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Mao Tse-tung and His Associates: Uneasy Alliance

Special Report
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MAO TSE-TUNG AND HIS ASSOCIATES: UNEASY ALLIANCE

For 18 months, the top of China's power structure—an inner circle of seven—has presented a virtually unchanging public face. This outward stability has persisted despite violent social upheaval, bloody factional fighting, several reversals of national policy, and the political destruction of half a dozen men in the second echelon of the leadership. The official voices of the regime have consciously portrayed the seven as a unified team. They have appeared on the same platforms, mouthed many of the same propaganda cliches, and have been careful in public to take consonant actions ever since January 1967.

Appearances, nevertheless, are misleading. The current inner circle is not the loyal phalanx of Mao's lieutenants that was projected to the outside world in the regime's first 16 years. The members of today's power center are a disparate group, not natural or congenial allies.

Given the severe internal strains that have developed in China, it does not appear probable that the top leadership will be able to maintain its facade of unity. A new purge may be near, and this time it might reach into the inner circle.



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Divisive Elements

The present group of leaders developed during the purge of party stalwarts--Liu Shao-chi, Teng Hsiao-ping, Peng Chen, and Tao Chu--which shook the previous politburo standing committee to its foundations in 1966. Besides Mao, the inner circle now includes Defense Minister Lin Piao, the durable Premier Chou En-lai, party theoretician Chen Po-ta, secret police specialist Kang Sheng, economic planner Li Fu-chun, and Mao's wife, Chiang Ching.

Chou and Lin, the only survivors of the pre-1966 standing committee besides Mao, had for

years been part of Mao's inner councils, which had changed but little from 1945 to 1965. Li Fu-chun was promoted to the standing committee from the rank of full member of the politburo at the 11th plenum in 1966. Chen Po-ta and Kang Sheng had been only alternate politburo members before then. Chiang Ching was brought out of almost total obscurity to take a prominent position at her husband's side.

It has frequently been difficult to judge where each of these individual leaders has stood and to discover the degree to which each has concurred or dissented with regard to the main thrusts

CURRENT LEADERSHIP ELITE IN CHINA

The first seven form the inner circle, which has not varied since January 1967. The next seven assumed their present status after the last purge in March 1968, and Wen was added in August 1968. These additional officials appear with the inner circle at all important public functions and presumably also carry considerable influence in the inner councils.

MAO TSE-TUNG	Chairman of party and Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC)
LIN PIAO	Vice Chairman, PBSC; Minister of National Defense; First Vice Chairman, Military Affairs Committee (MAC)
CHOU EN-LAI	Member, PBSC; Premier
CHEN PO-TA	Member, PBSC; Chairman, Cultural Revolution Group (CRG)
KANG SHENG	Member, PBSC; Adviser, CRG
LI FU-CHUN	Member; Vice Premier
CHIANG CHING	First Vice Chairman, CRG
CHANG CHUN-CHIAO	Vice Chairman, CRG
YAO WEN-YUAN	Member, CRG
HSIEH FU-CHIH	Member, MAC; Minister of Public Security; Chairman, Peking Municipal Revolutionary Committee
HUANG YUNG-SHENG	Member, MAC; Chief of Staff
WU FA-HSIEN	Member, MAC; Deputy Chief of Staff; Commander of Air Force
YEH CHUN	Member, the CRG in the People's Liberation Army; wife of Lin Piao
WANG TUNG-HSING	Vice Minister of Public Security
WEN YU-CHENG	Deputy Chief of Staff; Commander, Peking garrison

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of the Cultural Revolution. It is apparent from an abundance of indirect evidence, however, that a fundamental division exists at the ultimate center of power. This seven-headed team is, in fact, a volatile combination of individuals--with conflicting personal ambitions and differing policy stands--which can be expected to disintegrate if the strains of the Cultural Revolution become sufficiently powerful.

Although the official propaganda media have been fairly opaque regarding divergent attitudes among the protagonists, the less-restrained Red Guard press has reprinted speeches and pronouncements that tend to differentiate the individuals and their basic orientations. In some cases, animosities have shown through.

