

LEARNING FROM MA JIAJUE

On February 23, 2004, the bodies of four students were found hidden in cupboards in a dormitory at Yunnan University. Tang Xueli, Shao Ruijie, Yang Kaihong and Gong Bo had all been killed by blows to the head. A massive manhunt quickly led to the arrest of Ma Jiajue, a fellow student, who admitted to murdering his four friends between February 13 and 15. After being sentenced to death in April, Ma was executed on June 17, at the age of 24. The crime caused widespread debate throughout China: what would lead a promising biochemistry student to such a brutal act? Below, two commentators offer their different perspectives

BY ZHENG YICHUN

The venom of Communist teachings has seeped into the innermost soul of the Chinese people and obliterated their most fundamental moral standards.

Ma confessed to murdering his four fellow students, and said that his motive was that they had falsely accused him of cheating in a card game. Ma meticulously planned his revenge, going to a store to buy the hammer he used in the murders.

But Ma's case leaves many questions unanswered. One of the puzzling aspects is that many people on the Internet claim that Ma is innocent and, inexplicably, sympathize with him rather than with his victims. Moreover, the mainland Chinese media have apparently turned a brutal murder into a major source of entertainment. Rather than interpreting this crime as an evil prank by a young man unable to tell right from wrong, we would do better to see it as clear evidence of deep-rooted bad habits arising from cruel and brutish social mores. More recently, there have been reports of a similar murder case in Jiangyin County in Jiangsu Province, where police say a man murdered two classmates with a knife and other weapons while walking between a kindergarten and a junior middle school.¹ I believe that a sociological, psychological and criminological analysis of Ma Jiajue's case must be undertaken in order to avoid such horrific tragedies from recurring. Following are some of the revelations arising from the Ma Jiajue case:

1. The violent revolutionary theories of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) poison the minds of Chinese people such as Ma Jiajue.

The reason the CCP has been called a murderous party or murderous organization is that it has a murderous ideology,

BY WANG SHAOYAN

This young man was killed by the pervasive gap between rich and poor, the indifference of society and his inability to bear disgrace.

One night last February, four students from poor rural family backgrounds were brutally murdered in their dorm rooms shortly before they were to graduate from Yunnan University. This murder case shocked the central authorities. According to reports, Hu Jintao personally ordered the deployment of 1.7 million people to chase down the culprit. The murderer was quickly apprehended in Sanya, Hainan Island, and was in police custody by the beginning of April.

The culprit turned out to be Ma Jiajue, a fellow student who also came from a poor rural background. The media started out describing Ma as a burly, ferocious young man with murder in his eyes. But then some others began to say that Ma Jiajue should not be demonized, that the real Ma Jiajue needed to be revealed.

What kind person was the real Ma Jiajue? Why did he kill four fellow students with whom he was well acquainted? Ma Jiajue was a murderer, but who killed Ma Jiajue?

Ma Jiajue came from a poor family in rural Guangxi Province. At the age of five, he was already helping his parents with farm work. Later his family ironed clothes to make ends meet. Once when Ma's mother lost 100 yuan, the amount she earned for ironing 200 items of clothing, Ma dropped 100 yuan in the corridor where she could find it. His family had to borrow his entire 5,000-yuan tuition from the school.

Unlike most students, Ma never asked his parents for money. On cold winter days, his dorm mates used to pay him one or two yuan to wash their clothes. Ma performed this serv-

namely the violent doctrines of the proletarian revolution, class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The socialist system established by the CCP not only fails in its avowed aim to serve the people, but actually excels at violating human rights and treating human life as straw. The Communist regime has from the outset gone to all lengths to retain power and maintain stability: During the counterrevolutionary campaigns, Mao Zedong instructed the Party that it was permissible to “kill five out of every thousand”; Deng Xiaoping advocated “killing 200,000 for 20 years of stability”; and Jiang Zemin had peaceful Falungong practitioners persecuted and framed on false charges, and ordered that Falungong members be “killed in a way that looked like suicide so their deaths should be in vain.”

