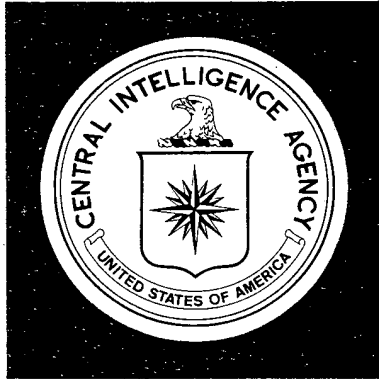


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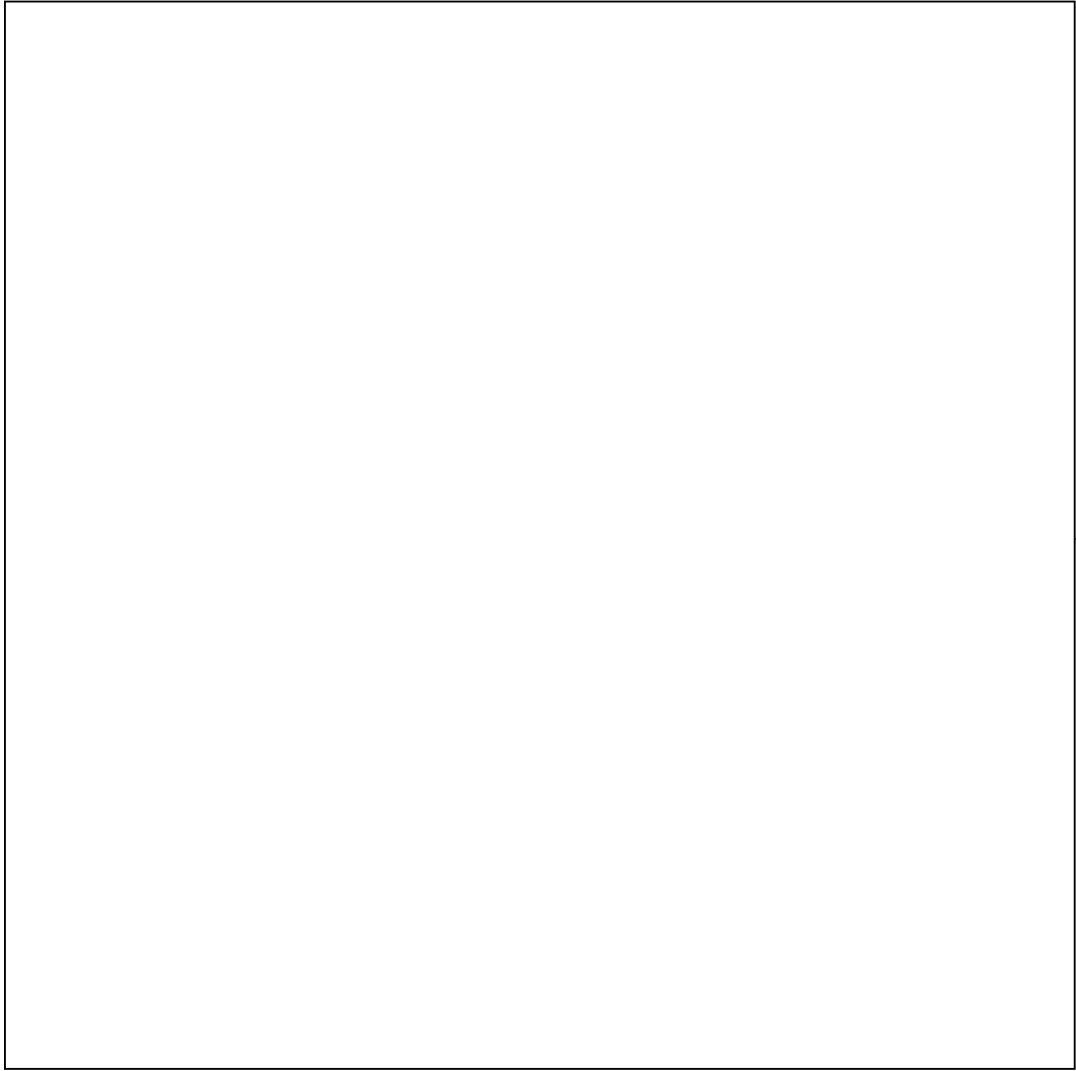
*The "Gang of Four" and the Rise
of Hua Kuo-feng*

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The "Gang of Four" and the Rise of Hua Kuo-feng

*Central Intelligence Agency
Directorate of Intelligence
April 1977*

Summary

Hua Kuo-feng, 56, the principal leader of the Chinese Communist Party, is a Centrist in the Chinese political spectrum. In making his spectacular rise, he had the favor both of Mao Tse-tung, for his loyalty to Mao's revolutionary objectives, and of Chou En-lai, for his managerial ability and sensible work-style. He proved able to work with the Left and the Right, to avoid the mistakes made by leaders of both, and to turn those mistakes to his own advantage. He also had good luck, as one contender after another was removed from the scene. After Mao's death, Hua was able to form a coalition to purge his immediate challengers, the Leftist "gang of four," and he has thus far been able to contain a potential challenge from the Right.¹

Having established himself in the early 1960s as a dedicated Maoist with an unusual range of competence in practical matters, Hua demonstrated his highly developed political sense in the Cultural Revolution. He survived and prospered both in the destructive period of 1965-68, in which the "gang" first came to attention as a group of Leftists using a mass campaign for factional ends and in the subsequent years of reaction against the Leftist excesses of that period. Brought from the provinces to Peking in 1971, Hua gained again from the fall of Lin Piao, moving into important positions under Chou. Hua and the youngest Leftist of the "gang" were added to the Politburo in 1973 to join the three Leftists already there.

The four Leftists used the anti-Confucian campaign of 1973-74 to attempt to discredit Chou and the rehabilitated Rightist Teng Hsiao-ping (restored to the Politburo) as potential successors to Mao, and in factional struggle against military leaders and old Party cadres throughout China. Hua Kuo-feng was briefly a target of Leftist attack, but, with the support of Mao and Chou, continued to thrive. The Leftists were temporarily set back in late 1974, when Mao held them partially responsible for the large-scale disorders of the anti-Confucian campaign.

In the 1975 campaign to "study the dictatorship of the proletariat" (reaffirming revolutionary values), which immediately followed Peking's commitment to the "comprehensive modernization" of China by the year 2000, the Leftists were given another opportunity. With Chou En-lai terminally ill and out of contention, the Leftists focused on Teng Hsiao-ping, who had been the principal beneficiary of their own errors in the anti-Confucian campaign. Again they sought to bring down large

1. Throughout this paper, the terms Leftist(s), Centrist(s), and Rightist(s) are used to indicate descending degrees of apparent allegiance to Mao's fundamental revolutionary vision: of the creation through continuing "class struggle" of a completely politicized and selfless, ideologically motivated new Chinese man, and of an egalitarian and largely self-sufficient China. Leftist, Centrist, and Rightist positions tend to represent genuine predilections on policy issues, but may be used primarily for factional advantage in a struggle for power.

numbers of veteran Party cadres and military men, thus increasing the hostility to themselves on the part of leaders of the Center and Right.

Teng unwittingly aided the Leftists in the summer of 1975 by making a series of "mistakes," most importantly by appearing to be an unrepentant Rightist interested solely in the "modernization" of China at whatever cost to Mao's Cultural Revolution programs. In contrast, Hua was performing well as the Party's supervisor of agriculture and as minister of public security. In October, Teng marked himself for his second purge by endorsing criticism of some of Mao's "revolutionary" policies. Again in contrast, in that same month Hua had occasion to make clear his unassailable Centrist position, reaffirming his loyalty to Mao's revolutionary objectives while calling for realistic measures to reach them.

