peasantry to take the road of collectivization. This was the correct choice under those historical conditions and had a historically progressive meaning. It serves as a powerful example for our current construction of a New Socialist Countryside. In constructing new socialist villages, we must fully affirm and fully absorb Mao Zedong’s thinking on agricultural cooperation.<sup>48</sup>

Today’s socialist countryside program, like its forerunners, calls for improving rural infrastructure (with greater state investment in water conservancy, roads, and public utilities), free compulsory education, and new rural

cooperative medical services. In terms reminiscent of the Great Leap's pledge to overcome the Three Great Differences and Walk on Two Legs, the current undertaking promises to redress the imbalance between city and countryside and between industry and agriculture. As the contemporary slogan puts it, "industry repays agriculture; cities bring along the countryside" (*gongye fanbu nongye*, 工业反哺农业; *chengshi daidong nongcun*, 城市带动农村).<sup>49</sup> The countryside is promised more favorable treatment with the slogan "give more, take less, enliven" (*duoyu*, 多予; *shaoqu*, 少取; *fanghuo*, 放活). As in earlier campaigns, however, the expressed goals — summed up by a twenty-character mantra — are not only economic but also social, cultural, and political: "develop production, enrich livelihood, civilize rural habits, tidy up the villages, democratize management" (*shengchan fazhan*, 生产发展; *shenghuo kuanyu*, 生活宽裕; *xiangfeng wenming*, 乡风文明; *cunrong zhengji*, 村容整洁; *guanli minzhu*, 管理民主).

Despite careful avoidance of the term "campaign" (*yundong*, 运动) and substitution of less politically charged terms such as "activity" (*huodong*, 活动) and "action" (*xingdong*, 行动), Maoist rhetoric and practices pervade the initiative. An ongoing "three down-to-the-countryside activity" to disseminate science, culture, and hygiene to backward villages is to be folded into a new "three strike-roots action" in which cadres are asked to "squat on a point" in order to institutionalize efforts in rural technology, education, and public health.<sup>50</sup> Implementation is said to require the identification of "breakthroughs" and the cultivation of "backbones." The need for mass activism and struggle is constantly invoked. Much of Premier Wen Jiabao's December 29, 2005 speech on constructing a New Socialist Countryside could have been mistaken for a Great Leap or Dazhai manifesto: "We must fully arouse the activism of the broad peasant masses, inspiring them to carry forth the spirit of arduous struggle and self-reliance."

To jumpstart the contemporary campaign, thousands of propaganda teams and lecture teams (*xuanjiangdui*, 宣讲队; *baogaodui*, 报告队) were organized in every province. In Guangdong, old revolutionaries were invited to accompany these groups down to the villages, to "carry out education in the revolutionary tradition." Places with "red resources" such as Hailufeng (site of China's first rural soviet) were selected as sites for conducting "advanced education activity" for village cadres. In Guangxi, more than 10,000 rural work cadres possessing "good political character and a certain theoretical level" as well as technical expertise were sent to the villages to educate grassroots party members.<sup>51</sup>

In Jiangsu's Xuzhou city, 3,078 "work teams," composed of 6,763 party members from every county, district, and township, were dispatched to all the villages in the municipality. In each village, "backbones" were selected from among the residents to carry out specific tasks. Additionally, some 10,000 cadres were sent down from the city agencies to "squat on a point" to carry out grassroots party education.<sup>52</sup> In Yan'an's Wuqi county, village speech competitions were held on the theme of "the party in my heart," while locally written and produced dramas were staged and three waves of "collective study sessions among the masses" were organized to publicize the many facets of the New Socialist Countryside project. This was followed by township-level mass meetings, "unprecedented in scale," to commend those villagers who had demonstrated the greatest enthusiasm and activism.<sup>53</sup>