The CCP has never counted the respect and safeguarding of human life among its political tasks. A blatant disregard for human life was in fact the CCP’s guiding strategic principle at the time it was founded, as well as its means to seize power. The lives of ordinary people simply do not enter into the deliberations of the CCP and its leaders, and the civil war with the Kuomintang and the peacetime Maoist campaigns have all amply demonstrated the Party’s consummate skill at killing people like flies.

Because revolutionary strength can only be displayed by killing people, the CCP on June 4, 1989 ordered the massacre of Beijing students and ordinary citizens who were peacefully petitioning the government. Only by reducing the Chinese people to mouselike timidity and terrified silence could the CCP display the unparalleled wisdom, greatness and rightness of its strategy. Every member of the central government, from the general secretary to the chairman of the Military Commission to the premier, has justified the June 4th crackdown on the grounds that it stabilized the socialist system and preserved the Party’s grasp on power. Under these circumstances, all that the serfs of the socialist system can do is kowtow and give three cheers for the government. The murders committed by a nobody like Ma Jiajue pale into insignificance next to the 80 million unnatural deaths perpetrated by this ruthless regime. Yet Ma’s murders are tied in a hundred and one ways with the CCP’s ideology and the countless outrages committed under its direction. Ma Jiajue is, in fact, the embodiment of the CCP’s murderous revolutionary ideology.

2. Marxism-Leninism and its foreign doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat and violent revolution have poisoned China’s social mores.

One of the manifestations of this poisoning of social mores is the denigration of human life and the hero worship of those who show no respect for human life. This is the result of corrupt Communist education, which is only capable of producing a new generation of Red Guards or young militants to make revolution by beating, smashing and looting. The wanton slaughter of “counterrevolutionaries,” the violation of all laws human and divine during the Cultural Revolution, and the June 4th Massacre have changed the collective con-

ice because he had no money. Once while Ma was awaiting his student financial aid payment, he had to go barefoot and cut classes for several days because he had no shoes. In prison, Ma wore the best item of clothing he had ever owned: his prison uniform. He himself told the police as much.

Ma Jiajue once won second prize in the National Physics Olympics. An outstanding all-around student, he also achieved third place in a national mathematics competition. Ma refused to give himself up to the police, and declined to be defended by four lawyers who offered to represent him on a pro bono basis. His reason was that he just wanted to die.

How does a student like Ma Jiajue become a murderer? How does such a person carefully plan the murder of four people and then calmly make his escape? Newspapers sparked debate on these questions. Some journalists conjectured that poverty and its associated humiliations had led Ma to commit murder and effective suicide. A larger number of journalists suggested that he was killed by his environment. If society had shown concern for Ma Jiajue when it counted, if the authorities had known about his predicament and had provided him with real help, if someone had given him a pair of shoes, or if the university had cared about the fact that he had no shoes, a trifling matter such as being accused of cheating at a game of cards would not have triggered the breakdown that caused him to murder four fellow students who, like him, came from impoverished backgrounds.

Ma Jiajue’s refusal of legal defense indicates that he wanted to die. How should society deal with someone who wants to die? Ma Jiajue chose to commit suicide by killing others. Clearly, he was unable to bear the humiliations of poverty. In his short social existence, Ma was apparently never really loved by anyone, and lost all hope in society. Psychiatrists would call his a classic case of mental disorder, but the question remains, why did Ma develop such a serious psychiatric disorder? Obviously, this young man was killed by the pervasive gap between rich and poor, the ubiquitous indifference of society and his inability to bear disgrace. Modern society as a whole killed this young man.

