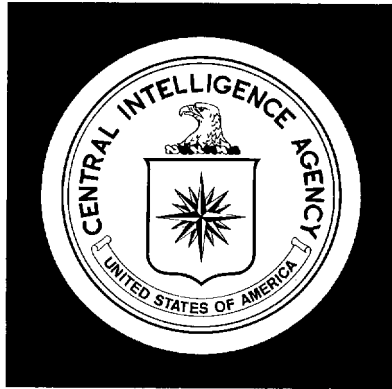


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*After Mao: Factors and Contingencies  
in the Succession*

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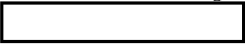
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE  
OFFICE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH

August 1976

AFTER MAO: FACTORS AND CONTINGENCIES  
IN THE SUCCESSION



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Note: The writer is grateful for contributions by other offices of CIA, although formal coordination was not sought. Research and analysis was completed in mid-August 1976. Comments and questions will be welcomed by the author 

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MAO TSE-TUNG

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The reason for writing this paper is that Mao Tse-tung, who has dominated the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for more than 40 years, may soon be totally incapacitated or dead, and that his degree of dominance has been such that his departure will profoundly affect the Chinese scene, regardless of whether violence is avoided.

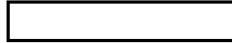
The enormous power and authority of the Chairman must somehow be divided—by agreement or through struggle—among a number of successors. This paper attempts to identify the key figures and contending factions.

This paper is organized sequentially, considering factors and contingencies in three periods: prior to Mao's death, around the time of death, and after death (meaning, a few months). In the first period, the question of access to and influence on Mao arises. In the second period, there are at least three dramatic possibilities: an attempted coup in Peking, intervention by Military Region leaders outside Peking, and a Soviet attack. In the third period, power must be distributed, and there seem to be at least three inescapable policy-questions for those who share in it: their relationship to Mao's "thought," their attitude toward the "rehabilitation" of leaders brought down in the Cultural Revolution, and their management of the Chinese position in the Sino-Soviet-American triangle. (It is recognized that other controversial issues might be taken up on their merits or for factional advantage.)

Throughout this paper, the words Leftist(s), Centrist(s), and Rightist(s) are used to indicate points on the Chinese political spectrum. These words do not imply fixed and predictable positions on every possible issue, but refer to apparent *predilections*. These designations are assigned to individuals and factions primarily in terms of apparent allegiance to and fervor for Mao's fundamental revolutionary vision.

This revolutionary vision (put summarily) calls for the creation, through continuing "class struggle," of a completely politicized and selfless, ideologically-motivated man, and of an egalitarian and largely self-sufficient China, in which differences between mental and manual labor, industry and agriculture, the city and the countryside have been abolished. It also calls for the creation of Maoist-type Communist

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parties, responsive to the CCP, to take power in other countries; but this objective has increasingly conflicted with, and been subordinated to, Mao's intense nationalism and the need as he has seen it to protect China's national security against Soviet "social-imperialism."

It is hoped that this presentation of selected factors and contingencies will be of some value to the reader in the months ahead, even though much of the paper is highly conjectural.

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## PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS

Mao Tse-tung, 82, appears to be deteriorating rapidly, and China is probably already under some degree of "collective" leadership.

Those with the greatest access to Mao, and in the best position to influence whatever decisions he is able to make in his last months, appear to be the Centrist Hua Kuo-feng, Mao's latest and current favorite, and the police figure Wang Tung-hsing, the head of Mao's personal bodyguard. Hua will probably bear the mark of Mao's favor into the post-Mao struggle, although this will not assure Hua's primacy in the successor leadership.

## DRAMATIC, BUT UNLIKELY, POSSIBILITIES

There is a possibility—to be taken seriously—of a coup at the time of Mao's death. The passed-over and unpopular Leftists, fearful about their futures, or Rightist military leaders, fearful of the Leftists, might conspire with the most important figures of the physical security apparatus—the leaders of the Peking Military Region (MR) and of the smaller inner-core forces. However, the key security figures seem unlikely to cooperate in any coup. Moreover, *any* hypothetical group of conspirators would have to have the cooperation or assent of the main-force armies of the Peking MR (not just the MR commanders); otherwise the coup could be quickly reversed. A coup would carry a high risk of splitting the military forces of the MR, leading to armed clashes among them, in turn risking the spread of armed conflict throughout China. Almost all of the post-Mao leaders would probably wish to avoid this.

Intervention in the succession process by leaders of the 10 MRs outside Peking seems most unlikely unless Peking itself is in a state of chaos and the conflict has spread further. While the Russians might offer—especially in a state of civil war—to provide substantial material support to a group of MR leaders whom they believed to be pro-Soviet, no such leaders can now be identified, and the central leaders are unlikely to allow the situation to deteriorate to the point that either the outlying MR leaders or the Russians would attempt to intervene.



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A Soviet attack on China at the time of Mao's death seems the least likely of the dramatic possibilities. There are too many obstacles to a meaningful military or political victory for the Russians. Beyond this, with Mao's death there will be a qualitatively new political situation for Moscow to try to exploit. The sensible course for the Russians, with their most implacable enemy departed, will be to talk, not fight.

#### A TENSE "COLLECTIVE"

Mao's successors, even if they have been working reasonably well together during Mao's deterioration, and even if they avoid violence at the time of Mao's death, will still face a difficult problem in distributing power among themselves in the immediate post-Mao period. This will be especially true if the leaders decide to retire the post of Chairman, which would place Hua Kuo-feng on a collision course with the Leftist Chang Chun-chiao for the post of Secretary-General of the Party, then the Party's topmost position. (In a showdown in the Politburo, Hua would seem likely to attract more votes and to have a better claim to the support of military and security forces.) The preferable course would seem to be to retain the Chairmanship, dividing power between Hua (continuing for a time as First Vice-Chairman) and Chang (continuing as Secretary-General).

No one person, whatever his title, will be able to dominate the Party as Mao had. Nor, probably, can any single faction—whether Centrist, Rightist, Leftist, or other. The group that dominates will probably prove to be some *combination* of the strongest figures from all points of the political spectrum.

In addition to the difficulty of calculating the perceptions of various leaders as to one another's strengths (especially, military/security support) too little is known of the personal *character* of the conjectured key figures to permit a confident judgment as to whether all or most of them would prove able to subordinate their serious differences with others, and their personal ambitions, to the common good. On balance, however, it seems likely that *most* of the key figures, acting from a sense of national interest, will be able to agree upon some form of "collective" leadership—one which, at least for a time, will conceal the extent of their differences.

#### A POSSIBLE EQUITABLE ARRANGEMENT

There is a possible distribution of power among the most important figures which would seem equitable to outside observers. The center-line

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in such a "collective" would run through the Center of the Chinese political spectrum—"moderate" in Chinese terms, although still more "revolutionary" than, say, the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The constellation would be:

- The Centrist Hua Kuo-feng, c. 56, as the Party's principal officer;
- The Leftist Chang Chun-chiao, c. 64, as next-ranking officer or Premier;
- The Rightist old Marshal Yeh Chien-ying, 78, and the "wild card" Chen Hsi-lien, 63, remaining respectively Minister of Defense and Commander of the Peking MR, the principal figures of the Military Affairs Committee which controls and directs the armed forces;\*
- The Centrist Chi Teng-kuei, in his late 40s, remaining the Party's supervisor of organizational work and the other key figure (first political officer) of the Peking MR, and becoming the back-up for Hua or Chang in the Party or governmental structure;
- Another "wild card," Wang Tung-hsing, 60, continuing in the role of director of the Party's political security apparatus (secret police);
- Most of the above, plus one of the lesser Leftists—the now second-ranking Vice-Chairman, young Wang Hung-wen, about 40, or Madame Mao, 61, or the propagandist Yao Wen-yuan, about 45—as composing the bulk of the Politburo Standing Committee, the core of Party power; and
- The Rightist Chiao Kuan-hua, 64, the very able protege of Chou En-lai, continuing as Foreign Minister.

## CENTRIST POLICIES

A centrist leadership of this kind would be expected to take Centrist positions on three inescapable policy-questions: the group's relationship to Mao's "thought," the concept of "rehabilitation," and the Sino-Soviet-American triangle.

Mao's successors will almost certainly affirm their fidelity to his "thought," in the interest of continuity and because they have been so

\*The term "wild card" is used herein for a leader whose record does not permit his classification as Left, Center, or Right, but whose power is such that his support would be of great value to any classifiable contender. It may turn out that the "wild cards" make the critical difference in shaping the succession.

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intimately associated with his policies. Some of the disruptive manifestations of Mao's "thought," however, can and very probably will be modified, but quietly, employing other aspects of the "thought" to justify this.

Mao's policy of "rehabilitation"—of thousands of Party cadres, government functionaries, and military leaders brought down in the Cultural Revolution, many of whom are again in important posts—will probably be reaffirmed, although many will remain purged. Any attempt by Leftist leaders to reverse this policy would probably lead to their own downfall.

Mao's successors may move to reduce the tension in the Sino-Soviet relationship, even in the immediate post-Mao period. For example, there seems a good chance that the Chinese will quietly modify their demands in the border dispute. This might be seen as having the additional advantage of inducing the US to move more rapidly toward "normalization" of relations with Peking.

It is not expected, however, that the Chinese will adopt a policy of equidistance from the USSR and the US. The probability seems strong that the USSR will remain the "main enemy," and that Mao's successors will persist in the policy of attempting to use the US as a strategic counterweight to the USSR. If for no other reason than that Peking's exploration of the potential of the US connection has not yet been completed, almost any constellation of post-Mao leaders could be expected to continue the process of exploration, even while complaining that the pace of "normalization" of relations is too slow.

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## THE DISCUSSION

## MAO'S DETERIORATION

Mao Tse-tung, 82 last December, has appeared to be deteriorating rapidly since March of this year. He is already incapacitated to the point that he no longer makes even brief appearances, and he may become totally incapacitated, or die, within the next few months. (See photograph.)