From April 2006 to January 2007, for the first time since the end of the Maoist era, every county party secretary and county magistrate in the country (more than 5,300 cadres in total) was required to attend special week-long training sessions on the implementation of the new campaign.<sup>54</sup> Some of these sessions were held at the Central Party School in Beijing; others at the new branch of the Central Party School located at the site of the CCP's first revolutionary base area of Jinggangshan; and yet others at "model" villages famous for their continued adherence to collectivist practices such as Dazhai in Shanxi and Huaxi in Jiangsu.<sup>55</sup> In some instances, graduates of these training sessions reportedly restored elements of collective farming upon returning to their home jurisdictions.<sup>56</sup>

To provide the central leadership with comprehensive data for selecting "test-points" and "keypoints," the Ministry of Agriculture conducted its largest-ever national survey of villages, the summary report of which concluded that "we personally felt the peasant masses' ardor and creative energy."<sup>57</sup> In the "model agricultural city" of Guang'an, survey data permitted the identification of fifty relatively well-off keypoint villages along with sixty poverty-stricken test-point villages.<sup>58</sup>

This emphasis upon survey research, while hardly surprising for a campaign designed by engineers, has also been linked to Mao Zedong's own method of rural investigation. (For more on Maoist methods of gauging public opinion, see the chapter in this volume by Patricia Thornton.) From the mid-1920s on, Mao was of course a firm advocate of village surveys, having conducted several key investigations among peasants in Hunan and Jiangxi that had a significant impact on the course of the Chinese revolution.<sup>59</sup> A researcher in the Department of Law and Politics of Jimei University draws the connection:

In sum, Mao Zedong's investigative approach retains its extremely important guiding function in the effort to construct new socialist villages in the new era. It is precious spiritual wealth that Mao Zedong bequeathed to us. In the process of New Socialist Countryside construction, only by upholding Mao Zedong's investigative approach . . . will the construction of a New Socialist Countryside develop in a comprehensive and healthy manner.<sup>60</sup>

Mao's "mass line" method — "from the masses to the masses" — is frequently invoked as the appropriate means of policy formulation and implementation in the building of new socialist villages.<sup>61</sup>

Scholars and officials are apparently not alone in sensing Chairman Mao's guiding hand in the contemporary program. The Chinese media have offered glowing descriptions of the peasants' response to the socialist countryside program, in which the spirit of Mao Zedong hovers over the current scene. A report from Jiangxi's famous "Red Well," which — according to revolutionary legend — was dug by Mao himself at the start of the Long March, is typical of these hortatory accounts:

By the side of the Red Well in Shazhoubei Village in Ruijin city, an old villager named Yang Qingpo could scarcely believe his eyes when he strolled around the newly built cement roads of the village. How could a village where he had lived for over sixty years change overnight? The old toilets and dilapidated pigpens had been torn down and the garbage that had been piled high around all the houses was gone. Newly built houses were neat and clean. . . . "The new socialist village construction has brought us old folks great benefit. Thanks be it to the Communist Party!" He touched the stone tablet next to the Red Well that read, "When drinking the water, don't forget the one who dug the well. Think often of Chairman Mao." He felt that it expressed his own deepest sentiments.<sup>62</sup>

Such rosy pictures notwithstanding, there is mounting evidence that the current New Socialist Countryside campaign — like its Maoist predecessors — is at times implemented coercively, with callous disregard for the desires of the local inhabitants. For example, to promote "village beautification," party leaders in Henan's Wen county ordered thousands of public officials, teachers, and medical personnel to return to their native villages to participate in an "uprooting movement" that entailed pulling out any crops planted in front of peasant homes, along roadways, or in vacant lots. Impoverished villagers who objected that they relied on the crops for their livelihood were threatened with having their welfare subsidies cut off if they did not comply with the directive.<sup>63</sup>