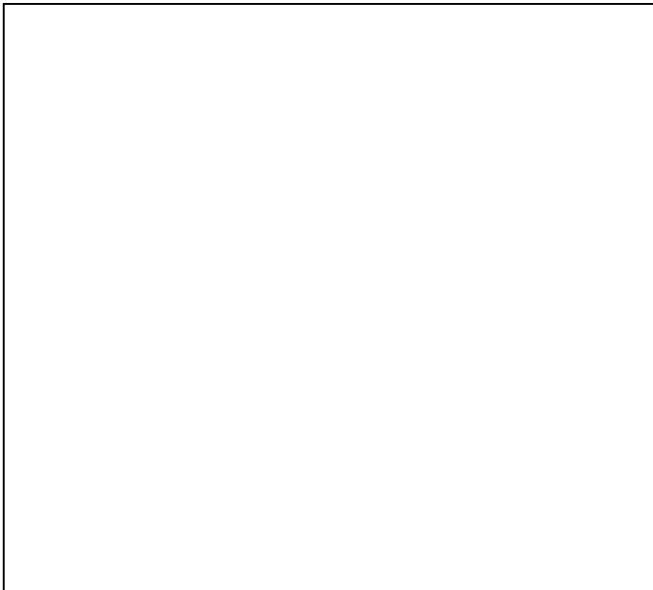
Soon after Chou En-lai's death in January 1976, Teng was removed as *de facto* premier, and Hua was named acting premier. The most important Leftist, who had been in line for the post, was passed over. Mao was once again recognizing that the Leftists were unsatisfactory as the managers of programs (in this case, "modernization") with constructive aims. With this appointment, Hua replaced Teng as the Leftists' main enemy.

The Leftists' long campaign against Chou (and Chou's memory) was turned against them in April, when a week-long display of popular affection for Chou—and of hostility to the Leftists—ended in unprecedented rioting in Peking's central square. This time Hua was able to profit from the misfortunes of both the Right and the Left. Teng was held responsible for the rioting and was removed from all of his Party posts, but the Leftists were pre-empted from exploiting the situation. Hua was named both first vice chairman of the Party (a new post) and premier, giving him the best claim of any Party leader to be Mao's designated successor. The failing Mao seemed to be making a final decision: to choose a Centrist who could be relied upon not to repudiate his revolutionary objectives as a Rightist would, but could

also be relied upon to avoid the excesses repeatedly committed by the Leftists.

After Mao's withdrawal from the scene in June, Hua apparently became the *de facto* leader of the Party, to whom most others (but not the Leftists) looked for guidance. The Leftists continued to attempt to bring Hua and others down, and to that end falsified a Mao directive. By late summer, Hua and a few key military figures had probably laid plans either to exclude the four Leftists from the post-Mao leadership or to purge them utterly.

Soon after Mao's death on 9 September, the Leftists put on record their falsified version of the Mao directive, thus directly challenging Hua. In the same period, they probably approached the leaders of military and security forces in Peking, seeking support against Hua, and were both rebuffed and reported. The Leftist press continued to make ominous threats against other leaders in that period.



Since the purge of the Leftists, the current leadership, which badly needs Mao for legitimacy and continuity, has been defending Mao's overall record. The case of the Leftists is an embarrassment because it is widely recognized that the four could not have survived as a Leftist faction for more than a decade without Mao's support, but Peking evidently hopes that

the case will seem small in the totality of the legacy that Hua was given. For the time being, Hua is forced to affirm more than he wants in the way of a revolutionary Leftist component, and it will test his managerial skill to divest himself of those features that he does not want while retaining those that he does.

With the striking appreciation of Chou En-lai since Mao's death, Hua is presenting his own working style as more like Chou's than Mao's. This fits the realities of Hua's situation because he does not stand above the Party as did Mao, or even alone at the top of it. He is compelled to be like Chou—a manager and conciliator, a coalition-building and consensus-seeking leader.

The other key figures of this collective leadership appear to be: the ranking military leader and the principal economic coordinator, both longtime friends of Chou's, and both Rightists; a step down, two career Party cadres like Hua, one apparently the Party's *de facto* Secretary General and the other the political boss of the city of Peking, both probably Centrists; and, less secure, the commander of the Peking Military Region and the director of the political security apparatus (Party police), both regarded as "wild cards," of great value to any leader to whom they give their support.

There may be disagreement among the seven current key figures as to how to deal with the difficult problem of Teng Hsiao-ping. There has apparently been much pressure to return Teng—who had the best record of any Party leader in opposing the Leftists in 1974-75—to a position of power. Hua may be reluctant, as Teng's return would cast a small cloud on Hua's own legitimacy, would offer a popular choice to replace Hua as premier, would give the Right an aggressive leader, and might even pose a threat to Hua's position as the Party's principal leader. But Hua, if indeed reluctant, will probably compromise, by returning Teng at least to the Politburo.

The seven leaders (or eight, if Teng returns) of Peking's inner circle appear to have

reached a policy consensus in a strategic sense—to put firmly behind them the extremism associated with the purged Leftists, and to move at least in the direction of the moderate and pragmatic domestic policies last seen before the Cultural Revolution. But there are some specific tough problems on which there are bound to be differences of opinion.

In Party-building, there seems to be agreement on the need to restore order, to identify the most important followers of the Leftists, and to reorganize Party committees. There appears to be some disagreement, however, as to how far to extend the purge.

Similarly, there seems to be agreement to pursue aggressively Chou's plan for the "modernization" of China (agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology), but there apparently is some disagreement as to what proportion of resources should go to the production of weapons.

Further, there is clearly agreement to return the armed forces to the high status they enjoyed before the Lin Piao affair of 1971, to display military figures in the leadership, to restore discipline, to emphasize military training over political indoctrination, and so on. But for the civilian leaders there is the very difficult management problem of retaining primacy in the decisionmaking process while avoiding the kind of showdown that would provoke the PLA into imposing a *de facto* military dictatorship.

In foreign policy, the new leadership is not expected to make any important change in the near future. Hostility to the USSR as the "main enemy" will be maintained, and Peking will continue to value the US as a strategic counterweight. There will remain room for disagreement, however, as to what tactics to adopt toward the USSR and the US, [redacted]

[redacted]

There are various ways in which the leadership might be broken down meaningfully: older and longtime national-level leaders versus

younger relative newcomers; career Party cadres versus career military and security figures; and Centrists (in whom there is an inescapable Leftist component), Rightists, and "wild cards." But little can yet be said with confidence about divisions in the leadership on particular issues.

Hua's position is not secure, but his record is impressive. He can probably conciliate Teng's supporters by returning Teng to power and yet remain in a strong enough position to contain any challenge by Teng. He can probably resolve other possible problems by compromising as much as is necessary to retain the support of the military leaders. He seems the best bet to be

the Party's principal leader for at least the year ahead.

Hua might be able to survive for years as a kind of Chinese Brezhnev, occupying a Centrist position, balancing the forces around him, discouraging the formation of any coalition against him, reducing the strength of the opposition on either side on any issue, gradually gathering the support of other leaders for his own position. As Mao's Leftist pull (still strong) on the leadership loses its force over time, the center of the political spectrum will probably become what would now be regarded as Centrist-Rightist. In any case, there seems no prospect for domination by the "revolutionary" Left.

