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16 February 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE RELATING TO NATIONAL SECURITY

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The most recently published available photograph of Mao Tse-tung, from the 21 January People's Daily. Like all formal portraits of Mao, it is either retouched or not a recent photograph.

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Communist China: Party chairman Mao Tse-tung's prolonged absence from public view, now nearly 12 weeks, revives questions about his health.

This is his longest absence in six years. The only two recorded gaps in his appearances which exceeded this were one of 15 weeks in 1956-57 and one of 12 weeks in 1959-60.

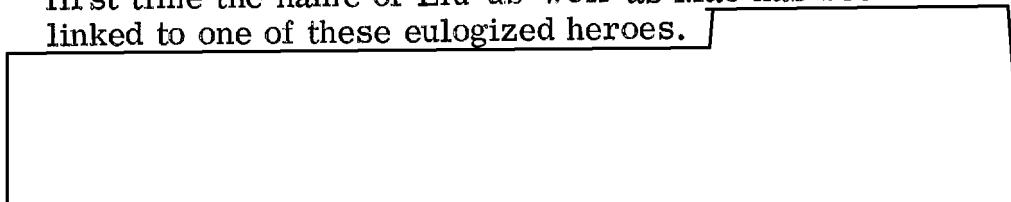


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The current absence of the 72-year-old leader has been accompanied by an unprecedented and growing outpouring of emotional, idolatrous propaganda, suggesting concern in the party's top ranks. Extreme claims for Mao's wisdom have now become common. Mao's thoughts are acclaimed as "the highest expression of contemporary Marxism-Leninism," and each of Mao's words is said to be worth 10,000 words of other men. The "epoch of Marx and Engels" and the "epoch of Lenin and Stalin" are proclaimed to have been succeeded by the "epoch of Mao Tse-tung" during which Communism will attain world-wide victory.

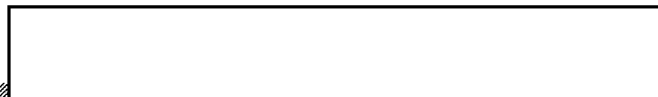
Passages in this new wave of propaganda contain occasional reminders that Liu Shao-chi, Mao's chief lieutenant in the party, is still the designated heir to Mao's power and authority. For example, the latest in a long succession of eulogized folk heroes, a party official who died of cancer, reportedly spent his last days studying not only Mao's works but also Liu Shao-chi's major work, "How To Be a Good Communist." This is the first time the name of Liu as well as Mao has been linked to one of these eulogized heroes.



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NOTES

Syria: Tension remains high among rival factions of the ruling Baathist Party. Yesterday the dominant moderate group reconstituted the party's legislative body, probably in order to eliminate most supporters of its rival faction, which is dominated by army officers. This is the second setback the radicals have suffered at the hands of the moderates since December. The radicals reportedly had been planning to confront the civilians at a party conference, but now may try to seize power instead.]

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Belgium: The naming of Socialist leader Achille van Acker to advise the King on formation of a new cabinet is a first step toward resolving the cabinet crisis. In view of continued tension between the former Catholic and Socialist coalition partners and the refusal on 14 February of the Liberal Party to help solve the problem, the crisis is likely to be protracted. Eventually new elections may prove necessary.

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