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The Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976)

After the disastrous failure of the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong stepped down in 1956 from being the Chairman of the PRC but remained the Chairman of the Party (the CCP). The country was essentially run by Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping. Their main aim was to repair the broken economy, by methods which were pragmatic rather than ideologically driven. But Mao feared that they were betraying revolutionary socialist ideals and returning the country to capitalism. And although his approval was still formally required for all major policy decisions, Mao missed the active exercise of power. He came to believe that the Party itself had capitulated to capitalist ideology, and that it had to be thoroughly purged. He therefore launched the immensely disruptive Great Socialist Cultural Revolution, in 1966. This encompassed not only politics and the economy, but also the army, as well as education, culture, and the media. The initial stage, from 1966 until 1968, led to widespread personal suffering, serious civil disorder, and even armed conflicts. For a brief time, from 1975 until 1976, Deng Xiaoping was able to stabilize the economy and generate growth. But the revolution was re-ignited by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and three political allies, who together formed the 'Gang of Four'. After Mao's death in 1976, the Gang aspired to seize power, but they were foiled by the concerted action of Hua Guofeng, Marshall Ye Jianying (the Minister of National Defence, effectively the army chief) and Wang Dongxing (the chief of Mao's personal security force, who however on this occasion took orders from Hua). The Gang of Four were arrested, and China's long Maoist nightmare was finally over.

The principal actors and their main offices

Mao Zedong (1893-1976)

Chairman of CCP (1943-1976); Chairman of PRC (1954-1959); Chairman of CMC (1954-1976).

Jiang Qing (1914-1991)

Married Mao 1938. Formed the radical political alliance known as the 'Gang of Four'. Other members were Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen.

Zhou Enlai (1898-1976)

Premier of PRC (1949-1976); Minister of Foreign Affairs (1949-1958); First V-C of CCP (1973-1976).

Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997)

Chairman of Central Advisory Commission (1982-1987); Chairman of CMC (1981-1989); Chairman of PCC (1978-1983).

Hua Guofeng (1921-2008)

Chairman of CCP (1976-1981); Chairman of CMC (1976-1981).

Lin Biao (1907-1971)

V-C of CCP (1958-1971); First V-C of PRC (1964-1971); Minister of National Defence (1959-1971).

Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969)

Chairman of PRC (1959-1968); First V-C of CCP (1956-1966).

Chen Boda (1904-1989)

Chairman of the Cultural Revolution Group (Mao appointment, 1966-1970); Member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo (1966-1970).

Ye Jianying (1897-1986)

Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (1978-1983); First Vice-Chairman of the CCP (1976-1982); Minister of National Defence of the PRC (1975-1978).

PRC: People's Republic of China; CCP: Chinese Communist Party; CMC: Central Military Commission; PCC: People's Consultative Conference



Red guards gather at a rally in Tiananmen Square in 1966 (*Alpha History*: retrieved on 13 November 2023 from <https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/red-guards/>)

The Prelude

Differing views on cadre corruption in the countryside

In 1962, two years after the end of the Great Leap Forward, when the economic situation in China was beginning to improve, and as the efforts of the more pragmatic leaders were showing positive results in repairing the economic damage, modifying the institutional changes, and moderating the ideological emphasis, Mao Zedong became restless. Even though his revolutionary socio-economic drive since the mid-1950s had plunged China into a serious depression and caused the death of millions by starvation in the early 1960s, he remained the paramount leader of the CCP. The deletion from the Party constitution, at the Eighth National Congress of the CCP in 1956, of 'Mao Zedong Thought' as the guiding ideological

principle, and his stepping down from being Chairman of the People's Republic while retaining his chairmanship of the Party, were hardly adequate consequences to such an egregious failure.

Although most of the Party leaders, apart from Peng Dehuai, did not openly blame Mao for his mistaken policies that led to the unprecedented economic disaster, there were criticisms of the Great Leap Forward, nonetheless. Mao's resentment of such criticisms would be borne out by the persecutions of his critics as revisionists, made by radical Maoists. Deng Xiaoping was a prominent critic of the socialist relations of production, after he realized the scale of the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Stating publicly that he 'favoured any form of production that would rapidly restore and increase agricultural output', Deng famously quoted the Sichuan proverb: 'it does not matter whether a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice'. He and members of his family later became victims of Maoist persecution during the Cultural Revolution.

Instead of being pleased with the progress his colleagues had made in restoring the health of the economy, Mao was concerned by what he regarded as the too high political price which was being paid for it. When his colleagues spoke favourably about policy adjustments to promote economic recovery, he would fume about the return of capitalism and feudalism to China. Since Mao's semi-retirement to the 'second line' in December 1958, Liu Shaoqi, who took over his former position as the head of state, had managed the party's affairs with the support of Deng Xiaoping, the Secretary-General of the Party Secretariat, Chen Yun, the Minister of Finance, Peng Zhen, the Mayor of Beijing, and others. Mao had to rely on this group and other Party bureaucrats to carry out his passion to transform the Chinese society. But these top Party leaders had made their way up on their own merits, relying on their political and administrative abilities and skills rather than Mao's patronage. Although they had, by and large, cooperated with, and deferred to, Mao over the years, they were neither dogmatic Maoists nor Mao's stooges. Their post-GLF policy was characterized by pragmatism in the economic arena, and by a more relaxed and gradualist approach to revolutionary social change. Yet the improvement in the economy did not satisfy Mao. He was deeply unhappy with his colleagues' apparent neglect of social revolution. They seemed to Mao to have let the Yan'an ideal fall by the wayside in their zeal to increase production. This ideological obsession would ultimately issue in the disastrous Cultural Revolution.

Besides policy differences, the importance of personal rivalry for power, at least between Mao and Liu, should not be underestimated. After the Great Leap Forward, Liu had risen to become the head of state while retaining his vice-chair position in the Party, just below Mao. Liu was widely regarded as the successor to Mao. It would not have been surprising if Mao had regarded Liu as a rival for power already at this point. After the Great Leap Forward, perhaps Mao felt excluded from power, or overshadowed by Liu. Mao's complaint of being treated like a 'dead ancestor' by Party members was very telling. In the past,

Mao had been accustomed to exercise power directly from the top without hindrance, and he obviously did not relish his present state of semi-retirement. Finding his colleagues insufficiently compliant in fulfilling his every demand to revitalize the revolution, the emperor - not simply the revolutionary - in Mao became increasingly frustrated. Mao's disaffection with the status quo led him to search for ways and means to remake the Party into a force for revolution, and perhaps to overthrow his rival and repossess his throne again. Meanwhile, Zhou Enlai, who directed the ministries of the State Council, deftly managed to stay out of the firing line in the conflict between Mao and other Party leaders.

The storm brewing inside Mao was revealed at a meeting of 7,000 cadres in February 1962, when he attacked the Party bureaucracy with venom, accusing it of arrogance. The Party, in his view, had become a stronghold of privileged powerholders with corrupt and exploitative cadres. The Party had become too bureaucratic, with its leaders not following the mass line. A few years previously, when Mao had spoken of a contradiction between the leaders of the Party and the masses, he had decided that the relationship between the two was 'non-antagonistic'. At this point, however, he characterized their relationship, alarmingly, as 'antagonistic'. This was a serious matter, because whereas 'non-antagonistic contradictions' could be resolved by reasoned debate, called rectification, 'antagonistic contradictions' could only be resolved through destroying the adversary, by violent means if necessary.

Did Mao already in 1962 harbour the idea of smashing the Party, or at least a section of the Party, together with its top leaders like Liu, Deng and Peng? Whether he did or not, he was not going to let the matter rest. At this point, he still had to work with them and through them to achieve his goals. However, he already regarded the Party as an organization in the grip of renegade elements from the top down, although he had not yet openly applied this label to his top colleagues.

A few months later, in late July 1962, Mao convened a meeting of 200 or so central and provincial Party leaders at the summer resort of Beidaihe, to deliberate and formulate strategies on a wide range of matters from agriculture and the economy to class struggle and the cadres. Cadre corruption and abuse of power in the countryside was endemic because of the structure of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives (APCs). The system might have had a chance of success, if it had been managed by model cadres, who were honest, hardworking (including doing their share of physical labour), fair-minded, and selflessly dedicated to the common good of the community and the country. Few of the cadres were so virtuous. The team leaders of the agricultural production teams (low level APCs), who were responsible for the accounts and taxes of their teams, and who moderated between the powerless peasants below and the more powerful higher-level cadres above, had opportunities to abuse their power and were often tempted to act corruptly. The famine after the Great Leap Forward simply exacerbated the corrupt and abusive behaviour of the rural cadres.

At this meeting, which lasted two months, it was generally agreed that apathy and corruption among cadres in the countryside was a problem that needed to be tackled. While Mao accepted some of the adjustments made to foster production and maintain cadre morale and discipline, he emphasized the importance of class struggle. He enjoined his colleagues to take concrete steps to prevent the restoration of capitalism, or a slide into revisionism, and never to forget class struggle at any time. Towards the end of this conference in September 1962, its participants legitimized the decisions of this body by naming it the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee. Mao's colleagues at the Tenth Plenum made a big effort to accommodate his revolutionary views, particularly the importance of class struggle. They launched the Socialist Education Campaign (also known as the Four Cleanups Movement to 'purify politics, purify economics, purify the organization, and purify thought') in the countryside in the winter months from 1963 to 1965. However, they continued to pursue their programme for economic recovery. Mao's colleagues did not realize that Mao had set them an impossible task – to reconcile a reformist economic policy with a conservative political one - and that this was the first round of Mao's struggle against them. The difficulty of this reconciliation would arise again much later, when Deng was the supreme leader.

In connection with the Socialist Education Campaign, Mao drafted 'The First Ten Points', a document that called, among other things, for the formation of an Association of Poor and Middle Peasants to identify and correct problems relating to the rural cadres. The results, as monitored by Peng Zhen in 1963, were far from ideal, partly on account of a lack of cadre cooperation. The poor results were mainly attributable to the fact that Party authorities at all levels were afraid that unleashing a struggle between the cadres and the peasants would upset production too much.

After this failure, Peng Zhen, the Mayor of Beijing, who was responsible for monitoring this movement, drafted, in 1964, a second set of guidelines called 'The Second Ten Points' which introduced the use of work teams - squads of trained provincial and county cadres - to investigate and clean up the rural cadres. Such work teams had previously been sent to the countryside during the time of land reform. Peng Zhen's work teams were told to proceed cautiously and tread a fine line between undermining the cadres and unsettling the peasants.

At this time, Liu Shaoqi and other top leaders were also focusing their attention on the same campaign. Liu despatched a work team with his wife, Wang Guangmei, travelling incognito, to the Taoyuan (Peach Garden) Production Brigade of Luwangzhuang Commune in Hebei, in November 1963. During her six months' stay at this high-level APC near Beijing, Wang witnessed cadre corruption and peasant capitalism that shocked her. Based on Wang's report on the situation, which was considered representative, and on the assumption that Peng's 'softly, softly' approach had failed, a harsher policy was next on the agenda. Liu took over the Socialist Education Campaign himself during the second half of 1964.

After his own investigation, Liu drafted the 'Revised Second Ten Points' that initiated a policy of larger and more aggressive work teams to unleash peasant struggle against the offending rural cadres, who were to be strictly rectified. Large work teams flooded the countryside, and an estimated one million rural cadres were purged. Since Mao had wanted the struggles to be more of a populist affair between the peasants and the Party bureaucrats, he was not pleased that Liu had sent bureaucratic work teams to direct the struggle in the countryside. Mao chided Liu on being undemocratic in his approach to the masses. In any case, Liu's campaign could not be sustained, because it disturbed the peasants and upset the rural cadres to such an extent that it threatened to undermine the recovery of agricultural production. Such was the nature of the impossible task.

Mao was more interested in politics than economics, and he wanted to keep the fire of collectivism in agriculture burning. For this purpose, he liked to use revolutionary models and encourage others to emulate them. In 1964, Mao promoted Dazhai, a poor and barren village in Shanxi province, where the peasants were apparently so dedicated to selfless collectivism that they had managed to increase their yields five-fold. The brigade had devised a work-point system that rewarded political awareness as well as labour input. Mao promoted Dazhai's example with the slogan: 'In agriculture, learn from Dazhai'. However, after the Party sent a work team in the same year to learn the secret of Dazhai's success, the team found that the increase in yield was spurious and wildly exaggerated. Mao did not allow the Party's findings to become known, so Dazhai remained a (fake) model production brigade for others to emulate until after Mao's death.

Although the disputes between Mao and Liu seemed to focus on subtle differences, there was a fundamental divergence in their diagnosis of the current malady, and the cure to be prescribed. Whereas Liu saw the issue as corruption and abuse of power by the cadres and strengthening the Party's control over them as the appropriate remedy, Mao looked at the problem as political revisionism, an evil which had penetrated all levels of the Party. How, he thought, was the situation to be remedied without destroying the Party? In January 1965, Mao convened a conference and brought out another document, called the 'Twenty-three Articles', in which he revealed that the real target of the campaign was not corrupt rural cadres, but the 'actions of those holding authority in the Party who were taking the capitalist road'. It seemed that the Socialist Education Campaign had been set up by Mao to let his adversaries show their true colours and give them rope to hang themselves. Even at this point, however, Mao had not spelt out who among his colleagues were taking the capitalist road. For example, as late as 1965 the *People's Daily* published a photograph of Mao and Liu swimming together.