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The "Gang of Four" and the Rise of Hua Kuo-feng

Hua Kuo-feng, now 56, has risen spectacularly in the past decade from a provincial Party secretaryship to the Chinese Communist Party's two most important posts—chairman of the Central Committee and chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, the same two posts that Mao had occupied—and to the most important governmental post, premier of the State Council, that Chou En-lai had held. Hua has done this by:

- Gaining Mao's favor early in his career for his association with Mao's objectives, and retaining that favor until Mao in his last months was ready to designate a successor.
- Gaining Chou En-lai's favor as well in the 1970s for his managerial ability and sensible work style, thus having a claim on Chou's admirers also.
- Being a genuine Centrist, so that he could work comfortably with either Left or Right, during both the advances in Mao's mass campaigns and the retreats from them.
- Having a highly developed political sense, so that he could not only avoid the excesses committed by the unwary of both Right and Left but could turn the mistakes of others to his profit.
- Having a large measure of good luck, in that he was there to fill the vacancy when one contender after another (Chou, Teng Hsiao-ping, Chang Chun-chiao) was removed from the scene by illness or hubris.
- Using his good relationships with the Right, notably the military leaders, to form a coalition soon after Mao's death to repel the challenge from the Left, to purge the Leftist "gang of four," and to rule China since.

- Successfully employing Mao's legacy (at least so far) to contain a potential challenge to him from the Right.

Hua and the "Gang" in the 1960s



By 1965, he had established himself as a dedicated Maoist with an unusual range of competence—all the concerns of a Party secretary and political officer, plus specialized knowledge of agriculture, water conservation, science and technology, military affairs, and public security.

The members of the "gang" began to work closely together during the Cultural Revolution years of 1965-68. Mao's declared aim was to increase the power of the Left, and to this end to purge the Party, the government, and the military establishment. This gave the four Leftists, each of whom helped to carry out the purge, their first opportunity to use a mass campaign for factional ends.²

All of the provincial Party committees were dissolved during the violent years of 1966-67, and most provincial Party secretaries went into eclipse. Hua Kuo-feng, although criticized by radical Red Guard groups, remained in favor with the central leadership and was received by Mao himself in 1967. After the tempering of the Cultural Revolution in 1968, Hua was named in 1969 to the Central Committee, and in 1970 was signally honored by being named first secretary of the first provincial Party committee (in Hunan) to be recon-

2. The eldest and most important of the four, however, the theorist Chang Chun-chiao, seemed to be a more complex figure, with more apparent potential, than the other three: the neurotic, vain, and vindictive Madame Mao, the young propagandist Yao Wen-yuan, and the young representative of "revolutionary successors" risen from the ranks, Wang Hung-wen.

stituted and proclaimed. He was clearly a coming man.

At the National Level

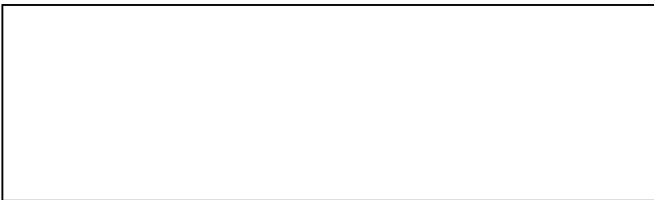
From 1969 to 1973, Chou En-lai was the Party's *de facto* secretary-general (replacing Teng Hsiao-ping, purged in 1966) as well as premier, and in that role was Hua Kuo-feng's supervisor. He was probably instrumental in bringing Hua—already known as an excellent administrator—to Peking in 1971. Hua again showed his talent for profiting from the mistakes made by others. Soon after the death of the Ultra-Leftist Lin Piao and the arrest of his fellow-conspirators in September 1971, Hua emerged as the director of the General (administrative) Office of Chou's State Council and was probably a member of Chou's group investigating the Lin affair (although Hua's role may have been confined to Hunan).

By 1973, Hua was established as an able administrator at the national level and as a genuine expert on agriculture. At the Tenth Party Congress in August 1973 he was elevated to the new Politburo as a full (voting) member. Three of the four Leftists were renamed to the Politburo (they had been members since 1969), and the fourth—young Wang—was added. Wang gave one of the two most important reports to the Congress, fiercely Leftist in its expressed delight in political "struggle" and the prospect of further Cultural Revolutions.³

The Tenth Party Congress gave the four Leftists—by that time known as "the Shanghai group," because all but Madame Mao came from the Shanghai Party committee—a much stronger organizational base to support their factional activity. From that time on, Chang and Wang were members of the Politburo Standing Committee (the core of power), both had posts high in the Party apparatus and reportedly in the Military Affairs Committee as well, Yao was the director of the Party's propaganda apparatus, and Madame Mao was the Chairman's sometime messenger and mail manager.⁴ But Mao, as always, did not leave the stage to any one group in the political spec-

trum; waiting in the wings, ready to be restored to the Politburo, was the confirmed Rightist Teng Hsiao-ping, who was to be the ailing Chou En-lai's principal deputy in running the government. Mao recognized that there would be contention, even "struggle," between the two extremes of the permissible spectrum, but he welcomed this as a healthy thing.

As of late 1973, at least three of the Leftists had common enemies: on the record, Chou En-lai (although one of the four, Chang, was already sharing Chou's work and had some hope of being Chou's successor), and many other veteran Party cadres and military leaders; but most importantly Teng Hsiao-ping, whose return to power could be expected to lead to the rehabilitation of many more old Party cadres and military leaders and perhaps to a coalescence of forces in the leadership opposed to the Leftists. Some if not all of the Leftists had helped to purge Teng in 1966 and had opposed his rehabilitation in 1973 and had reason to fear him. Hua Kuo-feng at that time, was apparently not regarded by the Leftists as a major rival.



4. Their strong organizational base gave the four the opportunity, as charged and massively documented, to attempt to "usurp" the leadership of the Party and state (that is, to improve their positions for a later attempt), to try to bring down many other leaders, to manipulate ideology for factional advantage, to corrupt the course of Party-building (advancing their proteges and recruiting others, oppressing good cadres), to dominate and destroy culture and education, to cause "enormous economic losses," to disrupt the PLA and the militia, and even (to a degree) to obstruct Mao's foreign policy. There is evidence from Leftist-controlled journals that the "gang" advocated a tougher policy toward the US, perhaps something close to that openly advocated by Lin Piao—of equidistance from two absolute enemies, the USSR *and* the US, rather than Mao's tilt toward the US. Peking has not done as much with this charge as it might have, probably because it would be awkward to attack the Leftists for what in this case would be an *orthodox* "revolutionary" position.

The Anti-Confucian Campaign

The four Leftists all had important roles in the anti-Confucian campaign of 1973-74. Just as in the Cultural Revolution, they appeared to manipulate this campaign for personal ends. The Leftists' main aim, at the highest level, appeared to be that of discrediting both Chou and Teng (restored to the Politburo in January 1974) as potential successors to Mao. Below that level, the principal targets appeared to be regional and provincial military leaders, and secondarily old Party cadres; the main objective of the Leftists was to increase the share of power held by their supporters and potential constituency in governing bodies.⁵

Hua Kuo-feng was briefly a target of Leftist attack, but continued to thrive. By mid-1974, he had apparently become the new minister of public security (a post of special trust), and was reportedly chosen to make an important speech on the Fifth Five-Year Plan.