In many instances, lineage halls and village temples have been razed to make way for roads and housing developments. In some cases, villagers have

been evicted from their own homes and forcibly relocated to concentrated mass housing complexes at considerable personal expense. Such resettlement projects afford an opportunity for land grabs by rapacious officials, triggering resentment and on occasion resistance.<sup>64</sup> The cadre corruption that has become pervasive in rural China these days (see the chapter by Joseph Fewsmith in this volume) is on full display in this campaign. The widespread illegal conversion of collective village lands into lucrative real estate developments (that line the pockets of unscrupulous cadres) has prompted its critics to characterize the New Socialist Countryside construction effort as a “fake urbanization leap forward” (*weichengshihua yuejin*, 伪城市化跃进).<sup>65</sup> The *Yan’an Daily* summed up the abuses bluntly, “In the course of New Socialist Countryside construction, some places have already shown signs of conducting a mass campaign. This calls for vigilance.”<sup>66</sup>

Even well-meaning cadres are sometimes carried away by the campaign spirit. Overly exuberant local officials have been accused of harboring “Great Leap Forward expectations.”<sup>67</sup> Their selection of test-points and models, for example, is said to overlook backward villages in favor of wealthier villages that can more easily be presented as success stories. As was the case during the Maoist campaigns, cadres in impoverished areas are said to be particularly prone to the practice of “blindly making false reports” (*mangmu di xubao*, 盲目地虚报).<sup>68</sup> Rich and poor villages alike have been saddled with onerous debts to pay for road building and other expensive construction projects, the costs of which may exceed their limited means.<sup>69</sup>

Criticisms of the insensitive manner in which the New Socialist Countryside initiative has sometimes been conducted echo the familiar litany of complaints from bygone campaigns. Cadres are accused of “formalism” (*xingshizhuyi*, 形式主义), “commandism” (*minglingzhuyi*, 命令主义), “bureaucratism” (*guanliaozhuyi*, 官僚主义), and “ossified conservatism” (*jianghua baoshou*, 僵化保守); and warned against “seeking rigid uniformity” (*qiangqiu yifu*, 强求一律), “cutting with a single knife” (*yidaoqie*, 一刀切), “running the whole show” (*baoban daiti*, 包办代替), or “trying to promote growth by tugging at the sprouts” (*bamiao zhubuzhang*, 拔苗助长).<sup>70</sup> Local governments are criticized for reverting to old Mao-era habits in trying to force peasant compliance without due consideration for local conditions and preferences: “During the period of the planned economy, the government grew accustomed to treating the peasantry as peons who simply took orders; it controlled the peasants by issuing blanket directives and administrative rulings. Today many local government agencies cling to these outmoded methods, refusing to adapt to the rules of a market economy as though one can still get by with ‘administration dominating everything.’”<sup>71</sup>

*Managed Campaigns*

Conceptually, today's managed campaigns perpetuate many features of revolutionary mass campaigns. Like their Maoist forerunners, managed campaigns posit a close connection between subjective consciousness-raising and objective economic gains. Intensive political propaganda, intended to arouse emotional enthusiasm and enlist widespread engagement, remains a central element.<sup>72</sup> So, too, does the call for struggle and sacrifice in service to a larger cause. In terms of implementation, there are also (sometimes unfortunate) continuities. Coercive enforcement by over-eager cadres is not uncommon.

But managed campaigns also depart from Maoist campaigns in significant ways. Although the main purpose is still to prevent bureaucratic ossification, the sources of inspiration and imitation are more eclectic than was once the case. Managed campaigns are unabashedly pragmatic, searching for workable models wherever they may be found. In addition to Maoist rhetoric and practice, a wide variety of other concepts and techniques are also employed. On top of the language of revolution is an overlay of new technocratic terminology. One sees frequent reference to “mechanisms” (*jizhi*, 机制), “propulsion mechanisms” (*yunxing jizhi*, 运行机制), “conveyers” (*zaiti*, 载体), “dynamics” (*lidu*, 力度), “pressure points” (*zhuolidian*, 着力点), and other technical terms befitting a Communist Party led by engineers. The entire process is to be guided by a “scientific concept of development” (*kexue fazhan guan*, 科学发展观), the motto of Hu Jintao's administration.

