

## 5 Villagers, Cadres, and the Politics of Rehabilitation in Post-Mao China, 1979–1982

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*Long Yang*

One day, in late fall 1979, a former rural cadre in a county in eastern Hebei set off firecrackers in his yard to celebrate the reinstatement of his party membership. His membership had been stripped in 1965 when the Socialist Education Movement (SEM) reached its zenith in his village. The decision on his expulsion was based on allegations that he had taken over 100 yuan from his village's account. In 1979 the County Disciplinary Commission reinvestigated his case, finding that the original accusations mainly came from the fact that he had bought a bicycle worth nearly 150 yuan. In the Commission's analysis, the original investigation did not provide reliable evidence to show that he had embezzled that money. The commission thus decided to fully rehabilitate him. The scale of the campaign against rural cadres during the SEM and the efforts to reexamine their cases in the immediate post-Mao era were immense at the national level. Official figures show that of the total of 11 million rural cadres across the country, over 2 million had cases of varying severity brought against them during the SEM.<sup>1</sup> By 1983, during the *boluan fanzheng* ("bringing order out of chaos") period, more than 630,000 sanctions levied against cadres during the SEM had been revised by disciplinary organs.<sup>2</sup> Of the 41,000 cadres whose SEM cases were

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<sup>1</sup> Zhonggong zhongyang zuzhibu, "Pingfan yuan jia cuo an, luoshi ganbu zhengce, cujin he tuidong zuzhi gongzuo de quanmian boluan fanzheng" [The Reversal of Unjust, False, and Mistaken Cases, the Implementation of Cadre Policies, and the Acceleration of Bringing Order Out of Chaos in Organizational Work], in *Boluan fanzheng (zhongyang juan)* [Bringing Order Out of Chaos (Central Volume)], vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1999), 234.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

reexamined in Hebei Province between 1978 and 1982, 31,000 received full rehabilitation.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter explores the administrative rehabilitation of rural cadres' cases that originated during the SEM to enrich our understanding of how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) handled Mao-era injustices in the immediate post-Mao period. By "administrative rehabilitation" I refer to how the CCP reevaluated the cases of cadres who received sanctions according to previous interpretations of party disciplinary rules. Of central importance is the fact that rehabilitating these cadres occurred against the backdrop of the reconsolidation and continuation of the CCP's hold on power in the immediate post-Mao era. Past scholarship, both in English and Chinese, has examined the rehabilitation of cadres, particularly at the elite level.<sup>4</sup> These studies have, however, paid scant attention to the experiences of rank-and-file cadres and their interactions with local disciplinary organs in the process of carrying out the rehabilitation. Recent research, by delving into the lives of ordinary subjects, has revealed the role of the CCP's disciplinary organs in revising verdicts concerning cases from during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Building on this recent literature, this chapter seeks to highlight that the reexamination of ordinary cadres' cases handled during the SEM was part of the CCP's larger effort to correct the wrongs of the pre-Cultural Revolution era. Administrative rehabilitation allowed the CCP to rebuild its connections with these cadres through the process by which their party membership was reinstated.

By situating administrative rehabilitation in the local context of eastern Hebei Province, it is possible to explore how the reexamination processes

<sup>3</sup> "Hebei sheng zhengfu fu mishuzhang Tian Yi tongzhi zai Hebei beibu liudi shi xinfang zuotanhui shang de zongjie jianghua" [Summary Speech by Comrade Tian Yi, Deputy General-Secretary of Hebei Provincial Government at a Petition Meeting with Delegates from Six Prefectural and Municipal Cities in Northern Hebei], HBDGB-1982-2, 5. I collected the files consulted in this chapter from County A and County B in Hebei Province. The files are now held at Tsinghua University in Beijing but only accessible via personal contact. "HBD" refers to Hebei documents and "GB" to government bodies. "1982" is the year when the document was released and "2" is the file number. In the below footnotes, "OD" refers to organizational departments, "PC" to party committees, and "DO" to disciplinary organs.

<sup>4</sup> Lowell Dittmer, "Death and Transfiguration: Liu Shaoqi's Rehabilitation and Contemporary Chinese Politics." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 40, no. 3 (1981): 455–79; Xiao Donglian, *Lishi de zhuangui: cong boluan fanzheng dao gaige kaifang* [Turning Point in History: From Bringing Order Out of Chaos to Reform and Opening Up] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Leese and Puck Engman, eds., *Victims, Perpetrators, and the Role of Law in Maoist China: A Case-Study Approach* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018); Chris Chang, "Paper Affairs: Discipline by the Dossier in a Mao-Era Work Unit." *Administrative Journal for the History of Public Administration*, 4 (2019): 125–40.

created opportunities for cadres and villagers to participate in the post-Mao political order. Unlike Cultural Revolution cases in the countryside, many of which involved great conflict, violence, and trauma,<sup>6</sup> SEM cases more often resulted in the public denunciation of cadres, dismissal from their posts, and expulsion from the party. The handling of each case by work teams dispatched by superior party organs usually followed an orderly procedure from the mobilization of villagers to evidence collection to public denunciations to disciplinary sanctions. Such practices sometimes led to the “unjust” implementation of party rules by its own bodies. In addition to this, cadres denounced colleagues, while villagers condemned cadres for a range of misconduct such as corruption and sexual impropriety. In the immediate post-Mao era, the CCP initiated reinvestigation through interviews and meetings with these cadres as well as the villagers who had previously provided evidence against them. Some provided new testimonies contradicting their original denunciations and further requested the revisions of original accusations or verdicts. What is more, villagers and cadres held SEM work teams accountable for wrongful denunciations. They took part in carrying out administrative rehabilitation, which in turn made rehabilitation as a form of transitional justice work on the microlevel beneath the macrolevel project of *boluan fanzheng*. The processes of restorative justice in the immediate post-Mao era were not exclusively top-down but hinged on the responses of ordinary citizens.

This chapter mainly relies on previously inaccessible materials from County A in eastern Hebei, with a particular focus on cadres’ personal dossiers.<sup>7</sup> Each dossier includes one case, and the cases range from eight pages to upwards of 800 pages. Each also contains an original file produced by work teams during the SEM and a reexamination file created by officials in charge of rehabilitation. A close look at the records of interviews, handwritten testimonies, minutes of meetings, investigation reports, and official decisions contained in each dossier shows how officials carried out reexaminations and how ordinary citizens reacted.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Hecheng Tan, *The Killing Wind: A Chinese Country’s Descent into Madness during the Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> The name of the county is anonymized in order to protect the privacy of individuals discussed in this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> For an outstanding example of this approach to personal dossiers, see Yang Kuisong, *Eight Outcasts: Social and Political Marginalization in China under Mao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

### **Administrative Rehabilitation Policy and Reexamining the SEM Cases**

Examining the post-Mao-era administrative rehabilitation of SEM cases in County A indicates that it was in fact built on the CCP's established approach to dealing with the "unjust" sanctions its members had received.<sup>9</sup> The incessant investigation into all aspects of the day-to-day lives of party personnel constituted a pernicious part of its politics in the Mao era. During the SEM, lower-level officials and particularly rural cadres were the primary targets, and they received various sanctions according to disciplinary rules.<sup>10</sup> Most of County A was agricultural, and it remains so today. Throughout the county, as was typical in north China at the time, rural cadres played a crucial role in agricultural production and village politics. As will be shown, their particular positions at the time in rural society significantly influenced the ways in which county party organs implemented rehabilitation policies on the ground.