As of October 1975, Mao impressed perceptive foreign visitors as still clearly the dominant figure in China, and it was just at that time that Mao personally set in motion the process that was to culminate in the purge of Teng Hsiao-ping in 1976. Mao was still lucid in December and January, and was credibly reported to have personally nominated Hua Kuo-feng to replace Teng as Acting Premier in late January. On 23 February, he met for about an hour and 40 minutes with former President Nixon.

Mao did not appear again until 17 March, at which time he gave a strong impression of diminished vigor. Nevertheless, he was credibly reported to be continuing to provide general instructions on the management of the anti-Teng campaign, and the rapid and severe 7 April response to the Tienanmen demonstrations of early April—including the purge of Teng and the appointments of Hua Kuo-feng (as First Vice-Chairman and Premier), both credibly attributed to Mao's initiative—looked as though Mao were still in command.\*

\*It may reasonably be asked why, if the terms Leftist, Centrist, and Rightist are meaningful, Mao named the Centrist Hua Kuo-feng to these key posts rather than elevating two Leftists (Wang Hung-wen and Chang Chun-chiao) who were hierarchically next in line for those posts—Leftists whose policy predilections had been closer to Mao's heart. The apparent answer is that Mao lacked confidence in the Leftists' ability to conduct China's affairs in the difficult period which Mao knew to lie ahead, and that he chose Hua as the ablest administrator for that period, the nearest thing to another Chou En-lai, who was not an ideologue at all but a manager and conciliator, and who nevertheless was the only one of Mao's principal lieutenants of the past 15 years to have remained in Mao's favor until his death. (See photograph on page 9.) Hua was a "compromise"—not one forced on Mao by other leaders, but in the sense that Hua was (as Mao saw it) a man like Chou, who could be relied upon to avoid the excesses repeatedly committed by the Leftists while not abandoning Mao's long-term objectives as a Rightist would. Mao stopped short of formally designating Hua as his successor, in the way that the Leftist Lin Piao had been designated.

Mao appeared twice in April for brief conversations. In the second of these, he had a new English-language interpreter, the Harvard-educated Chi Chao-chu, suggesting at least the possibility of a need for someone quick-witted enough to 'cover' for Mao on occasion, concealing possible gaps in Mao's comprehension and supplying plausible answers when Mao could not.

Again in May Mao appeared twice briefly, looking very enfeebled. His head lolled, he was clearly partially paralyzed on his right side, and may have been partially paralyzed on his left.

In mid-June Mao failed to meet with a visiting head-of-state, and a spokesman reportedly cited a "Central Committee" (or "Party Central," meaning Politburo Standing Committee) decision to put an end to Mao's audiences with foreign visitors, on grounds of failing health (obviously the real reason) and preoccupation with other concerns. That Mao himself was—strikingly—not said to have made this decision (unlike his 1958 decision to give up the post of state chairman), or even to have acquiesced in it, raised



HUA KUO-FENG

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CHANG CHUN-CHIAO

questions as to the degree to which Mao could still dominate the Party leadership, and as to the degree to which China might *already* be under a "collective" leadership.

Nevertheless, as of mid-August there was some reason to believe that Mao was still making decisions. The shift to a harder line (by various Chinese spokesmen, in talks with Americans) on the problem of Taiwan than Premier Hua Kuo-feng had been taking—actually, a counterproductive line—could probably have been imposed only by someone with greater authority than Hua, which narrows the field to just one man, Mao himself, who is known to have expressed impatience about this issue. Lacking evidence of Mao's total incapacitation, it must be presumed that Mao is still able to intervene effectively when he chooses to do so.

*Access and Influence:* Various observers have noted the possibility that Mao will not soon die, but will linger on, continuing to deteriorate until he not only can no longer dominate the Party but cannot even take part in the decision-making process, so that he is simply being *used* by others acting in his name.

There would seem to be at least two stages in such a decline. One would be that in which a deteriorated but still authoritative Mao is increasingly susceptible to the influence of the few other leaders who have access to him (perhaps the stage that we are in now), and the other would be that in which he would be simply a vegetable, like Lenin in his last months, allowing for a third possible stage in which the one condition would pass into the other.

In recent months, those who have visibly had access to Mao are of course those who have appeared with him in his meetings with foreign visitors: First Vice-Chairman and Premier Hua Kuo-feng, Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua, and Mao's interpreters and nurses. In his more private life, in which major decisions are made, there are probably at least two others: Madame Mao, who reportedly is again living with Mao and may still be the head of his personal secretariat (managing his mail and running his errands), and Wang Tung-hsing, the head of his personal bodyguard.\* There are probably others who have access occasionally, including some or all of the other three active members (besides Mao and Hua) of the Politburo Standing Committee: the Leftists Chang Chun-chiao and (possibly) Wang Hung-wen—the two leaders passed over when Hua was named—and the Rightist old Marshal Yeh Chien-ying.

Thus leading figures of the Center, Left, and Right all still have access.\*\*

\*\*A legacy of the Cultural Revolution has seemed to be a "factional" leadership below Mao's level. These have not been factions in an extreme sense, barely distinguishable from conspiracies, but loosely-organized factions in the sense that Mao himself has approved: persons with common predilections who *tend* to offer Mao options which he himself has described as Left, Centrist, and Right. (In periods of Left turns or course-corrections, the Leftists, or "radicals," or ideologues have had the foremost roles; in periods of Right turns, the comparatively Rightist, "moderate," pragmatic leaders.) At present, the principal figure in the management of China's affairs appears to be a Centrist. Although Mao has made the final decisions on large matters of policy and has manipulated his "factions," standing above them as the final arbiter, these factions have appeared to have special interests and have tended to manipulate the situation so as to advance these interests, sometimes at the expense of other groups, and in this sense can be said to have manipulated Mao himself.

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MAO TSE-TUNG AND HIS "CLOSE COMRADES-IN ARMS," 1962

Left to right:

Chu Te, principal founder of the Chinese Communist armed forces; degraded in the Cultural Revolution, restored to nominal position in 1969, died in limited favor in July 1976.

Chou En-lai, the PRC's only Premier until 1976, Mao's first lieutenant in the period 1970-1976, died in favor in January 1976; now being indirectly denigrated in the anti-Teng campaign.

Chen Yun, for many years the regime's foremost economic specialist, set aside in the early 1960s and criticized during the Cultural Revolution; still alive but inactive.

Liu Shao-chi, Mao's first lieutenant from the early 1940s until 1965, at which time he was Mao's designated successor; in 1966, became the highest-ranking victim of the Cultural Revolution and the prime symbol of all opposition to Mao's policies; has made no appearance after that time, although may still be alive.

Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese Communist Party's dominant figure for more than 40 years and its only Chairman since 1943, now ill and apparently dying; his present role in the Party's leadership, apart from his citation as the authority for every major policy, cannot be judged.

Teng Hsiao-ping, Secretary-General of the Party and Liu Shao-chi's principal deputy in the period 1954-1966, purged with Liu in 1966; "rehabilitated" by Mao, and returned to power in 1974, in 1975 (with Chou's illness) was wielding power second only to Mao's; under attack as a "capitalist-roader" since February 1976, replaced at that time as Acting Premier, removed from all posts in April 1976.

Lin Piao, distinguished as a military leader, succeeded Liu Shao-chi as Mao's first lieutenant in 1966, and in 1969 was designated in the Party Constitution as Mao's successor; clashed with Mao in 1969-1970, apparently planned a coup against Mao in 1971, was killed in a plane crash in Mongolia in September 1971 while fleeing from his imminent purge.

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Of these figures, Hua Kuo-feng is the nearest thing to a designated successor, named as Senior Vice-Chairman, the man in whom Mao in recent months has publicly and privately expressed the greatest confidence. He has been observed to have a close and warm personal relationship with Mao, and has one advantage none of the others has: he speaks Mao's language, Mao's native Hunanese.\* Wang Tung-hsing has been the leader physically closest to Mao since about 1950, virtually a constant companion, even accompanying Mao on his travels (which Madame Mao does not); while Wang cannot

those important organizational posts which they still have.

It is further possible that Hua Kuo-feng, now in line to succeed Mao, recognizing the importance of having a blindly loyal security chief and having doubts as to whether Wang Tung-hsing would give to him anything like the loyalty that Wang has given Mao, will attempt to transfer more and more of the overall security account into his own (Hua's) hands before Mao's death. Hua may regard some one of his own lieutenants as having precisely the qualities he requires in a security chief.

The possibilities for exercising influence—'undue' influence—on Mao are of course many, too many to enumerate. On balance, one concludes that Hua will be able to survive as the most important figure after Mao himself, and that he will have Wang's support as Mao would wish, although one cannot count on it.\*

### THREE DRAMATIC POSSIBILITIES

There are some dramatic and highly disruptive contingencies that could occur on Mao's death. The most important of these are a coup employing military and security forces of the Peking MR, military intervention by some of the leaders of the 10 MRs outside Peking, and a Soviet attack on China. An attempted coup is a serious possibility; the other two seem most unlikely except in the event of a coup.

*An Attempted Coup:* The possibility of a coup has to be taken seriously, because of the sharp differences among various leaders and because there are forces in Peking which could probably bring off a coup, at least initially. The passed-over and unpopular Leftists, fearful about their futures, or Rightist military leaders, fearful of the Leftists, might conspire with the most important figures of the physical security apparatus—the leaders of the Peking MR and of the smaller inner-core forces—to seize their opponents and even the Centrist figures like Hua Kuo-feng who have kept the balance. The three key physical security figures, acting just by themselves, could probably carry

\*One obvious complicating factor, if Mao's deterioration is prolonged, is the *credibility* problem. That is, in the nature of the case it seems likely that the dwindling few like Hua and Wang who have access to Mao will have increasing difficulty in persuading the many who do *not* have access that (a) the outsiders are being told the full truth about Mao's instructions, and that (b) Mao is in any condition to formulate instructions which deserve respect and obedience.

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Wang seems to be completely identified with Mao, to want what Mao wants; although Wang may turn out to have a mind of his own, a mind already busy making calculations as to what "factional" group in the leadership it would be most advantageous to himself to support, the presumption has to be that Wang is now a supporter of Mao's clearly-marked favorite, Hua.