The Gang of Four and the PLA are Mao's ideological allies against the Party

To 'smash' Party leaders as powerful and entrenched as Liu and Deng, Mao needed allies and tools. Since the early 1960s, Mao had enlisted the support of his wife Jiang Qing, who, as a relatively unknown young actress named Lan Ping, had married Mao in Yan'an in 1938. For many years, Mao kept her out of politics, so she neither had political standing, nor had she developed a power base in the Party. Her political career therefore depended entirely on Mao. But Jiang Qing turned out to have unbounded political ambition. Her interest in the performing arts and her revolutionary zeal led her to take up the role of Mao's cultural watchdog. As she plunged herself into radical cultural politics, she gathered a group of like-minded Party officials, academics, and students to help her to carry out Mao's wishes, and to promote her own political ambition.

Kang Sheng was a prominent member of this group of cultural radicals. Having been trained by the Soviet NKVD secret police, Kang was an important figure in the public security establishment and advised Mao on the Soviet Union. Kang had been a leader in the Yan'an Rectification Campaign against cultural deviants in the 1940s. Another member of the group was Zhang Chunqiao, who, as the head of the Party Propaganda Department in Shanghai, and the publisher of *Liberation Daily*, was Shanghai's 'cultural czar'. Zhang introduced Yao Wenyuan, a talented left-wing literary polemicist from Shanghai to Jiang. A major strength of this group, known familiarly as the 'Gang of four', was their expertise in handling the media, which they controlled during most of the Cultural Revolution. In addition to Jiang Qing's clique, Chen Boda, the Party ideologue, was also a stalwart in Mao's inner circle.

Among his supporters, Lin Biao was the most important and highly prized by Mao. Although Lin did not have a Party-political base, his leading position in the PLA made him an exceedingly valuable ally. In 1959, with Mao's support, Lin had taken over Peng Dehuai's post as the Minister of Defence, and he continued Peng's post-Korean War project of turning the PLA into a modern professional army. The improvement of the PLA must have contributed to its victory in the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962. As a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, Lin was also in the inner circle of the Central Committee of the Party.

During the Great Leap Forward, Lin responded to Mao's call for greater self-reliance and guerrilla war, so that China would be less dependent on advanced conventional weapons and Soviet aid. After Khrushchev withdrew Russian scientists, including nuclear weapon experts, from China, Mao supported China proceeding alone to develop her own nuclear weapons programme, which was carried out under the supervision of the PLA. The successful testing of an atomic device in 1964 must have brought kudos to Lin.

In the early 1960s, when other Party leaders were busy dismantling the Great Leap Forward, Lin continued to praise that movement, glorifying Mao, its author, and reforming the PLA on Maoist lines. He

strengthened political indoctrination of the army based on Mao's thought and increased the number of political commissars at all levels in the PLA. In 1965, Lin undertook an ultra-radical reform along Maoist lines: he abolished all ranks and insignia in the army and replaced the Soviet-style uniforms with fatigues for all. As a result, officers and soldiers became indistinguishable in clothing and lifestyle. This reform was apparently not very popular with the officers. During the same year, he also made large-scale personnel changes to ensure the army's control of the public-security apparatus. He seemed to have foreseen the coming social disorder.

Knowing that Mao was fond of using models to inspire the masses, Lin promoted a humble soldier named Lei Feng as a revolutionary role model in 1962. Lei had died at age 20, trying to help a comrade. After his death, his diary showed that he felt a boundless gratitude to the Party for the improvement of his lot in life, and he was determined to serve the people and Chairman Mao in a quiet way. With Mao's call to 'Learn from Lei Feng', the emulation campaign generated quite a lot of heat in youth and trade organizations for a while.

Lin's army also became involved in cultural matters by sponsoring literary and cultural festivals. It was the army that published a volume of Mao's quotations, which later became the famed 'Little Red Book', the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, carried by every Red Guard. Lin's adulation for Mao contributed greatly to the growth of Mao's cult of personality.

With Mao's support, Lin and the PLA became an ascendant force in China's political life during the 1960s until Lin's death in 1971. In 1969, Lin became Mao's officially acknowledged successor. According to Deng Xiaoping's daughter, Deng Maomao, the author of *My Father Deng Xiaoping*, Mao had already decided, in the early 1960s, to make Lin his successor instead of Liu. Mao popularized the slogan 'Learn from the PLA', and he wanted special political commissars assigned to various ministries, particularly those dealing with the economy, to report to the PLA's General Political Department. The Party leaders adopted instead a compromise measure: they set up a new political department to which the special commissars were to report, rather than to the army. Nevertheless, with Lin and the army behind him, Mao had strengthened his position to such an extent that he could carry out his agenda of overthrowing his powerful civilian colleagues, and root out revisionism from the Party, whenever he might decide to do so.

Mao's dissatisfaction with cultural and educational reforms

In addition to being unhappy about the post Great Leap Forward gulf between the Party and the masses, Mao was also displeased with the relaxation on class struggle in the educational and cultural spheres. During

the early 1960s, there was a retreat, if not reversal, from the radical measures introduced in education during the Great Leap Forward. The Ministry of Education, which normally set educational standards in curricula and examinations, was regaining its grip. The work-and-study schools that had flourished during the Great Leap Forward ceased to function. Regular students were no longer required to do manual labour. But the number of children in both primary and secondary schools declined. To address this problem, Liu Shaoqi tried to develop a two-track system of academic colleges and vocational schools. A network of 'key schools' was promoted, to train China's brightest from primary school to university. More of the limited budget on education was spent at the secondary school and at university levels, for educating those who were needed for China's modernization. The Ministry of Higher Education was restored in 1964. These elitist changes favoured the children of the urban intelligentsia and cadre families.

Mao was upset at this change of direction in education and worked towards its reversal. In 1964, after the Tenth Plenum, he pushed for wider access to education, and an admissions policy that favoured applicants from peasant and worker families at the expense of those from a 'bad' class background, such as landlord or bourgeois. He complained about the emphasis on examinations, on too much book learning and too little practical work, and on the length of schooling. Mao scoffed at the traditional Chinese respect for teachers and urged the young to rebel against school authorities. Although Liu and Deng were obliged to make some concessions to Mao's views on education, they dragged their feet on re-introducing Mao's agenda, since they were pragmatists, and reluctant class warriors.

Towards the middle of the 1960s, Mao's exasperation with his colleagues' handling of his Socialist Education Campaign in the countryside was compounded by Liu Shaoqi's industrial policy in the cities. Liu had tried to reverse the trend, in the GLF, of industrial decentralizing, by setting up large, centralized and integrated industrial enterprises called 'trusts'. This was against the spirit of Daqing, an oil field in Manchuria elevated by Mao into a model of self-reliance and mass mobilization in industrial development.

While Mao consorted in Beijing with the cultural radicals who supported his views, there was an opposite group of 'establishment intellectuals', scholars, writers, and teachers, whose creative works presented a more complex reality than revolutionary class struggle, and who disguised their criticisms of sensitive political subjects, such as the GLF, Mao's leadership, and Peng Dehuai's dismissal, in subtle and oblique ways. Some of them hid their identity behind pseudonyms. Mao was perturbed by the output of these intellectuals, and from the winter of 1963 to the summer of 1964, he repeatedly complained to his colleagues about excessive liberalization of the arts. He also urged them to investigate and attend to this matter seriously.

The Beijing cultural bureaucrats, however, tolerated and even protected some of the writers. They appear to have been more inclined towards creative diversity than revolutionary fundamentalism. Mao railed

against them and charged them with having ‘slid right down to the brink of revisionism’. Having had no choice but to appear to concur with Mao’s view on culture and to cooperate with him, the Beijing Party leaders organized a committee called a Five-Member Group to conduct a cultural rectification campaign. This nominally five-person group, led by Peng Zhen, was made up of senior members of the press, academia, and the Ministry of Culture. Except for its lone Maoist, Kang Sheng, its cultural orientation was similar to that of the establishment intellectuals, and politically they were close to Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

The Maoists had already picked out a prime target for this campaign. He was Wu Han, a distinguished writer and an expert on the history of the Ming dynasty, who was also the Vice-Mayor of Beijing. During World War II, he had criticized Chiang Kai-shek’s regime, using examples from Ming history. During the GLF, Mao had invited him to write about an upright Ming official called Hai Rui, who fought steadfastly for people’s economic rights. In 1961, Wu Han published a play that was rendered into an opera staged in Beijing called *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. In the opera, Hai Rui was a loyal official, who was dismissed by the emperor after criticizing his monarch for wasting the country’s resources when the people were starving. The emperor was depicted as someone who was ‘self-opinionated, unreceptive to criticisms and craving immortality’, while the typical court officials were too timid to oppose him, even when they knew that the emperor had made a bad decision. Interpreting the emperor as Mao, the bad decision as the GLF, and Hai Rui as Peng Dehuai, Wu Han’s play could easily be seen as an allegory critical of the GLF and the dismissal of Peng Dehuai by Mao, dressed up as a historical drama. At first Mao praised the play, for he did not see it as a veiled criticism against himself. After Jiang Qing and the radicals pointed out to him what they saw as the hidden political meaning of the play, Mao set what he hoped were cultural bloodhounds on Wu Han.

The Five-Member Group, with only one Maoist, Kang Sheng, among them, conducted only a mild rectification campaign. It made efforts to reform the arts, sent intellectuals to farms and factories, and targeted some writers, thinkers, and lower ranking cultural bureaucrats for criticism. It conceded to Jiang Qing’s call for new dramas that portrayed peasants, workers, and soldiers rather than emperors, ministers, and beauties. Liu Shaoqi, however, argued that the feudal plays must continue to be staged, because the more recent ones were substandard. The campaign spared Wu Han and his offending work. In April 1965, declaring the campaign a success, the Ministry of Culture ended it.

But letting Wu Han and his play escape condemnation was utterly unacceptable to Mao. During the Politburo meeting in September 1965, he lambasted the Party leaders for hindering the Cultural Revolution. He asked ominously, ‘What are we to do about revisionism that crops up at the very centre of the Party?’ In November 1965, Mao quietly left Beijing, which must have appeared to him by then as the stronghold

of revisionism, to join his radical supporters in Shanghai. Prior to his departure, he appointed Peng Zhen to lead a group to criticize Wu Han. When Peng told Deng Xiaoping that Wu was worried, Deng asked Peng to tell Wu that he should not be. Deng said that he had seen the play himself, and he saw nothing wrong with it. Deng continued to play bridge with Wu.

This assignment put Peng in a quandary, because if he criticized Wu Han, who was a protégé of his, he would have incriminated himself by association. If he did not, Mao would be displeased. When Peng Zhen was dithering about what to do, Mao was persuaded by Jiang Qing to authorize the publication, in November 1965 in Shanghai, of Yao Wenyuan's Marxist critique against Wu Han's play. Yao accused Wu Han of denying the key premise of Mao's thought, that the motive force of history was the masses, rather than individuals, however virtuous. But since Peng was officially responsible for handling Wu's case, he felt he should have been consulted before Yao's article was published. Angry at the Shanghai regional committee for intruding into the affair at the Party's centre, he sought to discipline the perpetrators for breaching Party procedure.

Unfortunately for Peng, he was caught utterly unaware of the political implications, and of Mao's support for Yao's attack. He did not realize that Mao had chosen Wu Han's work to open an assault on the cultural and other Party establishment in Beijing. He and other leaders at the Party's centre did not know that the radicals had been plotting in secret with Mao to trap them. After a three-week delay, when Peng finally permitted Yao's criticism of Wu to appear in the *People's Daily* in Beijing on November 28, he added an introductory passage stating: 'Our policy is to allow freedom of criticism and counter-criticism; as for mistaken views, we shall adopt the method of reason and persuasion, seeking truth from facts'.

As an indication of the centre's influence on propaganda, other papers in the country carried Yao's article with Peng's introduction. After unsuccessful attempts to seek audiences with Mao to find out Mao's position on this matter, Peng disseminated a statement called the *February Outline Report* with the approval of the Politburo. The document settled the matter by categorizing it as an academic debate, rather than a political issue relating to class struggle. It acknowledged the importance of Wu Han's case and criticized him, while at the same time sparing China's cultural system from attack.

The radicals were by no means idle when Peng Zhen was trying to defuse the cultural issues they had recently taken up. In February 1966, Lin Biao commissioned Jiang Qing to convene a 'Forum on the Work in Literature and Art in the Armed Forces'. The delegates diligently viewed films, theatrical performances, and operas, all with politically correct messages, and read Mao's works. They were told that despite Mao's achievements, China was still dominated by sinister anti-Party and anti-Mao bourgeois revisionists, supporting the 1930s line of art and literature. Wu Han's works were perfect examples of this kind of anti-

socialist ‘poisonous weeds’. The radicals proclaimed that the old cultural strongholds could be taken by storm by the revolutionaries, as the new Beijing operas had demonstrated, and that the PLA was to play a crucial part in the cultural fight to ‘destroy blind faith in Chinese and foreign classical culture’.