In managed campaigns, the benefits of an engineering approach are sometimes explicitly contrasted to the pitfalls of improperly applied Maoist methods. One policy analyst, in discussing the latest effort to construct a New Socialist Countryside, complains of a pervasive “test-point discourse” (*shidianlun*, 试点论) that confuses the identification of experimental villages with the actual construction of new socialist villages. While acknowledging that “establishing test-points and models, accumulating experience, perfecting policies, and moving from points to planes is a very important work method,” the analyst notes that grassroots cadres are often under the mistaken impression that all they need to do is to develop a few successful test-points to show off to higher levels. Instead, cadres are urged to regard the construction of new socialist villages as “systems engineering” (*xitong gongcheng*, 系统工程), requiring “comprehensive planning” (*tongchou jiangu*, 统筹兼顾) and “scientific mastery” (*kexue bawo*, 科学把握).<sup>73</sup>

Although the current program has certainly drawn its share of criticism for insensitive and uniform enforcement, managed campaigns do appear to allow greater latitude for grassroots variation than was true of many of Mao's campaigns. In the promotion of "model new villages" in Jiangxi's Ruijin, for example, no fewer than eighteen different types of models have been identified: tourist villages, industrial villages, agricultural villages, cultural villages, and so forth. Policy priorities are supposed to vary in accordance with these diverse identities.<sup>74</sup>

The recent religious resurgence taking place across much of the Chinese landscape poses special problems for an engineering effort intended, among other things, to transform rural habits and culture. One way in which the discussion surrounding the current New Socialist Countryside initiative differs from previous incarnations is in the widely expressed concern for accommodating, rather than eradicating, popular religious beliefs and practices. In contrast to the Mao era, when "new villages" were expected to renounce all expressions of religion, today's more pragmatic approach shows a greater appreciation of the necessity — and even benefit — of religious toleration. Christianity in particular is sometimes credited with contributing to villagers' patriotism, morality, and enthusiasm for education.<sup>75</sup> But such tolerance coexists uneasily with calls for security organs to play a more active role in constructing a New Socialist Countryside by crushing "evil cults" perpetrated by geomancers, witch doctors, and other practitioners of "feudal superstition."<sup>76</sup>

In light of the challenge that religion presents for managed campaigns, one cannot help but wonder whether the current construction program, like the Great Leap Forward fifty years ago, will not generate a backlash in minority regions — particularly Tibet and Xinjiang — where religious beliefs and practices are especially pronounced and where government calls for rural modernization may readily be interpreted as an assault on traditional cultural values. As June Dreyer noted of the Great Leap, "There was . . . one crucial difference between the impact of the Leap in minority areas and that in Han areas: the Great Leap Forward in minority areas was perceived as having been imposed from outside in an attempt to erase native culture and ways of life."<sup>77</sup> A recent report from a Tibetan region of Gansu province charges that the Chinese government, "as part of the creation of the New Socialist Countryside," has called upon Tibetan nomads "to give up their ancestral lifestyle, calling it primitive and unproductive . . ."<sup>78</sup>

The latest initiative is not simply a retread of previous mass campaigns, however. In contrast to the millenarian Great Leap Forward, today's New

Socialist Countryside program does not promise to deliver instant utopia. The central leadership emphasizes that the creation of socialist villages is a long-term mission that will require many years to complete. Moreover, despite the revolutionary origins of much of the program, violence and conflict are explicitly eschewed. Although there is much talk of “struggle” (*fendou*, 奋斗), there is no mention of “class struggle” (*jieji douzheng*, 阶级斗争); instead, the watchword is the omnipresent call for a “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui*, 和谐社会).<sup>79</sup>

Aside from the rejection of class struggle and quick fixes, perhaps the most significant difference between a managed campaign today and a Maoist mass campaign is the avowed eagerness with which contemporary policy makers attempt to identify, adopt, and adapt relevant historical and international experiences — regardless of their political bona fides. Whereas the Great Leap Forward and Learn from Dazhai campaigns were launched in a spirit of Communist correctness and autarkic defiance, the current initiative is openly receptive to a wide range of domestic and foreign exemplars — revolutionary and non-revolutionary alike.<sup>80</sup>