When the reform period began, Deng Xiaoping said that some people must be allowed to prosper before others. Subsequently the gap between rich and poor began to widen in China. According to a UN report, China’s income disparity has now reached dangerous proportions, and is actually the most severe in the world. At the same time, all of Chinese society has plunged into a headlong pursuit of wealth in which the ends justify any means. Leaving aside the fact that society looks down on the lower classes, has no sympathy for the weak and provides no welfare system, the real crux of the problem is that over the past 20 years people have been accumulating wealth without the slightest regard for justice, and have transformed money and power into interchangeable commodities. Economists have coined a term to describe a particularly Chinese economic phenomenon: “rentseeking.” This is actually putting too fine a gloss on the situation. If you don’t play the game, it’s all to your loss; no one will cut

sciousness of the Chinese people and fundamentally transformed individuals at a subconscious level. The venom of Communist teachings has seeped into the innermost soul of the Chinese people and obliterated their most fundamental moral standards.

The great meat grinder that is the Communist regime discounts not only the lives of ordinary people, but even those of its own Party officials, many of whom have been killed. With the exception of the supreme leader, who is venerated like an emperor, the life of everyone else is insignificant in comparison with the preservation of the regime's stability. The Sinicization of Marxism-Leninism into Mao Zedong Thought has turned mainland China into a country where savagery and brutality are the norm.

It must be understood that nothing in the world is more valuable than life. The divine gift of life is an exceedingly complex process. We know from medical science that millions of spermatozoa are sacrificed for the fertilization of a single ovum. The nine months of pregnancy are a great trial for expectant mothers, who give birth amidst great pain. As people mature, they continue to experience all manner of troubles and worries. How much material and energy is expended in one lifetime! You could say that a single human life embodies the whole history of human civilization, its hope and tears, laughter and heartache, happiness and suffering.

Because life is priceless, we Chinese must learn to revere and protect it, heart and soul, rather than to belittle, negate and even destroy human life as the CCP has done for so long. Only by establishing social customs and a system that upholds, improves and promotes life for all can we fundamentally transform a society characterized by Ma Jiajue's violent outrage.

3. China's education system has been seriously affected by Communist and socialist ideology, which encourages the belittlement and destruction of life. At the same time, China's socialist education system has also produced a vast range of pseudo-Mao Zedongs whose murderous inclinations have destined them to carry on the cause of the proletarian revolution.

From primary school to middle school to university, China's Communist education system centers on the values of violent revolution rather than on those of humanism, producing generation after generation of Communist slaves with no potential, no capacity to think for themselves and no independent understanding of the world. Ma Jiajue's case is a testament to the utter failure of China's Communist education system, in particular its higher education system.

The ideological and political indoctrination taught at colleges and universities is restricted to the stale Communist dogma of Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, the pronouncements of Central Committee officials, directives issued by the Ministry of Propaganda and falsehoods disseminated by the Party-controlled media. These worthless lies pollute the spirits of impressionable university students such as Ma Jiajue. In addition, every college and university in

you any slack, and certainly no one will sympathize with you.

Ma Jiajue's case has sparked a heated debate in China and has raised some interesting points. A writer with a long perspective on Chinese society sees it this way:

"Many people are focusing on what made a student commit this savage act. To my mind, they are only scratching the surface rather than getting to the root of the problem. The truth is that when someone suffers from a mental disorder, he cannot control himself and is incapable of clear-headedness. When such a person commits murder, it usually doesn't attract an inordinate amount of attention or discussion, regardless of



School photo of Ma Jiajue (top) and photo released by police after Ma's arrest (bottom).

China has a system of “political counselors” who examine and control every idea, statement and activity in the student curriculum and prevent students from expressing their natural youthful energy. This system of political counselors ought to be eliminated from China’s higher education system and replaced with the introduction of school psychologists.

4. The Ma Jiajue case demonstrates that Chinese society has entered a dangerous stage in which people with mental disorders are increasingly likely to commit desperate acts.