Lin’s attack on Luo Ruiqing

Parallel to the radicals’ initial volley against the Party establishment in Beijing, Lin Biao started his own offensive against his rival, the PLA Chief-of-Staff, Luo Ruiqing. Luo was close to the Party establishment, spoke for the PLA professionals wearied of the Mao cult, opposed Lin’s abolition of ranks, and considered Lin’s guerrilla strategy as a step backward. The issue on which Lin chose to attack Liu was the question of whether China should enter the Vietnam War.

In February 1965, when the United States deepened its involvement in the Vietnamese Civil War by sending more troops to the south and starting a programme of sustained bombing of the north called operation ‘Rolling Thunder’, China had to decide whether to support a fraternal Communist regime against America, as she had done in the Korean War. However, both the international situation and China’s internal political situation in 1965 were different from the time of the Korean War.

Mao had been the chief proponent for China’s entry into the Korean War in late 1950, when China had the Soviet nuclear shield and assistance. In the 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split changed all of that. If the Chinese were to fight in Vietnam, the CCP would need to repair its relationship with the Soviet Union. Without a credible nuclear deterrent, China would seem to risk American nuclear attack should she join the war in Vietnam. In fact, America did not want China to be involved. In 1965 and 1966, Washington repeatedly signalled to China that it did not want the war to spread to China. For their part, in the fall of 1965 Lin Biao and Mao were deeply preoccupied with their internal anti-Party campaign, and they did not want the distraction of an external war. As a show of fraternal support to another Marxist state, China did send Vietnam a squadron of MIG-17s at the start of the American bombing, and a smallish number (about 50,000) of mostly engineering and construction troops later.

In September 1965, Lin Biao published an article called *Long Live the Victory of the People’s War* that praised Mao’s role in leading a people’s war during World War II without outside help. It followed that the Vietnamese fighting a people’s war against imperialism should rely on themselves also. This would conveniently give China a good excuse for not joining the war on the side of the Communist regime in North Vietnam. In contrast, Luo Ruiqing, the army’s Chief-of-Staff, took the view that China should

befriend the Soviet Union again, aid the north Vietnamese actively in their war effort, and be prepared in case the Americans expanded the war into China. With Mao as an ally, Lin won the argument, and Luo was dismissed from his post.

However, Lin was not satisfied with this outcome. In December 1965, he falsely accused Luo of plotting a coup in the military. After Mao called a Politburo meeting to investigate and criticize Luo himself, he gave Deng Xiaoping, a friend of Luo, the job of criticizing Luo. This was just like Mao ordering Peng Zhen to criticize Wu Han. Deng did not like Lin, and he did not believe the accusation against Luo. Despite his sympathy for Luo, Deng was powerless to save his friend. But instead of being pushed into incriminating Luo, Deng went away to northwest China for an inspection tour. It fell to Peng Zhen to take up this case. Luo made a self-criticism after interrogation, but later retracted it. He ended up committing suicide by jumping out of a window. A rival to Lin, and a 'conservative' critic of Lin's policies, had been eliminated.

The impending storm

Luo was the first victim of the Cultural Revolution, which was like a bomb ready to explode on an unsuspecting Chinese public during 1966. And not just the Chinese public: even the Party establishment, except for the plotting Maoists, had no inkling that China was soon to be engulfed in an enormous upheaval that seemed to come out of nowhere. It was as if a fierce thunderstorm suddenly emerged out of a calm sunny sky. Many of the Party leaders and cadres suddenly found themselves lost in a political wilderness. Some were to fall from lofty heights to depths of disgrace and humiliation, or even death. It was a situation of Mao's making that they had not foreseen and could not comprehend. Since they were utterly unprepared for the extraordinary events, which developed very rapidly, they were destined to become passive victims, submerged by the mad currents of the revolution.

For Deng, the year 1966 began like any other. Not only there were many signs of normalcy; there were also expectations of better days to come. The policy of the pragmatic leaders had brought steady economic improvement during the past several years. The people at least had sufficient food to eat. Many disasters caused by natural or human agencies had been overcome. The people, feeling more relaxed and less burdened, were looking forward to a peaceful year and better times. The central leadership of the Party leaders, looking to the future, was meeting to discuss the Third Five Year Plan. This was how Deng Maomao described China at the opening of 1966. The coming explosion, generated by a small group of people, took place when the Chinese society was at peace.

There were signs of tension, to be sure, towards the end of 1965, attributable to the activities of the plotting Maoists. These activities, which included the dispute with Peng Zhen, and the persecution of Luo Ruiqing, Wu Han and some others, were like stirring a fermenting brew - the most important ingredients of which were Mao's anger and frustration at his colleagues' unresponsiveness to his imperious demands for a continuation of many of the measures of the GLF; and his desire to be fully in charge again. He wanted to engineer a revolution that would break apart the existing structure of society. The chief agitators were the inordinately ambitious radical Maoists, Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and others, who aimed to seize the opportunity, created by Mao's discontent with the status quo, to take over the ship of state under a Maoist banner.

After opening their first salvo on Wu Han and his play, the radicals succeeded in ambushing Wu Han's political ally, Peng Zhen. During a February meeting organized by Lin Biao and Jiang Qing in connection with the Forum on the Work in Literature and Art in the Armed Forces, a document was produced and edited by Mao that sharply condemned Peng's *February Outline Report* for its failure to tell right from wrong, or to distinguish the class line. This document, which was circulated throughout the country, stressed the importance of class struggle and the rejection of the literature of the past, and it attacked Wu Han and his allies' misdeeds. Ominously, it advocated a 'Great Cultural Revolution'. Deng Maomao wrote in retrospect that in March 1966 Mao spoke often with Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng and others on the theme of 'calling local authorities to rebel, if the government machinery at the centre does bad things.' He also urged them 'to support the leftists, build up the ranks, and proceed with the Great Cultural Revolution'.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

The start of Mao's campaign against the bourgeois revisionists

On 8 April 1966 Kang Sheng asked Deng to return quickly from his tour of northwest China because Mao had lost patience with Peng Zhen, whose purge was imminent. Mao called an enlarged Politburo meeting in Hangzhou to investigate Peng Zhen's anti-Party criminal activities. Although Deng Xiaoping never did agree with the campaign against Peng Zhen, even such a senior figure as he found it impossible to voice his objection publicly. After returning to Beijing, all he could do was to give Peng a basket of oranges to show that he was on his side.

Soon afterwards, Mao (from Hangzhou) dissolved the Five-Member Group led by Peng, made sure that Peng's report was repudiated by the Central Committee that met in Beijing, stripped Peng of his posts, and purged Peng's associates in the Beijing cultural establishment, including Wu Han.¹ The fall of Peng and his associates enabled the Maoists to capture the media and the Party's propaganda machine. From then on, the views of the radicals were trumpeted and heard all over the country, enabling them to attack individuals or organizations, call out their foot soldiers *en masse*, and stir up widespread rebellions. Having silenced the voices of the opposition from the military and cultural establishments, and possessing control of the armed forces through Lin Biao, and control of the national media, the conditions were ripe for Mao to launch his Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which Premier Zhou Enlai was given the job of proclaiming during the May Day celebration in 1966.

Between 4 and 26 May an enlarged Politburo meeting took place. It was presided over by Liu Shaoqi in Mao's absence. Liu had to carry out Mao's wishes by finalizing the purge of all those considered by Mao as Anti-Party, though they were his close political associates. On 16 May the Politburo issued an extremely provocative notice that was drafted by the Maoist Chen Boda and revised by Mao. The notice, widely disseminated as the '16 May Notification', was a bombshell of radicalism. It stated the Maoists' intention to mount a campaign of thorough criticism of the bourgeois reactionary ideas then prevalent in the media, in education, in culture and publications, and to capture the leadership in these areas. The circular also warned that 'those representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the party, the government, the army, and various cultural circles are a bunch of counterrevolutionary revisionists. Once conditions are ripe, they will seize power and turn the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Some of them we have already seen through, others we have not. Some are still trusted by us and are being trained as our successors, who are still nestling beside us. Party committees at all levels must pay attention to this'.

It was plain to see that the fallen Luo, Peng, and their associates were being referred to by the circular as 'some of them we have already seen through'. Those 'being trained as our successors...who are still nestling beside us' sounded like a dire warning to Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who were closely linked to Peng and Luo.

Why did Mao not cut them down at that point? Mao used certain procedures to demolish his adversaries, rather in the manner of a blood sport. He would first let the radicals loose to harass his targeted victim, as

¹ Wu died in 1969 from an illness after being brutally treated.

he had set Jiang Qing's gang against Peng Zhen's Five-Member Group. After the victim was wounded in skirmishes with the radicals, and had demonstrated sufficient weaknesses, Mao would direct an official agency, which in Peng Zhen's case was the May Politburo meeting, to deliver the fatal blow, and to make his victim's downfall legitimate. Although Liu obediently carried out Mao's wishes during that meeting, Mao still intended to bring him down.

It should be noted that Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution to cleanse the Party of the perceived bourgeois capitalists from all levels of the Party, but he had no intention of destroying the Party itself. Many official meetings of the Politburo and Central Committee, as well as several National Party and National People's Congresses, were in fact called during the ten years of this movement, to legitimize changes in governance and personnel.

The radical Maoists foment disorder

When Liu was put in charge of implementing the Cultural Revolution, ranged against him was a newly formed (Central) Cultural Revolution Group (CRG or CCRG), composed of radical Maoists that included Chen Boda, Kang Sheng, Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Wang Li and Xie Fuzhi. It was impossible for Liu and the Party bureaucrats to proceed to manage the economy, the foreign affairs, and all the tasks relating to the running of a country on a regular orderly basis, leaving aside his new role in connection with the Cultural Revolution, when Mao and his supporters were instigating a profound upheaval, a novel kind of disorderly coup that was eventually directed against them. They were trapped: whatever they did they would be the losers because Mao, the arbiter of their fate, had already prejudged them as revisionists, who were taking the capitalist road, and who would try to restore capitalism in China when the time was ripe.

After the Cultural Revolution was declared, the Maoists saw the potential of recruiting radical students and teachers as tools or storm-troopers. Jiang Qing's group, with their control of the propaganda machinery, aroused the campus 'rebels' to start public criticism campaigns, also called *struggle sessions*, against selected Party leaders and other authority figures. They also made personal contacts with left-wing activists at Peking, Tsinghua, and other universities in the capital to encourage them to generate anti-establishment storms. On 25 May, at Kang Sheng's instigation, Nie Yuanzi, a philosophy instructor and the Party Secretary of the Faculty of Philosophy at Peking University, and six students, put up a wall poster in big characters (*da zi bao*), attacking Peking University's Party committee, and indicting its president for suppressing student posters, meetings, debates, and marches. On the same day, big character posters representing a range of opinions were plastered on walls or were scattered by the wind all over Peking

University. Before long the educational establishments in Beijing descended into a state of disorder; rebellious acts multiplied and became more and more threatening. Parading students seized the head and other teachers at Peking University and ‘struggled’ with them, beating some of them.

The Party leaders try to control the situation by sending out work teams

Faced with this disorder, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping, who were responsible for the day-to-day management of the nation’s affairs, which included keeping order, were put in a quandary. Not knowing whether Mao had a hand in the outbreak, their dilemma was that if they were to clamp down on the rebels, they might be in trouble with Mao, assuming Mao supported them; however, if they did not, the disorder would spread – indeed it was spreading rapidly already. On 29 May they called a meeting of the relevant departments to consider the nature of the outbreak, and what to do about it. After the meeting Chen Boda, the arch Maoist connected with culture, was dispatched with a work team to the *People’s Daily*, and the Vice-Minister of Education, Zhang Chengxian, was similarly sent with a work team to Peking University. Zhou then phoned Mao in Hangzhou to ask whether the latter agreed with how they were proceeding. Having heard that Mao approved, the three wired Mao jointly to get formal approval from him. Mao wired back the same night, saying that he agreed with what they had done.

As these ‘first line’ leaders of the Party were getting ready to lead and channel the movement, on 1 June they were stunned by the news that Mao had not only expressed support for Nie Yuanzi’s poster, but he had also asked the media to spread its message all over the country. In addition, Mao said that as a fortress of ‘reaction’, Peking University ought to be attacked. Also on 1 June, the *People’s Daily* published an extremely strident editorial, without consulting the ‘first line’ leaders beforehand, with the title: ‘SWEEP AWAY ALL MONSTERS AND DEMONS’. It called on the masses to strike down the bourgeois experts, scholars, authorities, and leading teachers, and to shatter their power and prestige utterly and completely. The same evening, the officially controlled Central People’s Broadcasting Station publicized Nie Yuanzi’s big character poster. During the next few days, the *People’s Daily* put out a series of provocative editorials, articles and news reports, and the movement spread to the rest of the country. The following poster from a middle school shows how the strident revolutionary propaganda turned the thoughts of some of the young to violence:

Since we want rebellion, the matter has been taken out of your hands! We are going to make the air thick with the pungent smell of explosives. Toss them over, grenades and stick bombs together, and start a big fight. ‘Sympathy,’ ‘all-sidedness’ - out of the way!