Revisions of SEM cases were part of a larger attempt to reexamine pre-Cultural Revolution cases. From the CCP's point of view, its policies implemented prior to the Cultural Revolution were broadly correct, and it thus sought to distinguish between cases that occurred during the Cultural Revolution and earlier cases. In November 1978, the CCP Central Organization Department stipulated that, in contrast with their Cultural Revolution counterparts, pre-Cultural Revolution cases were only to be examined upon a request made by sanctioned cadres or their relatives. This included cases from the SEM.<sup>11</sup> Half a year later, Hu Yaobang, then Secretary-General of the CCP Central Committee, reinforced the CCP's justification of its pre-Cultural Revolution governance. In his instructions on the handling of reexaminations, Hu asserted that officials had only wrongfully handled a limited number of cases at the provincial level and below during the pre-Cultural Revolution period. According to Hu, only cases from the Cultural Revolution were to be classified as "unjust, false, and mistaken verdicts" because Lin Biao and "the Gang of Four" had intentionally fabricated cases for the purpose of

<sup>9</sup> Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950–1965* (White Plains: M. E. Sharpe, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Henrietta Harrison, *The Missionary's Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 164.

<sup>11</sup> "Zhongyang zuzhibu guanyu luoshi nongcun jiceng ganbu zhengce de jidian yijian" [The Central Organization Department's Directive on the Implementation of Rural Cadres' Policies], reprinted in Song Yongyi, ed., *Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* (Hong Kong: Universities Service Centre, 2006), accessed September 6, 2022.

taking over the political system.<sup>12</sup> SEM cases were therefore officially cast by a primary agent of the *boluan fanzheng* as resulting from administrative mistakes and oversights on the part of individuals within the system rather than a systemic failure.

Although top party leaders assumed that only a few pre-Cultural Revolution verdicts were generally considered wrong, records of reexaminations in Hebei indicate otherwise. Between October 1978 and June 1979 alone, the Hebei Provincial Committee and its subordinates reviewed more than 133,000 cases, over 44 percent of which concerned pre-Cultural Revolution cases.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the Hebei Provincial Committee instructed its county subordinates to reexamine pre-Cultural Revolution cases in accordance with local concerns.<sup>14</sup> When it came to the SEM cases in County A, its party secretary ordered the disciplinary commission to reexamine all 680 cases despite the fact that a number of cadres had not petitioned for the reexamination.<sup>15</sup> These 680 cadres were expelled from the party during the SEM, when the Hebei Provincial Committee sent more than 14,000 work team members to this region in an attempt to review all cadres.<sup>16</sup> This committee chose to radicalize the campaign and kicked such a large number of cadres out of the party because Wang Guangmei, then Chinese President Liu Shaoyi's wife, conducted the pilot experiment in this region and accused a large number of cadres of engaging in superstition, corruption, sexual impropriety, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

All 680 cases in County A were sanctioned according to party disciplinary rules, and it was the work teams that made the decisions on each case. The CCP's Central Committee decided to withdraw these work

<sup>12</sup> "Song Renqiong tongzhi he Chen Yeping tongzhi zai luoshi ganbu zhengce zuotanhui shang de jianghua" [Speech by Comrades Song Renqiong and Chen Yeping at the Meeting on the Implementation of Cadre Policies], HBDOD-1979-3, 10.

<sup>13</sup> "Wang Zheng tongzhi zai shengwei luoshi zhengce huibao huishang de jianghua" [Comrade Wang Zheng's Speech at the Provincial Report Meeting on Fixing Policy], HBDPC-1979-21, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> "Liu XX tongzhi zai diwei gongwei shuji huiyi shang de jianghua" [Speech by Comrade Liu XX at a Meeting with Secretaries of Commune Party Committees], HBDPC-1981-5, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Zhonggong Tangshan diwei, *Zhonggong Tangshan diwei di yi jiu quanhui guanyu jindong mingchun shehui zhuyi jiaoyu yundong de bushu de jueyi* [The Tangshan Party Committee's Ninth Plenary Session's Directive on the Deployment of the Socialist Education Movement This Winter and Next Spring] (Tangshan: Zhonggong Tangshan diwei bangongshi, 1964), 4-5, author's collection.

<sup>17</sup> Wang Haiguang, "Siqing yundong de jieji douzheng jiangou: 'Taoyuan jingyan yanjiu'" [The Construction of Class Struggle in the Four Cleanups Movement: A Study on the "Taoyuan Experience"]. *Ershiyi shiji* [Twenty-First Century], no. 175 (2019): 82-105.

teams at the peak of the Cultural Revolution in early 1967.<sup>18</sup> Almost a decade later, the party and government organs that had imposed the sanctions were instructed to take responsibility for reexamining their pre-Cultural Revolution cases.<sup>19</sup> Because of the dismissal of work teams and the disciplinary sanctions cadres had received during the SEM, the CCP tasked disciplinary organs with reexamining their cases.<sup>20</sup> The implementation of this reexamination was accompanied by the reestablishment of disciplinary organs that had been dissolved during the Cultural Revolution.<sup>21</sup> In 1979 alone, 2,521 of China's altogether 2,579 counties witnessed the rebuilding of such agencies.<sup>22</sup> That same year, the County A Disciplinary Commission was immediately authorized to reinvestigate all 680 SEM cases that resulted in disciplinary sanctions.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the reexamination of the Cultural Revolution cases, which often involved compensating the victims and punishing the perpetrators,<sup>24</sup> the process of rehabilitating SEM cases rarely touched on these issues. As indicated by the personal dossiers of cadres from County A, none obtained compensation for their SEM cases. These Mao-era cadres had not received government salaries; they had received subsidies from their collectives' accounts according to their time spent on managing collective agriculture.<sup>25</sup> After being brought down and

<sup>18</sup> “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu duidai wuchan jieji wenhua da geming zhong gongzuozu wenti de tongzhi” [Party Center Directive Addressing the Question of Work Teams during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution], *Zhongfa* [67] 54, reprinted in *Chinese Cultural Revolution Database*, accessed September 6, 2022. In the opening sentence of this document, the CCP Central Committee stressed how to deal with the ongoing problems concerning work teams dispatched during both the SEM and the Cultural Revolution. The SEM work teams were thus included but not mentioned in the document title.

<sup>19</sup> “Guanyu wenhua da geming qian yixie anjian chuli yijian de tongzhi” [Notice on the Handling of Some Cases Dealt with Before the Cultural Revolution], *Zutong* (79) no. 33, HBDOD-1979-1, 5.

<sup>20</sup> CCP Center, “Guanyu dangnei zhengzhi shenghuo de ruogan zhunze (Zhengqiu yijian gao)” [Certain Guiding Principles for Inner-Party Political Life (Draft for Comments)]. *Dangfeng yu dangji* [Party Work Style and Party Discipline], no. 1 (1979): 2–17, esp. 11.

