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*A SOVIET HERO, PAVEL KORCHAGIN, COMES TO CHINA**

The most precious thing a person has is life. It is given to him only once, and he must live it in such a way that, in looking back, he will not regret for years lived pointlessly and will not feel ashamed for a petty and worthless past – so that while dying he will be able to say, “I have devoted my whole life and strength to the most splendid cause in the world – the struggle for the liberation of mankind.”

Nikolai Ostrovskii¹

Countless Chinese wrote the above quotation in their diaries, hung it over their beds, glued it on the wall, memorized it by heart, and treated it as a life motto to encourage themselves. The novel, *How the Steel Was Tempered* (*Kak zakalialas stal'*), by Nikolai Alekseevich Ostrovskii (1904-1936), accompanied several generations of Chinese through their youth and deeply influenced their views of the world. The purpose of this article is to use the character, Pavel Korchagin,² hero of Ostrovskii's Socialist Realist novel, as a case study to explore the role that this character played in Chinese society and political culture. How did the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) utilize the character as an ideal-typed hero and commission him for a political mission aimed at remolding people? During the process, how did the contents of what was called “Pavel's spirit” change with the political environments? This will be a concrete and detailed study to explore the extent of the Soviet influence over China.

It is well known that the CCP policies leaned toward the Soviet Union since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The cultural policy was no exception. Five days after proclaiming the founding of the PRC, the chairman of National Association of Sino-Soviet Friendship, Liu Shaoqi, declared, “In the past

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1. Nikolai Ostrovskii, *Kak zakalialas stal'* (Leningrad: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1936), 257. The quotation is translated by the author with suggestions by Anne Lounsbury. The most popular Chinese version, *Gangtie Shi Zhenyang Lianchengde* (How the Steel Was Tempered), was translated by Mei Yi. (1952, 1st ed.; 1995, 5th ed.; reprint, Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 2000), 278. I will use Mei Yi's version hereafter.

2. According to the Russian transliteration, the name of the protagonist should be Pavel Korchagin. But the most popular edition in China was originally translated from the English one – Alec Brown, *The Making of A Hero* (New York: International Publishers, 1937). Brown translated Pavel into Paul. Therefore the Chinese transliteration became *Baoer*.

the Chinese Revolution learned from the Soviet Union and considered Russia the teacher. Now in order to construct a new country, China also has to learn from Russia."³ This policy was closely connected with the internal and external environments on mainland China at that time. On the one hand, the CCP wanted to get rid of the various poisonous residues inherited from the bourgeois "old" society and to welcome the coming of the communist "new" society. The only available example was the Soviet Union. On the other hand, as early as the CCP's approaching victory over the Guomindang (GMD, the Nationalist Party), Chairman of the CCP, Mao Zedong had proposed the policy of leaning toward the Soviet Union. He believed that based on past revolutionary experience, one had to take sides between imperialism and socialism. There was no hypothetical third road. The United States intervened in the civil war in China and supported Jiang Jieshi's GMD, but the GMD was eventually defeated by the CCP. This meant the failure of the invasive American imperialist policy in China. All the Chinese people had to unite and to have the determination for the long-term struggle against American imperialism. Only in this way would it be possible to destroy completely the imperialist forces in China. Internationally, the CCP belonged to the anti-imperialist camp, led by the Soviet Union. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was the best teacher. Therefore, the CCP must learn from it.⁴ In short, in early 1950s the PRC was diplomatically isolated. The Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellite countries were the only allies of the PRC. For both ideological and practical considerations, whole-hearted learning from the Soviet Union had become the only available option.

In the 1950s there was a very popular slogan in China: "Today's Soviet Union is tomorrow's China." Learning from the Soviet Union became a national "movement," enthusiastically promoted by the CCP. Images of a model Soviet socialist system and the happy life of the Soviet people were propagated. Inevitably there were some exaggerations. For example, a high school teacher in Sichuan province claimed that in the Soviet Union there was a kind of airplane that sped along at thousands of miles per second and a kind of medicine that could make people immortal. A certain rural propagandist boasted that the Soviet peasants' life had improved tremendously after entering the collective farms. He even said, "The pigs in the Soviet Union eat dumplings every day."⁵ One can imagine how much the Chinese peasants would envy Soviet pigs after hearing this!

For Mao Zedong, revolution did not simply mean the transfer of political power, but also, and more important, the reformation of society from the grassroots. The

3. "Zhongsu youhao xiehui chengli dahuishang, Liu Shaoqi huizhang baogao quanwen" [At the founding meeting of National Association of Sino-Soviet Friendship, the full text by the President, Liu Shaoqi]. *Renmin Ribao*, Oct. 8, 1949: 1.

4. "Lun renmin minzhu zhuanzheng, June 30, 1949," [On people's democratic dictatorship, June 30, 1949]; "Diudiao huanxiang, zhunbei douzheng, Aug. 14, 1949" [Throw away illusion, prepare for struggle, Aug. 14, 1949]; "Biele, Situ Leideng, Aug. 18, 1949" [Farewell, John Leighton Stuart! Aug. 18, 1949]. Takeuchi Minoru ed., *Mao Zedong Ji* [Collected Works of Mao Zedong], 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Sososhu, 1983), 10: 296-306, 317-32.

5. New China Agency ed., "Yinggai gajin Zhongsu youhao de xuanchuan gongzuo" [Should improve the propaganda work of Sino-Soviet friendship], *Neibu Cankao*, no. 284, Dec. 27, 1952: 386.

revolution had to change not only political and social organizations, but also customs, mores, thought, behavior and values. What he expected from the social reformation was similar to Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony. Therefore, after seizing power in 1949, Mao Zedong was eager to uproot the old feudal culture, the vulgar commercial culture, bourgeois culture and elite culture, and replace it with a new socialist mass culture. How to mold "new socialist men" and to establish new socialist values became an urgent task. Pavel Korchagin's heroic image offered the best example for making new men and a new mass culture.

Most current research on mass culture focuses on capitalist societies, not on communist ones. In fact, both societies have different aims (the former is for commercial profit, the latter is for dominance of the communist party), but the process of making, publicizing, and consuming a product or an ideology is similar.⁶ Therefore, from the aspect of exploring the relations between producers and consumers some mass culture theory may offer a useful perspective about the relations between the state (the producer) and the society (the consumers). This article will only examine the relevant aspects of mass culture theory. Some scholars, such as Herbert Gans and Dwight MacDonald, use popular culture and mass culture interchangeably.⁷ Leo Ou-fan Lee and Andrew Nathan, however, believe that, although the contents of both partially overlap, there are differences, too. They maintain that there were two kinds of popular culture in China. One is more relaxed, more widespread and closer to traditional culture, represented by the school of fiction inherited from the late imperial entertainment culture, the so-called Mandarin Duck and Butterfly group (Yuanyang hudiepai). The other popular culture includes more serious ideology – using "people" to redefine the nation in order to educate the masses and to enhance people's cultural literacy. The latter one is precisely what the intellectuals during the May Fourth Movement and Yanan period wanted to create.⁸ Popular culture and mass culture not only have similarities, but also distinctions, i.e., the popular culture might be initiated by unofficial groups, but the mass culture meant nationwide, without class distinction, consciously initiated and controlled by the upper ruling class.⁹ The latter type of mass culture is exactly what the CCP promoted. Its literary form is Socialist Realism. There is no doubt that using Socialist Realism as the highest guideline for literature and art constitutes an enormous barrier to creativity. However, as James von Geldern correctly points out, one of the contributions of Socialist Realism is to create a culture accessible to most common folks.¹⁰ The authorities used such So-

6. Dwight MacDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 30-31.

7. For example, Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); MacDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," 29.

8. The foci of the May Fourth Movement were the promotion of literacy, the re-evaluation of traditional Chinese culture, and nationalism. Yanan period is from October 1935 to March 1948 when the Central Committee of the CCP located in Yanan, Shanxi province.

9. Leo Ou-fan Lee & Andrew J. Nathan, "The Beginning of Mass Culture: Journalism and Fiction in the late Ch'ing and Beyond," in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, Andrew Nathan & Evelyn Rawski (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), 388, 360.

10. James von Geldern, Introduction to *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia*, ed. James von Geldern &

viet Socialist Realistic classics, as *How the Steel Was Tempered*, as a medium to create an accessible mass culture. If we consider the official CCP government the producer of the mass culture, and the heroic model, Pavel Korchagin, as the product, then how would the producer publicize and promote the product? How would the ordinary people, as consumers, respond to the product? Would they respond as predicted by the Frankfurt School and only passively accept top-down propaganda from the authorities, without any autonomy?¹¹ Or would the masses have their own interpretations, as John Fiske has suggested, and exercise an important degree of autonomy?¹²

This article focuses on the period from 1949 through the end of Cultural Revolution in 1976. The "heat of tempering steel" in mainland China resurging in the 1990s belongs to another discourse. The booming market economy in the major and coastal cities has radically changed the society and values. Even though the CCP still holds the flag of communism high, communist China has become, in fact, a capitalist society. The mass media plays an even greater role in the process of making culture. Therefore, to fully explore the role of "Pavel's spirit" in the 1990s lies beyond the scope of this article. Furthermore, due to lack of information about the countryside, the article mainly deals with the mass culture in the cities.

1. The birth of Pavel and Soviet official interpretations

Pavel Korchagin was the protagonist in the novel, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, by Nikolai Ostrovskii. On September 29, 1904, Ostrovskii was born into a family of a distillery worker in Ukraine. They later settled in Shepetovka. He joined the Red Army during the civil war. In 1919 he joined the Communist Youth League (*Komsomol*). He was severely wounded after several heavy battles and his right eye was blinded at age sixteen. Afterwards he contracted typhoid and rheumatism while building the railway from Kiev to Boiarka. In 1924 he joined the Russian Communist Party and returned to Shepetovka to become a member of the district party committee. His health deteriorated until his whole body became paralyzed and both eyes were blinded. Because he had received limited education in the past and because he did not want to become dependent on the state pension for a living, he took the correspondence courses at the Sverdlov Communist University. He hoped he could write down what he heard and his own experiences during the civil war into a novel, and thus carried on the struggle for revolution with his pen.

According to Ostrovskii, he wrote *How the Steel Was Tempered* in response to the calling from the Central Committee of the *Komsomol* to create heroic images of the revolution.¹³ In 1928 he began to write but his only manuscript was lost in

Richard Stites (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 1995), xviii.

11. John Storey, *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1993), 100-10.

12. *Ibid.*, 184-88.