Mao may have warned some or all of the four Leftists in July 1974, as alleged, to take care not to form a "small faction"—that is, not to engage in factional *activity*, long proscribed. In any case, the anti-Confucian campaign led in fact to large-scale factional struggle, political and social disorder, and economic loss—for which Mao held the "gang" (not yet called that) partially responsible. Moreover, one of the four, young Wang, may have angered Mao in late 1974 (as Peking claims) by slandering Chou in conversation with Mao; and Mao may have repeated his warning of July. (Wang never thereafter seemed to be in Mao's favor.) Finally, it is credible that in late 1974, immediately prior to the National People's Congress which was to fill important government posts, Mao flatly rejected a Leftist proposal to name to key positions a number of members and proteges of the "gang" (the Leftists' so-called "cabinet").

The Threat of Teng Hsiao-ping

Although it was Chou En-lai who set forth at the National People's Congress (NPC) in January 1975 the plan for the "comprehensive

modernization" of China by the year 2000—a plan endorsed by Mao as having both a constructive aim and a revolutionary spirit—by this time Chou had already been hospitalized, terminally ill, and was no longer a contender for the succession. The Leftist faction may have crystallized into a conspiracy against Teng as the main enemy at that time.⁶ Teng had turned out to be the principal beneficiary of the Ultra-Leftist errors made by the Leftists in the anti-Confucian campaign. Just prior to the NPC, Mao had appointed Teng as vice chairman of the Military Affairs Committee and as senior vice premier and chief of staff, thus giving Teng a stronger organizational position than any one of the Leftists. Moreover, Teng's speech at that time made clear—if not to Mao, to others of the audience—that Teng had not really changed his mind about the Cultural Revolution and its instruments, so that the Leftists knew what they could expect of him if he were to become Mao's successor.

The Leftists' view of Hua Kuo-feng—who in January 1975 became one of 12 vice premiers and surfaced in his post as minister of public security—cannot be judged with confidence. On the one hand, he was on his record less of a threat to them than was Teng. On the other, he enjoyed the favor of both Mao and Chou, he was a strong figure who was continuing to rise, and he was not one of themselves.

The primary aim of the campaign which began a month later—to "study the dictatorship

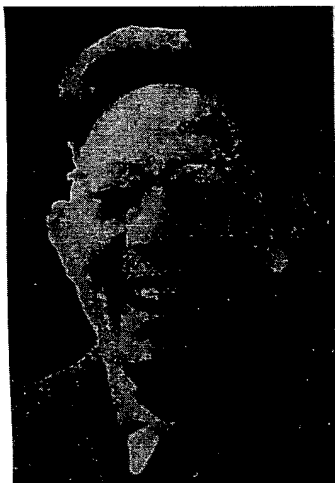
5. Wang stated publicly in early 1974 his desire to replace some of China's Military Region (MR) commanders with young men of his own age; this was not done.

6. Chang Chun-chiao, who had until then kept some distance between himself and the other three Leftists, apparently made the decision at about this time to cut his ties with the dying Chou, not even to attempt to establish ties with the vengeful Teng, and to throw in completely with the "gang." In his speech to the NPC, Chang, like Wang at the Tenth Party Congress, put heavy emphasis on "class struggle," on the prospect of "numerous sharp and intricate class struggles," the ground on which the struggle for power was to be waged. From this time, the Leftists were truly a gang of four.

THE PURGED LEFTISTS



Wang Hung-wen



Chang Chun-chiao



Madame Mao



Yao Wen-yuan

of the proletariat”—was to reaffirm revolutionary values. Typically, Mao, having strengthened the Right through Teng, now showed a concern not to go too far and moved to strengthen the forces of the Left throughout China. Among other things, he tasked two of the four leading Leftists, Chang and Yao, to provide theoretical and practical guidance for this campaign. Once again, given this new opportunity, the Leftists wrote and commissioned articles during the spring of 1975 which clearly took aim at old Party cadres like Teng (in particular, at Teng) and at military leaders as well; for example, by describing both as “crafty old bourgeois elements” responsible for a dangerous “bourgeois wind” in the Party leadership and as the proponents of “empiricism” (disregard of ideology).

Mao is now said to have criticized the Leftists in late April 1975 for their manipulation of the concept of “empiricism” and for regarding themselves as always in the right, thus justified in lecturing others.⁷ He is said also, at a Politburo meeting on 3 May, to have reiterated his longstanding warning against revisionism, splitting and conspiracy, and (for the first time) to have actually described the Leftists as a functioning “gang of four.” He is said to have given instructions on the same day that the

problem of the “gang” should be resolved as soon as possible; but he himself did not take the decisive action which Hua Kuo-feng was to take in October 1976.

Teng’s Mistakes, Hua’s Successes

Teng unwittingly helped out the Leftists at the height of his power in the summer of 1975 by making a careless mistake on an ideological position important to Mao (the primacy of “class struggle”), by making a series of speeches in which he seemed to be an unrepentant Rightist interested solely in China’s modernization at whatever cost to Mao’s Cultural Revolution programs, and by making himself vulnerable to specific charges of suppressing young “revolutionary successors” (the good Leftists whom the Cultural Revolution was supposed to produce) while rehabilitating too rapidly too many old cadres (Rightists overthrown by the Cultural Revolution). By contrast, Hua Kuo-feng was performing well in his roles as supervisor of agriculture and as minister of public

7. The criticism was for emphasizing the Rightist error of “empiricism” while ignoring the Leftist error (their own) of “dogmatism”—each being an expression of “revisionism.” The Leftists did indeed try to gain recognition as the guardians of Mao’s “thought,” and in 1976 were to fabricate a Mao directive to that end.

security; in the latter role, investigating security cases in South China, he gave evidence of what he was to prove in October 1976—that he could be as tough as he had to be.

In October 1975, Teng marked himself for his second purging by endorsing an educator's letter to Mao which was strongly critical of the implementation of Mao's "revolutionary" policies in education. Mao chose to take the letter as aimed at himself (which indirectly it was), and immediately set in motion a "great campaign"—beginning in the universities—to discredit Teng. Again Hua displayed his ability to profit from the mistakes of other leaders. Chosen to make the summation report to the national conference on "learning from Tachai" (increasing production through self-reliance) in that same month, Hua made clear his unassailable Centrist position; he reaffirmed his loyalty to Mao's revolutionary objectives, while calling for realistic measures to reach them. Hua's speech to the conference was widely publicized, whereas the speeches of both the Right and the Left—by Teng and Madame Mao respectively—were suppressed, presumably on Mao's order. Hua was apparently added to the officers of the Military Affairs Committee at that time.

Chou En-lai died on 8 January 1976. Although Chou's official obituary gave him greater praise than had been accorded any other of Mao's lieutenants, in the light of Chou's true contributions to the Party's cause for more than 50 years the obituary and the surrounding media commentary and coverage were remarkably ungenerous. While there is no record of Mao's objection to this mean-spirited treatment of Chou, the "gang" has been credibly blamed for it, and the four may, as charged, have so manipulated events that Teng Hsiao-ping was obliged to deliver the eulogy, thus permitting the Leftists to attempt to discredit Chou through the soon-to-be-disgraced Teng. The "gang" was to pay dearly for this.

Hua's Elevation Over the Right and the Left

In late January, Teng was removed as *de facto* premier and Hua was named acting

premier. The Chinese have said—clearly a part of image-building—that when Mao informed Hua of his intention to name him, Hua demurred several times, thus showing a sense of his personal limitations, which simply confirmed Mao in his choice. In any case, with Teng gone, Chang, who as the then-ranking vice premier was in line for the post and surely desired it (he wrote a bitter commentary later), was passed over. Mao and others were once again recognizing that the hard Leftists, while useful as agitators in periods of revolutionary turbulence, were unsatisfactory as managers and administrators of programs with constructive aims.