<sup>21</sup> CCP Center, “Guanyu dangnei zhengzhi shenghuo de ruogan zhunze” [Certain Guiding Principles for Inner-Party Political Life]. *Dangfeng yu dangji*, no. 16 (1980): 2–24.

<sup>22</sup> Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, “Zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuan hui yijiu qijiu nian de zhuyao gongzuo he yijiu baling nian de zhongxin renwu” [CCDI Work Report for 1979 and Central Task in 1980]. *Dangfeng yu dangji*, no. 13 (1980): 2–20, esp. 12.

<sup>23</sup> “Dangqian jijian gongzuo jiankuang” [Preliminary Report on Current Party Discipline Inspection Work], HBDPC-1979-5, 17, 21–23.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Leese, *Maos langer Schatten. Chinas Umgang mit der Vergangenheit* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Huaiyin Li, *Village China under Socialism and Reform: A Micro-History, 1948–2008* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 107.

expelled from the party, they had made a living by farming or working in rural enterprises. The regulations on salary compensation thus did not apply to them.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in 1978, the Central Organization Department instructed county authorities not to financially compensate for injustices caused by SEM cases unless the victim had gone to jail or been tortured to death.<sup>27</sup> Because the SEM cases discussed in this chapter did not entail criminal punishment, making financial compensation was thus not part of the disciplinary rules. Work team members, their colleagues, and other villagers had wrongfully accused the cadres, but the reexamination avoided holding these parties accountable. The Central Organization Department argued that nearly all party members had wrongfully condemned their colleagues. Punishing “perpetrators” would not help get rid of long-standing grudges but instead worsen internal relations.<sup>28</sup> As discussed below, the reexamination in County A did not even involve interviews with work team members to verify evidence.

The County Disciplinary Commission’s procedures provided the institutional framework through which cadres and villagers could participate in the rehabilitation. The reexamination dossiers created by this commission illustrate where and when their participation could occur. The reexamination usually began with the establishment of an ad hoc team after the commission’s receipt of a cadre’s appeal letter or the order from the County Party Committee. The team would then arrive in the village, convene forums for cadres and/or party members, and interview them and other villagers individually. The team would then instruct villagers and cadres to write testimonies. Prior to writing their final report, the team had to confer with the cadre whose case was under reexamination and collect a handwritten confirmation letter indicating the cadre’s own attitude toward the conclusion of the reexamination of the case. In the following days or weeks, the team would then pen an investigation report (*diaocha baogao*) and lay out its conclusions on the reexamination (*fucha jielun*). Finally, the team would submit both of these to the County Party

<sup>26</sup> “Guanyu guance zhixing quansheng dierci dang de jilü jiancha gongzuo huiyi jingshen de yijian (cao’an)” [Suggestions on Carrying Out the Spirit of the Second Session of the Provincial Disciplinary Inspection Work (Draft)], HBDDO-1980-5, 12.

<sup>27</sup> “Zhongyang zuzhibu guanyu luoshi nongcun jiceng ganbu zhengce de jidian yijian” [Central Organization Department’s Directive on Implementing Policies Concerning Grassroots Cadres], reprinted in *Chinese Cultural Revolution Database*.

<sup>28</sup> Zhonggong zhongyang zuzhibu, ed., “Tigao jiekai geda zengqiang tuanjie de zijuexing” [Improving the Consciousness of Breaking Down Prejudice and Enhancing Solidarity]. *Zugong tongxun* [Organization Work Bulletin], vol. 12 (1979): 1–7, esp. 3.

Committee for approval.<sup>29</sup> As will be discussed below, the way in which these procedures were performed demonstrates the disciplinary commission's changing standards for verifying the original accusations. If more than two of the villagers or cadres renounced their original testimonies, the commission would revise the associated sanctions. When the commission could not verify the original "evidence," it often put that on record and mitigated the sanctions.

The County Disciplinary Commission reexamined a wide range of accusations against cadres, including allegations of corruption, the misappropriation of collective property, engaging in gambling and superstitious activities, and sexual relationships outside marriage. The reinvestigation of a cadre's case focused mainly on the two issues of corruption or sexual relationships outside marriage.<sup>30</sup> For example, former cadre Wang Shiwu requested the reexamination of his case in 1982, saying that he had not in fact taken 336 yuan from his village's account.<sup>31</sup> What he admitted was his misappropriation of a small patch of collective land used to build a graveyard for his grandparents and parents.<sup>32</sup> The construction of graveyards was viewed as superstitious during the SEM. Wang's letter confirmed his engagement in the misappropriation of collective land and superstitious activities while denying the charge of corruption. The reinvestigation looked at the issues that Wang denied, finding that the work team's way of calculating the amount of his embezzlement was wrong. The disciplinary commission thus suggested a full revision of the original accusations of corruption against him and the reinstatement of his party membership.<sup>33</sup> Also, as indicated by Wang's case, the accounts of cadres' engagement in superstitious activities and appropriation of collective property were not difficult to verify because they involved a certain number of individuals, overt rituals, or immovable property like land. By contrast, the disciplinary commission

<sup>29</sup> For example, see Personal Dossiers, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0001, and Personal Dossiers, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0002. "HB" is Hebei, and "SEM" refers to the Socialist Education Movement. "0001" is the file number. One such personal dossier includes the original file and the reexamination file.

<sup>30</sup> "Nongcun dangyuan ganbu chufen jueding shu" [Letter of Decision Concerning XXX's Sanction], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0073, Original file, 3.

<sup>31</sup> The names of rural cadres and their villages have all been fully anonymized to protect their privacy.

<sup>32</sup> "Shensu xin" [Appeal Letter], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0073, Reexamination file, 10–13.

<sup>33</sup> "Zhonggong XX gongshe weiyuanhui guanyu XXX suofan cuowu de fucha yijian" [CCP XX Commune Committee's Reexamination Opinions on XXX's Problems], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0073, Reexamination file, 5–6.



often revised the original sanctions based on the accusations of corruption and sexual impropriety.

This reexamination produced a spectrum of results with varying responses among villagers and cadres. At one end of the spectrum, the County Disciplinary Commission concluded that some cadres had not engaged in the misconduct that the work teams had accused them of during the SEM. They were therefore granted full rehabilitation. At the other end of the spectrum, the commission affirmed the adjudications made against some cadres during the SEM period. Under these circumstances, the commission typically decided there was no need to commute the sanctions against these cadres or grant them rehabilitation. The bulk of the cases, however, lie somewhere in between these two extremes. In the majority of the commission's conclusions, either the accusations of misconduct against cadres were found to have been partially fabricated or the sanctions cadres received for their offenses were found to have been excessive. In these cases, the commission commuted part of their sanctions and granted partial rehabilitation to the cadres. These reexamination results were intertwined with the ways in which cadres and villagers could participate in the administrative rehabilitation of SEM cases.

### **The Reexamination of Corruption Allegations**

Between 1979 and 1982, the reexamination of corruption allegations took shape, along with the CCP's attempt to rebuild its connections with most of the cadres by readmitting them to the party. This primarily occurred through having villagers and cadres produce new testimonies. Here I survey the degree to which villagers and cadres changed their original testimonies and explore why some decided to renounce their original accusations while others did not. Those who offered new testimonies always argued that they had fabricated their denunciations under pressure from the work teams during the SEM. The villagers' and cadres' participation in this process made administrative rehabilitation possible.