Much more revealing of the antagonisms at the center, however, have been the key policy shifts and the related fortunes of different sets of individuals in the second echelon of the hierarchy. Although not in the same profusion as during the 1966 purges, the Cultural Revolution has continued to spew lesser officials into political oblivion. These new victims have been closely identified with one or another faction in the hierarchy, and their respective fortunes have reflected the inner tensions and provide a measure of the shifting political influence of these factions.

The ups and downs of the contending forces in the Cultural Rev-

olution over the last 18 months throw some light on the semiconcealed struggle at the center. Although most of the action on stage necessarily revolves around secondary figures, it tends to show what the principals were up to behind the scenes.

To Western observers, there have been four clearly demarcated phases in the Cultural Revolution since the Red Guard convulsions of 1966 dismantled the party apparatus: (1) the radical attack on the bureaucratic establishment in the government and army, March to August 1967; (2) the moderate ascendancy, August 1967 to March 1968; (3) the radical resurgence, March to June 1968; and (4) the turn to the right, July 1968 to the present. Each of these was ushered in by a shift in the propaganda line, and each but the most recent involved political attacks on a particular group of secondary officials.

The Radical Attack, March-
August 1967

During the first of these periods, the radicals in the leadership mounted a major campaign against officials in authority, primarily in government and the military, who were obstructing or stalling the momentum of the Cultural Revolution out of a basic interest in economic stability, the status quo, and their own political survival. Ultimately, this radical campaign aborted, but only after it had caused enormous damage to the country's economic, social, and political fabric, and had caused



MAO TSE-TUNG

Chairman Mao Tse-tung is the aging, ailing god-figure of Chinese Communism whose retreat into sophomoric Marxism and paranoid suspicion is the key to China's nihilist drama--the Cultural Revolution. The ostensible source of most if not all of the vaguely stated policies which have spurred the turbulent movements of the last two years--both leftward and rightward--Mao has clearly been the dominant figure in the Chinese Communist movement for three decades. Now halfway through his 75th year, Mao has a history of cardiovascular disease and is in doubtful health. He has not uttered a sentence in public for years, but brief, delphic "instructions" are issued periodically in his name which are often used to their own advantage by opposing political forces. Alone of all important leaders, Mao, despite his declining abilities, has retained his charisma and has remained immune from direct public criticism throughout the Cultural Revolution.

Vice Chairman Lin Piao, who has led China's army since 1959, was catapulted into the role of crown prince to Mao when the previous heir-designate Liu Shao-chi was toppled in disgrace in 1966. Propelled to the seat of authority by his command of the major instrument of political power in China, Lin may have lost the allegiance of many old-line military commanders by espousing the disruptive extremes of Mao's Cultural Revolution. The political disgrace in March 1968 of his protege--acting chief of staff Yang--cannot fail to have tarnished his own image, and there were some tentative indications during the summer that his position might be weakening.



LIN PIAO

Premier Chou En-lai has been the chief proponent of social order, stability, national security, and a productive economy, striving desperately at times to hold together a large enough coalition of vested pressure groups to challenge or modify the more extreme drives of the Cultural Revolution. This role has come naturally for the man who has been responsible for so many years for administering China's vast governmental bureaucracy. Chou's instinct for self-preservation and political compromise, however, has kept him silent at critical points during the Cultural Revolution.



CHOU EN-LAI

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KANG SHENG

Kang Sheng, the sinister, xenophobic former chief of the secret police, has been "adviser" to the Cultural Revolution group from its inception. This title and his extreme public and private statements paint Kang as one of the prime movers behind the destructive radical impulses of the Cultural Revolution.

The shadowy Chen Po-ta, longtime ghostwriter, propagandist, and ideologue for Mao, has been chief of the Cultural Revolution Group since its formation in the fall of 1966. Deriving his political stature solely from close association with Mao, Chen has generally been found on the radical side of controversies at the center.