Although the charge that the "gang" "frantically opposed" Hua's appointment is a normal rhetorical flourish, it is not incredible that some or all of the four were foolish enough at that time (as foolish as they were later in 1976 to prove themselves to be) to express in some way their displeasure with the appointment and thus to coalesce in the mind of Mao and others as a "gang." In any case, Hua had now replaced Teng as the Leftists' main enemy, and they had established themselves as his.

The "gang" continued to be active in the anti-Rightist campaign (centering on Teng) in early 1976 and probably did attempt once again, as now alleged, to widen the target and bring down a large number of Party, government, and military leaders. The assertion that Mao criticized them for this at the time tends to be supported by a *People's Daily* editorial of 10 March quoting Mao—presumably on Mao's order, because it was not in the Leftists' interest to do it—on the need to emphasize education of the erring and to "narrow the attack."

In Peking in early April, a week after the publication in a Leftist journal of an article unmistakably aiming at the late Chou En-lai as that "capitalist-roader" who had helped to restore Teng to power, there was a week-long display of popular affection for Chou—and by implication for Teng. It was also a demonstration of hostility to the Leftists and even (to a degree) to Mao himself. The overnight removal from Peking's central square of thousands of

tributes to Chou—an action which may have been ordered by the Leftists—led to a day of unprecedented rioting in the square, with many injuries, much property damage, and the arrest of hundreds.

Mao responded swiftly by purging the Right, pre-empting the Left, and elevating the Center. On 7 April, Teng (the “root cause” of the rioting) was removed from all of his Party posts. At the same time Hua was named first vice chairman of the Party (a new position) and concurrently premier (no longer “acting”). Both actions were said to be taken “on the proposal” of Mao. This time *two* Leftists hierarchically in line for the posts—Wang for the first vice chairmanship, Chang again for the premiership—were passed over. In naming the Centrist Hua, who on this occasion was able to profit greatly from mistakes made by both the Right and the Left, Mao and others were not only pre-empting any effort by the Leftists to exploit the rioting, but were giving Hua the best claim of any Party leader to be Mao’s designated successor, greatly strengthening Hua’s position against any challenger. The failing Mao seemed to be making a final decision: to point to an established Centrist as his personal choice to be his successor, a man who could be relied upon not to repudiate Mao’s revolutionary objectives as a Rightist would, but who could also be relied upon to avoid the excesses repeatedly committed by the Leftists.

Mao’s Important Directive

On 30 April, Mao reportedly wrote a three-part “directive” to Hua about handling problems of the anti-Rightist campaign in the provinces. One of the parts—“act according to past principles”—was to become important in the struggle for power, as the Leftists are credibly charged with altering it in such a way as to buttress their position.

Whereas Mao’s original directive was narrowly focused, the Leftists’ formulation of it was designed to make it appear all-encompassing and to permit the “gang” to pose as the sole authorized exegetes of Mao’s texts and as the

arbiters as to who was loyal to Mao and who was not. The Leftists are also credibly charged with presenting this counterfeit as Mao’s last words.

The three-part directive to Hua does in fact constitute the last remarks which Peking has attributed to Mao. Although one part—“with you in charge, I am at ease”—was used for a time by Peking to imply the handing-over of the scepter to Hua, this interpretation is so obviously at variance with Peking’s own admission of the original provincial context that Peking has stopped using it for that purpose.

After Mao’s withdrawal—by an action of the “Central Committee”—in mid-June, following another sharp deterioration in his health, the old man was probably out of things. Otherwise, he would probably have made some stronger remarks for subsequent use by his successors. Hua appears to have been the *de facto* leader of the Party—to whom most others (but not the Leftists) looked for guidance—from about that time.

The record supports Peking’s charges that during the summer the Leftists continued to use the anti-Rightist (anti-Teng) campaign to attempt to bring down other leaders. At a planning conference in July, the four are said to have incited attacks on Hua and others in the name of criticizing Teng. Hua is said to have put on record the above-cited Mao instruction—“act according to past principles”—at that time. As he had already told other Politburo members about it, he was apparently putting it on the record here in order to make it known to a larger circle.⁸

Preparations for a Showdown

It seems likely that by the end of the summer a few principals—including Hua and the

8. A directive very similar to this instruction of Mao’s was in fact circulating in China during the summer; this was evidently Hua’s version, as the Leftists are not charged with putting out their version until mid-September.

key military and security figures in Peking—had met and had laid plans either to exclude the four Leftists from the post-Mao leadership (without purging them) or to purge them utterly as a clear and present danger. And it is possible, as some observers have conjectured, that the Tangshan earthquake emergency permitted a few key principals during August to move certain armies closer to Peking in readiness for a showdown.

There is no independent confirmation of current charges that immediately after Mao's death on 9 September (he had been in a coma for a week while Madame Mao was traveling), the Leftists seized and altered some of Mao's documents, although that allegation is consistent with the action of Hua and the political security chief later in taking custody of all of them. Neither is there confirmation of charges of Leftist attempts to use the Party machinery to send instructions to provincial-level Party committees, although the four were certainly in an organizational position to do so.

[Redacted]

But there is on the public record, on 16 September, in the Leftist-controlled Party press, the version of Mao's 30 April directive which Peking credibly asserts to be a fabrication. This was a direct challenge to Hua, who had put the *correct* version on the record at least twice.

There was, probably, as Peking says, a Politburo meeting in late September in which the Leftists were charged with mishandling Mao's directives.

[Redacted]

The Leftist press made ominous threats against other leaders in that period, and on National Day (1 October) photography of the leadership turnout was so

arranged as to make Madame Mao appear to be foremost, with Hua far behind.

The Smashing of the "Gang"

During the following week, the Leftists made their final challenge and were "smashed at one blow." It is evident that they were hopelessly outmanned and outgunned from the start of the showdown, whether things were to be settled by a vote in the Politburo or by physical force or by both.

The first engagement of the week came in a deceptively mild form on 2 October when Hua deleted the falsified version of Mao's 30 April directive from a speech to be delivered by Peking's foreign minister. The latter informed the "gang" of this, thus helping to set up his own purge as their supporter.

There is some reporting to the effect that

[Redacted]

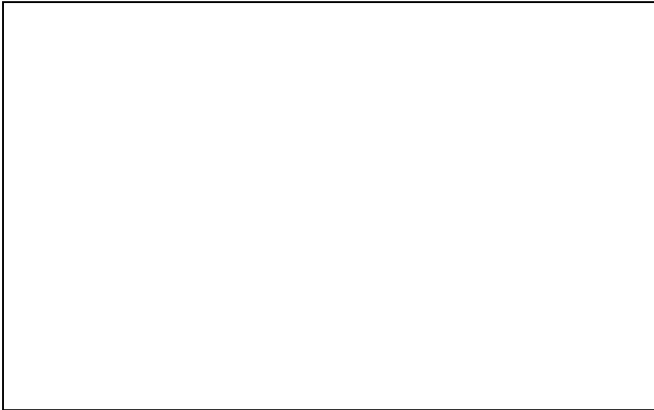
and failed to win the support of key figures of the physical security apparatus which even Western observers could (and did) judge that they would have to have in order to triumph either inside or outside the Politburo. It seems doubtful that they had private assurances from some of the key figures, who later discovered the true balance of power and thereupon

[Redacted]

and on 14 September, *People's Daily* (Leftist-controlled) published an unprecedented article about Mao's close relationship with the 8341st Unit, the special bodyguard force which Wang Tung-hsing supervised.

abandoned the Leftists, as this would have emerged in the interrogations (and in fact no other key figures have fallen). It is possible, however, that the Leftists went into a Politburo meeting at that time without any real hope of dislodging Hua in a vote. That is, they may have had simply a hope of posing a credible threat of widespread disorder—from the leaders of certain armies outside Peking and through followers in Party, government and mass organizations, especially the trade unions and the militia—in order to preserve their own positions in the leadership.