The process of reexamination was complicated by changes in the official definition of corruption. This change led to a shift in the CCP's standards in calculating the value of the procurements by cadres. In the 1960s, cadres were in charge of collective agricultural production, but the supply of goods and services for their villages was limited. It was because of this scarcity that cadres had used collective funds or grain as gifts to maintain their personal relationships with superiors in order to secure access to scarce goods for their villages. During the SEM, work

teams viewed such gift-giving as part of cadres' corruption.<sup>34</sup> In reexamining these cases, the disciplinary commission accepted that their use of collective funds was not for personal interests and thus decided not to view gift-giving in village interests as part of cadres' corruption.<sup>35</sup> Cadre Qin Dasheng's experience provides evidence of this. During the SEM, Qin was accused of taking collective funds, grain, and vegetables, all of which were valued together at 670.14 yuan.<sup>36</sup> In 1979, when the County Disciplinary Commission reexamined Qin's case, he asked to reinvestigate the amount of his corruption. Qin acknowledged at the time of having taken 76.14 yuan of collective funds and food for personal gain. However, he argued that he offered his superiors a wide range of items (e.g. cash, peanuts, cabbages, sweet potatoes, noodles, and pork) in exchange for his village's access to coal and chemical fertilizers.<sup>37</sup> The reexamination concluded that Qin's use of 594 yuan of collective funds for gift-giving was not to be counted as part of his corruption and not to be included in his revised verdict. The County Party Committee thus changed Qin's sanction from expulsion from the party into probation for two years.<sup>38</sup> This case offers an example of the changing definition of corruption among cadres. In the reexamination of Qin's case, his taking for personal gain was still viewed as one form of corruption, while his gift-giving to superiors in the village's interests was not. Furthermore, this changing definition enabled the County Party Committee to reduce the disciplinary sanctions on Qin and reinstate his party membership.

The standards for verifying the details of the original allegations had also changed. The story of the reexamination of Zheng Youshan is illustrative. Zheng, accused of corruption, committed suicide by drowning himself in a village well in 1964.<sup>39</sup> The work team's personal

<sup>34</sup> "XXX gongshe dangwei guanyu muqian jinxing siqing gongzuo qingkuang de baogao" [XXX Committee Party Committee's Report about the Current Situation of Four Cleanups Work], *Zhonggong Tangshan diwei wenjian* (63) no. 48, 4, author's collection.

<sup>35</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi wenti de fucha jielun" [CCP XX Party Committee's Reexamination Conclusion on Problems of Comrade XXX], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0057, Reexamination file, 199.

<sup>36</sup> "Nongcun dangyuan ganbu chufen jue ding shu" [Letter of Decision Concerning XXX's Sanction], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0119, Reexamination file, 16.

<sup>37</sup> "Shensu" [Appeal], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0119, Reexamination file, 20–21.

<sup>38</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi wenti de fucha jielun" [CCP XX Party Committee's Reexamination Conclusion on Problems Concerning Comrade XXX], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 5.

<sup>39</sup> "Zhonggong XX gongshe XXX cunzhibu guanyu kaichu XXX dangji chufen qingshi baogao" [Report Submitted by the CCP XXX Village Committee, XX Commune, on Recommendations of Dealing with XXX's Expulsion from the Party], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0098, Original file, 5.

dossier for Zheng recorded that he had embezzled 438.81 yuan and appropriated 75 kilograms of sorghum grain from the village's warehouse.<sup>40</sup> In April 1979, Zheng's widow petitioned the County Party Committee to redress the case.<sup>41</sup> The CCP in the immediate post-Mao period permitted people to seek posthumous rehabilitation for their dead relatives. In the following two months, the officials reinvestigated the case by interviewing Zheng's former colleagues and neighbors. They also reanalyzed materials that the work team had created on Zheng during the SEM against the context of their recent interviews with cadres and villagers. The reexamination stated that the officials had been unable to verify some of the details of the original accusations. It was, however, inclined to believe that Zheng's corruption had been marginal.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, the reinvestigation remained inconclusive. A turning point came a year later when the Hebei Provincial Disciplinary Commission instructed its county subordinates not to get hold of the details of the original allegations and to focus on only those accusations that had played a major role in the final verdicts. If the accusations also could not be verified, they should put that on record but revise the sanctions.<sup>43</sup> Following this, the officials concluded that Zheng had only embezzled 9.94 yuan rather than 438.81 yuan and that he had failed to return a loan of 30 yuan to the village's account.<sup>44</sup> It took two years before Zheng's widow received the reexamination result because of the focus that the disciplinary commission placed on verifying all of the details. In 1981, the County Party Committee concluded that Zheng's wrongdoing was trivial and thus exempted him from disciplinary sanction – the lightest sanction for a party member.<sup>45</sup> The reexamination of this case shows how the team could change the original allegations when they were unable to verify the associated details that had supported the original verdicts.

<sup>40</sup> "Chuli fan cuowu ganbu dengji biao" [Personal Resume Form Recording Handling Cadres Who Made Mistakes], *ibid.*, Original file, 8.

<sup>41</sup> "Guanyu dui XXX kaichu dangji de shensu" [Appeal Concerning XXX's Expulsion from the Party], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 14.

<sup>42</sup> "Guanyu XXX suofan cuowu de fucha baogao" [The Reexamination Report Concerning XXX's Misdeeds], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 7–8.

<sup>43</sup> "Guanyu guance zhixing quansheng dierci dang de jilü jiancha gongzuo huiyi jingshen de yijian (caoan)" [Suggestions on Carrying Out the Spirit of the Second Session of the Provincial Disciplinary Inspection Work (Draft)], HBDDO-1980-5, 12.

<sup>44</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi wenti de fucha jielun" [CCP XX County Committee's Reexamination Conclusion of XXX], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0098, Reexamination file, 2.

<sup>45</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi wenti de fucha baogao" (CCP XX County Committee's Reexamination Report Concerning XXX's Problem), *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 2.

Along with changing standards for defining corruption and verifying evidence, disciplinary officials also allowed cadres and villagers to hold SEM work teams responsible for wrongful denunciations. Officials did not interview former work team members to verify new testimonies, nor did they look into whether the work team members were accountable for wrongful SEM practices. In Zheng Youshan's case, his widow stated in the appeal letter that his confession and the villagers' denunciations had been obtained under duress from the work team.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, two villagers also provided handwritten evidence to show how the work team had pressured them to inflate the amount of Zheng's embezzlement.<sup>47</sup> Disciplinary officials accepted these statements but did not verify them by contacting former work team members, most of whom were officials at the county level and above. It seems likely that the work team members' higher political status played an important role in exempting them from being interviewed or even questioned.

