

“IGNITE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION!” (1966)

On May 25th, 1966 Nie Yuanzi, a female academic at Beijing University, displayed this dazibao (big character poster) titled ‘Ignite the Cultural Revolution’ in the universities. It urged stronger action by staff and students at the university, claiming they were being “suppressed” and that “something fishy is going on”:

“At present, the people of the whole nation, in a soaring revolutionary spirit that manifests boundless love for the Party and Chairman Mao, and their inveterate hatred for the sinister anti-Party, anti-socialist gang, are making a vigorous and great Cultural Revolution. They are struggling thoroughly to smash the attacks of the reactionary sinister gang, in defence of the Party’s Central Committee and Chairman Mao.

But here in Beida [Beijing University] the masses are being kept immobilised. The atmosphere is one of indifference and deadness, whereas the strong revolutionary desire of the vast number of the faculty members and students has been suppressed. What is the matter? What is the reason? Something fishy is going on...

The revolutionary people must be fully aroused to vigorously and angrily denounce [enemies of the party]. To hold big meetings and put up big-character posters is one of the best ways for the masses to do battle. By ‘guiding’ the masses not to hold big meetings, not to put up big-character posters, and by creating all kinds of taboos, aren’t you suppressing the masses’ revolution, not allowing them to make revolution and opposing their revolution? We will never permit you to do this!...

All revolutionary intellectuals, now is the time to go into battle! Let us unite, holding high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought. Unite round the Party’s Central Committee and Chairman Mao and break down all the various controls and plots of the revisionists. Resolutely, thoroughly, totally and completely wipe out all ghosts and monsters and all Khrushchevian counter-revolutionary revisionists, and carry the socialist revolution through to the end.

Defend the Party’s Central Committee! Defend Mao Zedong’s Thought! Defend the dictatorship of the proletariat!”