Liu, Zhou, and Deng were deeply troubled and dismayed; they had not been prepared for this turn of events.

On 3 June Liu called an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo and the leaders of the Party committees of the ministries concerned, to discuss how to meet the current crisis. The participants reached a consensus on adopting a policy of sending out work teams to enforce the following policy:

1. no big character posters on the streets
 2. no demonstrations and parades
 3. no beating and insulting people
 4. no large-scale noisy meetings
- and
5. no surrounding the homes of the so-called 'black gangs'.

The teams were to be sent promptly like firemen to extinguish fires. With petitions for help from schools and universities, Liu Shaoqi sent out over 400 work teams totalling 10,000 cadres to institutions in many cities. Despite the work teams' efforts, the disorder continued because the Maoist radicals kept on fanning the flames.

Mao Zedong's absence from Beijing at this juncture made it difficult, once more, for the first line leaders to decide what to do. On 9 June Liu, Zhou, and Deng went together to Hangzhou to report the situation and seek guidance. Mao called a meeting to discuss the various aspects of the 'Great Cultural Revolution'. Nothing concrete was said about how to conduct this movement in practice. There was a suggested time frame that the movement might continue for half a year. On the matter of sending work teams, Mao said that it would be better to go slow on that, because of a lack of preparation. He preferred to let the disorder continue for a while, and let the struggle go on a bit longer. He suggested that when the situation became clearer, that would be the time to send in the work teams.

After the three returned to Beijing around the middle of June, Zhou Enlai went on a diplomatic tour overseas. The responsibility for guiding the Cultural Revolution now fell on Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. They could not witness the paralysis at the educational institutions, and the turmoil on school and university campuses, and do nothing about it, as Mao had suggested. They believed it was their job to quell the disorder, to get the teachers and students to return to their classes, and to restore peace. They therefore continued to send many work teams to schools and universities in Beijing, with these goals, trying all the while to keep the leadership of the movement in the Party's hand.

Liu and Deng paid a lot of attention to guiding the work teams and listening to their feedback. Liu's wife, Wang Guangmei, led a work team sent to Tsinghua University. Deng Xiaoping gave detailed instructions to the work teams. They should teach the students to analyse issues, to distinguish right from wrong, and

to consider the consequences of their actions. They should tell the student rebels that they must not carry out struggle sessions and criticism campaigns lightly, for these campaigns should only proceed with good reasons, and then only if supported by accurate facts, which normally took a lot of time to gather and substantiate. They should emphasize that most teachers were good, and they should unite with the good teachers; without good teachers, there would be no good students. The students should be told that it was wrong, not smart, to beat people up; nor should they torture and put dunce's hats on people. Not all people were 'black gangs'. Political questions called for political solutions. Deng posed the question: 'If the movement destroyed the Communist Party, would that be victory? After all, our country remains a dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of the Communist Party'. Deng was simply trying to instil some common sense into the riotous students, some of whose conduct would have been considered criminal in an orderly society.

The Red Guards

While Liu and Deng and other Party leaders were busy trying to restore order, the Maoist radical leaders were visiting various schools and universities, doing their best to stir up more rebellions on the campuses. The support of the radicals emboldened the so-called 'revolutionary masses' to oppose and chase away the Party work teams. At the same time, a 'conservative' faction of students and teachers got themselves organized, and they sided with the work teams. They represented the children of the leaders, cadres, and other more privileged groups, whose outlook was similar to that of Party leaders like Liu and Deng. The two factions stood opposed to one another, just like the senior Party leaders.

Many Party meetings were called in July to discuss the problems associated with the work teams. Chen Boda accused the work teams of oppressing the masses, and proposed to disband them, but Deng disagreed. Liu Shaoqi and Kang Sheng had sharp verbal exchanges. Chen taunted Liu and Deng, saying that they were afraid of the masses. Deng asked Chen to go to the front and face the unruly crowd himself. The struggles between the opposing camps intensified at both levels.

Sometime in July and August 1966, many 'Red Guard' organizations appeared. The Cultural Revolution Group picked up this term from students at the Tsinghua University High School and popularized it with Mao's approval. They discovered that they could use the Red Guards as their storm-troopers to raid their enemies' strongholds. With the Maoist radicals daily fanning the fire of rebellion, their foot soldiers, the Red Guards, became ever more strident in criticizing the leaders of schools, seizing 'black gangs' and 'monsters and demons', punishing people with beatings, fighting with 'conservative student factions', and engaging in debate day and night. By this time, all schools and universities had stopped functioning. There

were times when Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai felt compelled to visit the hot spots of rebellion to talk to the rebels themselves.

Deng Maomao personally witnessed an occasion when both the ‘conservative’ leaders and the Maoist radicals were present, addressing a huge, excited crowd and shouting deafening slogans, on a hot day, in a large sports ground, under a red-hot sun. She saw Jiang Qing working a large crowd of young people, shouting furiously in a shrill voice ‘Salute the little Red Guard generals’, and ‘Learn from the little Red Guard generals’, with enormous self-satisfaction. By contrast, Deng, Liu, and Zhou appeared lack-lustre, trying to explain things and persuade the young people to return to the path of reason. These old revolutionaries were at a loss as to how to deal with this unprecedented revolution created by Mao.



The little Red Guard generals (*The Guardian*: retrieved on 13 November from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/07/mao-little-general-horror-cultural-revolution>)

Mao takes charge; Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping are targeted

As the maelstrom of the Cultural Revolution overtook China, on 16 July 1966 Mao, the creator of the storm, calmly swam in the Yangtze River with hundreds of youths in Hankow, the birthplace of the 1911 Revolution, to mark his return to take up the reins as China’s paramount leader, after staying largely out of the limelight for several years. To show his good health and vigour, the 73-year-old Mao was said to have covered fifteen kilometres in a little over an hour. This event was reported nationwide with red ink headlines and celebrated with drums and firecrackers. Two days later the red emperor returned to Beijing to take full

charge. One can be forgiven for thinking that the likelihood of this outcome had been a prime motivation, in Mao's mind, for starting this new revolution in the first place.

As soon as Mao returned to Beijing, he directed Liu to hold a conference, from 19 to 23 July, to report on the Cultural Revolution. At this conference the Cultural Revolution Group vehemently attacked the work teams sent by the first line Party leaders, on the ground of repressing the masses. On 24 July, Mao called a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, criticizing Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, telling them that the work teams created obstacles to the revolutionary movement, and asking them to abolish the work teams immediately. On 29 July the Beijing Party Committee organized a meeting of 10,000 people at the Great Hall of the People, which formally and officially abolished the work teams. On the same occasion Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping admitted that they and many Party officials in Beijing really did not know how to carry out the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution. Towards the end of the meeting, Mao unexpectedly appeared at the chairman's table, waving regally to those present. Instantly a great commotion overtook the sombre and silent chamber of the Great Hall. The Red Guards at the meeting stood up, many climbed up onto tables and chairs to have a better look at the Chairman, cheering and shouting, 'Long live Chairman Mao!'

From 1 to 12 August 1966 the important Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee convened. It was the first Central Committee meeting since the Tenth Plenum in 1962. At the beginning of the Eleventh Plenum, at an enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, Mao again lambasted those who made the decision to send out the work teams, which he blamed for terrorizing and repressing the masses. This terrorism came right from the Party centre, he fulminated, and the monsters and demons were sitting here with us. Using the typical form of expression of the Cultural Revolution, Mao wrote his own big character post: 'BOMBARD THE HEADQUARTERS'. He asserted that certain Party leaders from the centre to the local levels had taken a bourgeois capitalist reactionary stance and were enforcing a bourgeois dictatorship.

Although Mao did not name who were the 'monsters sitting with us', it was clear to those present that Mao had Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping in mind. The Maoist radicals seized upon the occasion to focus their attention on criticizing Liu Shaoqi, not only for the serious recent mistake of using work teams to repress the student rebels, but for all the mistakes he had made since he took over the first line Party leadership since 1962. Mao emphasized that Liu's mistakes were those of wrong direction and road. 'Inside the Party centre', Mao insisted, 'beside those who followed Mao's leadership, there was another group that followed Liu's command from the headquarters'. Mao therefore summoned the rebels to 'bombard the headquarters'.

At the beginning of this plenum, Mao published an open letter that praised the posters of the Beijing activists. In this letter he used the term 'Red Guards' for the first time and praised their slogan: 'Rebellion

Is Justified'. He again attacked the 'leading comrades' who had 'enforced a bourgeois dictatorship and struck down the surging movement of the Great Cultural Revolution of the Proletariat...'.

Mao dominated and controlled the Eleventh Plenum, by excluding some of the existing members of the Central Committee, who might not agree with him, and packing it with the radicals and Lin Biao's people. The Central Committee reorganized the Standing Committee of the Politburo and the Military Affairs Committee, giving the Maoists control of these two key Party organs during a round of meetings. Liu Shaoqi, previously number two and Mao's successor, was demoted to number eight in the Politburo alignment, while Lin Biao jumped vertically up to the number two position. Being the only Vice-Chairman of the Party at that point, Lin Biao effectively replaced Liu as Mao's successor. The shuffle made Deng number six, but it was not intended as a promotion. Deng was also soon subjected to more criticisms. He and Liu were not only no longer the first line Party leaders: they were forced to stop working altogether.

The Eleventh Plenum issued a 'Sixteen Points' directive to promote the Cultural Revolution and to declare its purpose as:

To struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road; to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic 'authorities' and the ideology of the bourgeoisie....and to transform education, literature, and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base.....

With the fall of Liu and Deng, no one dared to restrain the disorder spread by the Maoists. Mao's speeches and activities after his return to Beijing inflamed his followers to follow unconstrained paths of rampant destructiveness.

The Red Guards are unleashed

After the August 1966 Plenum, the students from the families of the 'five kinds of red' background – workers, peasants, cadres, soldiers, and revolutionary martyrs - were encouraged to become Red Guards. The Maoist educational policy also gave preferential treatment to children from such origins. Later this policy was relaxed to admit all those whose revolutionary spirits were deemed sufficiently high. Children of elite or bourgeois background also became Red Guards by claiming loyalty to Mao and adopting other superficial aspects of the Red Guards. The movement spread like wildfire. The Red Guards normally wore old PLA green fatigues, with a wide leather belt, and a red armband embossed with the words 'Red Guard' in yellow. The little red book of Mao's quotations would complete their accoutrements.

On 18 August one million Red Guards joined a tumultuous rally, deliriously waving their little red books, chanting praises to their beloved Chairman Mao, who stood atop the ancient imperial gate at Tiananmen Square with his 'closest comrade-in-arm', Lin Biao, and some other leaders of the radicals. This ecstatic communion of the Red Guards with Mao was trumpeted all over China by the media controlled by the Cultural Revolution Group. Before the onset of wintry weather, the publicity and revolutionary rhetoric drew more and more Red Guards from the provinces to make the pilgrimage to Beijing, to pay homage to their all-wise leader and the father of their revolution. By late November, Mao had reviewed, on eight occasions, a total of more than 11 million Red Guards. The influence exerted by the radical media on these relatively ignorant and inexperienced young people was incalculable. The PLA under Lin Biao also had a hand in facilitating the assembling of the Red Guards. This was the height of the Mao cult. The great man himself must have found the unreserved adoration of masses of China's young people intoxicating. The Red Guards did not know that Mao had been the driving force behind the Great Leap Forward, which had resulted in the death of millions of people through starvation. The disasters of the Great Leap Forward, and Mao's close connection with the movement, had never been widely publicized.

The Red Guards were encouraged by Mao and his lieutenants to act as vanguards in making revolution throughout the country, and to spearhead the purge of those taking the capitalist road at all levels. They were allowed to travel free on buses and trains. Buoyed by youthful enthusiasm and revolutionary zeal, they toured the country to network with youths from other regions, to visit scenic mountains and famous revolutionary sites, and above all to make revolution. They generated an enormous number of newsheets, and covered walls with big character posters with stirring political messages. Red Guard loudspeakers blared out propaganda or the 'Internationale' at all hours of the day. For a brief spell, it was an enormously exciting time for so many young people in China. However, there was another side to the coin of youthful energy and enthusiasm, and that was mob violence. Mao's lieutenants used the Red Guards not only as violent mobs to bring down their political rivals and adversaries, but also as iconoclasts, misled by an extremist ideology, to destroy so much of China's national treasures. As revolutionaries, the Red Guards had the words of Mao as sanctions for acts of violence:

A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained, and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.