Moreover, in recording new oral testimonies, disciplinary officials consistently used the term "work team" rather than specific names. In reinvestigating the case against Wang Shiwu in October 1982, officials convened a forum in which two of his former colleagues said that they had made wrongful accusations due to the work team's "extraction of confessions by torture."<sup>48</sup> They claimed that, under pressure from the work team and in the climate of the SEM, they had falsely decried Wang's misconduct at a public meeting and contributed to the work team's fabricated report against him. The minutes of the meeting employ the term "work team" without naming individual work team members, thereby enabling them to elude accountability.<sup>49</sup> Just as in this case, the other 350 SEM personal dossiers I have read also illustrate how administrative rehabilitation faced a limitation: Former work team members were not punished for their wrongful behavior.

Without the need to identify individual perpetrators, there was space in which cadres and villagers could still acknowledge that they had fabricated denunciations during the SEM. Some cadres and villagers intervened by giving new testimonies, whereas others apparently decided to allow their original denunciations to stand. As indicated by the cadre Du

<sup>46</sup> "Guanyu dui XXX kaichu dangji de shensu" [Appeal Concerning XXX's Expulsion from the Party], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 14.

<sup>47</sup> "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 17; "Zhengming cailiao," *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 18.

<sup>48</sup> "Guanyu XXX touqie liangshi he qinshan jiti gengdi de anjian taolun jilü" [Records of XXX's Case Concerning the Stealing of Grains and the Appropriation of Collective Land], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0073, 109–13.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 109–13.

Jinhua's original file, four villagers offered at least fifty pieces of handwritten evidence to expose cadre Du's embezzlement of 323 yuan and 117.75 kilograms of grain.<sup>50</sup> When the reexamination of Du's case took place in September 1979, only one of them provided new testimonies to prove his innocence.<sup>51</sup> Because the disciplinary commission instructed its officials to systematically interview the individuals involved,<sup>52</sup> this single villager's new testimony was insufficient to challenge the original accusations. The officials responsible for Du's case thus found two other villagers who had not written any testimony during the SEM but had fabricated the story of his malfeasance at public meetings. One of these two villagers acknowledged that he had punched and kicked Du at a public meeting.<sup>53</sup> Besides these villagers, one of Du's colleagues also contributed one piece of new testimony toward the rehabilitation of Du. During the SEM, this colleague provided eleven pieces of handwritten evidence to denounce Du.<sup>54</sup> In the reexamination, he stressed that Du had often challenged work team members, who had then forced this colleague to make wrongful accusations.<sup>55</sup> This colleague further stated that Du did not engage in corruption. This testimony was accepted by the officials, and as a result Du's party membership was reinstated.<sup>56</sup>

In those cases in which cadres and villagers considered their original accusations to be accurate, they could still play a role in rehabilitation by requesting the mitigation of the sanctions imposed during the SEM. The following case is illustrative. In February 1979, Zhao Qifa wrote an appeal letter in which he accepted the SEM work team's accusation against him of embezzling 70.2 yuan but requested a revision of the decision expelling him from the party.<sup>57</sup> At a forum convened by officials in charge of the reexamination in March of that year, three party members from Zhao's village expressed their unanimous support for mitigating the sanctions against him. They tried to do so by focusing

<sup>50</sup> "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten evidence], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0161, Original file, 12–61.

<sup>51</sup> "Tanhua jiyao" [Records of the Interview], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 24.

<sup>52</sup> "Qianduan jijian gongzuo jianxun" [Brief Report on Party Discipline Inspection Work Earlier This Year], HBDDO-1979-5, 23–27.

<sup>53</sup> "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0161, Reexamination file, 25; "Pinxia zhongnong zuotanhui" [Minutes of Meetings with Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 34.

<sup>54</sup> "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], *ibid.*, Original file, 51–61.

<sup>55</sup> "Tanhua jiyao" [Records of the Interview], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 24.

<sup>56</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XX tongzhi wenti de fucha jielun" [CCP XX Party Committee's Reexamination Conclusions Regarding the Problems of Comrade XXX], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 2.

<sup>57</sup> "Shensu Shu" [Petition for Revision], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0105, Reexamination file, 13–14.

on the change of his class status from lower-middle peasant to landlord during the SEM. As the historian Jeremy Brown has shown, the practice of changing class labels in Hebei during the SEM was, to some degree, arbitrary. In 1979, class labels were still important to villagers and cadres, and the CCP conducted a reinvestigation of Zhao's case after some of the villagers and cadres who experienced the change to their class labels during the SEM appealed.<sup>58</sup> It was against this backdrop that the three party members argued that the change of Zhao's class status had become the basis for this excessive sanction against him. They emphasized that the work team's investigation into Zhao's class background was highly problematic and that Zhao had received a heavier sanction because of the change in his class label. They thus suggested revising the penalties.<sup>59</sup> Accepting their suggestions, the officials investigated this issue, returned Zhao's class status to that of lower-middle peasant, and finally suggested a lighter sanction than that of expulsion from the party.<sup>60</sup> One month later, the County Disciplinary Commission decided to reduce the sanction to probation within the party for two years and reinstate his party membership.<sup>61</sup>

In sum, the reexamination of SEM cases concerning corruption included altering the standards for defining corruption and those for verifying original testimonies. These changes enabled county disciplinary officials to reduce previous sanctions and reinstate cadres' party membership. County disciplinary officials avoided mentioning the names of work team members, limiting individual accountability. Cadres and villagers often blamed work teams for having forced them to make fabricated denunciations against cadres, causing them to be wrongfully sanctioned. These cadres and villagers sometimes managed to renounce the original accusations against the cadres during the SEM. In a fraction of cases, villagers and cadres stated that their original denunciations did not need any revision. However, they still made use of rehabilitation to request the mitigation of sanctions adjudicated during the SEM. The

<sup>58</sup> Jeremy Brown, "Moving Targets: Changing Class Labels in Rural Hebei and Henan, 1960–1979," in Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson, eds., *Maosism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 51–76.

<sup>59</sup> "Guanyu XXX dangji zuotan jilu" [Records of the Meeting Concerning XXX's Party Membership], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 16–17.

<sup>60</sup> "Guanyu XXX tongzhi suofan cuowu de fucha jielun" [Reexamination Conclusion of Comrade XXX's Misdeeds], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0105, Reexamination file, 9.

<sup>61</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX suofan cuowu de fucha jielun" [CCP XX County Committee's Reexamination Conclusion of XXX's Misdeeds], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 5.

microprocesses of villagers' and cadres' participation in this process mattered in making administrative rehabilitation workable in villages. The processes of restorative justice in the immediate post-Mao era were not exclusively top-down, as might be imagined, but hinged on the participation of villagers and cadres.

### The Reexamination of Accusations of Sexual Impropriety

Between 1979 and 1982, officials also reexamined accusations and verdicts in cases made against cadres during the SEM concerning sexual impropriety. The Hebei Provincial Disciplinary Committee barred its officials from posing questions about this issue in the course of interviewing cadres and villagers or from holding meetings with them. In particular, it instructed them not to interview the women involved. The committee cited the potential for retraumatization (*erci shanghai*) of the victims in some cases as grounds for this.<sup>62</sup> However, villagers and cadres could still participate in the reexamination by voicing their opinions. Their responses to such reinvestigation varied. This section focuses on the role of women who, without being asked by the officials in charge of the reexamination, provided new testimonies to change or conceal their previous accusations. It also explores why the colleagues of some sanctioned cadres chose to discuss the issue of sexual misconduct in the reinvestigation. The participation of both the women involved and these colleagues was crucial to the full or partial rehabilitation of the sanctioned cadres.