The appeal of traditional Chinese values in today’s New Socialist Countryside construction is visible in the frequent references to Confucian ideals and institutions. Official directives speak of the classic Confucian goal of a “moderately comfortable society” (*xiaokang shehui*, 小康社会), of the need for “reverse nurturance” (*fanbu*, 反哺) in which the cities — like filial children — give back the support that they once received from the countryside, and of the deployment of “land literati” (*tianxiucai*, 田秀才) — an alternative term for local backbones with technical expertise.<sup>81</sup> In a village in Shanghai’s Chuansha county, a ditty entitled “Song to Admonish the People” (*quanmin ge*, 劝民歌), composed and promoted by the village party committee, expresses a Confucian concern for filial piety and frugality:

The loving kindness of parents is as deep as the ocean, Show deference to the elderly and boundless love to the young; Industriousness can make one rich, Gluttony and laziness lead to a lifetime of poverty. . . .

To popularize the ditty, famous opera singers were invited to make recordings, the CDs of which were then distributed to all the villagers. Each household in the village was also required to compose “family discipline phrases” (*jia xunci*, 家训词), encouraging its members to work hard and respect their elders.<sup>82</sup>

Imperial precedents are cited as the inspiration for a number of recent innovations. For example, the “new village construction councils”



introduced in Jiangxi province are praised as an adaptation of the “gentry power” (*shenquan*, 绅权) of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Just as in that earlier period when Jiangxi villages were governed by a “Confucian” local elite composed of retired officials, literati, lineage elders, landlords, and other influential non-bureaucrats, so today’s village councils are said to be led by a “Communist” local elite of non-officials: retired cadres and elderly school teachers, model workers, and non-cadre CCP members.<sup>85</sup>

Republican-era precedents are highlighted as well. Members of the so-called “Rural China School,” composed of eminent agrarian economists such as Chen Hansheng, Xue Muqiao, and Feng Hefa, are lauded for their illuminating rural investigations.<sup>84</sup> The rural reconstruction programs of the 1920s and 1930s attract considerable attention as a fruitful source of contemporary lessons. The efforts by James Yen, Liang Shuming, Lu Zuofu, Huang Yanpei, Gao Jiansi, and Tao Xingzhi are credited with promoting mass education, economic cooperation, popular participation, an equitable land system, agricultural technology, household sideline production, and the construction of rural roads, bridges, and other public works. Yen and Liang elicit particular praise for the favorable international reputations (especially in the United States and Japan) that they enjoyed during their lifetimes. Even the central organs of the Guomindang have been commended for their officially sponsored experimental counties (*shiyanxian*, 实验县) in Jiangning, Lanxi, Qingdao, and elsewhere.<sup>85</sup> A researcher at the Shandong Institute of Technology summarizes the contributions of these Republican-era pioneers: “Their ideas about rural construction offer inspiration and meaningful exemplars for our efforts today to study and solve the ‘three rurals’ and to actively promote the construction of new socialist villages.”<sup>86</sup>

It is not surprising that the experimental outlook of earlier rural reconstruction efforts, inspired in part by John Dewey’s pragmatism, attracts admiration from aspiring social engineers today. But the primary lesson drawn from the Republican-period experience is the need for a new generation of altruistic intellectuals willing to devote their own lives to the cause of rural transformation: “What must be stressed particularly is that the New Socialist Countryside construction desperately demands a large group of truly talented and knowledgeable intellectuals endowed with a spirit of sacrifice who will really go deep into the villages, into the grassroots, and will — together with the rural cadres and masses — enthusiastically carry out investigations and experiments and develop plans and proposals to solve actual difficulties and problems.”<sup>87</sup>