13. N. Ostrovskii, "Wo zenyangxie *Gangtie Shi Zenyang Lianchengde*" (How I wrote *How the Steel Was Tempered*), "Wode chuanguo guocheng" (My writing process), *Selected Works of Ostrovskii in Two Volumes*, trans. Mei Yi, 2nd ed. (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1995), 2: 735, 748.

the mail. This heavy blow demoralized him for a long while but he eventually pulled himself together, rewrote the novel, and finished it. In the beginning no literary journal was willing to publish it because the characters in the novel were flat and unconvincing and the literary style was rough. Later on, an old party member, who had good connections with the literary world, visited one editor after another. At long last, the editor of *The Young Guard* (*Molodaia gvardiia*), A. Kostrov, agreed to publish it. After four-years of revision, the first part of the novel began to serialize in the spring of 1932 in *The Young Guard* (No. 4). The second part appeared in the first half of 1934, and into a book in the same year.¹⁴ It was ignored until the journalist-writer, Mikhail Kol'tsov, published his interview with Ostrovskii in Sochi on March 17, 1935 in *Pravda*. The interview described Ostrovskii's life and achievements and made him instantly famous.¹⁵ Within a short time, the Red Army organized groups to study the novel and bought 80 percent of the first edition¹⁶ Then organizations everywhere, particularly party groups, were also required to study the novel seriously. *How the Steel Was Tempered* became overwhelmingly popular throughout the Soviet Union. During the two years before Ostrovskii's death in 1936, the novel was reissued in fifty Soviet national languages.¹⁷ Until the late 1980s the novel was still required reading for Soviet students.¹⁸

How the Steel Was Tempered described the transformation of the hero, Pavel Korchagin, from a lad lacking of political consciousness, who after living through wars and revolution and guided by several old communist enlighteners, finally became a firm Bolshevik. Thereafter, he devoted his life to revolution and the struggle for liberating all human beings. The little town, Shepetovka in Ukraine, where Pavel Korchagin grew up, was also Ostrovskii's hometown. The town, situated at the intersection of six railroads and not far away from the Polish border, was a critical strategic location. It was occupied in turn by the Germans, the Red Army, the White Army, Ukrainian nationalists, and the Polish army. The Red

14. Except for polishing words and style, there were many changes in the plots, more changes related to politics. For example, the editors deleted the last chapter of the first part about Pavel joining the Worker Opposition and Pavel jumping off the cliff for Tonia's enchanting eyes. The second part was under even more massive revision. Almost all the descriptions on the debates between Stalinists and Trotskyists were deleted. The editors for the book were more sensitive to politics than those of the journal. The contents of the book were not the same as those of the serialized novel. Elena Tolstaia-Stegal, "K Literaturnomu fonu knigi *Kak zakalialas stal'*," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, 22, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1981): 381, 383, 385, 389-92. The full texts of deleted and revised parts can be found in the 1989 edition of Ostrovskii's collected works. See Nikolai Ostrovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, t. 1, *Kak Zakalialas' Stal': Roman* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1989), 389-431.

15. Mikhail Kol'tsov, "Muzhestvo," *Pravda*, March 17, 1935: 4.

16. Ostrovskii, "Gei fuqin he gege dexin" [Letter to father and brother], in *Selected Works of Ostrovskii*, 2: 887.

17. Lev Anninskii, *Kak zakalialas stal' Nikolaia Ostrovskogo* 3rd ed. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), 7; Huang Shunan, "Yizhe qianyan" [Translator's preface], *Gangtieshi Zenyang Lianchengde* (*How the Steel Was Tempered*) (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 1994), 2-3; Tolstaia-Stegal, "Literaturnomu fonu knigi," 383.

18. David Gillespie, *The Twentieth-Century Russian Novel: An Introduction* (Washington, D.C.: Berg Publishers, 1996), 62.

Army won the final victory. The story started with the expulsion of Pavel from school for offending the school priest. His mother was a cook for a tax official's household. She sent her twelve-year old son to work in the restaurant kitchen of the main station at Shepetovka. This working environment showed Pavel how people abused power to bully the lower working class. For him, this was the epitome of the world. Meanwhile, Pavel learned from a Bolshevik sailor, Zhukhrai, that the Bolshevik Party aimed at liberating suppressed people. Pavel shared this goal, started secretly to support the Red Army, joined the fighting, became a member of the *Komsomol*, and went through such hardships as building the railway. In the process, he was severely wounded, became disabled, and eventually bed-ridden. However, he did not want to become a useless person who squandered government handouts. He tried hard to figure out other means to dedicate himself to the revolution. In the end, Pavel decided to use his pen to write about his life experience, which meant that he used pen to rejoin the cause of revolution.

Ostrovskii specifically emphasized that the novel was not his autobiography, even though part of story was based on his own personal experience.¹⁹ However, the most compelling sections were those parts closely related to his own life. The title, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, suggested that a revolutionary hero was not naturally born. The hero as steel was made by tempering in a blazing fire and then drastically cooled. In the beginning the editors felt that the title might be misleading and too easily related to the real steel-making business. But Ostrovskii insisted on it for he believed that the three Russian initials of the title, KZS, would serve as the lighthouse for the youth.²⁰

In October 1935, Ostrovskii was awarded the Order of Lenin, the first Soviet writer to win it. At that time, the chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the CPSU, G. I. Petrovskii, wrote a preface for the book, pointing out its significance for educating Soviet youth. Pavel's life served as a model for how to live and work. Modern youth would learn how to purge the residues of old life and embark on the new life. For the sake of socialist struggle, Pavel gave up his love for a non-proletarian lass. Whether wounded in a battle or afflicted by illness, Pavel did not surrender. He tenaciously dedicated himself to the construction of his country and the opposition to all wrong political tendencies – i.e., struggling for the Leninist line.²¹ A standard Soviet textbook on literature pointed out that “the writer links the biography of Pavel Korchagin with the fate of the whole generation that brought about the proletarian revolution.” Also, “N. Ostrovskii opened up man's inexhaustible spiritual possibilities, proving that devotion to social ideals and communism engenders a sublime, genuine morality, and spiritually enriches a person.”²²

19. He particularly stressed that the novel only contained true stories. Ostrovskii, “Dui waiguo pengyoumen jiangdehua” [Talks to foreign friends], in *Selected Works of Ostrovskii*, 2: 758.

20. *Ibid.*, 2: 771; Tolstaia-Stegal, “Literaturnomu fonu knigi,” 376.

21. G. I. Petrovskii, Preface to *How the Steel Was Tempered* (Hong Kong: Sanlian Shuju, 1972), 10-11.

22. Gillespie, *The Twentieth-Century Russian Novel*, 62.

Pavel's heroic model was in fact closely connected with the Soviet political environment. The Soviet authorities utilized many parts of the novel as the literary reference for studying Stalin's *Short Course on the History of the CPSU (b)*.²³ In order to boost the Russian patriotic spirit to resist the German invasion, the CPSU made a movie in 1942 based on the novel widely publicizing Pavel's spirit.²⁴ During World War II, people frequently found a bullet-pierced copy in the coat pockets of wounded or dead soldiers.²⁵ In addition, some regiments' troops were named after Pavel Korchagin.²⁶

2. The translation and diffusion of *How the Steel Was Tempered* in China

The May Fourth Movement massively introduced Russian culture to China. In the 1920s the famous writer, Lu Xun, believed Russian writers could serve as China's mentors and friends. He actively translated Russian literature into Chinese.²⁷ In the beginning of China's war of resistance against Japan, there was a renewed interest in translating Soviet literature. These translations mainly focused on resisting imperialist powers.²⁸ Among these works, the most influential were Aleksandr Fadeev, *The Rout* and Aleksandr Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*. Cao Jinghua, a famous translator, recalled that *The Iron Flood* was reprinted several times in Yanan. Almost all the old cadres from the Long March had a copy of the novel. He said that it almost became the textbook for the army.²⁹ This statement maybe somewhat exaggerated; nevertheless its popularity cannot be disputed. In the early years of the PRC, there was a wave of translations of Soviet literature. In addition to reprinting old Soviet literary works published since the 1930s, the authorities also translated a great many new works. According to the incomplete statistics by the Communist Chief Publishing Bureau, from February 1949 to September 1952, 3,131 different Soviet books were translated into Chinese in mainland China. The People's Publishing House published 12,166,100 volumes of Chinese translations, one-sixth of which were translation of Lenin's and Stalin's

23. L. Chaliaskaia & M. Chaliaskii, "Xuexi 'Liangong (bu) Dangshi' de wenyi cankao ziliao" [The literary and art reference material on studying Short Course of the CPSU (b)], *Zhongguo Qingnian*, 10 (1953): 5.

24. The director was Mark Donskoi.

25. L. F. Ershov, *Istoriia russkoi sovetskoi literatury* (Moscow: Vysshiaia Shkola, 1988), 219.

26. L. Timofeev ed., *Ehuosi Soweiai Wenxue Jianshi* [Brief History of Russian and Soviet Literature], trans. Yin Han, cited from Zou Zhenhuan, "Gangtie Shi Zhenyang Lianchengde: Zairu Zhongguo gemingshice de jiaokeshu" [*How the Steel Was Tempered: Written into the textbook of Chinese revolutionary history*], *Yingxiang Zhongguo Jindai Shehuide Yibaizhong Yizuo* [One Hundred Translated Works' Influence Over Contemporary Chinese Society] (Beijing: Zhongguo duiwaifanyi chubangongsi, 1996), 411.

27. Lu Xun, "Zhu zhongge wenzi zhijiao" [Congratulate the exchanges of written forms in Chinese and Russian], in *Completed Collected Works of Lu Xun* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1973), 5: 53-58.

28. Li Mingbin, *Zhongguo yu Esu Wenhua Jiaoliuzhi* [Records of Cultural Exchange between China and Russia/Soviet Union] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1998), 258-59.