The guideline for reexamining the cases concerning sexual impropriety focused on how to conduct the reinvestigation without interviews, particularly with the women involved. As the Hebei Provincial Disciplinary Committee explained, the reinvestigation could become complicated after the male cadres no longer acknowledged their sexual relationships outside of marriage in their appeal letters. Firstly, although cadres and villagers provided handwritten testimonies to denounce the cadres during the SEM, their accusations were unlikely to be accurate because such sexual relations were intimate. The committee thus barred its county officials from collecting new testimonies from these cadres and villagers. Secondly, the original investigation collected both the cadres and the women's confessions as evidence to back the accusations during

<sup>62</sup> “Zhonggong Hebei shengwei jilü jiancha weiyuanhui guanyu fucha lishi anjian de jianjie he jinhou yijian” [Hebei Provincial Disciplinary Committee on the Brief Conclusions and Recommendations for Reexaminations of Historical Cases from Now on], *Jijifa* [1980] no. 30, HBDDO-1980-2, 7.

the SEM. When the cadres retracted their original confessions in appeals, the most plausible way of investigating their cases was to verify these confessions with the women involved. However, the committee stressed that it was particularly important not to interview the women involved. It did not explain why.<sup>63</sup> The County A Disciplinary Commission thus ordered its officials to reexamine these cases through reviewing cadres' appeal letters, their original confessions, and the minutes of public meetings created by the work teams during the SEM.<sup>64</sup> This guideline is similar to that applied to the cases from during the Cultural Revolution. Officials who were responsible for reinvestigating Cultural Revolution cases also did not interview the women involved.<sup>65</sup>

The reexamination of sexual impropriety did not necessarily aim to find the "truth," as is suggested by the official policy barring the interviewing of the women involved. Instead, officials revised the original sanctions if they could not verify the details from the original files. One example is the reinvestigation of the case of Ding Ximing, who committed suicide by jumping into a river in 1965 after being accused of having maintained a sexual relationship with a married woman.<sup>66</sup> The sole form of evidence used in his conviction was his own confession.<sup>67</sup> The village party committee with which Ding had been affiliated wrote its superiors a report pleading for his expulsion from the party during the SEM.<sup>68</sup> Probably because of the lack of sufficient evidence, this same village committee also submitted a letter in May 1981 to request the reinstatement of Ding's party membership.<sup>69</sup> The officials responsible for reexamining this case determined that given Ding was no longer alive and official policy barred interviewing the woman involved, it was impossible

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>64</sup> "Zhonggong XXX xianwei jilü jiancha weiyuanhui guanyu guance quansheng dierci dang de jilü jiancha gongzuo huiyi jingshen de qingkuang huibao" [The CCP County Disciplinary Commission's Report on Carrying Out the Spirit of the Second Session of the Provincial Disciplinary Inspection Work], HBDDO-1980-5, 33.

<sup>65</sup> Jeremy Brown, "A Policeman, His Gun, and an Alleged Rape: Competing Appeals for Justice in Tianjin, 1966–1979," in Leese and Engman, eds., *Victims, Perpetrators, and the Role of Law in Maoist China*, 127–49, esp. 140–43.

<sup>66</sup> "Nongcun dangyuan ganbu chufen jue ding shu" [Letter of the Decision About Sanction], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0027, Original file, 20.

<sup>67</sup> "Ziji jiancha" [Self-Criticism], *ibid.*, Original file, 12.

<sup>68</sup> "XXX dadui dang zhibu guanyu gei XXX kaichu dangji chufen de baogao" [XXX Brigade Party Committee's Report on the Expulsion of XXX from the Party], *ibid.*, Original file, 1–2.

<sup>69</sup> "XXX cun dadui dangzhibu guanyu wei XXX huifu dangji de yijian" [XXX Brigade Party Committee's Opinion on the Reinstatement of XXX's Party Membership], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 7.



to verify whether he had engaged in sexual misconduct.<sup>70</sup> The disciplinary commission further argued that Ding's original confession was not permissible evidence for convicting him. On these grounds, the commission revoked his expulsion from the party.<sup>71</sup>

Officials sometimes conducted the reinvestigations not by focusing on cadres' sexual misconduct itself but by looking into other issues that were relevant to the accusations. For example, the reexamination of the case of former cadre Sun Yonglin shows how officials reviewed the issue of the "misallocation" of public funds connected to the original accusation of his sexual relationship with a widow.<sup>72</sup> Such accusations occurred against the backdrop of, in the Mao era, the CCP connecting these cases to the issues of cadres' misappropriation of power in exchange for sexual favors.<sup>73</sup> In 1979, after reviewing Sun's file, the officials responsible for this case noted that the work team accused Sun of having maintained an unusual relationship with the widow because, in early 1962, he had allocated 30 yuan of public funds to her. These officials did not interview the widow, nor did they ask her to provide new testimony.<sup>74</sup> Instead, they convened a forum with cadres and villagers in which they focused on Sun's alleged misallocation of public funds to the widow. Cadres and villagers pointed out that, in early 1962, the village party committee had held two meetings to discuss how to help those on the verge of starvation. The widow's family had lacked labor power, making it impossible for her to eke out a living. The majority of the cadres, including Sun, had thus agreed to provide her the funding.<sup>75</sup> As stated in the reinvestigation report, there was insufficient evidence to support the allegation of Sun having maintained a sexual relationship with her.<sup>76</sup>

Also, in Sun's case, the efforts of another woman played an important role in carrying out the rehabilitation. Without being asked, another

<sup>70</sup> "Zhonggong XXX gongshe weiyuanhui guanyu XXX anjuan de fucha yijian" [CCP XXX Commune Party Committee's Opinion on the Reexamination of XXX's Case File], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 5–6.

<sup>71</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi wenti de fucha jielun" [The CCP XX County Committee's Reexamination Conclusion Concerning Comrade XXX's Problem], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 4.

<sup>72</sup> "Dui XXX de wenti fucha zonghe cailiao" [Comprehensive Material of Reexaminations of XXX's Issue], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 20–21.

<sup>73</sup> Ralph Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao's Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 237–38.

<sup>74</sup> "Dui XXX de wenti fucha zonghe cailiao" [Comprehensive Material of Reexaminations of XXX's Issue], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0027, Reexamination file, 20–21.

<sup>75</sup> "Zuotan jilu" [The Forum's Records], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 71.

<sup>76</sup> "Dui XXX de wenti fucha zonghe cailiao," *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 20.

woman who was said to have maintained a sexual relationship with Sun sent a handwritten letter to the officials. She argued that the work team had forced her to fabricate a story that she and Sun had had a sexual relationship. The work team suspected this relationship, she wrote, because Sun was a good friend of her husband before the SEM and frequented their house to chat after dinner.<sup>77</sup> Her detailed account of what transpired convinced the officials, who cited her words as new evidence in the reexamination report. Therefore, they concluded that the allegations against Sun having had two extramarital sexual relationships were invalid,<sup>78</sup> and the County Party Committee approved the request for the reinstatement of his party membership.<sup>79</sup> Offering new testimony without being asked was crucial to rehabilitating Sun.