The public record gives some support to this latter interpretation and shows at least that the Leftists were indeed on the offensive as late as 4 October. On that date, a particularly militant and defiant article by their best known writing team again put forward the falsified directive as the Party's permanent guide, and also as a weapon to be used at will by the Leftists against other leaders. The article, since described by Peking as a "mobilization order" or "declaration of war," does seem to have presumed widespread support which could be brought out into the streets and fields in aid of Leftist initiatives at the Politburo level.



But there may in fact have been no Politburo meeting at that time. The Centrist-Rightist coalition, much provoked, may simply have moved pre-emptively against the Leftists before the Leftists could make any further attempt to mobilize their forces. (Peking itself encourages this view.) The four Leftists were

arrested on the night of 6-7 October (Peking has confirmed the date), probably by the special bodyguard unit controlled by the political security chief. Very little disorder followed. While the Leftists may indeed have had a constituency of millions, it turned out to be a constituency they could not mobilize.

On 7 October, Hua's group of eight unanimously elected Hua chairman of the Party and of its Military Affairs Committee. On 8 October, Peking announced decisions to establish a memorial hall which would include Mao's preserved body, and to publish Mao's works under Hua's supervision. Hua now had in hand Mao's posts, Mao's body, and Mao's works.

Defense of Mao's Record

Since the purge of the "gang," the current leadership, which badly needs Mao for legitimacy and continuity and as a unifying symbol, has felt obliged to defend Mao's overall record—not simply his record on the immediately embarrassing matter of the Leftists, but throughout the history of the Party since the 1920s. Peking evidently hopes that the former will seem small when viewed in the totality of the latter.

With respect to the Leftists, however, what the record shows is that Mao himself put each of the four into high positions and for 10 years gave them important roles in carrying out his policies, and that while he was probably angry with each of them from time to time for Ultra-Leftist errors he continued to give them the support without which they could not have survived, and that in fact he did not clearly recognize the four as a dangerous "gang" or



clearly subordinate them to other leaders until 1976, when he *did* clearly choose the Centrist Hua over all of them.

The impossibility of fully dissociating Mao from the "gang" is awkward for Hua, who must recognize that knowledge of the relationship between Mao and the Leftists over the years on the part of most Party cadres and much of the populace will necessarily lead to some devaluation of Mao. There is much evidence that this has already happened, and it will probably increase.

Hua has no alternative to his strategy of presenting himself as loyal to Mao's abiding objectives, reaching back to the heroic years of the Party's struggle to establish itself, the Kiangsi Soviet, and the Long March, on up through the Yen-an period and the defense against Japan, the brilliant conduct of the civil war after World War II, and the generally constructive years of 1949-57 (to which Hua is looking for most of his programmatic support), but continuing even through the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the latter being—unfortunately—the culmination of Mao's "thought." There is enough variety in the record so that Hua can continue to present the Party's policies in the name of that "thought," even while modifying—as he is—some of the most distinctively Maoist of them. But Mao gave Hua the entire legacy, and the rest of the record is stubbornly *there*. To put the matter bluntly, for the time being Hua is stuck with it—almost certainly with more than he wants in the way of a revolutionary Leftist component. Just how much he wants is still uncertain, but another test of Hua's managerial skill will be whether over time he will be able to divest himself of those Leftist features he does not want while retaining those he does.

Hua's Position in the Leadership

With the striking appreciation of Chou En-lai since Mao's death, Hua has much to gain by presenting his own working style as much more like that of Chou than of Mao; offering himself not as a "great" (and remote) leader,

but as one who is thoughtful, deliberate, modest, considerate, diligent, unambitious, close to his comrades and to the people. This seems to suit Hua temperamentally (he is in fact thoughtful and deliberate), and it also fits the realities of his situation.

Hua does not stand above the Party as Mao did, or even alone at the top of it. Standing with him, symbolizing the coalition between the career Party cadres and the professional military, is the old Marshal Yeh Chien-ying, Chou's longtime friend and Hua's most valuable ally.¹¹ Standing only a step or two below are the other full members of the Politburo.

Hua is forced to be—like Chou—a manager and conciliator, a coalition-building and consensus-seeking leader. He is not simply a "front" for military and security figures who dominate the central leadership; he is genuinely the principal leader. But three of the seven active Peking-based Politburo members who compose the Party's present inner circle are in fact the three most important figures of the military and security system on which Hua depends, and this consideration alone would deter Hua from attempting to be a dictator. The case of the "gang" gave considerable support to the pre-existing view that only a leader who has the allegiance of these key figures—the senior vice chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, the commander of the Peking MR, and the head of the political security apparatus—can be confident of his ability to repel a challenge. At least until such time as Hua is able to install his "own" men in these posts (one at a time as opportunity permits), Hua must conciliate the incumbents.

Other Key Figures

In addition to the Centrist Hua as the central or principal leader, the key figures, in order of rank, have appeared to be:



- Old (almost 80) Yeh Chien-ying, currently the Party's only vice chairman and the senior vice chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, an anti-ideologue and confirmed Rightist, who is probably holding the military together for Hua just as he did for Mao;
- Li Hsien-nien, 71, like Hua a career Party cadre, almost at Yeh's level, like Yeh a longtime friend of Chou's, the regime's principal economic coordinator, a Right-leaning figure;
- Chen Hsi-lien, 64, second only to Yeh in the Military Affairs Committee, and the current commander of the critically important Peking MR, whose position in the policy spectrum is not known and who has been regarded as a "wild card" of great value to any leader who can play him;
- Chi Teng-kuei, like Hua a provincial secretary until recent years, at about 47 the youngest of the leaders, apparently acting now as the Party's *de facto* secretary-general, and probably another Centrist;
- Wang Tung-hsing, 61, director of the political security apparatus and supervisor of the bodyguard forces, regarded like Chen as a "wild card," who has apparently been able to persuade Hua (for the time being) that he could transfer his loyalty from Mao to Hua; and
- Wu Te, 66, like Hua, Li, and Chi, a career Party cadre with responsibility for the city of Peking as the head of both its Party committee and its municipal government, regarded as another Centrist.¹²

Even with the inclusion of the other five full members of the Politburo (two of them unimportant, three important regional military leaders), the Party's topmost body is too small, and there are no Hua *proteges* on it (whereas Mao's Politburos were usually composed mainly of his proteges, who could be depended on to vote for his positions). There are other unfilled key posts in the Party apparatus, the government machinery, and the military establishment (in all of which there is also still a striking

paucity of Hua proteges), and yet other posts in which the incumbents will probably be changed.¹³ Decisions on appointments to these posts—even the military posts—may have been delayed by disagreement as to how to deal with the pressing problem of Teng Hsiao-ping.

The Teng Dilemma

There has apparently been much pressure—whether at the Politburo level (for example, from Yeh Chien-ying, who refused to associate himself with the anti-Teng campaign) or from Teng's many onetime comrades and proteges installed in the structure of power throughout China—to return Teng to a position of power, pressure which is increased by Peking's total defamation of the Leftists. Teng had the best record of any Party leader in opposing the "gang of four" in 1974-75 and was strongly associated with attractive, moderate, constructive programs, some of which are being affirmed now.