In addition to strengthening the Mao cult by hailing him as the great commander and helmsman, and describing him, at the Red Guard rallies, as the greatest genius and the most outstanding proletarian leader of the present era, Lin Biao also urged the Red Guards to destroy the 'Four Olds' (old ideas, old culture,

old customs, and old habits) of the exploiting classes. Lin and other leaders of the Cultural Revolution, who also supported the attack on the 'Four Olds', did not pinpoint who and what they were. The Red Guards were left with the initiative to choose their targets. These were not orders issued to soldiers against foreign enemies in times of war; they were invitations to mobs to commit violent acts against a class of generalized targets, people as well as objects, in their own country in a time of peace. Anyone or anything the Red Guards regarded as feudal or bourgeois was in danger of being attacked.

During the autumn and winter of 1966, the colleges and schools were closed for the Red Guards to take part in the revolutionary struggles. Starting on 20 August bands of Red Guards in Beijing demolished or defaced old buildings, temples, monuments, statues, gravestones, art objects, and many old irreplaceable historical treasures. They also burst into the homes of the intelligentsia, or people suspected of having foreign connections, to confiscate or destroy books, musical instruments, paintings, Western clothes, or any objects that were considered old or foreign.

The owners of the properties were by no means spared, for they were looked upon as belonging to the exploiting classes. That gave the Red Guards leave to seize them and parade them through the streets, wearing dunce's caps and self-incriminating placards hanging around their necks, amid jeering crowds. Humiliation was not the only punishment for those caught belonging to the wrong class. They were beaten, physically abused in a variety of ways, or made to stand for hours in an agonizing pose with their bodies bent forward and arms stretched out, in what was known as 'the airplane' position. Some died from the beating and injuries, and many committed suicide. Soon, the Red Terror against the 'Four Olds' spread all over China. The targets of the attacks alarmingly broadened out to include parents, teachers, cadres, and the elderly, all figures who enjoyed authority and prestige in the pre-Cultural Revolution society. Apart from the humiliation and the fear, a low to medium ranking Party functionary would normally lose his job, after being dragged out into the street and struggled with² by the Red Guards.

The Red Guards came from a variety of social backgrounds, and not all believed in Maoism, though they all considered themselves the true left, and labelled those who differed as either rightists or ultra-leftists. The political activism and the destructive power of the Red Guards sharpened the tensions and contradictions among the different factions of the Red Guards. A point was soon reached, when the Red Guards could no longer sort out differences through debates: different bands started to fight pitched battles against each other. Disorder, turmoil, and struggles spread to every corner of China.

² The term used to describe the type of humiliating treatment just described.

Was this what Mao wanted? He seems to have been prepared for such a development. Mao believed that the old regime must be broken for a new one to come into being (*bu puo bu li*). He expected to see a ‘great disorder under Heaven’ (*tian xia da luan*) to achieve a ‘great new order under Heaven’ (*tian xia da zhi*). Following this line of thinking, the revisionists-led order must be toppled before a new proletariat-led order could become established (by Maoists of course). Mao was nevertheless surprised by the violence of the Red Guards, and he and the Cultural Revolution Group tried to restrain them to some extent. Looking on the positive side, Mao told the regional leaders that the Red Guards’ assaults should help them to see past mistakes, which could then be corrected, and he assured them that no one – neither he nor the Red Guards - wanted to overthrow them. Mao was not overly troubled by the disorder.

The treatment of Liu and Deng, and their families

While Mao was pleased with having ‘started the fire of the Cultural Revolution’, and with its progress so far, he nevertheless sensed that there was a great deal of resistance to the movement.

From 9 October until 28 October Mao called a meeting of Party leaders from the centre and the provinces to discuss how to remove the resistance completely. Pointing their fingers at Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping as oppressors of the people, the Cultural Revolution Group and Lin Biao claimed that there were still a considerable number of unregenerate elements in the Party, who were following the anti-revolutionary road chosen by Liu and Deng. The agreed solution was a new round of attacks on Liu and Deng. Since Liu’s mistakes in the past had already been exposed during the August 1966 Plenum, it was Deng’s turn to hear abusive criticisms on every conceivable past error or offence, imagined or fabricated. Lin Biao even accused Deng of having been a Red Army deserter. Mao also expressed his dissatisfaction with Deng, saying that Deng never sought him out and had not reported to him for six years. Liu and Deng had to write self-criticisms.

Mao’s positive comments on what Deng wrote in his self-examination, about wanting a chance for ‘self-renewal to make up for his past mistakes’, gave Deng and his family hope. Mao said to Deng at one of the meetings that he should add that: ‘with the help of the comrades and my own efforts, I believe that my mistakes will be corrected in good time, and please give me time’. In addition, Mao asked: ‘After half a lifetime of making revolution, can you not get up after having fallen?’ Considering how much the Cultural Revolution had achieved during these five months, Mao was in a magnanimous mood. He said that Liu and Deng did things in the open, and they were ‘muddled, rather than trying to take the wrong road deliberately’. He concluded that they were not entirely to blame, and that the contradictions between them

and the people were non-antagonistic. He said, optimistically, that perhaps the mission of the Cultural Revolution might be completed in a little over a year's time.

Although Mao seemed to be willing to spare Liu and Deng from a more thorough-going purge at this point, Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution Group and Lin Biao wanted to destroy their political careers completely and eliminate them as future political rivals. These radical Maoists used every weapon in their arsenal and mounted a variety of intensive campaigns against Liu and Deng over the next two years and more.

Early in November 1966, big character posters appeared in the Party headquarters criticizing both Liu and Deng. Nie Yuanzi, who was closely associated with Jiang Qing, put up a poster at Peking University accusing Deng of having committed the crimes of anti-Cultural Revolution and anti-personality cult (meaning anti-Mao). The radical-controlled press carried out a ceaseless campaign of smear and vilification against Liu in particular, as 'the person in authority taking the capitalist road'. Radical faculty members and student leaders at Peking, Tsinghua and other universities gathered with tens of thousands of students to denounce and harass Liu and Deng. For a time, several thousand of them camped around Zhongnanhai, the headquarters of the Party centre and government offices, as well as the residences of the top leaders at the capital, with loudspeakers blaring out aggressive messages against Liu and Deng. Many groups of students were allowed to storm into the residences of Liu and Deng, and to conduct searches for evidence against them, as well as to criticize them inside or outside their homes. They were ordered by their tormentors to write self-criticisms, or confess their anti-Party, anti-Mao and other crimes in writing. Mao regarded the treatment meted out to Liu and Deng as the consequence of the fierce anger of the proletariat.

Throughout the ordeals the two men had to face, the treatment given to Deng was far less harsh than that accorded to Liu. One reason for this difference was that Mao was far less angry with Deng than with Liu, who, as Mao's chosen successor, had to bear more of Mao's blame for failing to follow the Maoist line. Since Mao had chosen a new successor, namely Lin, the old one had to be disposed of. Another reason was that Mao held a high opinion of Deng's ability, and he wanted to save Deng, whose ability and leadership experience might be needed in the future.

After the press campaign against him intensified, Deng wrote a letter on 3 April 1967 to Mao asking for help and guidance. Mao advised Deng to be patient and to bear the adversity, and Mao wrote – significantly – that the cases of Liu and Deng could be treated separately. Mao also told Deng that, if necessary, Deng could write to him directly, or to Wang Dongxing, a Politburo member whom Mao trusted to pass the letter along. This was an important opening that Mao left for Deng, because it would enable Deng to return to

power later. In late July 1967, after Deng had been struggled with and ‘overthrown’ by the ‘masses’, Mao was quoted as saying to a member of the Cultural Revolution Group that if ‘Lin Biao’s health was to fail, I would like Deng to come out again’. Although Mao allowed the ‘masses’ to punish Deng, he also protected Deng from serious harm. He never let Deng fall into the hands of Lin Biao or Jiang Qing’s gang.

By the fall of 1967, Both Liu and Deng had been toppled by the masses. They were both under house arrest in their homes in Zhongnanhai. Deng Xiaoping was luckier, for his wife was allowed to stay with him. Liu’s attractive wife, Wang Guangmei, who led a work team at Tsinghua, and whose name could be translated into English as ‘bright America’, was accused of having been an American spy during the civil war in 1947. She had to face major public criticism and struggle sessions and was paraded in a huge daylong Red Guard rally, wearing high heels, a long silk gown, and a string of ping-pong ball as pearls, to highlight her decadent bourgeois style. She was separated from Liu and put into prison. Their son had been under arrest since mid-January, for allegedly selling state secrets to a foreign power. Liu himself was accused of treason, because a ‘Preparatory Committee for Thoroughly Smashing the Liu Shaoqi Renegade Clique’ had discovered, astonishingly, that Liu had led a secret traitorous conspiracy as long ago as 1936. Dozens of people were detained as members of Liu’s renegade clique. Newspaper editorials and wall posters did not spare his famous book, *How to Be a Good Communist*, from vilification.

Their underage children, who were still living with them, were verbally abused and had stones thrown at them when they were recognized outside their homes, as the offspring of the anti-socialist ‘black gangs’. The children of both families were evicted from Zhongnanhai after their parents were put under house arrest there. After Deng’s children, who were being looked after by their grandmother, were settled elsewhere in Beijing, groups of radical gangs often burst into their home unceremoniously to search for incriminating evidence against Deng, while threatening and verbally abusing them and their grandmother.

Deng’s children of university age were victimized and ‘struggled with’ by their fellow students at Peking University. Failing to find evidence against Deng, after a lot of searching by the Deng Xiaoping Special Case Group that had been formed, in the spring of 1968, to investigate Deng’s past crimes, Jiang Qing and Lin Biao were getting desperate for a breakthrough on information against Deng. Jiang directed her associate, the notorious Nie Yuanzi at Peking University, to extract information from Deng’s children.

For this purpose, one day in May 1968, Nie Yuanzi sent a radical student gang to seize Deng’s oldest son, Deng Pufang, a brilliant student of physics at Peking University, and his oldest daughter, Deng Nan, a student at an art college. They were both living at home with their younger brother, sisters, and grandmother

during that time. After taking them captive, Nie's gang detained them in separate rooms in the physics building of Peking University for several months, interrogating and intimidating them cruelly, shouting verbal abuse and beating them, for the sake of extracting information that could be used against their father. Deng Nan told her captors that her father never talked about his work at home, and she knew nothing. Despite her fear, she gritted her teeth and kept quiet. Deng Pufang, wanting to spare his sister and other siblings, said that 'my younger sister and brother knew nothing of the family's affairs; if you must ask, just ask me'. After a while, their captors paid less attention to Deng Nan, but they continued fruitlessly to interrogate Deng Pufang during the long hot summer of 1968.

With such a prize captive as Deng's eldest son in her power, Nie Yuanzi was determined to force Deng Pufang to talk. Her group was notorious for inflicting all manner of torture against many faculty members and students at Peking University. They were responsible for the deaths from injury of more than sixty people, including an outstanding physicist, a famous historian, and many high-ranking professors. Some of her victims tried repeatedly to commit suicide.

In the hands of these merciless interrogators, Deng Pufang's steadfast refusal to bear false witness against his father was making life unbearable for him. After more than three months of agony, on 31 August 1968 when his captor was not looking, he jumped out of a window to escape from his torturers. He was seriously injured but did not die. As Deng Pufang was the son of the 'number two person in authority taking the capitalist road', many hospitals refused to take him in. Afraid of being held culpable for harming Deng Pufang, Nie Yuanzi used her connections to get him accepted by a hospital, which did not treat him as an emergency case. The delay in treatment led to a worsening of Deng Pufang's condition, and as a result the paralysis from the injury to his back became more extensive. The young man survived but became permanently crippled.

The purges spread to the provinces

Toppling first-rank leaders like Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, Luo Ruiqing, and some others did not mark the end of the Cultural Revolution for Mao Zedong. Mao saw the strong resistance to change as an indication that there were other revisionists lurking in the system. Once the media trumpeted that it was right to rebel, and that those in power at all levels could be toppled for the revolutionaries to takeover and to re-make the political order, the whole country was thrown into turmoil. The Cultural Revolution, once started in earnest, had its own momentum. It was a dangerous time of change, which also provided opportunities for personal political advancement. Because it was easy to mouth revolutionary slogans and

to pin revisionist or counterrevolutionary labels on others, workers, cadres, ex-students, and soldiers all formed their own revolutionary associations to advance their group interest, and for mutual protection when fighting others. Mao seemed to be content to allow his radical adherents, which included the Cultural Revolution Group, Lin Biao, the Red Guards, and other revolutionary associations, to seek out and overthrow the revisionists, and to establish a pure Maoist society. Lin Biao and the Cultural Revolution leaders all had outsize political ambitions and a lot of personal scores to settle. The scene was set for enormous power struggles all over China, with much violence and bloodshed.

On 1 January 1967 the official newspapers, all controlled by the Maoist radicals by then, started calling for a 'general offensive' to criticize and overthrow leaders from the Party centre and the provinces. Soon after, at the Party centre, two Vice-Premiers, Chen Yun and He Long, who was also a Marshal of the PRC and the Vice-Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, together with other Politburo members, were no longer eligible to attend Politburo meetings. In the State Council presided over by Zhou Enlai as Premier, the revolutionary rebels seized power in over twenty ministries. The Foreign Ministry was one among these. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chen Yi, an old revolutionary leader of the Jiangxi Soviet, and the wartime commander of the New Fourth Army, was struggled with wearing a dunce's hat, and forced to read self-criticism along with his wife.