Unlike Mao's to-the-countryside campaigns, in which the resettlement of urban intellectuals was supposed to be permanent, government expectations today are less demanding.<sup>88</sup> University students are encouraged to take advantage of their summer vacations to conduct the "three down-to-the-countryside activity" by "marching off to battle" (*chuzheng*, 出征), "following in the footsteps of the Red Army and cherishing the memory of the martyrs." Brief (and sometimes bogus) as the experience may be, the revolutionary idealism underlying the contemporary program remains observable.<sup>89</sup> As Bernstein wrote of the Mao era, "a revolutionary is one who defines the transfer to the countryside not as a form of downward mobility but as a form of service to the nation and to its goals of building socialism and communism."<sup>90</sup>

Today's engineers are willing to look not only backward, but also outward, to identify promising models for emulation and adaptation. In terms of foreign exemplars, although reference is made to the experience of Western countries such as the United States, Canada, and France, far greater attention is paid to cases closer to home: Taiwan, Japan, and especially South Korea. A recent compendium of essays by Chinese social scientists on the political theory underlying the New Socialist Countryside program begins with the statement: "From the rural reconstruction movement of the twenties and thirties, to Japan's 'one village, one product' campaign of the 1960s and Korea's New Village Movement of the 1970s, to Taiwan's village construction effort, there is a common lineage and legacy; the influence on East Asian society as a whole has been profound and the implications are immense."<sup>91</sup>

The South Korean New Village Movement (or *Saemaul undong*) has attracted the greatest attention and admiration, both because of the leading role played by the Korean government under Park Chung-hee in formulating and implementing the program and because of its apparent success in improving the living standards of Korean villagers.<sup>92</sup> In May 2005, as the Chinese Communist Party prepared to launch the Eleventh Five-year Plan guided by "the historic mission of constructing a New Socialist Countryside," the State Council dispatched a high-level delegation to Seoul to evaluate the legacy of South Korea's New Village Movement. The delegation, which included representatives from the Central Research Group, the Central Agricultural Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Construction, the People's Bank, and Guizhou province, returned to China with a highly favorable assessment, contributing to a flood of Chinese attention to the Korean experience.<sup>93</sup>

As a Chinese professor of public administration has observed, China's fascination with the Korean New Village Movement bears more than a passing connection to its own history of rural campaigns:

Using a campaign mode to undertake economic construction, as in the "Great Leap Forward" of the 1950s or "Learn from Dazhai in Agriculture" of the 1960s and 1970s, is a method of social mobilization that is very familiar to the Chinese people, particularly the Chinese peasantry. Since 1978, although many types of campaigns have become extinct, the government still favors launching campaigns as a means of social control. But as a means of economic construction, campaigns have been repudiated by government officials and ordinary people alike. And yet the Korean New Village Movement, which is hailed as a successful model of rural construction, actually shares many similarities with China's "Learn from Dazhai" campaign in terms of both organization and mobilization.<sup>94</sup>

Korea's *Saemaul undong*, carried out between 1970 and 1980, is generally credited with many of the same achievements as the Republican-era rural reconstruction effort: improved rural roads and residences, the delivery of electricity and running water to remote villages, the introduction of advanced farming techniques, and the establishment of functioning village councils.<sup>95</sup> A critical ingredient in the success of the New Village Movement, again like China's own rural reconstruction experience, is said to lie in its mobilization of urbanites — from intellectuals and government officials to ordinary citizens — who ventured down-to-the-countryside in large numbers to make their own contributions to improving the quality of rural life.<sup>96</sup>

At least as intriguing to Chinese observers as the process and outcome of the Korean movement is the fact that it was conducted under the auspices of an authoritarian government operating in a historically Confucian society. A Chinese political scientist points out:

The Chinese political system is similar to that of Korea in many respects. In the past we relied upon a central authority to launch a number of large-scale national campaigns, such as the "Great Leap Forward," "Learn from Dazhai in Agriculture," and so forth. Leaving aside the question of the pluses and minuses of a campaign mode of social control, under a centralized political system within a Chinese type of cultural tradition it is necessary to use central government authority to promote the provision of rural public goods. This is the valuable experience gleaned from the success of the East Asian countries, especially Korea.<sup>97</sup>

The combination of strong governmental initiative together with an emphasis on ethics and education is seen as a particularly attractive — and easily adapted — feature of the New Village Movement.<sup>98</sup> The *Saemaul undong* is

credited with having awakened Korean villagers from a fatalistic and dependent mentality nurtured by a long history of Confucian traditional culture.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, a perceived failing of the Korean (and also Japanese) experience is spotlighted and cautioned against; namely, the massive rural-to-urban migration that occurred in those countries in the wake of rapid economic growth. Officials and policy analysts alike call for an end to the “hollowing out” (*kongxinhua*, 空心化) that is already threatening many Chinese villages, as the younger, stronger, and more capable members of the communities depart for the cities.<sup>100</sup>

Taiwan is in many respects a politically more problematic exemplar for the PRC than either South Korea or Japan, of course. Yet political sensitivities have not prevented serious interest in the Taiwanese record of rural development. Somewhat ironically, in light of the PRC’s own socialist pretensions, it is Taiwan’s achievements in the realm of grassroots collective organization that have attracted the greatest admiration from observers on the mainland. Taiwan’s farmers’ associations (*nonghui*, 农会), first established in 1900 under Japanese colonialism but systematized in the 1970s under Guomindang authoritarian rule, are held up as a model for how to bridge the concerns of government and peasantry. The associations are lauded for providing a channel for the articulation of peasant interests as well as for publicizing and promoting official policies, agricultural techniques, market conditions, and the like.<sup>101</sup> Taiwan’s agricultural cooperatives (*nongye hezuoshe*, 农业合作社), albeit a more recent and less widespread institution than its farmers’ associations, are also credited with important organizational and economic contributions.<sup>102</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Although engineers have succeeded revolutionaries as the power elite in China, their ascendancy has not brought an end to the campaign tradition. What we are witnessing in contemporary China, it seems, is not simply the replacement of an outmoded revolutionary style of politics with a modern technocratic mode, but rather a complex amalgam of the two (with a strong element of Confucianism and East Asian experience thrown in for good measure). Modernization theory, with its emphasis on the inexorable evolution of rational-legal bureaucratization, will therefore not take us very far in making sense of it. Managed campaigns should be studied seriously on their own terms, as a powerful method of governance — capable of impressive achievements yet entailing substantial human cost.

The continuing importance of the campaign tradition to China's current development drive cautions against drawing too definitive a distinction between the Mao and post-Mao periods. As the Chinese economy enters its fourth decade of stunning growth, while retaining and reshaping central components of its Maoist past, the question that Michel Oksenberg posed of campaigns forty years ago remains relevant today: Must economic development be accompanied by "modern bureaucratic practice"?

Why do campaigns, which appear so antithetical to "modern bureaucratic practice," persist in post-Mao China? Tyrene White observed in 1990 that the campaign method remained an important mode of policy implementation because of "the lingering memory that campaigns played during the Maoist era and the defining tendency of Leninist parties to rely on directed mobilization as the basic approach to political change and control."<sup>103</sup> Part of the explanation for the continuation of campaigns in contemporary China surely can be attributed to the powerful hold of the past. No less an authority than the former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Zhao Ziyang, recalled the difficulty he faced in January 1987 in moving beyond familiar campaign methods: "I specifically stated that 'The Third Plenum resolved that there would be no more mass campaigns. However, people are accustomed to the old ways, so whenever we attack anything, these methods are still used.'"<sup>104</sup>

But managed campaigns are not a simple product of path dependence. As Tyrene White points out in her study of the one-child campaign, "mobilizational methods have been recast in ways that make them useful to the reformist elite."<sup>105</sup> Zhao Ziyang, in explaining how his approach to the anti-bourgeois liberalization campaign of 1987 would differ from past mass campaigns, promised that "From the beginning we will clearly define what can and cannot be done and declare specifically what the limits are."<sup>106</sup>