CHEN PO-TA

The sixth member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Li Fu-chun, has played only a limited role in the Cultural Revolution. He has appeared to be mainly symbolic of the bureaucratic administrators whose pragmatic views have been given voice by Chou En-lai.



LI FU-CHUN



CHIANG CHING

Last but not least, Mao's wife Chiang Ching, though not a formal member of the Politburo Standing Committee (and not even a central committee member), has exercised the influence of that rank as a leader of the CRG and the most vocal spokesman for the militants.

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Mao to doubt the reliability of the army.

The overt evidence of this campaign is found largely in the posters and demonstrations of militant Red Guards, who in January 1967 turned their ire on two groups of leaders, mostly at the secondary level, both associated with the moderate end of the spectrum. One of these groups consisted of the minister of petroleum and five vice premiers more or less consistently identified with the pragmatic policies championed by Chou En-lai: Li Fu-chun, Foreign Minister Chen Yi, Finance Minister Li Hsien-nien, agricultural specialist Tan Chen-lin, and national police chief Hsieh Fu-chih. The second group was primarily military: Hsu Hsiang-chien and Yeh Chien-ying--both old army heroes and members of the Military Affairs Committee--and the head of the state's scientific and technical program, Nieh Jung-chen, who also is a member of the Military Affairs Committee and a vice premier. Fragmentary evidence from Red Guard defectors suggests that these attacks were orchestrated and at least partially supervised by the radical leaders in the inner circle--Chiang Ching, Kang Sheng, and Chen Po-ta.

Chou responded to both initiatives with a strong public defense of the men involved, probably risking his own political standing to some degree in the process. As a result, Li Fu-chun and Hsieh Fu-chih escaped from the ordeal unscathed, and attacks on the others abated. In May, they began again, those

against Foreign Minister Chen Yi and agricultural specialist Tan Chen-lin becoming particularly virulent. This thrust by the Red Guards ended abruptly early in September 1967. Chou was apparently not in a strong enough position in the spring and early summer to be as forthright in their defense, and the Red Guards' targets gradually became less active in public, appearing mostly for ceremonial occasions. Some were removed or suspended from their posts. Tan Chen-lin fell in disgrace during the summer. This appeared to be a major blow to Chou, who was clearly on the defensive at this time.

Propaganda of last fall and winter blamed the attacks of early 1967 against government and army officials on "ultraleftist" extremists--the May 16 Corps. Specifically, these leftists, led by members of the powerful Cultural Revolution Group, were accused of pressing a long-range plan to strike at Premier Chou's subordinates and allies and, ultimately, to bring down Chou himself.

Later on, at the time of the disgrace of acting chief of staff Yang Cheng-wu in March 1968, propagandists in league with the Cultural Revolution Group identified the period of February-March 1967 as the "third wave" of the Cultural Revolution. They indicted Tan Chen-lin--the only target of the period they were able to bring down--as the mastermind behind the so-called "February adverse current of reversing current decision," i.e., a purported attempt to get earlier purge victims reinstated. Tan,

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however, was the politburo's only total casualty from the period, and the leftist treatment of his political demise suggests that the radicals considered the abortive campaign a major piece of unfinished business.

The Turn to Moderation,
September 1967

The most distinct switch in regime policies and in the fortunes of secondary officials of

the Cultural Revolution occurred during the moderate ascendancy last fall. Directives against revolutionary violence and in support of orderly economic activity--which had been publicly promoted for many months to no avail by Chou En-lai and members of his entourage such as national police chief Hsieh Fu-chih--were suddenly reiterated and enforced. But most striking of all, three young second-line leaders of the Cultural Revolution Group--Wang

PEKING'S OFFICIAL VERSION OF THE PHASES OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

In speeches on 24 and 27 March 1968, Lin Piao, Chen Po-ta, and others defined the "five waves"* of the Cultural Revolution and their key purges, as listed below. These "waves" differ from the phases identified by US observers, but the list shows that Chinese spokesmen understand the political nature of these phases in terms not greatly different from ours. (Information in italics supplied by OCI.)