In the provinces, militant Red Guard organizations supported by the Beijing Cultural Revolution leaders tried to topple existing power holders and take over their organizations. The first party secretaries of many provinces, and the first party secretary of Shanghai, were dismissed from their posts. Some, like the Minister of Coal Industry, died from maltreatment. Besides the Party and government institutions and their leading personnel, other targets were not overlooked. The radical editorials also called for 'power seizure' by 'worker-peasant coalitions' allied with intellectuals, to overthrow power holders in factories, mines, and rural areas. The Red Guards were told to give no quarter to the class enemies.

The Shanghai People's Commune

In Shanghai, the Cultural Revolution Group and other radicals helped the casual labourers and contract workers, who were among the most exploited of the workers, to get organized with the aim of seizing power. The 'January Storm (January Revolution)', staged by radical-led worker coalitions, destroyed the provincial Party organization and forced the mayor and other municipal officials to resign. With the help of the PLA, the rebel organizations took over control of the government offices and factories. To govern Shanghai, the rebels established the 'Shanghai People's Commune', which was controlled by

representatives elected by a secret ballot by members of worker organizations. The Shanghai 'power seizure' was followed by a wave of similar occurrences in cities all over China.

In some cases, these seizures were stage-managed by existing Party officials. For example, Zhao Ziyang, who was the first party secretary of the province of Guangdong, handed over his official seals to a coalition of radical rebels consisting of Red Guards, teachers, workers, and ex-soldiers called the 'Red Flag Faction'. Since the motley group was unable to run a government, Zhao and his colleagues continued to function much as before. Zhao was not alone among Party leaders who deftly allied themselves with radical rebels and continued to govern. There were even power seizures coordinated with central Party leaders themselves. Zhou Enlai was highly skilful in managing and containing the takeover assaults by the radical rebels against various ministries of the government.

Although the Shanghai People's Commune was supposedly a recreation of the Paris Commune of 1871, much idealized by the Maoists for its 'purist egalitarianism', Mao rejected it as a model for a new power structure. He favoured instead the 'revolutionary committee' - a coalition of representatives of the masses, the PLA, and revolutionary Party cadres that had been developed in northeast China - as the pattern for the whole country. Mao ordered Chang Chunqiao, a leader of the Cultural Revolution Group, which brought the Shanghai People's Commune into being, to change it into a 'Revolutionary Committee'. This so-called 'three-way alliance' was ordained by Mao to be the new structure, not just for Party governance, but also for other such institutions as universities, schools, factories, rural communes, newspapers and so on. The reason for Mao's choice was that he disliked pure populism. Democratic centralism³ was his creed, not democracy.

The Shanghai People's Commune of early February 1967 favoured the workers. Its steering committee was composed of five workers, two peasants, two PLA members, one Red Guard, and one cadre. By contrast, the steering group of the 'Revolutionary Committee' of late February was made up of five 'revolutionary' cadres, six PLA members, and just one workers' representative, Wang Hongwen, who later became one of the notorious Gang of Four. Radical workers who participated in the power seizure, demanding better wages and working conditions, were later labelled as 'conservatives' by rival Maoist workers. Their interest in improving their lot was denounced as 'economism' by the Cultural Revolution Group. Mao's choice actually militated against the interest of the workers, the proletarians of classic Marxism.

³ A practice, mainly associated with Leninism, in which political decisions reached by voting procedures are binding upon all members of a political party.

The power seizures were full of violence. The turbulence did not cease even after the 'revolutionary committees' were constituted. There were fights between the different groups such as workers against students, and Red Guards against cadres. All the groups were fragmented into internal factions, although the major cleavage was roughly between the conservatives, who had prospered under the regime of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, and the Maoist rebels, who were the previous outsiders. Fighting within the occupational groups could be just as fierce. These group or factional power struggles were deadly, because the adversaries fought pitched battles on the streets with guns, and even with tanks and artillery stolen from shipments to Vietnam, or from arms depots.

Since the January 1967 call to seize power, large-scale engagements with firearms were occurring in every province with much bloodshed. As anarchy spread, production ceased in many city factories. Even some villages were caught up in the revolutionary fever and stopped farm work. Shanghai was paralyzed by battles between students and worker Red Guards. Shipping and railway services were seriously disrupted, and food supplies were running perilously low. The Public Security forces gave up any attempt to maintain public order. Courts stopped operating.

In February 1967, the violent disorders provoked Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Li Xiannian and other highest-ranking Party officials, to denounce vehemently, at meetings of the Politburo and the Military Affairs Committee, the unlawful atrocious acts committed in the name of the Cultural Revolution. They also excoriated the Cultural Revolution Group, accusing it of conspiracy and going against the historical trend. These old revolutionaries from the Yan'an days were taking great risks in engaging Jiang Qing and her gang in verbal duels at these meetings.

Unfortunately, Mao was less troubled by the violent disorders than by his old comrades' 'unprecedented interference' with the revolution which he had initiated and which he now supported. Instead of restraining the radicals, he severely rebuked his old comrades, and called their intervention the 'February Adverse Current'. One positive outcome of their intervention was, however, that Mao let it be known that 'power seizures' would no longer be legitimate unless they had received prior Party approval. Mao also ruled that 'chiefs' or leaders were necessary, although his wife, Jiang Qing, advocating an extreme form of egalitarianism, declared that 'the title of chief should be smashed in pieces'. In due course Jiang Qing and her gang aimed to settle scores with these meritorious Party leaders who had crossed their path, and to take over their positions themselves, under new names.

The role of the PLA

With the Party and the government administration in disarray, the PLA was the only governing authority that remained intact during the turmoil caused by the Culture Revolution. The PLA role during this time was complex. On the one hand, the army was supposed to facilitate the radical rebels in causing disorder; on the other, it had the responsibility to prevent civil war and to keep China's borders secure. When things got too much out of hand, the army was called in to keep order, or to suppress 'counterrevolutionaries'. The PLA kept the radical rebels from entering or interfering with China's frontier military regions, its military installations, the technical installations of the Daqing oil fields, the naval fleets, the navy and air-force training schools, and the secret facilities for the production of hydrogen bombs. As regards factions within the PLA, Lin Biao at times carried out his own internal purges. The PLA forcefully resisted any militant radicals who attempted to disrupt military organizations or purge military personnel.

The PLA was not just a force to ensure order and limit disorder: it sometimes aggravated a violent situation by taking sides, either for protecting its own organizational interests, or for supporting its political allies in certain rebel factions. Factions inside the PLA itself also added complexity to the role it was called upon to play. Countless numbers of Red Guards or other radicals died in combat against the PLA.

One example of the PLA as an active participant in violent clashes, because it took one side in a factional struggle, occurred in Wuhan in July 1967. The local army commander supported a conservative worker coalition, called *bai wan xiong shi* (A Million Bold Warriors), which was opposed by the Red Guards and other radical worker and militant groups. The struggle between the two opposing camps, particularly after more than 500 radicals had been arrested by the army, escalated from public protests to massive strikes, and then to armed clashes, culminating in over a thousand radicals being killed by the army.

A delegation from the Cultural Revolution Group, together with Premier Zhou Enlai, travelled from Beijing to Wuhan to order the military to support the radicals. An army division mutinied and occupied Wuhan, and the 'million warriors' attacked the delegation. Two delegates were seized, one was given a bad beating. Zhou Enlai managed to get the situation in Wuhan under control by bringing in military forces from the outside. He also dismissed the Wuhan PLA commander.

The Wuhan incident led to confrontations between the PLA and many radical rebel groups in many parts of China throughout the summer of 1967. Jiang Qing and her radical allies began to call for the Cultural Revolution to be carried out more thoroughly, into Zhou Enlai's State Council and especially into the PLA, an institution which had hitherto been out of the reach of the Cultural Revolution Group, to 'pull out the

handful of capitalist roaders in the army'. Mao's reckless radical shock-troops did not seem concerned that by the end of August 1967, China was on the verge of civil war. They seem to have been entirely driven by a single goal: namely, to undermine or overthrow their rivals, so that eventually they could take over the control of the state as Mao's heirs.

International reverberations

The Cultural Revolution had an adverse effect on China's international relations. China's ambassadors throughout the world, with the exception of Egypt, were called home. Many international incidents took place. Tension between the PRC and the Soviet Union, which the Maoists regarded as the leader of revisionism, reached a high point during the Cultural Revolution. Early in 1967, after friction developed between the Moscow police and Chinese embassy personnel, the Red Guards reacted by assembling outside the Soviet embassy, harassing Russian diplomats and their families in Beijing. Losing patience, the Russian bear started to growl. The number of Russian troops stationed along the Sino-Soviet borders began to increase from this time. In June and July 1969, China claimed that the Russians had provoked 429 border incidents. In August and September, Moscow hinted at a possible pre-emptive strike against China's nuclear installations. It was alleged that the Soviets sounded out the American Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) negotiators about a joint action against China.

From May 1967, Hong Kong was disturbed by mob agitation instigated either by the Cultural Revolution Group or by local radicals. Later in the summer, the new leadership in the Foreign Ministry sent an ultimatum to the British *chargé d'affaires* in Beijing on the rioting in Hong Kong. Upon getting no satisfactory reply, radical rebels stormed into the British mission in August 1967, intimidating the *chargé d'affaires* and his staff, and setting fire to the building.

Slowing the pace of the Revolution

Moves to restore order

By late August 1967, even Mao himself was concluding that the Cultural Revolution was getting out of hand. He saw that what was happening was akin to a civil war. He repented of having placed too much faith in the 'politically immature', 'incompetent', and 'untempered' Red Guards, who should never have been 'trusted with things of such major importance'. With Mao's approval, Zhou Enlai and Lin Biao and others

made haste to restore order. Zhou made an important speech exhorting discipline among revolutionaries and respect for the army, which was entrusted with the job of imposing order. Arms seizure was forbidden, and all revolutionary groups were ordered to turn in all firearms. On 1 October 1967, Mao announced a 'Great Strategic Plan' that called for discipline, self-criticism, cessation of factionalism, and more study of Mao Zedong Thought, with special classes set up for that purpose.

Although the revolutionary tide was receding, turmoil continued to exist, particularly as Jiang Qing's group, which specialized in stirring up unrest for their own political gain, was still fanning fires in the provinces. Military units and other factions continued to fight for control of the 'three-way' revolutionary committees, the governing bodies of all institutions. These were deadly serious power struggles, because the winners would have the power to victimize the losers. In June 1968, large-scale battles with tanks and artillery were fought between Red Guards and a worker-militia alliance with PLA participation in the southern provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi. On university campuses in many cities, students fought battles over old vendettas. In Beijing, a violent clash at Tsinghua University left 15 students dead. However, not all students were violent rebels. Most of them abandoned the loudspeakers, wall posters, and violence, and settled for a quiet life at home.

With the PLA enforcing tough measures to suppress disorders, retrieving arms, and punishing offenders, order slowly started to return sometime in the middle of 1968. By this time, Mao had decided to end the Red Guard movement. He despatched work teams, called Workers' Propaganda Teams, to school and university campuses to repress disorderly students. Mao's work teams were much like those Liu Shaoqi had sent out at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Mao no longer had any use for his student Red Guard storm troops, whose adoration he had once basked in, and countless numbers of whom had lost their lives to promote or defend his policies and ideals. Millions of them were sent to the countryside, where they least wished to go, because life in rural China had little of the amenities and opportunities of the cities to allow them to fully develop their talents. They became a lost generation, although Mao tried to put a favourable gloss on it by saying that they should be happy to work in China's vast rural areas, where there was plenty of room for them.

To stabilize the new political order in the provinces, Zhou Enlai had been endeavouring to ensure that each province had a proper revolutionary committee set up to govern it. He worked province by province to get the various elements which were at loggerheads with each other to become reconciled, and forge compromises. By 8 September 1968 Zhou was able to announce to a massive gathering in Tiananmen

Square: 'Now the whole country is red', meaning the work of forming revolutionary committees in all the provinces had been completed.

There was a special urgency during this time for the PRC to put its house in order. On 20 August 1968 Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia to end the 'Prague Spring' reforms instituted by Alexander Dubcek's liberal regime, and to keep the country firmly in the Warsaw Pact. This act, coming on top of the Soviet troop build-up along the Sino-Soviet border, heightened the Chinese fear of Soviet invasion, particularly when China was in such turmoil.

In October, the Twelfth and last Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee met for the preparation of the Ninth National Congress (of the CCP), to confer legitimacy on the new political order. The members of this Central Committee were made up of the surviving 30% of the members of Central Committee that had not been purged, delegates of provincial revolutionary committees, prominent members of the Cultural Revolution Group, and the PLA officers. A draft Party constitution was circulated naming Lin Biao as Mao Zedong's close comrade-in-arms and successor. Liu Shaoqi, who had been repeatedly denounced, vilified, and maligned by the radical-controlled press, was finally named in this important Party document as the 'number one person in authority taking the capitalist road'. His official expulsion from the Party amounted to the termination of his political career. Although Jiang Qing and Lin Biao demanded that Deng Xiaoping should get the same treatment, Mao intervened and insisted that Deng, who no longer had any official position, should be allowed to keep his Party membership.