In sum, at all stages of Mao's hypothetical deterioration, it seems likely that Hua Kuo-feng, reinforced by Wang Tung-hsing, will have the greatest access to Mao and the greatest influence with him, and will be in the best position of any leader to act—or try to act—in Mao's name.

Nevertheless, so long as Mao retains the loyalty of the physical and political security apparatuses, he can probably continue to make whatever changes he likes in the Party leadership, and some of those with access to him may be attempting to manipulate him into making some.

It is not hard to imagine the passed-over and demoted Leftists endeavoring to persuade Mao that the realization of his revolutionary objectives can be accomplished only if the helm is in their hands.

Neither is it hard to imagine the Centrist and Rightist leaders with access to Mao trying to bring Mao to believe that the Leftists still have too much potential for disruption, and should be deprived of

\*Hua is a native of Shansi in North China, but served for more than 20 years as a Party secretary in Hunan before Mao brought him to Peking in 1971.

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out a successful coup. The question of whether there will be an attempted coup at the time of Mao's death (no real possibility is seen before that time) is sometimes put in the form of: Who will be the first to learn of Mao's death? Who, that is, might have private knowledge of the death even for an hour or two, and might thereby be in a position to issue orders in Mao's name which would be accepted as proceeding from Mao and would be acted on?

There seem only limited gains to be made by being the 'first to know' of Mao's death, if indeed there is any 'first.' The circumstances of Mao's last days may be such that other key figures, operating in teams, will be able to keep vigil around the clock, as is said to have been the case in the death of Stalin, in order to keep any one of them from having private knowledge. Even on the assumptions that this is not done and that Wang Tung-hsing himself is not on the scene, the bodyguard forces protecting Mao (as the Soviet police were protecting Stalin) could be expected to report at once to Wang.

There is a hypothetical possibility that Wang, acting on his own or in concert with some principal to whom he had secretly pledged allegiance, could move swiftly—using only the forces responsive to himself—to effect the arrest of certain other Party leaders before the remaining leaders were even awake. But this scenario looks implausible. Wang's security forces would have to be *perfectly* responsive to him: that is, each of his deputies ordered to arrest one of the top leaders of the Party (and, necessarily, his entire family, and household staff, in order to keep the fact from being made known to other top figures) would have to be willing to take such extreme action without attempting to verify that the order did in fact come from Mao, and all of the blocks of arrests would have to be perfectly coordinated, carried out at the same moment at several different points in Peking, also in order to preserve secrecy and prevent the mobilization of stronger military forces by other leaders.\*

\* In this connection, the failure of those who attempted the coup in Indonesia in 1965 to capture just one of the several key military leaders, on the eve of the coup, is instructive. Although all of the other key generals were successfully taken, the escape of just one—thus enabling the army to rally—was an important factor in the failure of the coup, ending with the capture and execution of the conspirators and the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party. See "Indonesia 1965—The Coup that Backfired," December 1968.

One version of this scenario is that Wang and Madame Mao might act together (with Madame Mao informing Wang if she were the first to know), on behalf of the "Shanghai group"—the Leftists—with which she is affiliated. This presumes that Madame Mao has persuaded Wang, contrary to the visible evidence, that it was Mao's will to have these true "revolutionary successors" in fact succeed him.

A somewhat more plausible form of a coup—more plausible than simultaneous arrests throughout Peking—would be one in which all of the top leaders are summoned to the deathbed of a dying or (unbeknownst to them) already dead Mao, at which time one faction is arrested by Wang's small security force on the scene, on behalf of some other faction. But it seems likely that those summoned would have alerted others, so that this could not be carried out in secret.

In any case, there is the entire question of the morning after. Even if Wang and his principals were prepared to arrest and confine a number of the other top leaders (an action which might set loose all of the powerful forces in China making for instability and insurrection), they would have to have the cooperation or assent of other military forces in the Peking area, especially the main-force armies of the Peking MR; otherwise, the coup could be quickly reversed. And even if they did have the military's cooperation or assent, the military would be in a position to dominate the leadership emerging from the coup.\* It is hard to believe that any of the civilian leaders—Left or Right—would willingly arrange what would be in effect a military dictatorship.

Those in the best position to carry out a coup would seem to be the three most important figures of the physical security apparatus acting together—Wang Tung-hsing at the inner core and Chen Hsi-lien and Chi Teng-kuei, respectively Commander and 1st Political Officer of the Peking MR, to whom the main-force armies of the MR would probably be responsive, at least initially. (See photograph.) These three, each of them perhaps acting in the belief that he would not otherwise hold high position in the post-Mao leadership (or even in the belief that he would

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WANG TUNG-HSING



CHI TENG-KUEI



CHEN HSI-LIEN

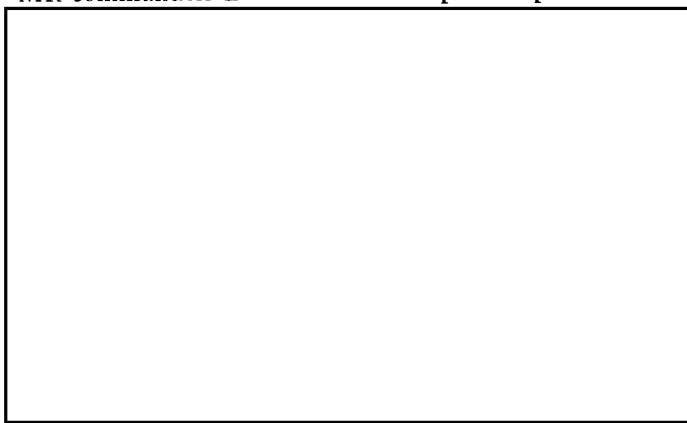
otherwise be purged as a danger to other leaders), by acting together could probably easily dispose of the four principal Leftists, who do not command either regular or security forces. Wang, Chen, and Chi could probably prevail against Hua Kuo-feng too, or against any other group.

However, this hypothetical troika would also have to face the problem of the morning after, justifying their actions to the military forces they had employed in the coup and to military forces throughout China. They *might* be sufficiently persuasive to prevent a successful armed rebellion against themselves (another way in which a military dictatorship could come to power)—which is the reason for regarding a coup as more than a marginal possibility. But a coup even by these three key figures would seem to carry a high risk of splitting the military forces of the Peking MR, leading to armed clashes among elements of them, in turn risking the spread of armed conflict throughout China to a state of anarchy or civil war. This situation would carry the greatest risk of Soviet intervention, in the form of support of selected elements of the armed forces or of an outright Soviet attack. Those who are in the best position to carry out a coup—each of whom is on record as hard-line anti-Soviet—would probably be unwilling to accept such risks.

*Revolt of the Regional Leaders:* There has long been speculation that the MR leaders—often called the *powerful* MR leaders—might forcibly intervene in the

succession process. Such speculation has perhaps been strengthened by the consideration that, of the several MR commanders who seemed to be—or possibly to be—in some degree of political trouble as of early 1975 (at least one or two of whom seemed likely not to survive their prolonged examinations), not one has yet fallen\*—as if Mao and other leaders were afraid to move against any of them or were being blocked by central military leaders. (See map, facing.)

It still seems to be the case, however, that the MR leaders are not very powerful outside of their military regions (and can be bypassed even within them). The purge of several of them in the Lin Piao affair, the mass transfer of MR commanders in 1973, the replacement of several career military men by career Party cadres in political officer posts, the removal of MR commanders from their most important political

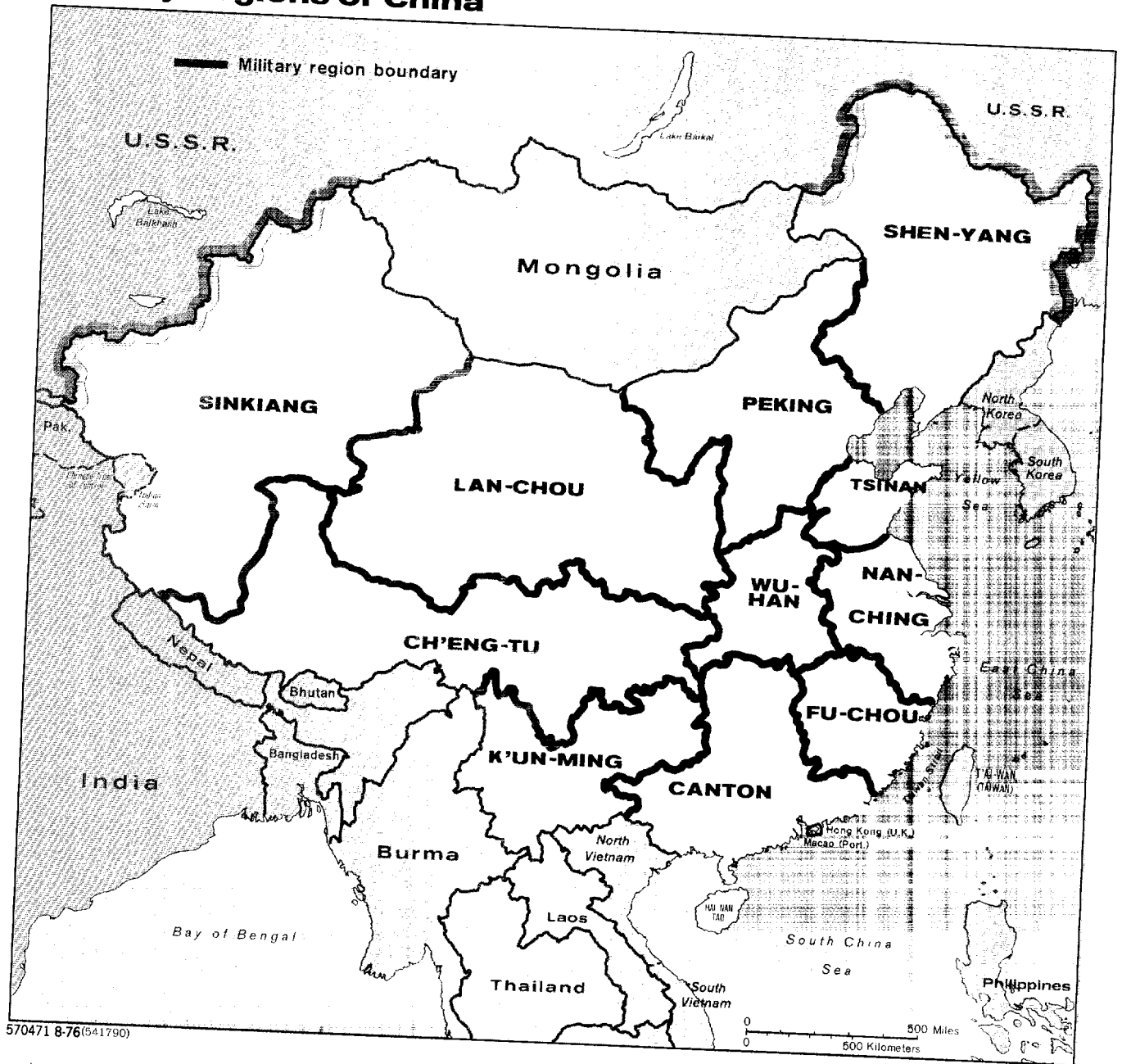


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### Military Regions of China



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(and probably of main-force armies, although these changes are not announced)—these and other actions have combined to return the MR leaders to what appear to be the subordinate positions which they had accepted without serious challenge in the years before the Cultural Revolution and continued to accept during the Cultural Revolution.