According to reports, mainland China now has the highest suicide rate in the world, with more than 300,000 people committing suicide for various reasons every year. This is a clear indication of how abnormal life is in this socialist society, and the lengths to which people are prepared to go to free themselves from injustice. For the psychologically fragile, suicide is the ultimate expression of despair.

Suicide prevention measures need to be strengthened through the establishment of specialized psychiatric clinics and hospitals. People suffering from depression ought to be afforded effective channels to express their pain and anxieties so that potential crises can be nipped in the bud. If Ma Jiajue had been able to discuss his problems and anxieties with a professional, such as a psychiatrist, he may not have gone to the extreme of committing murder. But because Ma Jiajue had nobody to confide in, the small grudge he bore grew inside him like a bubble until it finally burst and contaminated his soul with a murderous obsession.

Murder can never be justified under any circumstances. But Ma Jiajue’s mind was clearly disturbed, and he never received the psychiatric help he needed. Even a normal person who loses his bearings can end up committing an unpardonable crime.

We must prevent trouble before it happens, respond effectively to social discontent, and employ appropriate therapies to help people with serious mental disorders. Likewise, we must correctly diagnose and apply effective treatments to China’s political, economic and cultural disorders. Only by so doing can we hope to achieve social harmony and stability.

Translated by Paul Frank

This translation is an edited version of an article posted on the Epoch Times Web site: <http://www.dajiyuan.com/gb/4/4/23/n518427.htm>.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

1. Chen Zhigang, aged 25, was reported to have murdered his fellow students, Zhao Yi and Ju Li, on the night of April 9, 2004. He then attempted suicide by slitting his wrists, but was discovered and taken to the hospital for treatment. The motive for the murders was not clear, but Chen Zhigang claimed others looked down on him, and said he was aware of the Ma Jiajue case. A detailed article on the crime can be accessed on the Epoch Times Web site: <http://www.dajiyuan.com/gb/4/4/13/n508362.htm>.

the brutality of the crime. But because Ma was a university student, many people regard him as a different kind of case. That’s the problem. As a matter of fact, there’s every reason to believe that Ma Jiajue was mentally disturbed. His severe psychiatric derangement went hand in hand with his moral derangement. I think this is the crux of the problem. When a dysfunctional personality is combined with a dysfunctional society, anything can happen, and any act can be explained.

“But why was Ma so disturbed? Many people have concluded that this case is related to China’s development. Compared with advanced nations, China has a wide gap between the rich and the poor, as well as a huge urban-rural disparity. Nowadays people worship money and put a lot of emphasis on standing out and looking heroic and enjoying political privilege. In a country with no democracy, such attitudes become all the more extreme.

“Added to that you have the traditional Chinese cultural expectation of bettering one’s station in life through academic achievement, especially among those from a poor rural background; these attitudes are instilled in children from an early age, and are deeply ingrained by the time they grow up. If you are able to stand out among your peers in a certain area, you will attain the status you deserve in this society. Ma Jiajue carried this psychological and cultural baggage to college, where he found a very different environment than he was used to, and in which many students were every bit as good as he was. The resulting feeling of inferiority dealt a great blow to his original expectations. Unable to control this shock, Ma tried again and again to find something to rely on, and when these attempts failed, he totally lost control.”

This writer has identified a very serious phenomenon: why is it that although Chinese society places a reasonable emphasis on education in ethics, the results are so often disappointing, and murders as brutal as Ma Jiajue’s are still committed?

We really have to ask ourselves: why does somebody completely give up the will to live? Why is a university student in his twenties capable of such cruelty? What drives a student who won the second prize in the National Physics Olympics to such a dead end?

After he was arrested, the police asked Ma Jiajue why he had killed those students. He said he felt that everybody looked down on him. When asked why other people would look down on him, he said that maybe it was because he was poor. Poverty can drive a young man to commit murder, but the world has many more examples of poverty inspiring people to make something of their lives. In reality, what killed Ma Jiajue and drove him to kill four innocent students was an unjust and indifferent society.

Translated by Paul Frank

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