29. Cao Jinghua, "Sulian wenxue zaizhongguo" [Soviet literature in China], *Renmin Ribao*, Feb. 14, 1952: 3.

works.³⁰ Up to 1953, among the Chinese translations of literature, 79 had won the Stalin Prize such as *The Young Guard*, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, *Story of Zoia and Shura*, *Aleksandr Matrosov*, *Days and Nights*, *Story of Tania*, and *Unyielding People* and were the best sellers then. Among the best sellers, *How the Steel Was Tempered* had the largest circulation.³¹

The earliest edition of *How the Steel Was Tempered* in China was translated by Duan Luofu and Chen Feihuang from a Japanese translation in 1936 and published in May 1937 by the Shanghai Chaofeng publishing house. But the most influential and most widely circulated edition was translated by Mei Yi from the English rendition of Alec Brown's *The Making of A Hero*.³² According to the communist publishing statistics, after the founding of the PRC the most popular seventeen novels included Yong Mo's *Song of Youth* (Qingchunzhige). Among them, the only translated novel was *How the Steel Was Tempered*. From October 1949 to December 1952, more than 2 million copies of the novel were sold.³³ The People's Literature published Mei Yi's edition revised and enlarged according to Russian texts in December 1952. This first revised and enlarged edition was reprinted twenty-five times between 1952 and 1966, accounting for over 1 million copies; the second to fourth editions were reprinted thirty-two times between 1979 and 1995, accounting for 1.3 million copies. The total amounts were fifty-seven times and over 2.5 million copies.³⁴ It is obvious that the largest volume of the publication concentrated on the early 1950s. In addition, there were editions geared for children and those with limited reading ability.³⁵

The Chinese people became familiar with Pavel Korchagin through other media as well. During the Chinese civil war, a play entitled *Pavel Korchagin* was performed in Manchuria.³⁶ In the autumn of 1949 Beijing New China Radio Station began a serialized broadcast of Pavel's story for a children's program.³⁷ In

30. New China Agency, "Zhongsu liangguo sannianlai wenhuajiaoliu gongzuo" [The cultural exchange work between China and the Soviet Union in the past three years], *Renmin Ribao*, Dec. 9, 1952: 3.

31. "Woguo daliang chuban Sulian wenxue shuji zhongwen yiben" [The Chinese translations of Soviet literary works are published by great quantity in our country], *Wenhuibao*, Nov. 20, 1953: 3.

32. Zou Zhenhuan, "Gangtie shi zenyang lianchengde zuizao yu yingxiang zuidade yiben" [The earliest and most influential edition of *How the Steel Was Tempered*], *Yilin Jiuzong* [Old traces in the translation forest] (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 200.

33. Zou, "Zairu zhongguo gemingshice de jiaokeshu," 409-10.

34. Mei Yi, "Yihouji" [Words after translation], *How the Steel Was Tempered* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1997), 493.

35. For example, Bai Ren abridged (Tianjin: Zhishi shudian, 1949); Zhong Yao abridged (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1950); Pengdalinko adapted, Lu Lizhi trans. (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1951); Wu Zhaojiang & Li Qing adapted (Beijing: Kaiming shudian, 1952); Pan Anrong annotated (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1960); In 1959 the People's Fine Art Publisher for the first time published a strip cartoon adapted by Wang Su & Xia Xing and sketched by Yi Jin. (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2000).

36. The earliest date was in summer 1948. Gao Mang, "Baoer jingshen busi" [The immortality of Pavel's spirit], *Renmin Ribao*, July 11, 1990: 8; Lu Zhi, "Baoer jiaoyule women: yige gongchandangyuan yinggaishi zenyangderen?" [Pavel has educated us: What kind of person a communist should be?], *Zhongguo Qingnian*, no. 20 (Sept. 1949): 7-8.

37. "Xinhuadiantai jinwanyuomu" [Tonight's program of New China Radio Station], *Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 21, 1949: 4.

October 1950, Beijing Youth Theatrical Troupe performed the drama, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, directed by Zhou Enlai's adopted daughter, Sun Weishi. The famous actor, Jin San, played the role of Pavel. The performance ran for three months and tickets were very hard to get.³⁸ At the beginning of the Korean War, to drum up support for the Anti-America and Aiding Korea movement, the authorities hurried to translate and to show the Soviet movie, *How the Steel Was Tempered*.³⁹ Probably because the movie had been hastily produced during World War Two, the plot was dull and lengthy, the structure was loose, and the acting poor. In 1956 Aleksandr Alov and Pavel Naumov directed a much better version under the title of *Pavel Korchagin*. The directors revised some plots and made the movie more vivid than the original novel. In addition, the excellent performance of the leading actor made the movie very impressive. In celebration of the fortieth anniversary of October revolution in 1957, the authorities dubbed the movie in Chinese and showed it in twenty-nine cities. The province of Liaoning even sent out 200 film teams to the countryside to show the movie.⁴⁰ Because of the mass media, the heroic image of Pavel became widespread. Since the great majority of Chinese in the 1950s were illiterate, the movie reached many more Chinese than the novel.

In addition, language textbooks were also used to instill Pavel's message in young minds. The novel's section on building a railway was incorporated into many textbooks. There were also classes named after Pavel to publicize his spirit. In 1952, after the Fifth High School in Beijing obtained permission from the Beijing Education Bureau and Soviet Embassy, the first class named after Pavel was founded. It aimed at achieving excellent grades. A picture of Pavel Korchagin was hung in the classroom.⁴¹ Schools in other cities one after another also established "Pavel classes."⁴² Moreover, some schools initiated a "Reading good books, learning from Pavel" program to emulate Pavel's spirit and labor for the fatherland.⁴³

Interestingly, this popular red book on the mainland was banned in Taiwan, due to the political environment then. The authorities of the GMD not only did not encourage people to read it, but also would punish those who did it. One of the

38. Xu Guorong & Zuo Lai, *Jin Shan Zhuan* [Biography of Jin Shan] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1989); Cao Jinghua, "Sulian wenxue zai Zhongguo" [Soviet literature in China], *Renmin Ribao*, Feb. 14, 1951: 3. In early 1951, there was also a dramatic performance directed by Tian Kai in Shanghai. *Jiefang Ribao*, Jan. 8, 1951: 2; Feb. 2, 1951: 2.

39. "Haodianying Jieshao" [Introducing good movies], *Renmin Ribao*, March 4, 1950: 6; "Dianyingju sanzhipianchang fanyipian gongzuozhe baogao gongzuo" [Work report by the translation workers in the three film studios of the Movie Bureau], *ibid.*, March 4, 1951: 1.

40. "Sulian dianyingzhou shengli jieshu" [A victory ending for the Soviet film week], *ibid.*, Nov. 27, 1957: 4.

41. Xu Zuzhe (one of the students in the class of Pavel), "Baouer jingshen guwu women qianjin" [Pavel's spirit encouraged us to march forward] <<http://www.zhongguo.com/theme/gangtie/index.htm>, Nov. 17, 2000>.

42. Chen Zhaoxiang, "Baouer zaojiu laile" [Pavel came long ago], *Zhongguo Qingnianbao*, Jan. 13, 1957: 1.

43. Yang Yongming, "Yaowei zuguo wangwode laodong" [Need to labor for the fatherland selflessly], *Renmin Ribao*, May 13, 1990: 7.

charges against twelve Taiwanese young people accused of treason was that they had read the "bandit" book, *How the Steel Was Tempered*.⁴⁴

3. Pavel's heroic model and molding the "new socialist man"

Since the Yanan period, how to mold the heroic model had been the crucial issue for the Chinese communist literary and artistic world. However, due to the limited space, it is impossible to discuss the issue in this article. Here I can only briefly state Pavel's heroic model and spirit presented in the book of *How the Steel Was Tempered*. The highest guideline for Pavel's life was dedication to the party and the revolution. All other things were subordinated to this ultimate goal. Two principles determined his thoughts and behavior: class and collective consciousness. They explained all of Pavel's deeds.

1) Love: Pavel, who was from a worker's family, unintentionally fell in love with a forester's daughter, Tonia. When Pavel took Tonia to attend a *Komsomol* mass meeting, a problem appeared. Surrounded by *Komsomol* members clothed in rags, Tonia's beautiful dress not only was conspicuous but also was inappropriate. At that time Pavel felt immensely embarrassed and angry. How he wished that Tonia could have thrown away all such bourgeois bondage and joined the revolution with him. Although Tonia had the courage to love a worker, she did not love the ideal of the working class. The only option for Pavel was to break up with Tonia. In their last talk Pavel told her, "I, first of all, belong to the party. Then it's you and other relatives." Later on, he evaded love with the *Komsomol* member, Rita, because he felt he had not accomplished enough for the revolution.⁴⁵ Although Pavel later confessed that his attitude toward love caused some regrets, nevertheless he still believed that he gained more than lost. In the end he married Daia because he had a sense of mission to help this young woman become a party member. Otherwise, he would have been worthless.⁴⁶ All Pavel's experiences of love were, in fact, trials of loyalty to revolution, i.e., tempering his party spirit (*partiinost'*). In Pavel's eyes, class relations were more important than love.

2) Career: One of the most outstanding parts describing the heroic image provided by Pavel was building the railway. The *Komsomol* members intended to build a light railroad from Boiarka station directly to the logging area in order to supply wood for Kiev in the winter. It portrayed the trials of Pavel and the *Komsomol* members: they worked in a freezing cold and rainy climate, slept on a cold and damp concrete, ate bread crumbs, wore little clothing and broken boots, sucked snow for water, and endured bandits' attacks and disease. The hardships did not discourage the *Komsomol* members. On the contrary, they redouble their efforts. This story showed how hardships tempered the steel of the human spirit. Therefore, it was incorporated into textbooks. Either in fierce battles or in socialist constructions, Pavel lived in the collective and entirely forgot about "I." In his eyes there was only the party, no self; only collective consciousness, no individual consciousness.

44. Sources provided by Mr. Shi Xianhua.

45. *How the Steel Was Tempered* (Beijing, 2000), 201-02, 222.

46. *Ibid.*, 384-85, 426, 439.

3) Life and death: War wounds and disease eventually left Pavel paralyzed. For a short time he became pessimistic and even thought of committing suicide. When he reflected on his past twenty-four years by the seaside, he wondered whether to destroy his betrayed body with one shot. But, after second thoughts he considered this a cowardly action. In the end he concluded that even if life had reached an unbearable level, he must live to make his life useful to the people.⁴⁷ A passion and devotion to the party and revolution overcame his doubts. He resolved that in life nothing could be more horrible than dropping out of the revolutionary march. As long as his heart was still beating, he would not abandon the party.

In short, the so-called Pavel's spirit emphasized "correct" love based on class consciousness and revolutionary spirit. One must have a clear class consciousness as well as have a firm proletarian position. One had to cultivate steel-like will and insist on revolutionary optimism in work and life. Pavel's heroism was collective heroism, not individual heroism.