The MR leaders outside Peking still do not appear to constitute a unified, purposive group. No *single* MR outside Peking could possibly conduct a successful offensive against the capital with its own resources. It would be very difficult (although not impossible) for the leaders of a *group* of MRs to conspire successfully, and equally difficult—owing to the controls all along the line—for them to bring their forces into action.

There is still the marginal possibility of the use of bombers or missiles located in the various MRs being used against Peking. But the probability remains that the command-and-control system is secure, and it is hard to see how such weapons could be employed effectively in any case.

There also remains the possibility of Soviet material support for a key MR (e.g., Shenyang) or a group of MRs, giving those forces the capability for sustained operations which they do not now have, but this does not seem a serious possibility unless armed conflict in Peking itself spreads throughout China to a situation approaching that of civil war, and some elements of the contending forces make known to Moscow that they support a reconciliation with the USSR.

Further, having come through the public demonstrations that surrounded the mass mourning for Chou En-lai and the changes in the leadership (at which time every MR lined up to proclaim its support of the changes), the central leadership is not likely to let any political campaign—e.g., the continuing anti-Teng campaign—get so out of control as to make it necessary to return the military to political power throughout China. Neither is Peking likely to alarm the MR leaders by threatening a large-scale purge of them.

It still seems true that only the leaders of the Peking MR (discussed above in connection with a possible coup) have substantial capability to affect the shape of the succession, either by making their weight felt—without actual intervention—on the side of a

contender or group of contenders or by sending their forces into action. To do the latter would, as noted above, incur substantial risk.

Thus it still seems true, as it did in early 1975,\* that the best course for the regional leaders in the period in which the succession is being shaped, and the course which most if not all of them are likely to follow, is to be passive, accepting whatever arrangements are worked out in Peking (just as they did in April). If they do refrain from attempting to interfere (simply voting or counselling as individuals when invited to do so), they are likely to continue to be substantially represented in the new Politburo, to have greater influence in the Politburo than they have thus far had, and, in most cases, to retain their present posts and powers—a better situation, in many respects, than to be caught up in the hazardous infighting in Peking.

*A Soviet Military Attack:* Some observers have long believed that a Soviet attack on China at the time of Mao's death is a strong possibility, a possibility presumably enhanced by the Soviet observation in recent months that the leadership has failed to maintain its "unity and stability" and by the sound conclusion that it will not magically become unified by Mao's death. There is evidence that the Chinese themselves genuinely fear the possibility of a Soviet attack at that time.

A case can be made for it: essentially, that the Russians have believed for years that the largest reservoir of pro-Soviet sentiment (or perhaps more precisely, of the least strong anti-Soviet sentiment) is to be found in the Chinese military; that some Chinese military leaders may intervene in the succession process in order to prevent the accession to power of the Leftist (and most anti-Soviet) group; and that those leaders would be willing to undertake joint operations with Soviet forces. In this connection, a possibly disaffected military leader, Li Te-sheng, removed from his post as a Vice-Chairman of the Party in January 1975 and severely criticized before and after, is still the Commander of the Shenyang MR, the Northeast area through which a Soviet ground attack would presumably come (as it did in 1945, against Japanese forces there). With or without Li Te-sheng (who is still a Politburo member, and would probably

\*The problem was considered then in OPR 203-75, "China's Regional and Provincial Leaders: Roles in the Succession."

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not care to exchange his high position for permanent status as a traitor, another Lin Piao), there is no doubt that Soviet forces could drive deep into the Northeast and force the Chinese back into their last recourse of "people's war."

In 1969, when the level of Chinese provocation on the Sino-Soviet border was high, the Russians did indeed encourage, both publicly and privately, the view that they might attack China, by a nuclear strike or conventional means or both, and the Chinese were clearly alarmed by this. Moreover, in the years since, Soviet spokesmen have occasionally indicated that present Soviet policy toward China is the "softest" possible, that there are forces in the Soviet leadership which favor a much harsher policy, forces held in check by Brezhnev's sober coalition. But since 1969 the Chinese generally have refrained from military provocation, and the Russians have repeatedly disclaimed, again both publicly and privately, any intention to strike the Chinese in the absence of such provocation. It seems virtually certain that, at the time of the succession, the Chinese (who showed their alertness to the problem during the leadership changes in April) will take care not to offer any military provocation to the USSR, any case for the "hawks" in the Soviet leadership (who probably really do exist, and who probably do figure in Chinese calculations).

The Soviet disclaimers can probably be accepted. There are sound military and political reasons for not attacking China at any time: e.g., the probability of bogging down huge forces for years in a land action, the stigma of first use of nuclear weapons and the inability of such weapons to distinguish between friends and enemies, the Chinese capability of a (limited) nuclear counter-strike, the impossibility of successful occupation of China for a prolonged period, the importance of not "freezing" Chinese hostility for decades or centuries to come, and so on.

There are additional reasons for not intervening at the time of the succession: the possibility that a Soviet attack, far from increasing whatever disunity existed in the Chinese leadership, would draw the Chinese leaders together to act against what they would see as the worst of all situations, subordination to the USSR; their own ignorance of the Chinese leadership, their lack of evidence as to which Chinese leaders—the anti-Mao "patriots" they have spoken of—they might

effectively intervene on behalf of (they seem genuinely not to know which of the current leaders, if elevated to supreme power by Soviet arms, might turn out to be reliably pro-Soviet—in the qualified sense that, say, Peng Te-huai was); and the lack of assurance, even if they see some combination of central and regional military leaders rising up against the civilian leaders at the time of the succession, that the group would be able to survive or if in power would be pro-Soviet.\*

As previously suggested, a state of civil war in China might seriously tempt the USSR to extend support to the most promising contenders, and this argument holds for the possibility of a Soviet attack as well. A Soviet attack seems most likely—that is, least unlikely—if military as well as political power is fragmented throughout China, so that Soviet military intervention would not appear so nakedly to be undertaken against "China." One good reason for regarding the possibility of a Soviet attack as marginal is that there seems only a marginal possibility that the Chinese leadership—however disunited and contentious—will allow the situation to deteriorate to a condition of civil war.

Beyond this, the strongest reason for refraining from military intervention is that, with Mao's death, the Russians will have a qualitatively new situation to exploit, without incurring any stigma or risk. Their most implacable enemy will have departed, and the successor group is bound to feel insecure, more vulnerable to Soviet political initiatives. There are surely advantages to the Russians in reducing Chinese hostility if possible. The sensible course for the Russians, and the one that they are expected to follow, before, during, and at least for a time after the succession, will be to talk, not fight.

## FUTURE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

*No Commanding Figure or Faction:* Assuming, then, that the three key figures of the physical security apparatus do not attempt a coup in the hours surrounding Mao's death, that there is no revolt by the MR leaders, and that there is no Soviet attack, Mao's successors—even if they have been working reasonably well as a "collective" during the period of Mao's

\*For a careful examination of Chinese leaders in terms of possible softness toward the USSR, see PR 76 10046, "Sino-Soviet Detente? The Views of China's Leaders."

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deterioration—will still face a serious problem in distributing power among themselves in the immediate post-Mao period.

First, will there be any single commanding figure? That is, is there any one of the successors to whom the others would “naturally” be expected to turn for leadership?

If Chou En-lai were still alive and well, Chou would probably be that man, for most of the leadership (all but the hard Leftists); and, if he had lasted, Teng Hsiao-ping might conceivably have been in Chou's position. In their absence, no one seems to stand out, as having been a national-level leader for many years, as commanding great respect for his demonstrated achievements over the range of a leader's concern, and as being at the same time vigorous and vital, projecting the image of the new China.

It is easier to eliminate candidates than to choose one. Of the current Vice-Chairmen, Wang Hung-wen is too young and unproven, leaving Hua Kuo-feng (the present First Vice-Chairman) and Yeh Chien-ying, who, although old and infirm and almost entirely a military man, can be regarded as a marginal candidate owing to his general popularity and to his prestige as the last of the Old Guard still active in the inner circle. (See photograph.) Of the other Leftists (besides Wang), Chiang Ching is female and is probably disliked by most other Party leaders, and Yao Wen-yuan is both young and unpopular and has been only a propagandist, leaving only Chang Chun-chiao of this group. Of the other Rightists (besides Yeh), Li Hsien-nien is also old and infirm, and Chiao Kuan-hua has not really been a leader, simply a specialist in foreign affairs—leaving only Yeh in this group. Of the other Centrists (besides Hua), Chi Teng-kuei is probably not well enough known, and Wu Te has not indicated a capacity for much greater responsibility than his present role in managing the affairs of the Peking municipality—leaving only Hua Kuo-feng as above. Of the two unclassifiable or “wild card” leaders, Wang Tung-hsing has been a very narrow security specialist, leaving only Chen Hsi-lien, a career military man, of this group.\*

\*“Wild card” is a term used herein for a leader whose record does not permit him to be classified with any confidence as Left, Center, or Right, but whose power is such that his support would be of great value to the classifiable leaders who in general seem to be better candidates for the top Party posts.