If Hua is indeed [] reluctant to have Teng return to the inner circle, that is understandable. Teng's return would cast at least a small cloud on Hua's own legitimacy (Hua was the principal beneficiary of Teng's fall) and would embarrass Hua (who among current leaders has been Teng's sharpest critic). It would also offer a popular choice to replace Hua as premier (Teng is highly qualified, and Hua holds too many posts for a modest, unambitious man) and would give the forces of the Right an aggressive leader (unlike Hua, Teng is not stuck with the revolutionary Leftist elements of Mao's "thought," as he repudiated them, and was repudiated by Mao for doing that). Teng's return might even pose a threat to Hua's position as the Party's principal leader,

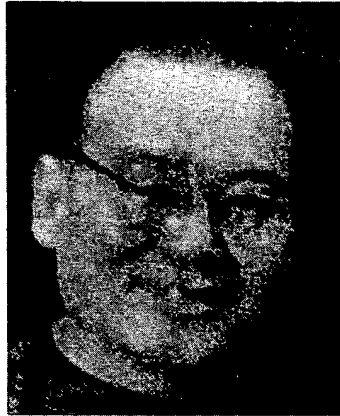
12. Five of these seven are on the record as hard-line anti-Soviet (as is Teng Hsiao-ping); the other two do not speak on foreign affairs.

13. Hua himself has described as "unnatural" a situation in which there are so many unfilled key posts, but has pled more pressing problems.

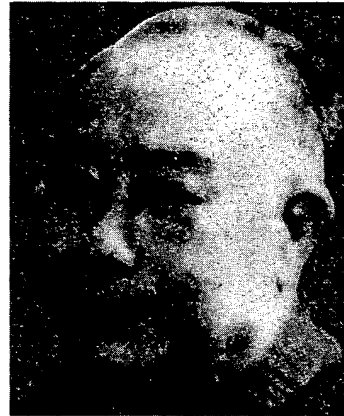
THE KEY CENTRISTS



*Hua Kuo-feng
(chairman)*

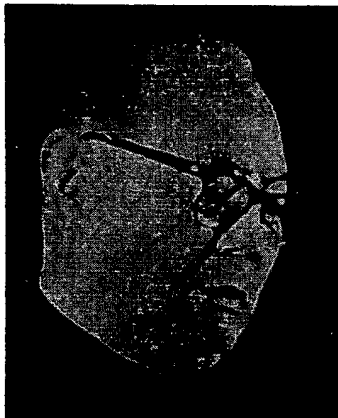


Chi Teng-kuei



Wu Te

THE KEY RIGHTISTS



*Yeh Chien-ying
(vice chairman)*



Li Hsien-nien



*Teng Hsiao-ping
(in the wings)*

THE "WILD CARDS"



Chen Hsi-lien



Wang Tung-hsing

through an alliance between Teng and the military leaders with whom Teng has much in common. But Hua as a consensus-seeker will probably have to compromise, perhaps by returning Teng to the Politburo and to a vice premiership while finding someone else to replace himself as premier, and to take his chances on winning out in any subsequent competition with Teng.¹⁴

Strategic Consensus, Tough Problems

The seven leaders (or eight if Teng returns) of Peking's inner circle appear to have reached a policy consensus in a large strategic sense—to put firmly behind them the extremism associated with the purged Leftists, and to move at least in the direction of the moderate and pragmatic domestic policies last seen in the early 1960s after the retreat from the Great Leap Forward and prior to the massive disruptions of the Cultural Revolution. But they have to wrestle with some specific tough problems, on which there are bound to be differences of opinion. These too will test Hua's skill: as a Centrist manager and conciliator.

As a general proposition, ideology is to play a smaller role in Chinese decisionmaking, as Hua himself has said. This will be especially true in the management of the economy, but should be apparent also in Party-building, in culture and education, in science and technology, and even in foreign policy.

Party-Building. Hua is strongly committed to carrying out a campaign of "consolidation and rectification"—meaning thorough reorganization, intensive reeducation—throughout the Party in 1977. The priority objectives are probably those of restoring order (using the PLA as necessary) in provinces in which there is still factional fighting and identifying the most important followers of the "gang." All provincial-level committees will probably be purged and reorganized to some degree. There is a lack of clear guidance from Peking, however, evident in the differing behavior of various provinces, as to how far to extend the purge of sympathizers with the "gang." This apparently reflects some

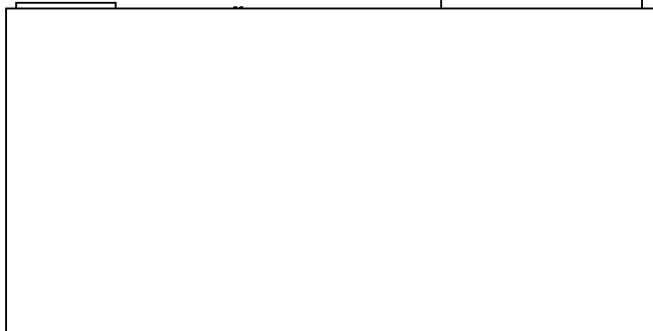
disagreement in the inner circle itself. Apart from this, the current leadership clearly wants to return to the state of Party discipline that existed before the Cultural Revolution. This would mean mainly recognition of the Party's absolute authority and of the need for strict obedience by lower levels to higher. Peking also intends to cut off criticism of the Party from outside the Party, a uniquely Maoist phenomenon.

Propaganda, Culture, Education. Important changes in the fields of propaganda, culture, and education—in which the "gang" was organizationally the strongest—are evident.

The propaganda apparatus has been thoroughly reorganized at both the national and provincial levels, with the "gang's" proteges purged and, at least at the national level, a more sophisticated type replacing them. The ideological component of propaganda has not yet been much reduced because the Ultra-Leftist distortions of the true doctrine still have to be corrected from an ideological base, but the aim is to convey more practical, fact-structured messages in a simpler and livelier style.

Madame Mao's creature as minister of culture was purged with her, and a cultural spring has been promised. This has not amounted to a great deal thus far, but a genuine if limited improvement has been noted.

14. Hua has thus far managed Teng's return well, in avoiding over-dramatization of it by not allowing it to occur either on the anniversary of the Tienanmen rioting (5 April) or on the anniversary of Teng's second purge (7 April).



There has been some degree of return to the pursuit of excellence in education: for example, a de-emphasis on ideological criteria for admission to universities, more strict academic standards, a reduction in political activity, and a new prestige for academic achievement (perhaps especially in the hard sciences). Ultra-Left activists at some universities have been arrested. Peking apparently is serious about making education capable of what Chou En-lai asked of it—supporting the objective of China's modernization.

"Modernization". There seems clearly to be a consensus in the present leadership on pursuing aggressively the "comprehensive modernization" plan announced by Chou. Of the four modernizations, agriculture (Hua's own area of expertise) is to have the top priority in the regime's planning process, although the largest proportion of budgetary investment may continue to be in heavy industry. Peking has suggested that there is some disagreement as to what proportion of resources should go to the production of weapons.

Western specialists expect Peking to take steps sooner or later to firm up the Five-Year Plan, to improve industrial management (with an emphasis on labor discipline), to enhance the status of scientists and technicians (getting the ideologues out of the laboratories), to attach greater importance to material incentives, and to pursue a more active foreign trade policy (especially in purchasing whole plants and high-technology items).

The Military. Peking is in the process of correcting the military-related problems created or exacerbated by the "gang." The status of the PLA, which has been under attack fairly consistently since the Lin Piao affair of 1971, is very high: the most important military figures are clearly (even emphatically) part of the ruling coalition; the PLA itself is being used to identify the few PLA supporters of the "gang" at lower levels and to suppress the most unruly of the leftists; the Military Affairs Committee appears to be in effective control of the armed forces; discipline in the PLA has been restored;

there is greater emphasis on military training, less on political study; the militia is being returned to the effectual control of the PLA; and the entire leadership is committed to military modernization.