In the Soviet Union, the *Komsomol* was the main organ to promote the study of *How the Steel Was Tempered* and to mobilize its members to emulate Pavel. Similarly in mainland China, the Communist Youth League of China (CYLC), *Chinese Youth Magazine* and *Chinese Youth Newspaper* did likewise. However, the archives on this subject remain largely closed. Therefore, we can only get a sketchy picture based on some currently available published materials.

When the drama *How the Steel Was Tempered* was performed in Beijing, the Central deputy secretary of Chinese New Democratic Youth Corps (in 1957 it re-named as CYLC), Liao Chengzhi pointed out the two aims of the performance: 1) to let the Chinese youth know about the struggle of the Soviet youth and the training of *Komsomol* members, and the transformation of the *Komsomol* into the Party's reserve force; and 2) to learn from the Soviet experience to bind the Youth Corps to the masses, to enhance political consciousness, and to make party members possess noble quality of devotion to revolution like Pavel.⁴⁸

In January 1957 Nikolai Ostrovskii's wife visited mainland China and went to various schools to recount her husband's life story and publicize Pavel's spirit.⁴⁹ She visited Beijing University, too. The CYLC at Beijing University then used a case of a student, Huang Jian, to promote Pavel's spirit by discussions between teachers and students. When Huang Jian was sixteen, his hometown was "liberated" and ruled by the CCP. Then, his father got a job. He was an activist and was among the first to join the CYLC. While participating in the land reform propaganda work, he became a close friend with his classmate, Li Hua. During the Korean War, the CCP called for the youth to join the army. Huang Jian decided to put away his books, answered the call and persuaded Li Hua to go with him. Li Hua, however, suddenly changed her mind and decided to stay. Five years later after

47. Ibid, 191, 404, 419, 424.

48. Liao Chengzhi, "Yanchu Baoer Kechajin de yiyi" [The significance of performing Pavel Korchagin], *Renmin Ribao*, Sept. 20, 1950: 3.

49. Wang Xuezheng et al. eds., *Beijing Daxue Jishi, 1898-1997* [Chronology of Beijing University, 1898-1997] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 1: 512; "Aositeloufusiji de furen tong Beijing qingnian jianmian" [Madame Ostrovskii met Beijing Youth], *Renmin Ribao*, Jan. 21, 1957: 4.

Huang Jian was demobilized, he passed the entrance examination to become a student in Beijing University. One day he ran into Li Hua, who had graduated from the university and was working in a science institute. She and her husband had published several articles in science journals. Huang Jian could not help asking himself who was wrong: he or Li Hua? Huang Jian considered himself a progressive person, this was why he had joined the army. Yet he had spent five undistinguished years. If he did not change, he would spend the rest of his life the same way. He drew a painful conclusion that his forsaking study for political activities meant giving up the capital to serve the people. Time and tide wait for no one. The experience of life proved that those who ignored politics gained more. They spent time on study to acquire genuine skills, while political activities were mere talk incapable of solving problems. In the past he too had been naïve. He had emulated the heroes portrayed in movies. Later he realized that in real life there were no such heroes who would sacrifice everything for a higher cause. The heroes were simply the creations of writers and artistic masters. Now it was time for him to be more mature. Yet, Huang Jian felt uneasy about reaching such a conclusion. Politically he felt he lagged far behind. He thought of withdrawing from the CYLC in order not to become a burden on it and thus could rid himself of his uneasiness. But he did not do so. In fact, he did not know what to do.⁵⁰ In the end he wrote a letter to the Beijing University weekly journal soliciting advice.

Huang Jian's letter sparked a heated debate among teachers and students. Some readers felt that Huang Jian's conclusion was not entirely wrong. It was impossible both to study and to engage in politics. Students' duty, after all, was to focus on study.⁵¹ Others believed that Huang Jian had pointed out a certain objective fact, i.e., if he had not joined the army, he would have achieved more via his studies. This in turn would have made a greater contribution to backward China.⁵² Another reader stated that he had similar experience to Huang Jian's and he insisted his choice was correct. The beautiful life at Beijing University was paid by the revolutionary martyrs' lives. He was proud that he had participated in the revolutionary struggle. Huang Jian did not waste his life in joining the Korean War. He might lag in book knowledge but he had gained a more vivid and profound education in life.⁵³ Such opinions echoed Pavel's conclusions. Other readers thought Huang Jian had mixed up personal honor, position and revolutionary contribution all together. He did not correctly understand the question of making one's contribution to the revolution, but was shadowed by individualism. They all believed that what Huang Jian had done in the past was not wrong, what went wrong was his current thinking. They urged Huang Jian to consolidate his revolu-

50. "Qingniantuanyuan de chenghao yiweizhe sheme" [What does the title of CYLC member mean?], *Beijing Daxue Xiaokan*, no.109, March 3, 1957: 4.

51. Yandong, "Worenwei xuesheng bubi zuo shehuigongzuo" [I think students don't have to do social work], *ibid.*, no. 111, March 16, 1957: 3.

52. Shixin, "Zheyeshi keguan shishi" [This is also an objective fact], *ibid.*, no. 110, March 11, 1957: 3.

53. Wang Kewu, "Women aichang zhezhi" [We love to sing this song], *ibid.*, no.110, March 11, 1957: 3.

tionary view of world, not to be concerned about personal gains or losses. The collective profit was higher than personal profit. The collective life, struggle, and sacrifice for revolution would bring true happiness.⁵⁴

The propaganda section of the CYLC concluded that students should learn from Pavel's spirit – his incomparable hatred of the enemy and his unparalleled love for the party, the people and the socialist fatherland. "One should learn from Pavel's spirit of enduring hardships and waging an arduous struggle in order to protect our socialist road and to propel our socialist construction cause."⁵⁵ Huang Jian's experiences and problems were widely shared by his contemporaries. There was no doubt that the CYLC wanted to use Huang's case to inculcate Pavel's spirit in the young.

4. Pavel's spirit and the development of politics and current affairs

The contents of Pavel's spirit, stressed by the CCP authorities, varied according to different political movements. Mei Yi recalled that in April 1938 in Shanghai he was asked to translate *How the Steel Was Tempered* from Alec Brown's edition, *The Making of A Hero*. The CCP authorities thought this work had great educational significance for Chinese readers and especially for the young. Mei Yi did not finish the translation until the winter of 1941 and it was published in the summer of 1942. It was distributed not only in Shanghai but also in the GMD and CCP occupied areas.⁵⁶ The book immediately played a role in the Ratification Campaign for thought reform after its publication. The CCP authorities exhorted all to learn from Pavel Korchagin by working hard to enhance one's political consciousness and temper one's party spirit.⁵⁷ Anyone who disliked reading the book was accused of having a bourgeois tendency.⁵⁸ During the Chinese civil war (1945-1949), the CCP published various abridged editions, because the original was too big and costly for the young readers and cadres. These new editions aimed at encouraging the youth to join the revolution and strengthen their will in the harsh struggle against the GMD.⁵⁹

In June 1950 the Korean War broke out. The Shanghai Film Studio hurried to translate and show the film of *How the Steel Was Tempered* in order to promote Pavel's patriotic spirit. Meanwhile all circles sent various materials to the front,

54. Ibid., no. 110, March 11, 1957: 3; no. 11, March 16, 1957: 3; no. 114, April 6, 1957: 4; no. 116, April 19, 1957: 4.

55. "Xiang Baoer Kechajin xuexi" [To learn from Pavel Korchagin], *ibid.*, no. 173, Nov. 30, 1957: 4.

56. Mei Yi, "Chongban houji" [Words after reprinting], *How The Steel Was Tempered* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1995), 527. This edition was also revised by Jiang Chufang according to Russian edition. Mei Yi, "Shenqingde huainian" [Deep emotion of remembrance], *Shanghai "Gudao" Wenxue Huiyilu* [Literary Reminiscences on the "Isolated Island" of Shanghai] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1985), 2: 66.

57. Wu Yunduo, *Bayiqie Xiangeidang* [Devote everything to the Party] (Beijing: Gongren chubanshe, 1953), 176.

58. Gao Hua, *Hongtaiyang Shi Zenyang Shengqide* [How Did the Red Sun Rise?] (Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2000), 432.

59. Bai Ren abridged, "Suoxie dehua" [Words on abridgement] *How the Steel Was Tempered* (Tianjin: Zhishi shudian, 1949), 1.

including the book, to boost morale.⁶⁰ In response to Pavel's patriotic spirit, students organized combat teams or applied for the military cadre schools.⁶¹ During the crisis over the Taiwan Straits in 1958, the military regiment at Beijing University claimed that in emulation of Pavel's spirit, once the CCP issued the order, they would immediately march to the front.⁶² After the wars ended, the CCP authorities had to deal with the many demobilized soldiers who had become handicapped in wars. They offered Pavel's optimism and his stubborn resistance to fate. Thus, when *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily) covered news on disabled soldiers' schools or disabled veterans' homes, it emphasized how bravely and courageously these veterans faced their life's challenges. Like Pavel, they too strived to serve the people. They were called "Chinese Pavels."⁶³

Starting in 1953, the CCP embarked on its First Five-Year-Plan. It focused on implementing the 156 key industrial projects assisted by the Soviet Union. When Ostrovskii decided to entitle the novel, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, he implied not only the need to temper a human's will like steel, but also the need to industrialize in order to become a modern country.⁶⁴ The CCP shared Ostrovskii's implication and wanted to use Pavel's spirit as a model to assist Chinese socialist industrialization. In the mid-1950s to solve the problem of urban youth unemployment and the need for supporting agricultural cooperative movement and development of state collective farms, the Communist authorities encouraged intellectuals to settle down in rural areas or frontiers where their knowledge and skills were needed.⁶⁵ Among these people and victims of the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, many clung to Pavel's image to defy difficulties and embraced tasks traditionally spurned by intellectuals.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, residents in the cities were mobilized and organized to do obligatory work. For example, residents in Beijing organized Pavel teams or student Pavel platoons constructing the reservoir of the

60. *Renmin Ribao*, March 4, 1951: 1; Jan. 20, 1951: 3; Febr. 26, 1951: 2; June 16, 1951: 4; Febr. 18, 1953: 1.

61. *Ibid.*, Dec. 1, 1951: 1; Dec. 3, 1950: 2; Dec. 8, 1950: 2; Jan. 8, 1951: 3; July 3, 1951: 1.

62. "Quanmin dongyuande haojiao xiangle" [Bugle calls for mobilizing people of the whole country], *ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1958: 3.

63. *Ibid.*, Dec. 20, 1952: 3; June 4, 1958: 8; Aug. 5, 1958: 4; Feb. 26, 1959: 6.