YEH CHIEN-YING

Of these four putative candidates—Hua, Yeh, Chang, and Chen, in order of current rank—to assume the Chairmanship immediately upon or very soon after Mao's death, assuming that Party leaders feel a need for another Chairman so soon, Hua Kuo-feng would seem to have the best chance. This conclusion rests on a judgment that most of Mao's successors, in the immediate post-Mao period, would find it easier to group temporarily around Mao's own choice as his principal successor than they would around anyone else, that Hua is better-qualified than Yeh, and that there would be less objection to the smooth, pleasant Hua than to either Chang or Chen.\*

\*The Party Constitution does not provide for a First Vice-Chairman (a post which did not exist when it was written) to succeed to the Chairmanship automatically. It specifies instead that a plenary session of the Central Committee must elect the Chairman and other Party officers. But a decision by the “Central Committee” can be made very rapidly if necessary—as witness Hua's own appointment within two days of the Tienanmen rioting. Presumably the matter would come to a vote in the Politburo. In an honest (i.e., uncoerced) balloting, the four demonstrable Leftists would constitute a small minority of the 16 full (voting) members, almost certainly unable to attract enough supporters from the other 12 to put their own man in the Chairmanship. In the unlikely event that both of the “wild cards” could be played by the Leftists—a credible threat of coordinated intervention on their behalf by military and security forces—sufficient “votes” might follow. In any event, the immediate distribution of power seems likely to depend heavily on the perception of the voters as to which contenders for high position have what degree of military/security support.

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Actually there seems a fair possibility that the Party will retire the post of Chairman. Mao has made even the *post* so awesome, the very word "Chairman" so inseparable from himself at the national level, that it may be retired out of respect for him. If so, presumably all of the Vice-Chairmanships would disappear at the same time, leaving Hua Kuo-feng with only the Premier's post and putting him on a collision course with Chang Chun-chiao for the Secretary-General's post, which would then be the Party's most important position.

There seems a stronger possibility that the Party will operate for a time, perhaps a prolonged period, without a Chairman, because, for the above reasons, no Party leader would feel comfortable in the post; but that the post itself will not be retired.\* Hua could presumably remain First Vice-Chairman under such circumstances, and the *de facto* leader of the Party, much as the Military Affairs Committee (MAC) for years has been run by its senior Vice-Chairman. There would seem at a minimum a need for some one leader to be recognized as the senior figure, the man to convene the meetings (e.g., Politburo Standing Committee) necessary to convene other Party meetings (full Politburo, expanded Politburo, Central

Committee) in turn necessary to work out the distribution of power and to put the Central Committee's seal of approval on it, even if that man could not expect—as he could not—to dominate such meetings. To recognize the designated First Vice-Chairman, Hua, as that man would seem the least disruptive course.

It would seem to make the best sense to name a new Chairman, after a suitable period of mourning in which Hua is recognized as the *de facto* Chairman. The Chairman's post would then be balanced by the Secretary-General's post, permitting both Hua and Chang to occupy key Party posts and thus allowing them to divide the power. Whatever the arrangement, no *individual*—Hua, Chang, or whoever—would be able to dominate the Party as Mao had.

If there is no single commanding figure, neither does there seem to be the prospect of any one commanding *faction*.

The Leftists do not appear to have the organizational strength. Chang Chun-chiao is the strongest figure in that group, but in recent years the Secretary-General's post has not seemed to be anything like as powerful as it once was (under Teng Hsiao-ping) and Chang does not seem to have a firm grip on the General Political Department (GPD), a grip maintained through his own proteges which would

\*The Chinese could of course finesse the problem of a "Chairman" by redesignating the topmost post as that of General Secretary or First Secretary, but that would eliminate the post of Secretary-General, leaving Hua and Chang still on collision course.



WANG HUNG-WEN



MADAME MAO (Chiang Ching)

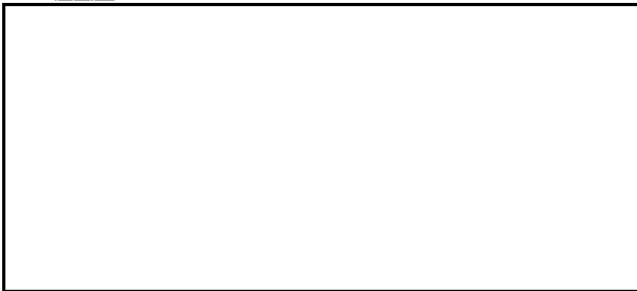


YAO WEN-YUAN

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ensure its obedience to him in a Party crisis.\* Wang Hung-wen may still be a Vice-Chairman of the MAC (as well as of the Party), but can act only with the consent of other MAC officers. Madame Mao has no power apart from Mao, and is simply a name to be exploited. Yao Wen-yuan has only some part of the propaganda apparatus, the equivalent of the old Propaganda Department. (See photograph.) In sum, the only way in which this group could take power would be in an alliance with opportunistic military leaders, who, first, would seem to have no good reason to ally with them, and, second, would dominate any such alliance (just as they would in a coup). It would not be surprising to see some members of this Leftist group excluded from the leadership after Mao's death.\*\*

The strength of the Rightists is probably concentrated in the military leaders—demonstrably in Yeh Chien-ying, who although old and ailing will



FOUR STRONG MEN: Chang Chun-chiao, Wang Tung-hsing, Hua Kuo-feng, Chen Hsi-lien

probably be a key figure in the immediate post-Mao period, much as he was used to rally the military in the Lin Piao affair; and just possibly in Chen Hsi-lien, whose background and associations would seem to place him with the Rightists but who probably has to be regarded as Unclassified, i.e., as a "wild card" who might play himself in support of another leader at almost any point in the spectrum. The good will of the military will be extremely important to the non-military leaders, some of whom may be able to play military cards, but they will probably seek to avoid bringing the military into military action (the cards can be played simply by being shown in Politburo voting, or perhaps even by bluffing, by making a credible claim of support by military and security elements not directly represented in the Politburo meetings). While an effort by the military itself to impose a military dictatorship is of course conceivable, any military intervention seems more likely to be on behalf of whatever group of leaders whom the military—meaning that portion of the military in a position to intervene—believes to be best-disposed toward themselves. On the record, this group would certainly seem to be some combination of the Center and the Right, not the Left.\*

The strength of the Centrists is spread throughout the Party apparatus, the government machinery, and the security forces. But the group does not include military leaders in the sense of career military men, unless the "wild card" Chen Hsi-lien has already pledged his allegiance to it. This group appears to be in the same position vis-a-vis the military as the military are toward it: that is, they seem to need each other, neither as a group has *both* the military strength and the managerial skills to enable it to dominate and govern by itself.

The two Unclassified or "wild card" leaders, Chen Hsi-lien and Wang Tung-hsing, constitute a significant group with just the two of them, by virtue of their control of military and security forces which can take swift action in crises. But they do not make a strong enough pair to dominate, by themselves, the

\*Some observers conjecture that the Leftists control the militia, and that the Left could employ it effectively as a counter. The bulk of the evidence to date seems to indicate that both propositions are mistaken: that military men in general handle the militia's affairs (including supply of weapons), and that in almost any given area the militia would be no match for the PLA.



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post-Mao situation; they too would have to act in combination with key figures of other groups.\* If both Chen and Wang are truly "wild cards," acting purposively together they would be a formidable combination, perhaps able to be the "king-makers" for any group of contenders of their choice; and separately, working for different contending groups, they might plunge the leadership into chaos. Unfortunately, there is no solid information on the state of their relationships with each other or with any other Party leader except Mao himself.\*\*

There seems only one sense in which the immediate post-Mao leadership can be regarded as *likely* to be dominated by a small group. This would be some *combination* of the strongest figures of the Center, Left, Right, and Unclassified: namely, Hua Kuo-feng and Chi Teng-kuei of the Center; Chang Chun-chiao of the Left; Yeh Chien-ying of the Right; and Chen Hsi-lien and Wang Tung-hsing of the "wild cards." Most observers would add a seventh figure, Wang Hung-wen of the Left, and some would substitute or add another, the PLA's Chief-of-Staff when one is named, a probable Rightist (like the present acting chief).

Further, little is known of the personal *character* of these conjectured key figures. The distribution of power would seem to depend heavily upon this factor as well as upon perceptions of one another's strengths: specifically, whether all or most of them would prove able to subordinate their serious differences with others, and their personal ambitions, to the general good, the appearance of stability and of national purpose. Perhaps they will prove unable to do so, even temporarily. On balance, however, it seems likely that *most* of the key figures, acting from a sense of national interest, will be able to agree upon some form of "collective" leadership, one which, at least for a time, will conceal the extent of their differences and the degree of tension among them.

*A Possible Equitable Distribution:* There are serious observers of the Chinese scene who contend that *any*

\*Wang might be sub-classified as a very special kind of card, one permanently affixed to the Mao-card and to be discarded with it. But on balance, this seems doubtful.

\*\*There is some reason to believe that Chen has pleasant relationships with both Hua Kuo-feng and Chang Chun-chiao, which would be only prudent for all three; Wang has been entirely Mao's man.

speculation as to the shape of the post-Mao leadership is simply a waste of time, as too little can be set forth with sufficient confidence to be of value to the reader. Nevertheless, the effort must be made, if only because some constellations seem more likely than others.

It has already been conceded that there are several serious contingencies in any assessment of the post-Mao situation: e.g., (a) that Mao will change his mind again and will once more upset the arrangements for the succession which he has made (this was always the principal contingency in calculating Teng Hsiao-ping's status, and, in the event, was the main factor); (b) that there will be a successful coup, perhaps led by key figures of the physical security apparatus; (c) that any such coup will be overturned by some combination of military forces in the Peking area, resulting in a *de facto* military dictatorship or armed conflict; (d) that main-force armies in other military regions will revolt against the national leadership (or lack of it) and plunge China into something like a civil war; (e) that the USSR will intervene, either in the form of supporting certain Chinese military forces or in the form of an attack on China by Soviet forces; and (f) that Chinese leaders are so divided and hostile that they will not care about an appearance of stability and will immediately engage in an all-out struggle for power upon Mao's death.