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| (1) November 1965 - June 1966
<i>Attacks on allegedly anti-Mao elements in the party</i> | Peng Chen <i>politburo member</i>
Lo Jui-ching <i>army chief of staff</i>
Lu Ting-i <i>propaganda chief</i>
Yang Shang-kun <i>Mao's aide</i> |
| (2) August-December 1966
<i>Attack on party machine as a whole</i> | Liu Shao-chi <i>heir apparent</i>
Teng Hsiao-ping <i>party secretary</i>
Tao Chu <i>South China party boss</i> |
| (3) February-March 1967
<i>Purge of "rightists"</i> | Tan Chen-lin <i>politburo member, leader of "February adverse current"; not actually eliminated until August 1967</i> |
| (4) August 1967 - January 1968
<i>Purge of "ultraleftists"; a counterattack by moderates</i> | Wang Li <i>member, Cultural Revolution Group</i>
Kuan Feng <i>member, Cultural Revolution Group</i>
Chi Pen-yu <i>member, Cultural Revolution Group</i> |
| (5) March 1968
<i>New purge of "rightists"; radical reaction to 4th wave</i> | Yang Cheng-wu <i>acting chief of staff</i>
Yu Li-chin <i>air force commissar</i>
Fu Chung-pi <i>Peking garrison commander</i> |

*A sixth wave was visible beginning in July 1968, with a new swing to the right and the stringent suppression of radical Red Guards. No major victims had come to light as of early September.

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Li, Kuan Feng, and Mu Hsin--were disgraced in early September. All were certified radicals, and all were closely associated with Chen Po-ta, Kang Sheng, and Chiang Ching.

Charges against the outlawed anti-Chou group of extreme leftists, the May 16 Corps, became increasingly detailed and explicit over the next six months, naming all three as kingpins in the attempt to eradicate Chou's government bureaucrats and hinting darkly that a more important protector lurked untouched somewhere in the hierarchy. When a fourth Cultural Revolution Group member, Chi Pen-yu, was purged in January, he was immediately charged with the same crimes.

At this time, when the radical faction was suffering its first important casualties of the Cultural Revolution, the moderate targets of the preceding half-year were gradually being reinstated. This process culminated in the apparently full rehabilitation of Foreign Minister Chen Yi in November 1967 and the elevation of the relatively unimportant Petroleum Minister Yu Chiu-li to the second rank of leaders in public appearances--no doubt as a symbol of the changed balance of forces among the top leaders of the regime.

The removal of the four young radicals has since been officially termed the "fourth wave" in the Cultural Revolution. This period appears to have been one when the radical members of the inner circle were under some re-

straint and Chou En-lai, his subordinates, and allied military leaders were in the ascendancy. Like other periods of retreat, this one was given Mao's full official endorsement, and was said to be part of his "great strategic plan" for rebuilding the party. This retreat was short-lived, however, indicating that Mao viewed it with suspicion.

Radical Resurgence,
March 1968

The "fifth wave" was precipitated by behind-the-scenes struggles in Peking at some point between 8 and 24 March, when it was announced that acting Chief of Staff Yang Cheng-wu, the air force political commissar, and the Peking garrison commander had been removed. Subsequent Red Guard documents have recounted in detail a stormy meeting during the night of 24-25 March at which Lin Piao, Chiang Ching, Chen Po-ta, and Kang Sheng in particular charged that the three had attempted to arrest unnamed personnel of the Cultural Revolution Group, to unseat air force commander Wu Fashien and Peking municipal Revolutionary Committee chairman Hsieh Fu-chih, and to engineer the dismissal of several key military region commanders. They reportedly were frustrated mainly by the personal intervention of Chiang Ching. Leaders at the meeting lauded her action in excessive terms.