64. Yu Yizhong maintains that the word "steel" in the title implies the cult of Stalin and the Stalinist political line. His reason is that the word root of Stalin's family name happens to be related to the Russian word, *stal'* (steel). Yu Yizhong, "gangtie shi zenyang lianchengde shi yiben haoshuma?" [Is *How the Steel Was Tempered* a good book?], *Eluosi Wenyi* 2 (1998): 65. I would argue that the usage of the word, *stal'* is closely related to the Stalinist line, but has nothing to do with the cult of Stalin. First, Stalin did not play a prominent role in the novel and Stalin was rarely mentioned. Pavel's political mentors were either old red army soldiers or old party members, not Stalin. Second, at the time when the novel was published the climax of the cult of Stalin had not yet been reached.

65. Ding Yizhuang, *Zhongguo Zhiqingshi - Chulan, 1953-1968* [History of Chinese Intellectual Youth - First Wave, 1953-1968] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 40-45; Du Honglin, *Fengchao Dangluo, 1955-1979 - Zhongguo Zhiqing Shangshan Xiaxiang Yundongshi* [Undulant Tides, 1955-1979 - History of Chinese Intellectual youth going to the mountains and countryside movement] (Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 1993), 18-19.

66. *Renmin Ribao*, Jan. 27, 1958: 4; Jan. 28, 1958: 8; Feb. 13, 1958: 4.

Thirteen Ming Emperors' Tombs. While they were working, they would hold Pavel's pictures high.⁶⁷

In the late 1950s as Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, the Soviet hero, Pavel Korchagin, played a very paradoxical role in mainland China. In 1956 Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin in the Twentieth Party Congress for his cult of personality and the purges of old Bolsheviks. Mao Zedong believed that Khrushchev was wrong to completely negate Stalin, putting the Soviet Union on the road to revisionism. In 1960 Khrushchev suddenly and abruptly recalled all Soviet specialists in mainland China. Both sides increasingly and heatedly denounced each other. On the one hand, the Chinese hero, Lei Feng, gradually replaced Pavel's heroic image. On the other hand, the CCP considered itself the protector of Pavel's spirit and used it as a weapon to attack the CPSU. In the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute, the CCP believed that whoever embraced Pavel's spirit possessed the legitimate socialism. The general secretary of CYLC, Hu Yaobang, severely denounced Soviet revisionism in the CYLC Ninth Congress. He said the Soviet Union harshly criticized the Chinese soldier, Lei Feng, who completely devoted himself to serving the people. According to the Soviets, Lei Feng was "absurd," "having no brain." The Soviet authorities also believed that Pavel Korchagin's era had passed. Pavel's fanatical spirit of self-sacrifice and ascetic behaviors were outdated and over-heated.⁶⁸ In addition, a student, who had studied in the Soviet Union but was forced to return to China after the complete Sino-Soviet rupture, claimed that *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* not only had published articles of declaring Pavel's spirit outdated, but also were propagating the bourgeois world of view of everyone for oneself and the devil take the hindmost.⁶⁹ I have not been able to find the articles in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* to verify the student's claim. However, given that on October 4, 1966 the Soviet authorities erected an Ostrovskii statute in his hometown, Shepetovka, and identified him with Pavel Korchagin,⁷⁰ it was very possible that the student's statement twisted the newspapers' coverages or simply took them out of context.

In the 1960s the CCP emphasis on Pavel's spirit focused on class antagonisms and the class struggle. In 1963 when the novel appeared in cartoon form, it stressed Pavel's proletarian background and fight for the dictatorship of the proletarian class. In the preface to the 1964 edition of the novel Cheng Daixi praised the novel for telling people "not to forget the class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the past. It was also a good book on strengthening revolutionary will and increasing revolutionary enthusiasm."⁷¹ During the Cultural Revolution, Pavel's spirit was again picked up by the CCP as a political weapon. Externally, it

67. Ibid., May 17, 1958: 4

68. Hu Yaobang, "Wei woguo qingnian geminghua er douzheng" [For the struggle of revolutionizing our youth], *ibid.*, July 7, 1964: 2.

69. Ibid., Nov. 15, 1966: 4.

70. A. Levina & S. Esman, "Pravoflangovyi Komsomolii: v Shepetovke otkryt pamianik Nikolaiiu Ostrovskomu," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, Oct. 4, 1966: 1.

71. Cheng Daixi, "Yibenxu" [Preface for the translation], trans. Mei Yi, *How the Steel Was Tempered* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1964), 15.

was used to criticize and denounce Soviet revisionism; internally it was used to emphasize the dictatorship of the proletariat and the spirit of class struggle. In the early 1970s, when the Gang of Four was still in power, several times the People's Literature Publisher tried to reprint Mei Yi's translation. However, because the translator was a "capitalist fellow-traveller, refusing to repent even until death," it was never allowed.⁷²

The emphasis on class antagonism and struggle was even more clearly reflected in the preface to a new translation by the workers from the third section of Daqing oil field, the 72nd class of proletarian-peasant-soldier students and revolutionary teachers in the Department of Chinese at Heilongjiang University: "Today reading this novel makes us treasure the dictatorship of the proletariat more, hate the Soviet-revisionist traitor clique more, and strengthen our determination more to carry out the struggles combating and preventing revisionism to the very end." It also praised Pavel Korchagin as a model proletarian soldier. "The struggle experience and revolutionary spirit of the entire generation of revolutionary youth are well reflected in Pavel." "Pavel continuously defeated the attack of bourgeois thought, overcame various kinds of anti-proletarian consciousness, and never tolerated his own errors and shortcomings. He consciously resisted the poison of bourgeois thought and the erosion of petty-bourgeois forces. He actively attacked at them. In order to preserve the purity of the proletarian class in organizations and thought, he drew a clear demarcation between whom or what to hate or to love and hated the wicked like enemies. . . ."⁷³ In addition, they followed the criteria, used during the Cultural Revolution, that a hero must be "tall, big, and perfect" to evaluate *How the Steel Was Tempered*. They maintained that the novel played up too much the love between Pavel and Tonia, his despair at losing his health and losing his manuscript in the mail. These shortcomings damaged Pavel's heroic image.⁷⁴ These criticisms well reflected the requirements for a hero during the Cultural Revolution; a hero must be perfect in class, morality and behavior.

5. Ordinary people's reading of Pavel's spirit

Although *How the Steel Was Tempered* was widely circulated in the 1950s and 1960s with the highest sales volume for a translated novel in China, this does not necessarily mean that it was the most popular translated novel. We know that the sale volume was closely connected with the officially directed distribution and sale. Yet, we also should not ignore that at that time few Chinese could afford their own books but borrowed them from friends or libraries. What the actual readings would be among ordinary people is the most difficult and complicated question to answer.

Many readers who echoed the official interpretation of Pavel's spirit appeared in various official newspapers and magazines. They believed that young people

72. Mei, "Chongban Houji," 528.

73. The translation group of the Department of Russian and 72th worker-peasant-soldier class trans., *How the Steel Was Tempered* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1976), 1, 3-4, 6-9.

74. *Ibid.*, 9.

should answer the call from the party.⁷⁵ When the CCP called for young intellectuals to work in remote areas, there were indeed a many hot-blooded youth encouraged by Pavel's spirit.⁷⁶ When the writer Laogui (Ma Po, the son of a famous writer, Yang Mo) was still in high school, he decided to work in Inner Mongolia. Pavel's fanatically hardworking spirit at the local train station was his model.⁷⁷ Although there were people forced to do manual work in order to reform themselves, Pavel's spirit helped them endure their endless humiliations and extremely heavy labor.⁷⁸

For those who became handicapped, the most convincing and useful spiritual encouragement came from Pavel's similar experience. For example, a twenty-four-year-old youth, Ruan Songming became bedridden because of rheumatic arthritis. In the beginning he was in despair about his future. *How the Steel Was Tempered* brought him hope and courage. He decided to learn Russian. After years' of study, he published many translations. Similar cases could be found in many cities.⁷⁹ A junior high school student, Liao Yixun, became disabled after the Korean War, only one thumb could move. In bed he read *How the Steel Was Tempered*, *The Young Guard*, and *A Real Man*. They strengthened his will and his confidence in victory. He particularly learned from Pavel and diligently learned to write.⁸⁰ Another soldier from the Korean War, Huang Renchuan, lost both of his arms. After reading the novel in a comic book, he learned to use mouth painting pictures and became a propagandist.⁸¹ *Renmin Ribao* always covered several similar cases every year. Such responses were in keeping with mainstream official interpretations.

The most interesting case of learning from Pavel's spirit was probably that of Gao Yubao. A soldier from a poor peasant background, he had only received a one-month education. If he wanted to write ten characters, he would have to ask

75. Wang Chengyu, "Yigeren yinggai zengyang huozhe" [How should a person live], *Beijing Ribao*, Nov. 10, 1957: 3; Luo Ming, "Baoer Kechajin geiwode ganshou" [What Pavel Korchagin made me feel] *Xinjiang Ribao*, Nov. 17, 1957: 3; Ye Jun, "Baoer de 'de' 'shi'" [Pavel's "losses" and "gains"], *Zhongguo Qingnian*, no. 24 (1957): 22.

76. Zhang Huiren, "Naqi tieqiao qianwan buneng shuaidao" [Take shovels, be sure not to fall], *Zhongguo Qingnianbao*, Nov. 22, 1957: 3; Li Hui & Lan Yingnian, "Yige shiji de manchang jiechu he yingxiang - guanyu sulianwenxue yu zhongguode duihua" [Long contacts and influences of a century - dialogue between Soviet literature and China] first part, <<http://www.zhongo.com/theme/gantiao/pinglun-012.htm>, 2000/11/17>

77. Laogui, *Xieyutie* [Blood and Iron] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 54.

78. Fan Ruoding, "Xunzhao Baoer Kechajin" [Searching for Pavel Korchagin] <<http://book.peopledaily.com.cn/big5/paper17/1/class001700002/hwz1119.htm>, 2000/11/11>

79. Yao Yuanfang, "Sulianwenxue he Zhongguoqingnian" [Soviet literature and Chinese youth] *Zhongguo Qingnian*, 21 (1957): 7; Li Shiyuan, "Baoer Kechajin guwuwo qianjin" [Pavel Korchagin encouraged me to march forward] *Xinzhongguo Fumu*, 10 (1954): 12-13, 17; Wu Jia, "Gangtie jiushi zheyang lianchengde" [This is how the steel was tempered], *Zhongguo Qingnian*, 81 (1951): 31; Peng Shuzhi, "Sulian wenyi zuopin guwuwo zhanshengle jibing" [Soviet literary and artistic works encouraged me to overcome illness], *ibid.*, 21 (1953): 33.