If each of those six contingencies is arbitrarily assigned some substantial chance of coming to pass (the first three the highest, the other three the lowest), then the odds might already be almost even that some *one* of them will occur (even if the particular one cannot be foreseen), and the odds may therefore not be much better than even that anything very useful can be said about the shape of the post-Mao leadership in terms of particular leaders. If other, more remote contingencies are added (e.g., the assassination of Mao by a member of his personal staff or medical team, the sudden death of one or more of the principal actors in the succession, a Soviet attack or a Sino-Soviet reconciliation *before* Mao's departure, the revolt of the masses throughout China), then the odds might fall to *less* than even. So it seems best to offer a brief conjecture, to emphasize that this conjecture is *highly* conjectural, and to warn earnestly against betting heavily on it as a probable outcome.

The most reasonable-seeming distribution of power in the most important posts, on present evidence, looks

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IMMEDIATE POST-MAO PERIOD  
(Highly Conjectural)

POLITBURO

Standing Committee	Secretariat	Military Affairs Committee	State Council
Hua Kuo-feng, <i>de jure</i> or <i>de facto</i> Chairman	Secretary-General	Chairman or Standing Cttee	Premier (if no leading Party post)
Chang Chun-chiao, Vice-Chairman	Secretary-General?	Standing Cttee?	Premier?
Yeh Chien-ying, Vice-Chairman		Chairman or <i>de facto</i> Chairman	Minister of Defense
Wang Hung-wen, Vice-Chairman?	Generalist	Standing Cttee?	
Chen Hsi-lien		Vice-Chairman?	Vice-Premier; Commander, Peking MR
Chi Teng-kuei	Organizational Work	Standing Cttee?	Premier or Vice-Premier; 1st PolOff, Peking MR
Wang Tung-hsing	Political Security	Standing Cttee?	

to be something like the following (although what looks reasonable to Western observers may not look reasonable to the Chinese themselves)\*:

—Hua Kuo-feng as Party Chairman, and perhaps as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces concurrently (as the Party Constitution now provides), although there seems a good chance that the Constitution will be changed in order to avoid such a concentration of power in one man's hands, a precaution to avoid "another Mao"; or to be Secretary-General if the post of Chairman is retired.

—Chang Chun-chiao as the (continuing) *de facto* or (newly-proclaimed) *de jure* Secretary-General of the Party (if Hua is to be Chairman), the Party post

\*The writer apologizes for introducing so many contingencies even into his "reasonable" hypothetical distribution of power, but sees no way to avoid this without misleading the reader as to our state of knowledge.

next in importance to that of Chairman; with the possibility that Wang Hung-wen will be retained in the leadership as Chang's deputy, although with much less power.

—Yeh Chien-ying and Chen Hsi-lien as the *de facto* heads of the MAC, either with Hua as the *de jure* Chairman if the Constitution is unchanged or with one of the two (probably Yeh, first) moving up to Chairman if the Constitution is changed, with Yeh remaining Minister of Defense and with Chen retaining the critically important post of commander of the Peking MR.

—Hua Kuo-feng to continue as Premier concurrently if he does *not* occupy the post of MAC Chairman concurrently with that of Party Chairman, or if the post of Party Chairman is retired; or Chang Chun-chiao to be Premier concurrently with his Secretary-General's post if

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Hua becomes both Party Chairman and MAC Chairman (thus ranking Chang in the two most important hierarchies).

—Chi Teng-kuei as Premier if Hua is both Party Chairman and MAC Chairman and wishes to prevent—and has enough support to prevent—Chang Chun-chiao from being both Premier and Secretary-General, or if in the absence of a Chairmanship Chang loses the contention for the Secretary-General's post and is not offered the post of Premier; and Chi in any case to have the responsibility for supervising the Party's organizational work, probably remaining First Political Officer of the Peking MR as well.

—Wang Tung-hsing to continue as the director of the Party's central political security department and of the Central Committee's General Office, *inter alia* continuing to supervise the security forces that protect the Party leaders.

—Chiao Kuan-hua, the Chou En-lai protege who is clearly the best-qualified man for the job, to continue as Foreign Minister.

Some such arrangements would provide the smoothest possible transition from the currently-existing situation and, on the assumption that Hua and Chang are not forced to compete for the Secretary-General's post, would reduce the possibility that any one of the seriously disruptive scenarios will in fact occur. Secondary arrangements might reasonably include:

—The naming of most of the above-cited primary leaders below Hua's level as Vice-Chairmen of the Party and as the core of the Politburo's Standing Committee and the naming of at least one of the three lesser Leftists (Wang Hung-wen, Madame Mao, Yao Wen-yuan) to the Standing Committee as well;

—And the confirmation (re-election) of most members of the current Politburo, moving up one or two of the alternates who symbolize important groups (women, minorities, labor), adding a few key figures from the many to choose among in the structures of power and the governmental machinery (e.g., a new Chief-of-Staff, a new Minister of Public Security, the head of the State Planning Commission, two or three promising

provincial-level figures such as half of the above-named leaders themselves were until the 1970s).

The contingencies which probably deserve emphasis, in offering one of these configurations as a moderately credible one for the immediate post-Mao period, seem to be the following:

—That Mao before he dies will choose to do and will prove able to do what he pointedly did not do in naming Hua Kuo-feng First Vice-Chairman and Premier, *i.e.*, to strengthen the Left organizationally at the expense of the Center and Right, in which case we might see Chang Chun-chiao in a position to be installed as Party Chairman (or as Secretary-General in the absence of a Chairman) with the support of leftist or opportunist military leaders, with Wang Hung-wen moved up to become the Party's Secretary-General and with both Madame Mao and Yao Wen-yuan added to the Politburo's Standing Committee, and Hua Kuo-feng being only the Premier (if that);

—That Chen Hsi-lien will be perceived by other leaders, either before or after Mao's death, as potentially too powerful and ambitious, and that arrangements will be made to ease him out, in favor of some other military leader who would not have a strong personal following in the Peking MR and would be perceived as more docile;

—That Wang Tung-hsing will similarly be regarded by other leaders as potentially too dangerous to all of them, with his control of the most sensitive personnel records (including records of positions taken at Party meetings) and his control of the bodyguard forces which constitute the innermost ring of security, that some part of the security apparatus will be successfully used against Wang in somewhat the same way that Beriya was taken, and that Hua (or whoever) will be able to place his own man (as Mao has done for so long) in the critically important post of director of the political security apparatus; and

—That Wang Hung-wen (who has probably made himself an adversary of the military) will be seen by other leaders as thinking of himself as "another Mao," and that they will act together against him, excluding him entirely from the leadership.

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But none of these possibilities seems strong enough to shake the judgment that one of the configurations outlined earlier is the best possibility for the general shape of the immediate post-Mao leadership.

If that is a more-or-less accurate picture, then, this would be a "collective" dominated in fact by a coalition of career Party cadres and career military men, in which the strongest single figure would be the Centrist Hua Kuo-feng, although he could not dominate the Party in anything like the way that Mao had done. Next in importance would probably be the non-extreme Leftist Chang Chun-chiao, and after that the military leaders Yeh and Chen, one a Rightist, one a "wild card" backing the Center. At the next level of power would be the Centrist Chi Teng-kuei and the "wild card" Wang Tung-hsing, the latter probably, like Chen Hsi-lien, backing the Center. The center line in this constellation, which would dominate the Politburo Standing Committee and would probably be replicated (with some rearrangement) in the MAC, would run in fact directly through the Center of the Chinese political spectrum as now perceived—"moderate" in Chinese terms, although still more "revolutionary" than, say, the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. But one must reiterate another *caveat* here: while some such arrangement might hold for the immediate post-Mao period, it seems *probable*—owing to personal ambition, irreconcilable differences on policy, and the unpredictability of the "wild cards"—that it would prove unstable over the longer run.

### THREE INESCAPABLE POLICY-QUESTIONS

A Centrist leadership of this kind would be expected to take Centrist positions on three inescapable policy-questions: the group's relationship to Mao's "thought," the concept of "rehabilitation," and the Sino-Soviet-American triangle.

*The Relationship to Mao's "Thought":* Mao's successors must immediately define in some fashion their relationship with the 40-plus years of Mao's leadership of the Party, the dominance of his person and his "thought."

The successors have the option, of course, of denouncing and disowning Mao, in roughly the terms of the "571" document attributed to Lin Piao's group

of conspirators and more recently used privately by Chinese officials in the wake of Chou En-lai's death and Teng Hsiao-ping's purge: for tyranny instead of leadership, for placing himself above the Party, for egomania, for refusal to share power and for blaming others for his own mistakes, for falsifying history to protect himself, for treachery to faithful lieutenants, for the doctrinaire pursuit of illusory goals at immense human cost, for indifference to the welfare of the masses, and so on.

But most members of the inner circle of the successors will owe their rise to high position to Mao's campaigns of the past decade, and most in fact to Mao's personal selection of them for preferment, and they cannot degrade him or his "thought" in the immediate post-Mao period without undermining themselves while they are still insecure. Despite their own mixed feelings, and the temptation to exploit the negative feelings about Mao that are now probably widespread in the Party and even in the "masses" that have been his constituency (Lin Piao had a good case, and there has been a marked increase in the willingness of Chinese, both officials and common men, to express anti-Mao sentiment in the past year, most strikingly in the Tienanmen rioting), it seems likely that most of the successors would agree that continuity must be maintained. The Leftists would certainly so contend, as otherwise they would have no legitimacy at all. The Centrists and Rightists might rejoice in the downfall of the Leftists, but they already have a stronger organizational position than do the Leftists (an advantage given them by Mao himself, as everyone is aware), and they do not need to discredit Mao in order to keep this advantage and if necessary to use it.