The participation of women in reexamination, despite their not being asked, contributed in some cases to revisions of original accusations and sanctions. This is exemplified in the partial rehabilitation of Huang Zhenhua, who was expelled from the party during the SEM due in large part to the accusations of his having maintained sexual relationships with five women.<sup>80</sup> In March 1979, Huang acknowledged in his appeal letter that he had had sexual relationships with two married women but denied the accusations of maintaining such relationships with the three other women.<sup>81</sup> Several days later, the officials came to Huang's village and reexamined his case by focusing on the charges he had rejected in his petition.<sup>82</sup> Without being asked, all three of the women mentioned in Huang's letter provided the officials with handwritten testimonies to support his innocence.<sup>83</sup> One stated that because her husband's poor health had made it difficult to make ends meet for years, she had asked Huang to help sell her house. Huang thus visited the woman in the presence of her husband several times to arrange the transaction. Using

<sup>77</sup> "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 73.

<sup>78</sup> "Zhonggong XX gongshe weiyuanhui guanyu XXX suofan cuowu de fucha jielun" [CCP XX Commune Party Committee's Reexamination Report Concerning XXX's Misdeeds], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 13–14.

<sup>79</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX suofan cuowu de fucha jielun" [CCP XX Party Committee's Reexamination Report Concerning Comrade XXX's Misdeeds], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 4.

<sup>80</sup> "XXX chufen jue ding shu" [Letter of the Decision Concerning XXX's Sanction], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0140, Original file, 67–68.

<sup>81</sup> "Yaoqiu zuzhi huifu shenqing shu" [Appeal Letter Requesting to Reinstatement Party Membership], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 22.

<sup>82</sup> "Guanyu XXX wenti de diaocha baogao" [Investigation Report Concerning XXX's Problem], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 11.

<sup>83</sup> "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], 24; "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], 25; "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], 26, all in *ibid.*, Reexamination file.

this as a pretext, the work team had forced Huang and the woman to confess to a fabricated sexual liaison at a public meeting. Although the woman's husband had passed away in 1979, she gave the name of another cadre who had visited her together with Huang for the transaction.<sup>84</sup> The officials accepted these three women's new testimonies in their reexamination reports. Just as importantly, party members' engagement in extramarital sexual relations was still considered as violating disciplinary rules at the time. The Hebei Provincial Party Committee gave instructions to reduce the disciplinary sanctions on members thus accused from expulsion from the party to probation within the party.<sup>85</sup> On this basis, the County Party Committee reinstated Huang's party membership and merely put him on probation within the party for a year.<sup>86</sup>

Besides women's participation, the various responses of a sanctioned cadre's colleagues influenced reexamination processes and results. Some of these colleagues would acknowledge to reinvestigation officials that the cadre had engaged in extramarital relations, but some of them would not. In the case of Huang Zhenhua, the officials summoned twelve village party members to attend a meeting in 1979 to reassess the verdict imposed on him. Eleven of them spoke highly of Huang, citing his sense of responsibility toward villagers during his tenure as a cadre in the 1950s and early 1960s. They voted in support of reinstating Huang's party membership.<sup>87</sup> The sole outlier also believed Huang's sanction should be revised, but he stressed that Huang's sexual relations with two women still constituted a severe contravention of party discipline and recommended giving him a light sanction according to party disciplinary rules.<sup>88</sup> The two different strategies Huang's colleagues employed to guarantee his partial rehabilitation underscore the importance of their opinions in the revision of the verdict.

That a previously sanctioned cadre's colleagues could formally voice their opinions in the course of the reinvestigation illustrates the importance of their participation. Wen Yongshan was expelled from the party in 1964 due to a sexual relationship in which the woman's husband brought

<sup>84</sup> "Zhengming cailiao" [Handwritten Evidence], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 25.

<sup>85</sup> "Wang Zheng tongzhi zai shengwei luoshi zhengce huibao hui shang de jianghua" [Comrade Wang Zheng's Speech at the Provincial Report Meeting on Implementing Policy], HBDPC-1979-21, 4.

<sup>86</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi wenti de fucha jielun" [The CCP XX County Committee's Reexamination Conclusion Concerning Comrade XXX's Problem], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0140, Reexamination file, 5.

<sup>87</sup> "Lao dangyuan zuotan yijian" [Records of Veteran Party Members' Forum], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 30–32.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–32.

this issue to the county court.<sup>89</sup> In 1979, when officials convened a meeting to carry out the reexamination of this case, eleven party members were invited to offer their comments on the original accusations and sanctions. Four of them reconfirmed Wen's engagement in this sexual relationship outside marriage while requesting the mitigation of Wen's sanction.<sup>90</sup> However, the minutes of the meeting do not record the reason why they did so. The remaining seven members simply argued that Wen had received heavier sanctions than he had deserved.<sup>91</sup> Five months later, the County Party Committee decided to reinstate Wen's party membership and probated him within the party for two years.<sup>92</sup> The partial rehabilitation of Wen's case makes it clear that his colleagues used the meeting to reevaluate the original accusations against him and the sanctions that followed.

In an attempt to rehabilitate the sanctioned cadre, his colleagues could shift the focus of reexamination to help mitigate the original verdict. Their participation in the reinvestigation of Xia Zhentai's case, for example, exemplifies this. After being accused in 1964 of having had extramarital sexual relations with thirteen women, Xia committed suicide by swallowing half a bottle of pesticide. Xia was posthumously kicked out of the party because of both his sexual relationships outside of marriage and his suicide.<sup>93</sup> In June 1982, Xia's village party committee submitted a report to its superior commune party committee, proposing the reinstatement of his party membership. The report did not mention the issue of Xia's extramarital relationships but claimed that the decision to expel him from the party had been made based on the fact of his suicide.<sup>94</sup> The village committee chose to focus on Xia's suicide because, half a year ago, the County Party Committee had instructed disciplinary officials to take a sympathetic stance when reexamining suicide cases

<sup>89</sup> "Zhonggong XXX gongshe XXX zhibu guanyu yuan da duizhang XXX tongzhi suofan cuowu de zonghe cailiao" [The CCP XXX Party Committee's Comprehensive Materials on Comrade XXX's Misdeeds], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0046, Original file, 8.

<sup>90</sup> "XXX dadui zhibu quanyu XXX tongzhi de taolun yijian" [XXX Brigade Party Committee's Opinion on Comrade XXX], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 8–9.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>92</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi suofan cuowu de fucha jielun" [CCP XX County Committee's Reexamination Conclusion of XXX], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 4.

<sup>93</sup> "Guanyu qunzong niming fanying XXX lishi buqing weifa luanji deng wenti xiang diwei de diaocha baogao" [An Investigative Report to the Prefectural Committee About Anonymous Reporting from the Masses Concerning XXX's Historical Problems and Violations of Law and Discipline], in Personal Dossier, 1962–1967, HBSEM-0068, Original file, 35, 43.