80. Liao Yixun, "Chongxin zhandoude kaishi" [The beginning of a new struggle], *Renmin Ribao*, Jan. 6, 1952: 4.

81. Fan Bingyi, "Dangde youxiude xuanchuan yuan" [An excellent party propagandist], *ibid.*, May 19, 1959: 6.

people about seven or eight of them. Inspired by Mao Zedong's question why there was no peasant protagonist in Chinese novels, Gao Yubao decided to write his autobiography. While he was writing it, a propagandist in the army told him Ostrovskii's story. Gao was greatly stimulated. He said in great confidence, "The blind Ostrovskii can write. I, who am not blind, write slowly and will write much better than a blind man." In the end he wrote a 300,000 word-autobiographic novel, *Gao Yubao*.⁸² Few would read it today.

Adults and children derived different reasons from Pavel. Pavel's mischief and his punishment at school struck a responsive chord in the hearts of schoolboys, particularly those who were frequently punished by teachers. For them Pavel's story pointed out a bright road: Even one who behaved poorly in school could still become a hero after growing up. The writer Laogui recalled that when repeatedly seeing the movie of *Pavel Korchagin* in Beijing, he, an elementary schoolboy, most liked the part when Pavel hit the dandy, Victor. In Laogui's little mind this scuffle made the noble and beautiful Tonia become Pavel's close friend. Laogui and his classmates imitated Pavel's horse riding, loudly singing the movie theme song on the way to their dormitory in the freezing wind. He felt that the song contained a mysterious force, which would make him chin up and chest out. He did not feel cold at all. On the contrary, every fiber felt alive and he was eager to kill a bad guy or an enemy.⁸³ The idea that revolutionary heroes should treat enemies cruelly was widely shared among elementary and high schools students. Of many causes contributing to the cruelty and violence toward class enemies during the Cultural Revolution, one of them came from the idea of emulating the revolutionary hero. Carrying out the idea could lead to extremely dreadful consequences.

Current available sources show that the communist authorities promoted *How the Steel Was Tempered* mainly in the early 1950s. In the late 1950s, however, the reading interests of young people seemed to change. According to the investigation of CYLC in Zhejiang province, the youth had switched their reading interest away from the officially promoted works, such as *How the Steel Was Tempered*, *To Devote Everything to the Party*, *An Ordinary Soldier*, *Gao Yubao* and so on, to the old Chinese classics, such as *Dream of Red Chamber*, *Water Margin*, *Strange Tales of Liaozi*, *Investiture of the Gods*, and *Romance of Three Kingdoms*.⁸⁴ Artistically these old Chinese classics are far superior to those preaching communist works. Likewise Chinese audiences preferred traditional dramas to the new reformed dramas, which reflected revolutionary life and struggle.⁸⁵

After the founding of the PRC, the state propaganda machine had been focused on how to serve and sacrifice for the party and state. What it stressed was the be-

82. "Yingxungde wenyi zhanshi Gao Yubao" [Heroic literary and artistic soldier, Gao Yubao], *ibid.*, Dec. 16, 1951: 4; Gao Yubao, "Woshi zenyang xuexi wenhua he xuexi xiezuode?" [How I learned literacy and writing?], *ibid.*, June 8, 1952: 4.

83. Laogui, *Xie Yu Tie*, 52, 54.

84. "Zhejiangsheng qingnian jinianlai dui wenxueyishude xinshangxingqu you hendade zhaungyi" [The youth in Zhejiang province greatly shifted their appreciation of literature and art in the past few years], *Neibu Cankao*, Dec. 26, 1957: 11.

85. "Shanghai gejuchang xiandaijumu shangzuoludi" [The ticket sales were low in Shanghai theaters showing modern dramas], *ibid.*, May 24, 1958: 13.

havior models in public sphere, the emotional part as a private sphere was either ignored or treated as business-like and completely rationally. Yet, human beings are, after all, a species full of emotion. There is a time when one wants to channel one's inner feeling outward. It is impossible to hold in one's feeling all the time or always treat it completely rationally. This is probably why young people would shift their reading interest from official preaching works to the old Chinese classics, even though they might still maintain the passion to serve the party and country.

The biggest divergence by ordinary people from the official reading of the novel concerned the relationship between Pavel and Tonia. Juvenile readers focused on their love story while the authorities emphasized their class difference. The last time they met, Pavel was working himself to the bone building the railway. Pavel's ragged clothes and malnourished face shocked Tonia; he sarcastically retorted that Tonia had acquired a bourgeois stench. Naturally some readers accepted the official emphasis on class. Nevertheless, others were fascinated with the love story. Some even felt that it was a great pity that Pavel and Tonia did not marry in the end.⁸⁶ This kind of fascination was more obvious during the Cultural Revolution, when the authorities emphasized permanent revolution, the purification of one's heart and the restriction of one's desires. Literature was prohibited from describing love between a man and a woman or any inclination toward it. Films never had plots concerning love affairs. *How the Steel Was Tempered* was one of the only foreign novels allowed to be legally published during the Cultural Revolution. For many teenagers reaching puberty, the love between Pavel and Tonia provided the only avenue to release their emotion and desire for love.

Zhang Chaoyang, one of the richest men in mainland China today because of his Zouhu website, most remembered Tonia of all the characters in the novel. Tonia's big eyes, enchanting smiles, and even her petty bourgeois temperament immensely fascinated him. As a little red guard in early 1970s, Zhang had felt then that Tonia's world was just like a fairy tale for a poor Chinese child. The novel also provided his first opportunity to learn about love.⁸⁷ A cultural critic, Liu Xiaofeng, remembered a liking for Tonia from the very beginning. She was frank and open-minded, had a tender temperament, and loved reading novels. She had two long, dark and glossy braids, a slender figure, and looked strikingly beautiful in her sailor dress. "She was the first slim, graceful and crystal-clear beauty embodied in my heart."⁸⁸ Tonia stood for proscribed individualism during the Cultural Revolution. Such interpretations lacking a class emphasis were impossi-

86. Chunliang, "Gangtie – na ranshouzhe de zhenshi rensheng" [*Steel – it is burning with real life*], <<http://www.3stonebook.com/ts/t19.htm>, 2001/3/18>; "Mangkunlun – wenxue yishu xinshang – Gangtie Shi Zhenyang Lianchengde" [Overlook high mountain – appreciation of literature and art – *How the Steel Was Tempered*], <<http://www.gs.cninfo.net>>

87. "Anlian Dongniya" [Secretly in love with Tonia], <<http://www.zhongo.com/theme/gangtie/pinglun-05.htm>, 2000/11/17>

88. Liu Xiaofeng, "Jilian Dongniya" [Remember and love Tonia], *Dushu*, no. 1 (1996): 85; "Dongniya de zhongguo qingjie" [Tonia's Chinese plot], <<http://www.zhongo.com/theme/gangtie/pinglun-10.htm>, 2000/11/17>

ble to publish openly in the 1950s and the 1960s. With the widespread internet usage in the past decade, such readings can now at long last appear openly.

6. Pavel's spirit and molding Chinese heroes

In the 1950s among many imported Soviet heroes, there were also a few local Chinese heroes. The earliest and most heavily promoted by the CCP were Liu Hulan and Dong Cunrui. At the age of fourteen, Liu Hulan had become a candidate of the CCP (the CYLC did not exist then). She was arrested by the GMD Yan Xishan's army at fifteen and showed no fear when she was executed. Mao Zedong wrote an inscription for her: "Born great, Died gloriously." Her short biography was published in the summer of 1951 and it was one of the required readings promoted by the CYLC.⁸⁹ Dong Cunrui joined the liberation army at sixteen and died by throwing himself to blast a fortification at nineteen. His biography was also widely spread.⁹⁰ Another hero, alias China's Pavel Korchagin, Wu Yunduo became a member of the CCP in May 1939. He was wounded in trying to defuse a bomb: four fingers on his left hand were gone and his left eye was blinded. He was wounded again in the civil war. Despite these disabilities, he still worked diligently. He admitted that he was heavily influenced by *How the Steel Was Tempered*. The CCP also massively published Wu's book, *To Devote Everything to the Party*.⁹¹

Born in 1915, Wu Yunduo was approaching age fifty on the eve of Cultural Revolution. He was too old to be a national hero. Such models were preferably dead lest real life detract from the revolutionary ideal. Better to find a young "martyr" who had little experience in life and could easily be "molded" into a perfect revolutionary hero. Lei Feng, an orphan who died early, fit these criteria.⁹² In March 1963 the CCP initiated a mass campaign to emulate Lei Feng. The Central Committee of the CYLC urged the youth to learn from Lei Feng about: 1) his loyalty to the party and the proletarian position; 2) his willingness to be a cog in a machine and devotion to serving the people; 3) his concern toward comrades and remaining an altruistic communist; 4) his brave will to overcome all difficulties and do down-to-earth work; and 5) his insistence on the "red" and "expert," and to study Chairman Mao's works hard.⁹³

After Lei Feng, there were various movements aimed at learning from such Liberation Army soldiers, as Wang Jie and Ouyang Hai. The authorities published books about them as well.⁹⁴ They all listened to Chairman Mao, were willing to

89. Liu Hulan was born in 1932 in Shanxi province and died in 1947. Liang Xing, *Liu Hulan Xiaozhuan* [Short Biography of Liu Hulan] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1954)

90. Dong Cunrui was born in Hebei province in 1929 and died in 1948. Ding Hong, Zhao Huan & Dong Xiaohua, *Zhenzhengde Zhanshi: Dong Cunrui de Gushi* [A Real Soldier: Story of Dong Cunrui] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1954)

91. Wu Yunduo, *Bayiqie Xiangeidang* [To Devote Everything to the Party] (Beijing: Gongren chubanshe, 1953).

92. Lei Feng was born in 1939 in Hunan province and in 1962 died of a car accident.

93. Special issue of learning from Lei Feng, *Zhongguo Qingnian*, no. 5-6 (1963): 9.

94. *Lei Feng Rijixuan* [Selection of Lei Feng's Diary] (Beijing: Wenzhi gaige chubanshe, 1978); *Wang Jie Riji* [Diary of Wang Jie] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 1965); Jin Jingmai, *Ouyang Hai Zhige*

accept any work assigned by the party, and were happy to do any small or even trivial good deeds.⁹⁵ Essentially, the heroic models provided by Ouyang Hai and Wang Jie were variations on a theme of Lei Feng. Their thoughts and behavior were almost perfect, leaving no room for criticism. This exactly fit the "big, tall, and perfect" heroic ideal. These heroes promoted by the CCP in the 1960s differed from those old heroes of the 1950s in that they worshiped the cult of Mao Zedong.