There is the inescapable problem, however, of the civilian-military relationship at the highest levels, a problem in some respects increased by solving other problems. For example, in giving the PLA its new elevated status, Peking may carry the process too far, giving the PLA more influence than the principle of Party control of the military can permit; and in relying heavily on the PLA to restore order in the provinces and on the railways, the civilian leaders underline their dependence on it. The civilian leaders wish to retain primacy in the decisionmaking process, but they must manage this in such a way as to avoid provoking the PLA into imposing a *de facto* military dictatorship. This is probably the most serious management problem that Hua faces.¹⁵

Foreign Policy. In foreign policy, the new leadership is not expected to make any important change in the near future. Hostility to the USSR as the "main enemy" will be maintained, and Peking will continue to value the US as a strategic counterweight. There will remain, however, room for disagreement as to what tactics to adopt in dealing with both the USSR (for example, whether to soften the demand for withdrawal of Soviet troops from "disputed" border areas as a first step toward a settlement there) and the US (for example, how long to be "patient" in waiting for a "normalization" of relations).

One major recent article in defense of Chou En-lai's foreign policy can be read as a defense of the *current* leadership's foreign policy. This may mean that Hua has been criticized for being too soft toward the US, a

15. There may be a related problem in the status of the "wild cards" among the key figures. It would be understandable if Hua and other leaders were to wish to get the "wild cards" out of the game.

criticism that Hua has felt it necessary to answer; but this is conjectural.

Divisions. In sum, two questions that apparently have to be resolved in the near future are those of the status of Teng Hsiao-ping and the extent of the purge to be undertaken in eliminating the influence of the four purged Leftists. A third may be the size of the investment in military modernization. A fourth might just conceivably be tactics toward the US. There may be others.

A priori, the seven members of the current inner circle, with differing backgrounds and representing diverse interest groups, would not be expected to line up in exactly the same way on every possible question. But there are various possible ways to break them down which might be meaningful. One is a division between old comrades who have been leaders at the national level for a long time (Yeh, Li, Wang, and Teng if he returns) and the mostly younger men who rose during the Cultural Revolution and became national-level leaders only in recent years (Hua himself, Chen, Chi, and Wu). Another is a division between the career Party cadres (Hua, Li, Chi, Wu, and Teng if he returns) and the professional military and security figures (Yeh, Chen, Wang, and three others outside Peking when they are brought into the voting). Perhaps the most important division is among the Centrists (Hua, Chi, Wu), the Rightists (Yeh, Li, Teng if he returns), and the "wild cards" (Chen, Wang). The only leaders who have three of these categories in common—which might be regarded as enough to create a centripetal effect among them—are Hua, Chi, and Wu, all relative newcomers, all career Party cadres, and all Centrists; a number too small to assure a voting majority.

The balance in this leadership is said to be Centrist, rather than Centrist-Rightist, because Mao is still *there* exerting a Leftward pull. In other words, there is an inescapable Leftist component, which cannot be repudiated, in all of the Centrists who rose during the Cultural Revolution, and probably in both of the "wild

cards" as well. Moreover, as previously suggested they do not *want* to repudiate all of it, both because they genuinely believe in some Leftist aspects of Mao's thought and because of the importance of the large constituency among the young who think that Mao represented their interests, a constituency that Hua and other Centrists would like to have.

The relevance of the Centrist-Rightist division appears to be illustrated in the Teng Hsiao-ping problem. [redacted]

[redacted] the division in the leadership places Hua, Wu, Chen, and Wang in a group which opposes the return of Teng to the inner circle—all four of them leaders with Leftist components, who played roles in bringing Teng down for the second time and in suppressing the most explosive manifestation of pro-Teng feeling in the Tienanmen rioting. Yeh, Li, and two outlying military leaders are said to be in a group favoring Teng's return—all of them Rightists who did not play any roles in Teng's downfall or at Tienanmen. The voice of the latter group might have been heard also thus far in favor for a larger purge of Leftist supporters and sympathizers than Hua and other Centrists desire, and for a larger share of the budget than the Centrists want the PLA to have. [redacted]

[redacted] and in any case the composition of the leadership will probably soon change and require recalculations.

Hua's Prospects

Hua is of course not secure (not even Mao ever seemed *entirely* secure against a coup), but his record is impressive. He can probably resolve the problem of Teng Hsiao-ping. That is, he can conciliate Teng's supporters by returning Teng to favor and even to power and yet remain in a strong enough position—exploiting Mao's legacy—to contain any challenge Teng may offer him.

Assuming that Hua can get past that problem, he can probably then resolve the other

possible problems noted above—by compromising as much as he has to in order to retain the support of the military leaders. Just as Hua seemed in the months before Mao's death to be the best bet to succeed Mao as the Party's principal leader, so he seems now to be the best bet to be the foremost figure for at least the year ahead—and, if he survives that year, to be likely to consolidate his position to remain foremost.

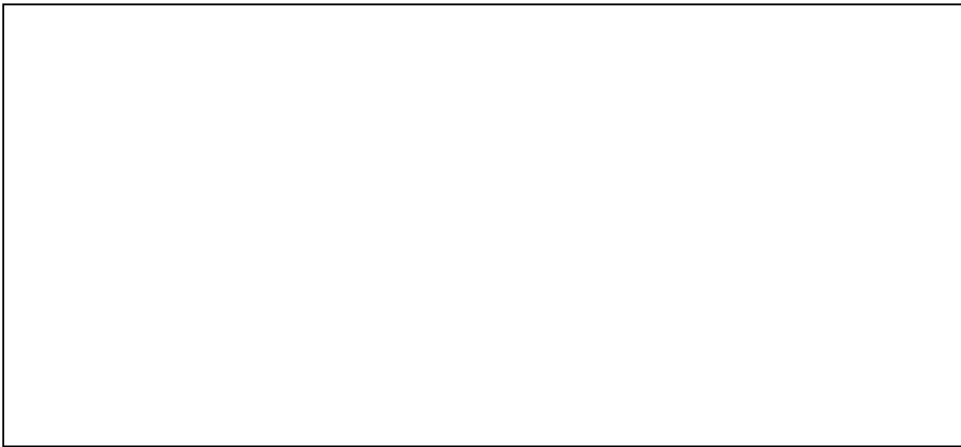
Although the question deserves further examination in other studies, Hua might be able to survive for years as a kind of Chinese Brezhnev, deliberately occupying a Centrist position, balancing the forces around him, discouraging the formation of any coalition against him, reducing the strength of the opposition on either side on any issue, gradually gathering the support of other leaders for his own position, and postponing large decisions whenever possible until he has achieved this consensus.

This process would make Hua a somewhat different kind of Centrist than he has been.

Although the leadership as a whole will probably feel obliged for years to define its relationship with Mao in large part in Leftist terms, its experience with Mao over the years, and in particular its suffering of the Leftist "gang of four" over the past decade, will probably serve to place the leadership as a whole on what would now be regarded as a Centrist-Rightist balance, the position that Hua would then be forced to occupy. In other words, in this conception Hua would not retain as much of the Left, as much of Mao's "thought" and Mao's policy, as has persisted since Mao's death, perhaps not even as much as he himself would wish to retain.

If Hua's highly developed political sense, his extraordinary clear-sightedness as a Centrist, should fail him and he falls, the prospect looks to be for either another coalition of old Party cadres and military leaders or a *de facto* military dictatorship administered largely by old Party cadres. In either case, there seems no prospect for domination by the "revolutionary" Left.

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