On the other hand, it seems most improbable that any individual or any single group of Mao's successors will be allowed to present himself or herself or themselves as the guardian or guardians of Mao's "thought." Among the current leaders, only Wang Hung-wen and Madame Mao seem conceivably to be inexperienced or simple-minded enough to try to do this, an effort which if undertaken would surely fail, whether in Party councils or in an appeal to the "masses." Probably neither will do so, but other leaders may nevertheless choose to get rid of both—judging (as noted above) that Wang does indeed think of himself as "another Mao" and that the

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very unpopular Madame Mao is not necessary for the preservation of continuity.

Mao's posthumous immunity may not extend to some of his "socialist new things"—e.g., the mass study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Thought (in which the Party and populace have been saturated for years), the three-in-one combination in which old, middle-aged and young people are given theoretically equal representation in leadership organs, the assignment of millions of cadres to "May 7th" schools for productive labor and reindoctrination, the creation and popularization of (Madame Mao's) "revolutionary" plays, the "open door" management of universities (e.g., admission only after at least two years of labor, continued labor while studying, direction by worker-peasant-soldier propaganda teams), and the dispatch of the great majority of educated youth—more than 12 million so far—to the countryside to settle permanently. These policies are all controversial, and some will probably be modified, but it would seem that this could be done at a deliberate pace, without attacking either the "thought" embodied in the policies or the man himself.

In sum, Mao is of course vulnerable, and some degrading of him in his Stalinist role will probably take place sooner or later—perhaps within a three-year period corresponding to that between Stalin's death and Khrushchev's "secret" speech. But this will probably not occur in the immediate post-Mao period.

*"Rehabilitation" or Reversal:* A potentially highly disruptive issue, for the successors, is that of the "rehabilitation"—now an accomplished fact, but one which could be reversed—of thousands of Party cadres, government functionaries, and military leaders brought down in the Cultural Revolution, hundreds of whom are probably now in important positions again (including one member of the Politburo). Although this has been Mao's own policy since 1967, the year after the great purges began, an attempt to reverse it could be linked to a defense of the Cultural Revolution itself.

The link has in fact already been made, in the anti-Teng campaign, with Mao leading the way. Teng has been charged—more or less credibly—with trying to return to the Good Old Days before the Cultural Revolution, with denigrating the Cultural Revolution ("the present is not as good as the past"), with

attempting to reverse verdicts (inter alia, on those condemned), and with restoring to office discredited old cadres. There is no doubt that Teng was primarily or partially responsible—especially during 1975—for rehabilitating a large number of old cadres, including many of his old associates and proteges from his years (1954-1966) as the Party's Secretary-General.

Any attempt to repurge the "rehabilitees" *en masse* would almost certainly come from the Leftists, who played leading roles in the purges, who rose at the expense of those purged, who felt threatened themselves by the return of such figures as Teng, and who would like to open up all those jobs for the young people who constitute their putative following (Wang Hung-wen has reportedly said this frankly, with respect to senior military positions held in part by rehabilitees). But Chang Chun-chiao, the most strongly-based and apparently least extreme Leftist, has himself been associated with the policy of rehabilitation, and even if the Leftists were to act as a group they would on this issue as on others be outgunned. Hua Kuo-feng, Chi Teng-kuei, and Wang Tung-hsing have all strongly associated themselves with the rehabilitation policy, and also, owing to their organizational positions, have probably played large roles in effecting the rehabilitations. The latter is almost certainly also true of the leading military men like Yeh Chien-ying and Chen Hsi-lien, who have helped to restore their old comrades (excluding the conspirators of the Lin Piao affair) throughout the military establishment and might be expected (Yeh certainly, Chen probably) to resist any attempt to change the current professionalism and conservative cast of the upper levels of the armed forces.\*

There is the outside possibility that the Leftists—or some of them—will attempt to bypass the rest of the Party leadership and appeal directly to the masses, much as Mao did in the Cultural Revolution. This would be a call to complete the Cultural Revolution, or to carry out another Cultural Revolution (Mao himself is the authority for the dictum that further Cultural Revolutions will be necessary periodically), and this time to sweep out all of the hidden supporters of Teng Hsiao-ping, meaning in effect the great majority of the rehabilitees.

\*For a thorough survey of the character of the central leadership organs of the PLA, see PR 76 10048 and PR 76 10058J, "The Reconstruction of the Chinese Central Military Leadership."

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It is even conceivable that the Leftists will contend that the shape of the succession itself—in the absence of Mao's definitively-expressed will—should be determined by the masses. That is, a contender for high position who regards his prospects as otherwise poor could argue with some justification that the concept of the Cultural Revolution is the essence or culmination of Mao's "thought" (the highest form of "struggle"), and that the masses should therefore be given the opportunity to select those who will protect and preserve his "thought." (The likeliest carriers of this particular virulence look to be Wang Hung-wen and Yao Wen-yuan, who owe their rise wholly to the Cultural Revolution and who might believe that they have a strong base of support in the young.)

But the problem for any such challenger—on either the issue of "rehabilitation" or the issue of the entire configuration of the succession—seems obvious: that the impetus for another Cultural Revolution could come only from a leader who was already in possession of something like Mao's power (otherwise, the Party already faithfully represents the masses), who could use the masses as a weapon against those unresponsive to himself personally as the embodiment of truth, and who among other things could completely control the propaganda apparatus employed to rouse the masses. There is no Leftist on the current scene who has anything like Mao's charisma, who could send the masses out into the streets on his or her behalf. Although two prominent Leftists, Chang and Yao, do seem to have the largest roles in directing the propaganda apparatus for Mao now, there is no way they can expect to keep these positions against the wishes of other Party leaders after Mao's death unless they also control the military establishment, and there seems virtually no prospect of that. Chang's GPD does not control the armed forces, it works for those who control them; while the GPD is a vital organ, and Chang might be able to use the GPD to support his own or another's candidacy for high position (redirecting the PLA's loyalty from Mao to someone else, even himself), in itself it seems clearly to be an insufficient vehicle for "king-making," and Chang himself needs the good will of the senior military men who appear to dominate the MAC, of which the GPD is the instrument.

In sum, the prospect of another Cultural Revolution, another mass campaign outside the

control of the Party apparatus, is an internal threat that almost all members of the inner circle—including Chang—are probably determined to eliminate. [redacted]

[redacted] To make such a threat would probably lead to the downfall of those who had made it.

*The Sino-Soviet-American Triangle:* Another inescapable issue for Mao's successors in the immediate post-Mao period—as inescapable as that of defining their relationship to Mao himself—is that of the Chinese position in the Sino-Soviet-American triangle.\* This is true not only because Peking's policy toward the USSR—and consequently its policy toward the US—has been so closely identified with Mao's personal intransigence toward the Soviets and his personal advocacy of the opening to the US, so that a qualitatively new situation will arise with his death, but because Moscow will not allow the successors to escape the issue. That is, with the menacing presence of half a million Soviet troops on the border as an incentive to Peking to negotiate, the Russians will almost certainly renew overtures to the Chinese for an improvement in relations, beginning with a border settlement.

Almost all of those expected to be key figures in the succession have put themselves repeatedly on record as hard-line anti-Soviet, and in recent months, following the changes in the leadership, Chinese leaders have been at pains to reaffirm that their fundamental foreign policies—meaning those since 1969, when the USSR officially became the "main enemy" and the US began to emerge as a potential tacit ally against the USSR—will not change. But these leaders have had no choice, because Mao has continued to dominate the Party and has shown himself to be willing and able to continue to purge it, and any sign of a resolution less firm than Mao's would have served to remove the offender from leadership. (That was not, however, the reason for Teng Hsiao-ping's purge.)

It has never been credible, *a priori*, that every member of a group as large as the Chinese leadership would feel the same degree of hostility to the USSR that Mao has felt; or even that every member of the

\*The writer is indebted [redacted] for the insights he has drawn from their studies, PR 76 10006C, "The Chances of Sino-Soviet Reconciliation after Mao's Death," and PR 76 10052C, "The Foreign Policies of China's Successor Leadership."

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topmost group of successors—the inner circle of a dozen or so—would feel so. Moreover, it has long seemed likely, in the nature of the case, even if every key figure of the succession *were* fully as hostile to the USSR as Mao has been, that considerations of national interest would lead to some sentiment among Mao's successors for an easing of the tension. Further, it has long seemed possible that some group in the successor leadership would try to exploit the Sino-Soviet-American issue for factional advantage, perhaps irrespective of its genuine views; just as Lin Piao opposed an improvement in relations with the US in part because his main rival for influence with Mao, Chou En-lai, favored such an improvement (and vice versa), so the Leftists and Rightists in China after Mao's death, although no longer competing for influence with Mao, might manipulate the issue against each other. The intelligence problems here have been to identify the "soft" figures (least hostile to the USSR) in the leadership, to calculate their weight in the succession, to determine how far they (or other leaders for other reasons) would be willing to go in order to ease tensions, and to assess the value of the Sino-Soviet-American issue as a counter in factional politics.

There seems virtually no chance of a *radical* change in Chinese policy toward either the USSR or the US in the months following Mao's death. Just as they cannot repudiate Mao personally and the concept of his "thought" in general in the immediate post-Mao period without undermining themselves, so they cannot *radically* alter these particular policies without repudiating Mao. The anti-Soviet policy has been at the center of almost all of Mao's policies—meaning the policies of the Party as a whole—for more than a decade, even prior to the Cultural Revolution, and in recent years the (sharply qualified) pro-American policy has been a function of that policy; to repudiate that policy would thus bring into question the entire fabric of Chinese policy. This would be true regardless of whether the immediate post-Mao succession were to be dominated by the Left, the Center, or the Right.