In 1964 the Chinese Youth Publisher edited a book entitled *Stories of Young Heroes*. It introduced thirteen Chinese heroes (three females) and all were dead. Nine of them had either died in combat or from execution, one had died rescuing a drowning boy in the Korean War, and the other three had died while on duty. Their ages ranged from fifteen to twenty-eight.⁹⁶ Compared with the "new" heroes in the 1960s, these "old" heroes (whose heroic deeds had all occurred in the 1940s and 1950s) did not worship the cult of Mao Zedong. Two of them wanted to learn from the Soviet World War II heroes, Tania [Zoya Kosmodem'ianskaia] and Aleksandr Matrosov, not Mao Zedong. In contrast, Lei Feng and Wang Jie attributed their good deeds and success solely to Mao Zedong's teaching and applied Mao's thoughts in their daily life. The new Pavel in the Chinese version was entitled *Song of Ouyang Hai* (Ouyang Hai Zhige). Its author, Jin Jingmai, maintained that Ouyang Hai was born with class consciousness and had a selfless spirit of dedication to the revolutionary cause. But this was not enough to be a hero. He specifically emphasized that a hero's growth relied on continuously learning from Chairman Mao's works. Only when Mao's thoughts influenced Ouyang Hai, did he become a real hero.⁹⁷

Compared with the "tall, big, and perfect" Chinese hero, Pavel's imperfect personality made him seem more real. Pavel had a hot-temper, sometimes used coarse language, and was not always disciplined.⁹⁸ He had a distinctive personality, inner conflicts and many personal struggles. His development of political consciousness was a process. In general, Soviet heroes all experienced a "road to consciousness."⁹⁹ Instead, Chinese heroes either had a very short process or none at all. Usually Chinese heroes were born with political consciousness and full of ideas of class struggle. They did not undergo transitions or inner conflicts. Chinese heroes had bones but no flesh. They were more ascetic and dull, flat without personality or temper. They seemed molded of clay, without life or love but only dogma. Their lives had only party and revolution. They were like the characters in

[Song of Ouyang Hai] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1966)

95. Mary Sheridan, "The Emulation of Heroes," *The China Quarterly* 33 (Jan.-March 1968): 47-72.

96. These heroes are Liu Hulan, Dong Cunrui, Wang Xiaohu, Ding Youjun, Yang Gensi, Luo Shengjiao, Du Fengrui, Long Junjue, Xiang Xiuli, Li Gong, Huang Jiguang, Qiu Shaoyun, and An Yemin. *Qingnian Yingxiong de Gushi* [Stories of Young Heroes] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1964)

97. Jin Jingmai, "Ouyang Hai zhige de yunniang he chuanguo" [The ferment and creation of *Song of Ouyang Hai*], *Renmin Ribao*, March 1, 1966: 6.

98. Mei trans, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, 178-79, 210, 395.

99. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 255.

traditional Beijing operas: either heroes or villains. Only two poles with no possibilities for transformation. Once a hero, always a hero; once a villain, always a villain. When Chinese films were shown in Moscow, Soviet audiences left the theater in droves. They said the contents of the movies were politically correct, but the plots were so boring. After watching them, they could not remember a single character or the plot.¹⁰⁰ In contrast, when the Chinese watched Soviet films, many could not get used to the love scenes. Some even closed their eyes. Others considered Soviet movies to be pornographic.¹⁰¹ Movies shown in China in the 1950s were largely made during the Stalin's era. Compared with contemporary West European and Northern American films, the Soviet films displayed a very puritanical view of love. The issues on the Chinese reception of Soviet films and Soviet reactions to Chinese films are tremendously interesting and worthy of further exploration.

7. The new mood in China after the Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution exhausted the interest of the Chinese people in political movements and ideology. The market-oriented economy changed people's values as well. Little by little individualism replaced the emphasis on collectivism and the party. Information no longer came exclusively from the state. This broke the state monopoly not only over information but also over its interpretation. Although official publications still advocate learning from revolutionary heroes and resist "Western spiritual pollution," these calls now find little resonance in the general population.

In early days of Deng Xiaoping's reform *How the Steel Was Tempered* officially remained among the best sellers. In 1982 the CYLC in Liaoning province included *How the Steel Was Tempered* among its five most highly recommended books.¹⁰² In 1989, the Central Committee of the CYLC selected ten best sellers to serve as guides for life. *How the Steel Was Tempered* was number one. Even until the 1990s, the novel was still at the top of official best seller's list,¹⁰³ but this had a lot to do with promotion and propaganda by the CCP. In reality, the popularity of *How the Steel Was Tempered* rapidly declined in the 1990s. For example, in the early 1980s a poll in four Shanghai universities put *How the Steel Was Tempered* at the top of the book list. But another poll in 1997 did not include it in the most popular seventeen books. Instead, this list included four main Chinese classics, *Gone with the Wind*, *Jane Eyre*, *Les Miserables* and others.¹⁰⁴

100. *Neibu Cankao*, Oct. 10, 1956: 867-68.

101. "Shanghaishi 'Zhongsu youhaoyue' xianyu jiangju" ["Sino-Soviet Friendship Month" provoked a dilemma in Shanghai city], *Neibu Cankao*, Nov. 24, 1952: 295-96.

102. *Liaonian Qingnian*, 11, no. 6 (1982): 24.

103. Yu Hongmei, "Jiedu women shidaide jingshen zhenghou - dui dianshi lianxuju 'Gangtie shi zenyang lianchengde' jieshou fankui de sikao" [Reading spiritual phenomenon in our era - reflection on the feedback of the TV serial, *How the Steel Was Tempered*], in *Shuxie Wenhua Yingxiong - Shijizhijiao de Wenhuyanjiu* [Writing Cultural Heroes - Cultural Study at the Turn of the Century], ed. Dai Jinhua (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin wenhua chubanshe, 2000), 198.

104. Yu Yizhong, 69; "Shanghai sisuo daxue dushu diaocha" [Survey of reading books in universities in Shanghai], *Chongqing Wanbao*, Nov. 27, 1997: 3.

In 1995, Lu Xuechang, a sixth generation director, made his first movie, *How the Steel Was Tempered*. When his protagonist, Zhou Qing, grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, he accidentally picked up an incomplete serialized copy of *How the Steel Was Tempered*. He considered himself Pavel and Zhukhrai (Pavel's mentor) his idol. The film ends by juxtaposing Zhou Qing's idealism of the 1950s with the reality of the 1990s, leaving Zhou puzzled and alienated.¹⁰⁵ Lu Xuechang explained: "Our generation is situated in a very awkward position. . . . We are sandwiched between two generations. The reality where we find ourselves conflicts with the education we had in the past."¹⁰⁶ Old beliefs have collapsed, but new ones have yet to be found.¹⁰⁷ The end of the movie almost totally negates the heroic image still promoted by the authorities. Perhaps because of its gray and pessimistic ending, the film was not released in the mainland until the end of 1997 – after a major three-year revision and the new title of *Growing Up* (Zhangda Chengren).

In the autumn of 1997 a youth group decided to adapt the revolutionary classic for a stage performance. Their childhood had been spent reading the novel, seeing the movie version and flipping through the cartoon book. They missed Pavel, even though they knew they would not be able to lead Pavel's life. According to the director, Cai Shangjun, his intention was to remind people: "Once there was someone who lived this seriously. I hope that my soul at least is like my hat, not too far away from me." The director vigorously denied that the play was a product of nostalgia. He stressed that he tried to give today's young people what they needed most, not what they liked most. He wanted to present Pavel, who transcended ideology and possessed noble human quality. He offered a positive example of an idealist, whose idealism gave meaning to his life. The producer, Zhang Yang, in recalling his past thirty years, realized that his youth lacked color. He could not identify a pivotal point for his future life. Just like a drowning man grasping something, he accidentally found Pavel.¹⁰⁸ The play was staged in January 1998 in the Beijing Children's Theater. Although the official mass media claimed it was a box office success. In reality it flopped. It was canceled in late February due to the low attendance.¹⁰⁹

Just when the stage performance failed, a private media company in Shenzhen planned to make a TV serial of the novel in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Later, the Propaganda Section of Shenzhen City Party Committee and the Central Television Station jointly produced the serial. In February 1999 they began filming it in the Ukraine directed by Han Gang, and screenplayed by Liang Xiaosheng. In contrast to past productions,

105. Yu, "Jiedu women shidaide jingshen zhenghou," 199-201.

106. Lu Xuechang, "30sui dui 40sui suo" [Thirty years old talking to forty years old], *Zhongguo Qingnian*, 1(1998): 62.

107. Yu, "Jiedu women shidaide jingshen zhenghou," 201.

108. Ibid., 202-03; Zhao Caijing, "Jintian, women haineng 'xiaohua' Baoerma?" [Today, can we still digest Pavel?], *Zhongguo Qingnian*, 4 (1998): 58-59.

109. "Baer shi yingxiong haishi panni?" [Is Pavel a hero or a traitor?], <<http://www.zhongo.com.1998>>; Peng Po, "Shei geng xuyao Baoer?" [Who needs Pavel any more?], <<http://www.zhongo.com.2000/11/17>>.

they focused not on the party and revolution, but on Pavel's love life.¹¹⁰ After its release in February 2000, according to unofficial sample poll, 60 percent of junior high schools students did not watch it, nor did 73.8 percent of senior high schools. Others stated that if their teachers had not required them to write a paper about it, they would not have watched it at all. There were even fewer who had read the original novel. Most high school students had no idea who Pavel was; instead they were fascinated by the Hong Kong TV serial, *Yang Guifei* shown at the same time as *How the Steel Was Tempered*.¹¹¹ As a result the audience for the latter was middle-aged people, who watched with nostalgia. Pavel had been their youth's companion. However, some resented the focus on the love story between Pavel and Tonia rather than the issues emphasized in their youth of class struggle: the cruelty of combat, and the personal growth of a soldier into a loyal communist. They thought the new emphasis violated the spirit of the original work.¹¹²

From Lu Xuechang's film to the production of the TV serial, there was a heated debate over the continuing relevance of Pavel's spirit. Many articles on the internet show how ordinary people view the work. The majority of those who emphasized Pavel's spirit were old or middle-aged people. They believed that Pavel's entire life provided a perfect example of revolutionary view of life.¹¹³ His sincerity, selflessness, devotion to communist ideals, and stubborn resistance to fate displayed not only his personal excellence, but also the heroic quality of all classes (i.e., not confined only to working or peasant class).¹¹⁴ Some thought Pavel's devotion to revolution might be out of date, but the search for the meaning of life and discovery of it in the devotion to others remained of enduring significance. The influence of market forces has made many Chinese feel spiritual loss and a sense of drift. "Today's Pavel inspires and encourages people to rethink history, look forward to the future, strengthen socialist and communist ideals and belief, and ascend to a higher level of life."¹¹⁵ Such viewpoints, however, do not resonate among the younger generation. Even for those young people who admired Pavel's spirit, they were not interested in a message of self-sacrifice devotion to the revolution, or insistence on communist ideals. Rather, they focused on his steel-like will, his ability to overcome obstacles and to transcend himself.¹¹⁶ In

110. Liang Xiaosheng, *Chongsu Baoer Kechajin* [Remolding Pavel Korchagin] (Beijing: Baihua chubanshe, 1999); Yu, "Jiedu women shidaide jingshen zhenghou," 203, note 2.