Managed campaigns are the result of an active and ongoing attempt to reconfigure elements of China's revolutionary tradition in order to address new challenges under changed conditions. Although the process by which China's leaders convert revolutionary legacies to contemporary purposes is sometimes opaque, recently available memoirs make clear that this has been a conscious and contested strategy within the political elite. According to the economic diaries of Zhao Ziyang's nemesis, former Premier Li Peng, at a September 1988 central work conference to deal with the then serious problems of inflation and panic purchasing, "someone suggested that we should undertake a campaign without announcing it as a campaign." As a result of this suggestion, Li observes, the emotional climate in the meeting

hall “immediately turned tense.” Nevertheless, Li Peng volunteered to take responsibility for this initiative. A few days later, he proposed a plan to control prices by inspections involving “keypoints” and “breakthroughs.” As Li explains, “the method was to incite the masses to file reports, strengthen oversight, pursue clues, thoroughly investigate, analyze causes, adopt correct policies, prevent loopholes, and manage prices well.”<sup>107</sup> Although campaign methods were but one weapon in the arsenal of central measures to control inflation,<sup>108</sup> they remained — albeit in altered form — a well-recognized approach to overcoming bureaucratic hurdles to solve economic challenges.

Today’s rendition of constructing a New Socialist Countryside is one among a number of current programs that draw selectively upon past campaign practices in a manner both familiar and foreign. While this particular initiative may already be losing steam, it will surely be followed by other campaign-like efforts to harness the Chinese state’s still significant mobilizing capacity to the pursuit of developmental goals.

Although today’s managed campaigns differ in important respects from their Maoist forerunners, they still serve as a powerful tool for combating bureaucratic rigidity and resistance. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is often attributed above all to bureaucratic entrenchment. The ossified Leninist party-state, we are told, stymied the best intentions of Gorbachev and other reform-minded leaders.<sup>109</sup> For this reason, the PRC’s continued reliance on a campaign style of policy implementation may provide a telling clue about the relative resilience of the Chinese Communist political system.

As historian and sociologist Perry Anderson observes, the divergent paths of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China are among the most influential developments of our time:

If the twentieth century was dominated, more than by any other single event, by the trajectory of the Russian Revolution, the twenty-first will be shaped by the outcome of the Chinese Revolution. The Soviet state . . . dissolved after seven decades with scarcely a shot, as swiftly as it had once arisen. . . . The outcome of the Chinese Revolution offers an arresting contrast. As it enters its seventh decade, the People’s Republic is an engine of the world economy . . . for a quarter of a century posting the fastest growth rates in per capita income, for the largest population, ever recorded. . . . In the character and scale of that achievement, of course, there is more than one — bitter — irony. But of the difference between the fate of the revolutions in China and Russia, there can be little doubt.<sup>110</sup>

Critical as the Soviet model was for Chinese communism, Mao and his comrades — along with their successors — forged a distinctive (if ironic) revolutionary road.

Among the many ironies of managed campaigns in contemporary China is their reversal of Deng Xiaoping's dictum to "rely on the masses, but do not launch campaigns." Although campaigns continue to be launched as a key method for checking bureaucratic inertia and promoting economic development, they no longer elicit the same degree of mass involvement and enthusiasm. These days it is grassroots officials, rather than ordinary peasants, who appear to be the main objects and actors in state-managed campaigns. To be sure, the recruitment of backbones and activists from among the masses remains a high priority for the Communist Party, but contemporary Chinese villagers — allured by alternative channels of upward and outward mobility — have become a less receptive and less reliable target of state mobilization.

### *Endnotes*

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48. Fu Chun, “Shixi Mao Zedong,” p. 37.

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90. Bernstein, *Up to the Mountains*, pp. 7–8.

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