On the foreign relations front, there were major developments for this Plenum to explore. The growing Soviet threat, coupled with the possibility of American disengagement from the war in Vietnam, prompted the Chinese leaders to consider a major shift in China's foreign relations. The possibility of normalizing China's relationship with the United States was first raised at this Plenum.

In March 1969, the Sino-Soviet military clash over the Zhenbao Island in the Wusuli River led Mao to the erroneous conclusion that another world war was looming. Lin Biao ordered the Chinese army, navy, and air force to make urgent preparations for war. In this connection, the Party decided to disperse many of the experienced elder statesmen like Chen Yun, Zhu De and Chen Yi from Beijing into the provinces. A similar plan also applied to important 'offenders' singled out by the Cultural Revolution, such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Liu Shaoqi was to be moved to the city of Kaifeng in Henan to be sequestered there. Deng Xiaoping and his wife were to be transferred to Jiangxi.

Deng in Jiangxi

Deng had been confined for two years in Zhongnanhai, when Wang Dongxing, the Politburo member closest to Mao, came to visit him, and informed him that he and his wife were to go to Jiangxi. Zhou Enlai was extremely solicitous of Deng's safety and comfort in connection with this move. He chose a small town not far from Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi, so that the Dengs could get good medical treatment should they fall ill. Zhou made sure that Deng, his wife, and his stepmother, who lived with them, got to their destination safely, could live and work in a secure setting, and would not to be further molested by radical rebels. Zhou personally called the provincial authorities in Jiangxi to discuss with them in detail the best living and working arrangements to be made for the Dengs. Zhou instructed these officials to accommodate them in a suitable two-storey house so that the elderly couple and Deng's stepmother could have the privacy of the upstairs to themselves, and their custodian and guard could live downstairs. There was to be a yard for outdoor activities. The house was to be within walking distance of the factory, where the Dengs were to work, and where they would be reformed through physical labour, and learn from the masses. Zhou reminded his old comrade's minders in Jiangxi that Deng, being over sixty years old, should not be labouring full-time. Zhou's instructions were carefully carried out.

Deng was concerned that the exile would make it even harder for him to reconnect with the centre again. However, Mao kept a political lifeline open for him: he continued to let Wang Dongxing be in charge of Deng, who was permitted to contact Wang, if necessary. Since Wang Dongxing kept nothing from Mao, writing to Wang was equivalent to writing to Mao. During his exile in Jiangxi, Deng wrote now and again to Wang Dongxing, to report on his own life, thoughts, and activities as a matter of protocol for someone being reformed through labour. Although Deng did not know for sure that his letters to Wang would reach Mao, he somehow hoped and expected that they would. Apparently, Deng got to know that Mao did read most of his letters to Wang Dongxing, even though Deng did not know Mao's reaction, for Mao never communicated with him since he left Beijing. Writing to Wang Dongxing was a way of keeping intact the political lifeline that Mao had thrown him.

Since Deng was a caring father, he wrote letters to Wang because his children were suffering from persecution or discrimination because of him. He also wrote to Wang when, at one point, the normal salaries of both he and his wife were no longer being paid, and his stipend was reduced to such a meagre amount that he and his dependants had great difficulty making ends meet, despite living extremely frugally. On receiving no reply, the family raised their own chickens and grew vegetables in their garden to supplement their food supply.

Most of the time Deng wrote to remind Mao of his existence, and to prepare the ground for resuming his political career. He assured Mao that he accepted his treatment, and was living and working in seclusion, seeing no one outside his family and the circle he was restricted to, observing strictly the terms that the Party laid down for him. He made sure Mao knew that he spent an hour each day studying Mao Zedong Thought. To earn Mao's goodwill, on one occasion Deng wrote that he sincerely wished Mao would *'wan shuo wu jiang'* (long live ten thousand years without end) - a congratulatory address reserved normally for an emperor - and that Mao's good health and long life were the greatest blessings to the Party and the people of China. Unlike Lin Biao, Deng was not normally given to flattery. At that point, of course, Deng was in Mao's power, and Deng's political future as well as some of his children's future rested on Mao's decisions.

Even with Deng leading a quiet a life in exile, his political rivals, Lin Biao and Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution Group, could not rest until he was eliminated like Liu Shaoqi. The Deng Xiaoping Special Case Group tried to discover some serious historical 'crimes' or mistakes hidden in his past, all the way back to the time when he had joined the CCP early in the 1920s. If members of this group could obtain evidence of his having surrendered to enemies, or deserted the Red Army, it would be far more damaging to his political career than his big recent mistake of using the work teams to repress the rebellious students during the Cultural Revolution. Unable to build a case for certain allegations, which his inquisitors hoped to make against him, they asked Deng to write an account of his past. Deng obliged and wrote a 57,000-word history of his more than forty years of work inside the CCP. They then used Deng's account, which Mao must have seen, to track down and interview many people all over the China to find evidence to support their allegations. But they failed turn anything up that could incriminate Deng, after spending many man hours, and covering huge distances to track down Deng's past associates scattered in the provinces.

Under detention in Jiangxi, Deng and his wife were only allowed to move between their home and the small factory in the county of Xingjian, where they worked from 6 am to noon. The factory produced parts for agriculture machineries. Deng worked at making pliers, a skill he had learnt many decades ago from working at Renault in France, when he went abroad as a young worker-student. His wife did unwinding and cleaning of coils at the factory. Here in this quiet corner of Jiangxi, isolated from politics, Deng spent the next two and a half years (October 1969 - March 1972) working in the factory, reading, contemplating, helping with housework, and growing vegetables in the garden. At home, Deng specialized in the kitchen department and became quite a competent cook. Later, their three daughters and the two sons, including the paralyzed Deng Pufang, came to live with them in Jiangxi. Retaining his trademark character of a silent brooding man, sparing of words, Deng found solace in having his children, and later a newborn granddaughter, around him during his time of exile.

The Ninth Party Congress: the radicals control the Politburo

Nearly three years after the start of the Cultural Revolution, in April 1969, when Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were still being detained at Zhongnanhai, Mao presided over the Ninth Party Congress assembled at Beijing for the purpose of consolidating the gains of the Cultural Revolution. The goals this congress intended to achieve were: (1) to confirm Mao's theory of class struggle as the fundamental line of the Party during the socialist stage of China's historical development; (2) to reaffirm the necessity of the Cultural Revolution and its timing; (3) to revise the Constitution so as to confirm that Lin Biao was the close comrade-in-arms and successor of Mao Zedong, and that Mao Zedong Thought was restored to the position of the guiding principal of the Party; and (4) to elect a new slate of left-wing members for the Ninth Central Committee, which, being under Maoist domination, would keep China's development along the correct path, and would prevent a revival of revisionism or bourgeois capitalism. After such a destructive upheaval against the Party, which Mao had attacked but never intended to destroy, it seemed that the time had come to rebuild it again, but on Maoist lines.

The Ninth Party Congress elected Mao Zedong as the Chairman of the Party and Lin Biao as the Vice-Chairman. Since the Cultural Revolution had toppled a majority of the old Central Committee members, the vacancies were filled by the radicals, who were elected by the more radical provincial delegates to this party congress. Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution Group and Lin Biao's supporters in the PLA occupied more than half the seats in the powerful Politburo. Even Lin Biao's wife got into the Politburo. Zhou Enlai was the only non-radical in the most powerful organ that ran the PRC, which was the Standing Committee of the Politburo.

The Ninth Party Congress was a triumph for Mao, Lin Biao and Jiang Qing's colleagues. Mao's person and thought were gloriously enshrined in the new Constitution, and Jiang Qing's radical group became a force in the Politburo. Lin Biao was not only formally acknowledged as Mao's heir; the army under his command dominated the country politically at that point. Officers of the PLA made up 55% of the Politburo, played a leading part on the revolutionary committees of the provinces, and were given political roles in factories, schools, and other institutions all over China.

Mao's assessment of the Cultural Revolution was overall upbeat. He thought it was 'absolutely necessary and most timely for consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, preventing capitalist restoration, and

building socialism'. Considering the turmoil and destruction, Mao claimed, on balance, that it represented 70% achievements and 30% mistakes. At this point Mao was not ready to abandon the Cultural Revolution, for he wanted to carry the movement more deeply into factories, schools, rural production brigades and teams, and other socio-economic institutions, in addition to the political ones.

There were, in fact, serious negative consequences. Although the Cultural Revolution did not affect industrial and agricultural production as adversely as the Great Leap Forward, the politics of revolution distracted people from productive work, and the disorders had a considerable negative impact on the economy. The national income estimates dropped sharply from the peak of economic recovery in 1966, particularly during the three years of revolutionary high tide from 1966 to 1969. The economic recovery and growth which had been wrung from the pragmatic policies and efforts of Chen Yun, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai, were lost. Deng Xiaoping looked extremely grim when, during his exile, his children brought him news of the widespread chaos and destruction of the Cultural Revolution.

The Maoist remedy for the economic decline was to put politics in command once more, to foster the collective spirit, egalitarianism, selfless devotion to the good of the community, and self-reliance, and not to forget Mao Zedong's Thought. The slogans 'Learn from Dazhai' in agriculture and 'Learn from Daqing' in industry were revived in campaigns to stimulate production.

With Liu, Deng, and other pragmatists out of the way, education was proletarianized along the Maoist line. Every school had its own shop or was attached to a factory where the students worked. Grades and examinations were abolished. Students destined for higher education were selected by the recommendation of fellow workers and revolutionary committees. The curriculum emphasized political indoctrination, and applied subjects related to production. Enormous numbers of middle school graduates were sent down to the countryside to do agricultural work, because opportunities for employment in the towns and cities were scarce.

The issue of the PRC Chairmanship: Lin Biao versus Jiang Qing, and Lin's death

In the summer of 1970, Mao expressed a desire to hold a fourth national people's congress to legitimize a structural change of the government. The change Mao wanted to make was the abolition of the office of chairman of the PRC, a post Mao had held concurrently with the chairmanship of the Party before he voluntarily gave it up after the Great Leap Forward. From 1959 onwards, Liu Shaoqi had occupied this office, up to the time when the Cultural Revolution ended his political career. Since then, the post had been left vacant. Liu's insufficient compliance to his wishes made Mao feel that he had let great power slip out

of his own hands. To avoid the recurrence of a similar situation, Mao decided to do away with this office altogether.

Lin Biao, however, disagreed with Mao's decision, and urged Mao repeatedly to reinstate this office. Mao stood firm on his decision and became suspicious of Lin's motives. Not unreasonably, perhaps, Mao began to think that Lin wanted to take this position himself. Since Lin had already been officially confirmed as Mao's successor, why did he take the risk of opposing Mao on this critical matter? To Lin's wife and his other supporters, it was apparently very important for Lin to occupy this top post. They believed that if Lin were chairman of the PRC, their group would be in a stronger position in their power struggle against Jiang Qing and her cohorts in the Cultural Revolution Group, who were their chief competitors for power.

In August 1970, when the Second Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee met at the Lushan, Lin Biao gave a speech with a concealed message for reviving the PRC chairmanship. His supporters picked the theme up and started a propaganda campaign to gather support for such a move. Jiang Qing and her gang also registered the theme, and they reported the 'unusual activities' of Lin's group to Mao. Finding his suspicions confirmed, Mao called an enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo and severely criticized Lin's factions. On the closing day of this Plenum on 6 September, Mao criticized sharply again many important members of Lin's group, although Lin himself was never named. Chen Boda, who had just detached himself from Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution Group to attach himself to Lin, endured such serious criticisms and investigations that it finished his political career. This unexpected development pleased Jiang Qing, worried Mao, and made Lin anxious about the security of his position.

During Lin's recent rise, he had made outrageous accusations against other top Party leaders, such as Luo Ruiqing, Liu Shaoqi, and Deng Xiaoping, whom he saw as rivals. He and his supporters had also arrested and interrogated many of the highest-ranking officials, old revolutionaries going back to the Yan'an period and earlier, by labelling them as revisionists, or as opponents of the Cultural Revolution, if they had not shown themselves to be unreservedly Maoist. Many of them and their wives, having been turned into political offenders, did not survive the interrogation, imprisonment, torture, or exile. The Number Two Office for Special Cases controlled by Lins' group was notorious for cruelty in its treatment of those accused of political crimes.

As Mao's thoughts around this time were turning towards rebuilding the Party, the PLA appeared to him to have been guilty of 'carelessness' and 'arrogance' in the way it handled the prolonged investigation and purges of the veteran Party officials. Mao was having second thoughts about Lin's suitability as his

successor. He was not going to let this matter rest, after Lin's evident hunger for power, and the PLA's ascendancy, had given him pause. Mao had needed Lin's support to launch the Cultural Revolution, but Mao also believed strongly in the principle that the Party should command the gun, and not vice versa. From then on Mao and Lin were engaged in a covert struggle against each other.