111. "Baoer shi zuotiande yingxiong?" [Is Pavel: yesterday's hero?], <<http://www.zhongo.com.2000>>.

112. "Bugai zheyang chongsu" [Should not be remolded this way], <<http://www.zhongo.com/theme/gangtie/pinglun-09.htm>, 2000>

113. Ren Guangxuan, "Chongdu changpian xiaoshuo *Gangtie Shi Zenyang Lianchengde*" [Rereading the novel, *How the Steel Was Tempered*], *Eluosi Wenyi*, 2 (1998): 60.

114. Du Lin, "Zoujinqu, tiaochulai: wakan *Gangtie Shi Zenyang Lianchengde*" [Walking in, jumping out: I read *How the Steel Was Tempered*], *ibid.*, 1 (1999): 77-78.

115. Wu Junzhong, "Women shifou haixuyao 'Baoer jingshen'?" [Do we still need Pavel's spirit?], *ibid.*, 3 (2000): 10-12.

116. Liu Yale, "Gei Hu Jinmei laoshide yifengxin" [A letter to teacher Hu Jinmei]; Liu Shuqin, "Zai gongzuozhong tiyan Baoer" [To experience Pavel through work] <<http://www.zuowen.com>, 2000/5/21>.

fact, many young people had read about Pavel without any revolutionary spirit since early 1980s.¹¹⁷

People who rejected the novel were those middle-aged men who felt cheated from their youth. Fundamentally they thought *How the Steel Was Tempered* displayed ultra-left ideas and the Stalinist line. The book intended to deprive them of their abilities to think independently, to share a normal love relationship, and to make friends normally. Even though Pavel's spirit was still sparkling now, it was like the reflection of light and eventually would be extinguished.¹¹⁸ They frankly admitted that they had liked reading *How the Steel Was Tempered* in their childhood because at that time there were very few alternatives. In retrospect, they felt foolish at having been so fascinated by a book loaded with propaganda and preaching. They blamed their parents' and grandparents' generations for having "no rationality, no tolerance, no culture and no love." The older generations only wanted to raise their offspring to become qualified political animals, in the name of their revolutionary ideals. After meeting the expectation of their elders, they discovered an ice-cold world with a very short supply of spiritual idealism or material goods and a superabundance of struggles and hatred. It was better to throw away such ideals. Now the old generations again wanted their children to learn from Pavel. This meant continuing to cultivate their children's ignorance. Such parents' nostalgic sentiment treated their wasted youth as a treasure.¹¹⁹

Today's students in China feel Pavel's era has been left far, far behind. Although university political counselors required students to watch the TV version of *How the Steel Was Tempered*, they were more interested in watching football games on the sports channel. Students in high schools found Pavel's suffering incomprehensible. The Soviet Union had already collapsed without fulfilling any of Pavel's revolutionary ideals. Did this not mean that all Pavel's suffering had served no purpose?¹²⁰ Such a rhetorical question expressed the boundless sorrow of generations growing up in the 1950s and 1960s who had imitated Pavel's spirit and wholeheartedly devoted themselves to the party and the state, yet suffered so much and made so many others suffer in various political movements. Nowadays the hero worshipped by most students is not Pavel Korchagin, but Bill Gates.¹²¹ After the reform policy of Deng Xiaoping and under the influence of a market economy and pro-American sentiment, young people's values have changed. Most youth have a new definition of a hero: a man of success. The new hero is not he

117. Xie Haizeng, "Liehuo lianzhenjin – Gangtie Shi Zenyang Lianchengde duhou" [Pure gold proves its worth in a blazing fire – after reading *How the Steel Was Tempered*], *Liaoning Qingnian*, 11, no. 6 (1982): 25.

118. Yu Yizhong, "Gangtie Shi Zenyang Lianchengde shi yiben haoshuma?" 63-69; Yu Yizhong, "Zaitan Gangtie Shi Zenyang Lianchengde shi yiben haoshuma?" [Retalking -- is *How the Steel Was Tempered* a good book?], *Eluosi Wenyi*, 3 (2000): 20-25; Dong Jian, "Baoerxia lengsikao" [A cold thinking under the 'Pavel heat'], *ibid.*, 13-15, 25.

119. "Gangtie za zheyang lianchengle?" [How come the steel was tempered this way?] <<http://www.zhongo.com>, 2000>

120. Du Zhiwan, "Wangshang duihualu – guanyu Baoer he Bier Gaici" [Dialogue on the internet – about Pavel and Bill Gates], *Eluosi Wenyi*, 3 (2000): 16-19, 33.

121. Yu, "Jiedu women shidaide jingshen zhenghou," 216-19.

who will endure hardship or is willing to be a cog in a machine living in poverty; he must either have a high social status or wealth surpassing others.

In the 1990s, only the communist authorities in Beijing still held the novel in high regard for precisely the same self-serving reasons they had promoted it in the first place. Young people in China who had been compelled to read it generally had low opinion of the novel. The collapse of the Soviet Union left few Russians interested in the novel as well. Today it seems that more Chinese than Russians visit the Ostrovskii Museum in Moscow. Most of the Chinese visitors went there probably to lament over their bygone youth rather than to emulate Pavel.

8. Conclusion

Nikolai Ostrovskii never expected people to consider *How the Steel Was Tempered* a first-rate literary work. His purpose was to transmit a political message: fight enemies with an indomitable will and have unquestioning loyalty to the party. This was exactly what Stalin's regime wanted to promote as the best heroic model. The CCP favored the novel for precisely the same reason. On one level the message was meant to stimulate people's patriotism, to galvanize them to resist imperialism, to encourage young people to march on the rough road to revolution, and to endure hardships along the way. On another level the message was meant to rally loyalty exclusively around the party. All other forms of loyalty should be destroyed. Promoting Pavel's spirit was a means to mold new men along the party line.

It is well-known that Communist China was greatly influenced by the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Yet, a detailed study of such influences, especially in cultural spheres, remains to be done. The role played by Pavel Korchagin in China offers us a concrete case of the Soviet impact on China. In the fall of 1949 when the chief manager of the Soviet International Bookstore, Deomilov, visited China, he urged Sanlian Bookstore to print *How the Steel Was Tempered*, not 3,000 copies as Sanlian originally planned, but tens of thousands copies, for it was regarded "a most needed book for today's Chinese youth."¹²² Clearly the large-scale publication of the novel and widespread promotion of Pavel's spirit may be considered the Soviet Union's attempt to guide the construction of a new socialist China. Both Stalin and Mao Zedong wanted to destroy private loyalties in order to create a single loyalty to the party. The novel turned out to be an effective mechanism for the purpose.

Since the beginning of China's war against Japan, the CCP produced *How the Steel Was Tempered* in massive quantities. The authorities used various media including movies, dramatic performances, textbooks, school classes named after Pavel, and propaganda rallied by the CYLC to promote Pavel's spirit. The interpretations of Pavel's spirit varied with changes in the political environment. The official emphases changed from patriotism in the Korean War, enduring hardships in the socialist construction period, and class struggle and dictatorship of the pro-

122. "Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian gongzuo baogao (October 8, 1949)," in *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Chubanshiliao* [The Publishing Historical Sources of the PRC] (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 1995), 1: 376, 633.

letariat during the Cultural Revolution. Before Deng Xiaoping's reforms in 1978, there was a great deal of overlap between official and popular interpretation. This may be partially attributed to the success of the official propaganda. However, even before 1978 ordinary people's readings of *How the Steel Was Tempered* did not completely follow the official baton. The main difference was on the love between Pavel and Tonia. The relation between the state and the masses was not exclusively a *diktat* but negotiated. Although the negotiation was largely within the boundary drawn by the authorities, we still cannot say that the state controlled everything from the top, with the masses only passively accepting what was given.¹²³ The CCP as the top elite molding mass culture calls for reconsideration. Because the readings of the masses were not entirely identical with the official readings, the public contributed to the process of molding mass culture. After the product, "Pavel's spirit," left the producer's hand, it cannot be said that this mass culture belonged to upper or elite culture. On the other hand, we also cannot say the masses had full autonomy to interpret the product without interaction with the state. In other words, the entire cultural production was a multi-participant process. Regardless of the similarities and differences between the masses and the authorities, reading Pavel's spirit, it had become part of mass culture, one cannot say that only the elite or the producer is the protagonist, or vice versa. This case demonstrated that the polarized explanations of mass culture by the Frankfurt School and John Fiske did not reflect the historical reality.

In the early stage of the PRC it is not surprising that the CCP did not have time to create its own Chinese socialist hero. Thus the imported Soviet hero, Pavel Korchagin played a crucial role in China's political stages. In 1960, with the rupture of Sino-Soviet relations and the need to meet new situations in China, national Chinese socialist heroes began to appear. However, with the political, economic, and social changes resulting from the open-door policy and reforms, today's youth have almost abandoned the revolutionary spirit embodied by Soviet and Chinese socialist heroes. To be fair, with the deletion of the ideological sections, *How the Steel Was Tempered* is still a good book, which encourages people not to give up in adversity but bravely face life's challenges. However, because the CCP propaganda has made people associate the book with politics, it is difficult to treat the book as a pure uplift work.

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123. According to a Shanghai professor who was a college student in the 1950s, some intellectuals even completely rejected the political messages in the novel after the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957.