<sup>94</sup> "XX gongshe XXX dadui dang zhibu" [XXX Commune's XXX Brigade Party Committee], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 3.

from during the SEM.<sup>95</sup> Xia's colleagues also focused exclusively on his suicide at a meeting held for the reexamination. After this, Xia's party membership was suggested to be reinstated.<sup>96</sup> Four years later, the County Disciplinary Commission inspected its reexamination files, finding that it had forgotten to approve the conclusion on Xia's case. The commission then affirmed the reinstatement of Xia's party membership.<sup>97</sup>

Some colleagues of a sanctioned cadre, without being asked, spoke out against any revision of the original accusations and verdicts. Hou Mingyuan, accused of embezzling 1,224.45 yuan and sexual misconduct with several women, was expelled from the party during the SEM.<sup>98</sup> As the reexamination of the SEM cases in County A came to an end in 1982, the County Disciplinary Commission sent officials to review his case despite not having received an appeal letter.<sup>99</sup> At a forum for party members held by the officials, none of Hou's former colleagues referred to any details of his sexual misconduct. Instead, they just said, "what Hou did made him fail to meet the criteria for party membership."<sup>100</sup> Their opinions were clear: The expulsion of Hou from the party did not require revision. The County Party Committee thus decided not to revise the original sanction against Hou.<sup>101</sup>

In sum, although disciplinary officials were barred from posing questions about sexual impropriety in their interviews and meetings, cadres and villagers could speak out if they chose to do so. Some of the women involved, without being asked, provided handwritten testimonies to attest to the innocence of previously sanctioned cadres. The colleagues of a sanctioned cadre also intervened in the process by commenting on the original accusations and sanctions. Additionally, some of them reconfirmed a cadre's engagement in extramarital sexual relations, while

<sup>95</sup> "Su X tongzhi zai quanxian luoshi zhengce huiyi jieshu shi de jianghua" [Comrade Su X's Speech at the End of the Meeting on Fixing Policy], HBDPC-1981-5, 6.

<sup>96</sup> "Zhonggong XX gongshe dangwei guangu fucha XXX tongzhi kaichu dangji de zonghe cailliao" [CCP XX Commune Party Committee's Comprehensive Materials on the Reexamination of Comrade XXX's Expulsion from the Party], in Personal Dossier, 1962-1967, HBSEM-0068, Reexamination file, 2.

<sup>97</sup> "Yijiu baliu nian anjuan zhiliang jiancha qingkuang dengjibiao" [Registration for the Inspection of the Quality of Case Files in 1986], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 8.

<sup>98</sup> "XXX chufen jue ding shu" [Decision Letter Concerning XXX's Sanction], in Personal Dossier, 1962-1967, HBSEM-0165, Original file, 2.

<sup>99</sup> "Dangyuan zuotan yijian" [Records of Party Members' Forum], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 14.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>101</sup> "Zhonggong XX xianwei guanyu XXX tongzhi wenti de fucha jielun" [XX County Committee's Reexamination Conclusion Concerning Comrade XXX's Problem], *ibid.*, Reexamination file, 2.

others chose not to mention such issues. Their various responses resulted in the revisions of original accusations or sanctions, which constituted a portion of the microprocesses of administrative rehabilitation.

### Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the participation of cadres and villagers in interviews and meetings and in the writing of new testimonies was critical in making the administrative rehabilitation of SEM cases possible on the micro-level. Their responses to different types of accusations varied widely, and they either provided new testimonies, requested the mitigation of original sanctions, or suggested no revision to the cases. Providing new testimonies became a means for cadres and villagers to respond to administrative rehabilitation in a way that reconnected them with the post-Mao state. In handwritten evidence and interviews, some cadres and villagers renounced their original accusations, further arguing that during the SEM work teams had pressured them to fabricate testimonies. When it came to cases associated with allegations of sexual impropriety, some of the women involved, without being asked, provided new testimonies to attest to the innocence of previously sanctioned cadres. Just as importantly, meetings with colleagues of the sanctioned cadres constituted a channel through which these cadres participated in the reassessment of original evidence, accusations, and verdicts. This can be seen in the reexamination of allegations of both corruption and sexual impropriety. At the meetings, these colleagues often requested the mitigation of the original sanctions and the reinstatement of a cadre's party membership, even if they stated that the original denunciation did not need revision. Cadres' and villagers' participation was an integral part of the microprocesses of administrative rehabilitation, playing a significant role in the reinstatement of sanctioned cadres' membership through the transformational period of *boluan fanzheng*.

The stories of SEM case revisions in eastern Hebei make explicit that administrative rehabilitation also consisted of an official process initiated in a top-down way, particularly at the county level. The County Disciplinary Commission dealt with a wide range of potentially disruptive injustices caused by the misuse of disciplinary sanctions during the SEM. Their standard for assessing the original evidence changed during the interactions with cadres and villagers. The commission accepted the fact that some cadres in the Mao era had used collective funds or grain as gifts to their superiors in order to access scarce goods for their villages. What is more, cadres and villagers had rejected viewing such practices as a form of corruption. Because of this, the commission preferred to

rehabilitate the cadres who had engaged in the gift-giving for their villages' interests. In addition, the reexamination of cadres' sexual impropriety demonstrated the CCP's attempt to loosen sanctions on its members concerning such issues in the immediate post-Mao era. This change provided the grounds for the commission to reinstate a large number of cadres' party memberships. In contrast to postsocialist Eastern European countries that punished perpetrators and implemented lustration after the decline of communist parties in the 1990s,<sup>102</sup> China under the CCP's leadership could, to some degree, redress SEM injustices through disciplinary mechanisms without undermining its rule.

The analysis of how ordinary people and local officials in eastern Hebei came to terms with and moved on from the difficult legacies of the SEM reveals particular characteristics of the post-Mao administrative rehabilitations concerning the role and responsibility of work teams. In the course of providing new testimonies, villagers and cadres held SEM work teams accountable for wrongful denunciations rather than themselves. Meanwhile, disciplinary officials attempted to limit this in the interest of carrying out rehabilitation on the ground. Passing responsibility for the original wrongful denunciations onto the work teams left the CCP with a serious problem regarding the historical injustices stemming from its SEM policy implementation. The CCP's 1981 Resolution acknowledged that "in the course of the movement (SEM), problems differing in nature were treated as forms of class struggle or its reflections inside the Party," and that as a result of problems in the SEM, "quite a number of the cadres at the grassroots level were unjustly dealt with."<sup>103</sup> The Resolution did not discuss the details involved in the SEM injustices or the reexamination of these cadres' cases. The national policy on the handling of the CCP's historical issues did not affirm the local practices of blaming work teams for SEM injustices. In this way, the CCP set aside the question of the role of work teams (and thus the CCP) in SEM injustices, and thus although the reexamination process provided some aspects of transitional justice on the ground, its attempts at administrative rehabilitation were incomplete.

<sup>102</sup> Katherine Verdery, "Postsocialist Cleansing in Eastern Europe: Purity and Danger in Transitional Justice," in Nina Bandehi and Dorothy Solinger, eds., *Socialism Vanquished, Socialism Challenged: Eastern Europe and China, 1989–2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 63–82.

<sup>103</sup> "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," June 27, 1981, [www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/history/01.htm](http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/history/01.htm). Also available in the Maoist Legacy Database as item no. 356.