Although the ouster of Yang and associates must have been one of the major turning points in the Cultural Revolution, at

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which the fortunes of the main players took a sharp turn--this much is acknowledged by radical spokesmen--it is unclear who the culprits were working for and against. All were Lin Piao appointees, but Lin was seemingly unhurt by their sudden fall from grace. Immediately after their political demise, however, leading members of Chou's State Council again came under brief poster attack and remained out of sight for several weeks.

Nevertheless, the two men brought in to replace the fallen military leaders, Huang Yung-sheng and Wen Yu-cheng, have even better credentials as "conservatives" than their predecessors. Chou En-lai had backed Huang, then commander of the Canton Military Region, where Wen was his subordinate, against charges in 1967 by radical Red Guards there that he was guilty of suppressing them.

It would appear, therefore, that while the Cultural Revolution took a sudden lurch to the left again in March, the resulting situation was a stalemate between the two main leadership factions. Propaganda became notably more leftist and inflammatory, and Red Guard violence in the provinces picked up once again. Some of the lines of moderate policy were blocked, while others were sidetracked. At the same time, however, renewed attacks on moderate figures--except for those on Nieh Jung-chen, the head of the state's scientific and technical program--quickly died out without follow-through, and such moderate drives as the formation of provincial

revolutionary committees headed by old-line military and party figures moved ahead at a good pace through the end of May.

At this time, the Cultural Revolution reached still another critical juncture. In May and June, fierce factional fighting grew rapidly, especially in Fukien, Kwangsi, Yunnan, Tibet, and Sinkiang where new-style governments had yet to be formed. The organization of provincial revolutionary committees in these areas was stalled. For a period of several weeks, military shipments to Vietnam through Kwangsi were disrupted by violence, which reached levels of destruction in some areas--Kwangsi, Kwangtung, Fukien--as bad as the worst Red Guard chaos of the summer of 1967.

The Turn to the Right,
July 1968 to Present

In June, Chou En-lai reportedly tried to intervene in the Kwangsi situation to end the fighting, but his efforts were unsuccessful. In July, however, Peking began issuing directives in the name of Mao Tse-tung to curb Red Guards, open the rail routes again, and authorize firm military control, not just in Kwangsi but in all provinces. These directives finally took hold.

By August, the army stopped the fighting in most areas. For the first time since February 1967, it was empowered to suppress unruly Red Guards. During July and August it arrested large numbers of radical Red Guard leaders, executed some, occupied their

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headquarters, and deputized rival conservative Red Guards to help bring order. The Red Guard rank and file were terrorized, and in several provinces Red Guard organizations were forcibly disbanded. Obviously, these actions severely damaged the interests of the radical leadership faction in Peking.

Moreover, progress toward reconstituting the political order has resumed. Presumably, with the strong backing of military/moderate forces in Peking, Yunnan founded its provincial Revolutionary Committee on 13 August, and Fukien and Kwangsi followed suit within weeks. The final revolutionary committees--in Tibet and Sinkiang--were formed in the first week of September.

In major ideological pronouncements, "workers" were authorized to take the lead in "everything." In Communist terminology, "working class" is a euphemism for whoever is exercising authority, and in this case meant the "conservative" provincial leadership that had fitfully been formed in late 1967

and 1968, evidently with the backing of the more moderate elements of the central leadership. Apparently, these pronouncements thus tolled the death knell for the Red Guard movement, an important power base for leaders of the Cultural Revolution Group in Peking. Another conservative military figure, the new deputy chief of staff and Peking garrison commander Wen Yu-cheng, began appearing with the elite list of 15 leaders on 11 August.

In the face of this concerted swing back to law and order, the inner circle continued to appear together as if nothing had changed. After two years of the turmoil, however, there can be little doubt that this superficial unity masks a ferocious fight for dominance. Strains of that fight have nearly split the inner circle asunder at least twice in the past year, and many key lieutenants of both factions have fallen in the fray. There can be no security at the pinnacle of power in China today, save perhaps for Mao himself. A new, ruthless purge would seem to be near and this time it might reach into the inner circle. (SE-
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