However, there *is* some room for a very limited easing of the tension with the Soviets in the immediate post-Mao period, without giving the appearance of repudiating Mao himself. And the incentive will be greater than it has been; that is, those Soviet troops along the border will be worth something psychologi-

cally to Moscow at the time of the succession, as Chinese fears of a Soviet attack at that time will (as the Chinese themselves have indicated) have increased. Although the Chinese cannot be expected to take the initiative to send a delegation to Moscow soon after Mao's death (a repudiation of Mao, a humiliation for themselves), it is conceivable that they would agree to a "summit" meeting in Peking, and in any case the border issue is not in fact central to the overall struggle against Soviet "social-imperialism." The Chinese could recognize this by quietly withdrawing their demand for a withdrawal of Soviet troops from the border as a precondition for beginning *serious* talks (just as the Russians could quietly withdraw some part of the troops as a gesture of good faith). While the prospects for an early settlement of the border issue are small (the Chinese would have to agree to compensation for, rather than gain possession of, a disputed river island), a modest compromise on the matter of troop withdrawal would help to insure the Chinese against the possibility that these troops would actually be used.\*

Over the longer run, the situation looks more complicated. Ironically, the group likely to be the most uncompromisingly anti-Soviet, the Leftists, is likely also to be the most firmly anti-American, while the groups likely to be least anti-American, the Centrists and the Rightists, are likely also to be the least harshly anti-Soviet (although still clearly anti-Soviet).

The Russians themselves have regarded the Leftists—specifying Madame Mao and the three "Shanghai radicals" Chang Chun-chiao, Wang Hung-wen and Yao Wen-yuan—as the hard core of intransigent hostility to the USSR in the anticipated successor leadership, because the members of this group have seemed genuinely to share Mao's view of the need to persist in the struggle against "revisionism" on all fronts. On the other hand, although associating themselves nominally with the opening to the US while Mao lives, [redacted] all but Chang have seemed to suggest a blind ideological adherence to orthodox, fundamentalist, "revolutionary" attitudes which call for as great hostility toward the US as toward the USSR—essentially a policy of

\*The Chinese would probably expect a limited easing of tension with the USSR to have the additional advantage of concerning the US, thus inducing the US to move more rapidly toward "normalization" of relations with Peking.

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equidistance from two absolute enemies (the policy favored by the "ultra-Leftist" Lin Piao), regardless of the strategic situation and considerations of national interest.

The Russians entertained no hopes of Teng Hsiao-ping (who had been as intransigently anti-Soviet for many years as Mao could possibly have wished), but they were quick to express some hope for Hua Kuo-feng, of whose record of anti-Soviet pronouncements they appeared to be unaware

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Presumably Hua's public and private remarks in recent months have reduced if not extinguished those hopes, and the Russians have no ground for more than minimal hopes from others of the conjectured Centrist group. But, as earlier suggested, the Russians have had hope for years from elements of the Right, and in particular from Chinese military leaders, even though they have seemed genuinely unable to identify—since 1959—the pro-Soviet or the least anti-Soviet individuals in the military. The hope was stimulated by the Peng Tehuai affair of 1959, in which Defense Minister Peng frankly advocated an improvement in relations with the USSR, was fed by the Lin Piao affair of 1971 (which implied that there were other "closet" anti-Maoists in the Chinese military leadership), and has been watered in recent years by certain features of the anti-Confucian campaign of 1974, the "Water Margin" campaign of 1975, and the anti-Teng campaign of 1976—in all of which the regime's propaganda has reflected Mao's continuing fear that he has not managed to extinguish pro-Soviet feeling (or anti-anti-Soviet feeling) in China, especially among the military. The Russians are probably right in believing that for whatever combination of reasons—pro-Soviet feeling, fear of the USSR, considerations of national or professional or factional interest—there are important elements of the professional military who do favor a substantial improvement in relations with the USSR (even though we too are unable to identify individuals as more than possibly feeling this way).

It follows, then, that the happiest outcome for the Russians would probably be domination of the successor leadership by a *Rightist* faction in which the

military would have a strong voice.\* This outcome is unlikely, but the next best outcome, for Moscow, would seem to be the accession to dominance of a coalition of career Party cadres and career military men, on a Centrist balance, in which the military would also have a strong voice, inasmuch as the career Party cadres would depend for their survival upon retaining the military's good will. And this seems the *most* likely outcome, the arrangement with the best chance of coming to pass, even though it seems little more than an even-money bet.

One variation of the 'military dictatorship' scenario would be very awkward for the Russians to deal with. That would be an alliance between the Leftists and opportunistic military leaders, if the latter were to include Chen Hsi-lien and his personal following in the strategic Peking MR. That improbable union would coalesce those believed to be most anti-Soviet on one hand and least anti-Soviet on the other. The military would be expected to dominate the alliance, but the civilians might be formulating and carrying out its foreign policy. Perhaps fortunately for almost everyone, that scenario seems to have small chance of coming to pass.

There does not seem to be any possible constellation of successors to Mao which would wish to restore the Sino-Soviet alliance of 1949-1953, returning the US to its place as the main enemy of both. The worst that the US has to fear is a Chinese policy of equidistance.\*\* The *probability*—because the prospect of either Leftist domination or a Leftist-military alliance is small—is that the USSR will remain the "main enemy," and that Mao's successors will continue to explore the possibility of effectively employing the US as a strategic counterweight to the USSR.

The Sino-Soviet-American triangle can of course become an issue in factional politics, between those who genuinely favor (or would pretend to favor) a policy of equidistance, and those who genuinely favor

\*Russian officials sometimes express a sardonic hope that the Leftists will triumph and will then mismanage China into a state of collapse, but this does not seem to be their genuine calculation.

\*\*This is believed to be the policy-preference of the Leftists, but it would not be a net gain for the USSR, as the Leftists would be less inclined to improve relations with the USSR than would other factions or groupings. I.e., 'what you make in St. Louis you lose in Detroit.'



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(or would pretend to favor) the greatest degree of improvement in relations with the USSR. Although the former group would be expected to argue mainly on ideological grounds for a withdrawal from the US connection (the equal threats to the True Doctrine from "imperialism" and "social-imperialism"), the two groups could employ similar pragmatic arguments to justify their opposed positions—arguments which have surfaced from time to time in various pronouncements and commentaries directed to different audiences. These would be:

—that for many years, the determination of the US to resist Soviet advances has been declining;

—that partly because of this, there has been a shift in the military balance of power in favor of the USSR, a shift which further erodes the US will to resist;

—that in consequence, the US is betting heavily on the success of "detente" with the USSR, a detente which will prove to be an "illusion" for the US as the USSR will go on behaving as it always has, under cover of detente, but which will prove to be a disaster for China, as China will have no leverage on either;

—that American relations with the USSR are far more important to the US than relations with China can possibly be, as China is no great military threat to the US, is of little value in deterring a Soviet attack on the US, and would not be of great value as an ally in war;

—that it is not the US which is now deterring an attack on China, and that the US would do nothing for China in the event of a Soviet attack on China;

—that as a practical matter, the principal US interest in China is in the border issue (i.e., keeping it unsettled), which 'forces' the USSR to invest heavily in the China front and reduces the threat on the European front where the US strategic interest really lies;

—that the US is determined to prevent Peking from taking over Taiwan;

—and, in sum, that the US has simply been using China to get a better deal from Moscow.

For one group, these arguments would add up to a policy of abandoning efforts to "normalize" relations with the US; for the other, to a policy of following the same course as the US and reducing tensions with the USSR as much as possible, beginning by accepting Soviet terms for a border settlement.

While elements of the argument might be accepted by almost all of the key figures of the post-Mao leadership (the USSR is obviously a more important country at this time than is China, simply a regional power; and a genuine concern about the military balance and the current state of US resolve seems to come through Chinese statements to all audiences), and while the two positions may be put forward over the longer term, the argument as an argument does not seem worth much to either of the two possible groups at the extremes of the foreign policy range in a contest for position at the time of the succession. In other words, most of the key figures have accepted a different argument, so that, if one or the other of these two hypothetical groups has not already won the struggle for power but has to try to persuade other leaders to adopt its foreign policies, neither of them would be able to do it.

Public and private statements by Chinese leaders, both in recent years and recent months, have seemed to make clear that those concerned with foreign policy, including most of those expected to be the key figures of the post-Mao leadership, have a picture of the Sino-Soviet-American triangle something like this:

—that China must have a counterweight to the USSR under any circumstances (even if there is a substantial improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, and only a limited improvement is expected), and there is simply no alternative to the US;

—that the US is still militarily powerful (almost as strong as the USSR), and means to remain so;

—that the US does in fact help both to deter a Soviet attack on China and to resist Soviet efforts to establish "hegemony" in the Far East, and has declared its intention to continue to do so (cf. President Ford's remarks on this theme during his visit to Peking last December);

—that the Soviet-American detente is in fact limited and precarious;

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—that the US does indeed perceive China—with its land mass and huge population—as of value *strategically*, a value that can only increase with the increase of Chinese military power;

—that normalization of relations with the US (full diplomatic relations) of course will require some time, and cannot be expected in the next few months;

—that the Taiwan issue, while vexatious, is much less important than the strategic issue, and China can afford to “wait,” as regards the annexation of Taiwan;

—and that, in sum, Sino-American relations, while imperfect, are more-or-less satisfactory.

In other words, to put the matter in minimal terms, the Chinese are far from having completed their exploration of the possibilities for a profitable relationship with the US, and it would be on the face of it absurd to close off those possibilities, *or* to move rapidly toward an accommodation with the USSR, without at least completing the process of exploration.

Earlier calculations as to the distribution of power in the immediate post-Mao period (lasting at least for some months) were that the “collective” would probably be headed by the Centrist Hua Kuo-feng, who would probably retain Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua. (See photograph.) Both Hua and Chiao have associated themselves with the above-summarized position in a credible fashion (i.e., it seems to be what they genuinely believe, independently of Mao), and most of the others expected to be key figures in the post-Mao leadership are associated with it to some degree. Although a leadership completely dominated by the doctrinaire Leftists might choose to close off the opening to the US



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in the immediate post-Mao period, there seems little chance of such dominance. Any other constellation of post-Mao leaders, even a military dictatorship, could be expected to continue the process of exploration, even while continuing to complain (as are the current leaders) that the pace of “normalization” of Sino-American relations is too slow.\*

\*The three standard demands for “normalization” will presumably continue (in this period) to be the severance of US diplomatic relations with Taipei, the withdrawal of US armed forces from Taiwan, and the abrogation of the US-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954.

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