During 1971 Mao tried to weaken Lin's position through a policy he described as 'throwing stones, adding sand to mud, and digging into the cornerstone'. The 'stones' were thrown at Lin's senior army officers, who were forced to make public self-criticism. 'Adding sand' meant changing the composition of the Military Affairs Commission of the Party's Central Committee, by introducing fresh members to replace some of Lin's supporters. The 'cornerstone' meant the Beijing Military Region, where Mao's appointees took over key positions. Several generals, and even Lin's wife, were obliged to make self-criticism. During August and September 1971, Mao toured southern and central China, visiting the regional military commanders there to be assured of their loyalty, and pointing out the seriousness of the struggle he was having with Lin.

Lin seemed to realize that his time was up: his ambition to succeed Mao lay in ruins. It was alleged that Lin authorized his son to devise a plot to assassinate Mao when the Chairman was on a special train. The plot failed. In desperation Lin, his wife, and son, and some of his supporters tried to escape from China. They flew in a military Trident jet in a northerly direction towards the Soviet Union, but the plane crashed in Mongolia on 13 September 1971, burning to death everyone on board.

Partial Recovery: The Moderates versus the Radicals

Mao's second thoughts, and Zhou Enlai's efforts at normalization: the question of Deng's rehabilitation

With Lin Biao's death, the first and most violent stage of the Cultural Revolution came to an end. What followed was characterized by a continuing struggle between the moderates (Zhou, and then Deng) who strove to get China's government, and its economy, back on track; and the radicals (Jiang Qing's Gang of Four) who wanted to continue the ideological purging at all costs. While the moderates had China's best interests at heart, Jiang was surely motivated by dreams of personal power, as much as by doctrinal purity.

Unfortunately for China, although Mao supported economic progress in principle, he generally sided with Jiang on political matters.

After Lin's death, Mao suffered a spell of serious illness. He was also overcome by a sense of repentance over the disgrace and fall of so many of his old revolutionary comrades during the Cultural Revolution. He admitted the mistaken treatment of Luo Ruiqing, Chen Yun, He Long and many others, particular those who had died from their ordeals. When Marshal Chen Yi, a founding member of the PRC, and a victim of the 'February Adverse Current', died in January 1972, Mao appeared genuinely sad at the memorial service of his old comrade from the Jinggang Mountain days. He said to Chen's wife that Chen Yi was a 'good person' and a 'good comrade', who had rendered 'meritorious service'. Although Mao started to blame himself for these 'ultra-left excesses', admitting responsibility for them, he also blamed Lin Biao. Mao said to Chen's wife, at the same memorial service, that if Lin Biao had succeeded in his conspiracy, 'all the old ones like us would have fallen'.

After Mao made self-criticism, Zhou Enlai hastened to take the opportunity, with Mao's support, to 'liberate' the Party leaders and cadres of various levels, to set them free from prison, and from being detained, watched, made to undergo labour reform, or victimized in any other way. Zhou also endeavoured to restore to them, as quickly as possible, their lost official positions, and to remove the black marks from their reputations.

Deng Xiaoping was not forgotten. Mao even mentioned him at Chen Yi's memorial service, an occasion attended by most of the top Party dignitaries. Zhou Enlai heard Mao say that Deng's case was different from that of Liu Shaoqi, because Deng's was in the nature of a contradiction among the people. As mentioned previously, in Mao's thinking, contradictions among the people were a non-antagonistic kind of contradiction that could be resolved through discussions and other peaceful means. Since Deng's return hinged on Mao's attitude to him, this was good news. Zhou Enlai was extremely eager for Deng to return to work, to share the burden of his extraordinary workload. He hinted to Chen Yi's relatives to spread widely Mao's judgement on Deng's case, to generate favourable public opinion for Deng's re-emergence.

Previously, Lin Biao had been an insurmountable obstacle to Deng's rehabilitation. Lin took the line that Deng's case was one of antagonistic contradiction, which meant that Deng was an enemy with whom reconciliation was not possible. With Lin out of the way, Jiang Qing and her Cultural Revolution Group remained the other big obstacle to Deng's return to work. Zhou repeated, once again, what Mao said about

Deng's case, at a meeting with provincial delegates when Jiang Qing and her allies were present, and he stressed the importance of differentiating between the two different types of contradictions.

Zhou Enlai was a political realist, who was extremely adept at navigating the hidden rocks and reefs along China's political coastline. Since there had been so much negative propaganda aimed at Deng Xiaoping as 'the number two person in authority taking the capitalist road' in the past, he knew that some groundwork had to be done to prepare for a change in public opinion, especially a change in Mao's own attitude towards Deng, before his comrade and friend could return to join him.

Isolated from the outside world, Deng first heard about Lin Biao's demise at his workplace, nearly two months after the event. The head of the Cultural Revolution Group called a special meeting at the factory on 6 November 1971 and read out an official notification that told the story of Lin Biao and Chen Boda's criminal anti-Party conspiracy, and of Lin's violent death. Two days later, Deng wrote a letter to Mao directly for the first time, for he sensed that this was an opportunity he must grasp for him to return to his political life. In his letter, Deng expressed his sense of shock and indignation at the criminal actions of Lin Biao and Chen Boda, and his firm support for the decisions taken by the Party against them and members of their faction. It was, he wrote, very fortunate that the wise leadership of Chairman Mao and the Party had exposed the Lin-Chen anti-revolutionary faction promptly and dealt with them effectively. Deng continued by saying that, had they succeeded, so many more heads would have fallen, and so many more disasters would have overtaken the country. The elimination, finally, of this great peril caused him and all Chinese people to rejoice. As regards himself, Deng wrote that his health was good, and he hoped one day he could work for the Party again, for a few more years before his retirement.

Mao read this letter, but he made no move regarding Deng's request to return to work. Mao enjoined Wang Dongxin to continue to respond to Deng's requests, and to take care of Deng's needs. During 1972, Deng and his family's situation in Jiangxi improved greatly. Not only was payment of his and his wife's salaries restored; they hosted many visiting friends, arrangements were made for his paralyzed son to travel to Beijing to receive medical treatment for his condition, and his two youngest children were able to enter universities and study the subjects of their choice. Amid all these encouraging signs, Deng continued to write to Mao, thinking that perhaps Mao wanted to know more about his attitude towards Lin Biao's faction, as well as towards his own past mistakes. However, Mao was still very concerned that Deng might want to overturn the Cultural Revolution. ⁴

⁴ As indeed he did, when he returned to work in 1977, after Mao's death.

After a fourth time of listening to a report on the Lin anti-Party faction's treachery at the factory on 1 August 1972, Deng wrote to Mao at greater length criticizing and exposing the crimes of this group. He also made suitable self-examination and admission of his past mistakes. He mentioned that it had been almost six years since he had done any work or had any social contacts, and he had been hoping for an opportunity to remedy his past mistakes through work, and to return to the Chairman's line on the revolution of the proletariat. Though 68 years old, he thought he was in good health. He suggested that he might do some work of a technical nature, such as research and investigation. He would like to serve the Party and the people for another 7 to 8 years to make up for his past errors.

After reading this letter, Mao promptly made his comments, which were mostly favourable. Mao wrote that, although Deng's mistakes were serious, they ought to be looked upon differently from those of Liu Shaoqi. On the positive side, Mao mentioned that there was nothing wrong with Deng's history – for example, he had never surrendered to an enemy. Indeed, Deng had a meritorious record during the war. Mao remembered that during the time of the Jiangxi Soviet, Deng was one of the leaders who suffered victimization for siding with the Mao faction. Mao also pointed out that Deng had stood up to the Soviet revisionists during his visit at the head of a delegation to Moscow for talks. Mao ended by asking for Deng's letter, and his own comments, to be read by Zhou Enlai and circulated to all the comrades at the Party centre.

Mao's positive comments showed that he was seriously considering Deng's return. The big obstacle at that point appeared to be the strong opposition of Jiang Qing's group. Although Mao had taken a stand against the ultra-left excesses of the Cultural Revolution, he remained dedicated to the movement itself. For this reason, he kept Jiang Qing's faction in power to keep the movement going, and to watch for any backsliding towards revisionism. At this point, Mao still preferred to take a wait-and-see attitude, so he did not yet ask Deng to come back to work.

During the autumn of 1972, after Mao's positive comments on Deng became widely known, Deng and his wife were freed from all the restrictions placed upon him. With their new-found freedom, he and his wife spent some time travelling around Jiangxi, touring the hallowed revolutionary sites: the Jinggang Mountain and the old Jiangxi Soviet, and investigating current socio-economic conditions. Everywhere they went the local Party dignitaries received them like VIPs.

Zhou Enlai's position

After Lin Biao's fall, Zhou Enlai was able to get on with the difficult tasks of rebuilding the Party and restoring economic growth – still, however, without the benefit of Deng Xiaoping's help. Six years had elapsed since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. This movement, particularly the first three years of violent disorders, had not only interfered with the process of agricultural and industrial production, but had also damaged the institutions in these sectors. In 1972, the State Council issued a series of directives on strengthening the management and re-establishing a proper regulatory system, especially for the industrial sector. With Mao's permission, China started again to import machinery, equipment, and whole plants from abroad. Despite many impediments, Zhou's efforts achieved a certain degree of success. The total value of the combined agriculture and industrial production in 1972 was 4.5% higher than that of the year before.

In addition to the economy, an all-out effort was required from Zhou to repair the devastated Party. To inform and admonish the general public, Zhou Enlai published an article in the *People's Daily* in April 1972, stating that during the Cultural Revolution many cadres and intellectuals were persecuted and suffered harm as a result of mistaken, unjust, or false accusations. He emphasized the fact that over 90% of the cadres were good, and that it was important to recognize the difference between the two kinds of contradictions: one among the people themselves, and the other between ourselves and our enemies.

The 'liberation' of the top-ranking Party leaders facilitated the return of many high- to medium-ranking central and provincial cadres to their former posts. With the help of Ye Jianying, a Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission, over 100 generals from the PLA were liberated and resumed their leadership positions. Because some of the purged officials had perished from being denied medical treatment, Zhou Enlai personally arranged a medical check-up for nearly 500 old comrades who were above the rank of vice-minister. Many 'old comrades' who had been sent to May Seventh Cadre Schools in the countryside to study Mao Zedong Thought, and to be reformed through labour, came to Beijing for health checks and to be liberated at the same time.

As the Party revived with the return of the old cadres and the recruitment of new ones, it began at first to dominate the revolutionary committees, and later it took over the positions of the PLA and representatives of the masses, who were the other constituents of these committees in the governmental and in other socio-economic institutions. In due course, the PLA had to retreat to its former position of being dominated by the Party, rather than vice versa.

Many of Zhou Enlai's measures were opposed by Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution Group. They wanted to see the senior Party leaders overthrown by their storm troops and remaining in the political wilderness. They were looking for ways to undermine Zhou's position and his work. Pointing to Zhou's criticisms of the left extremism, they accused him of bringing back revisionism. A sharp struggle between the two sides developed. Unfortunately for Zhou, Mao as the umpire sided with the radicals.

Mao stood firm on the correctness of his far-left revolutionary line. From then on, criticism of the ultra-left was off-limits. Mao was not entirely happy with Zhou Enlai because of the ideological differences between them. Politically, Zhou was a moderate pragmatist, not an idealistic left-winger like Mao. This was why Zhou had not been chosen as Mao's heir, even though he ranked number two in the Party hierarchy at that point. However, Zhou could only enforce policies of which Mao approved and, where necessary, dress his actions in Mao's radical language. Like the head of a large household, Mao could not do without the services of his most able steward. Mao depended on Zhou to manage the affairs of the state. Mao realized that those who were ideologically close to him, like Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan were good at revolutionary politics, but not at running the country, as Zhou Enlai could. During the most chaotic time of the Cultural Revolution, Zhou steered a steady course on damage limitation, on keeping the day-to-day business of the government going, and on managing China's foreign relations.

If the Cultural Revolution were viewed as a tragic drama directed by Mao, the principal actors would be Lin Biao, the Cultural Revolution Group, and Zhou Enlai. The roles of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing were purely destructive, striking down this or that person, and causing disorder; the part Zhou Enlai played was entirely constructive, saving and protecting scientists and others whose skills the nation needed for modernization, as well as his old colleagues and comrade-in-arms from the beginning of the Communist revolution, whose lives were threatened by the upheaval. He also saved historical structures, cultural relics, libraries, and valuable book collections, and other rare and irreplaceable national treasures. The Cultural Revolution was none of Zhou's doing. In policy and ideological outlook, Zhou was far closer to Liu Zhaoqi and Deng Xiaoping than to Mao, and Mao knew this. Zhou's courtesy, charm, mildness of manner, and interpersonal skill might have made Mao more forgiving towards him. Zhou's skill in administration and foreign affairs, especially the latter, was indispensable to Mao. After the storm whipped up by the 'Great Helmsman' – one of Mao's epithets – broke, throwing China into an unprecedented state of disorder in a time of peace, it was Zhou Enlai alone who kept the ship of state going.

Deng's recall, and the question of Mao's successor

In the spring of 1973, the overworked Zhou Enlai, who had been diagnosed with cancer in 1972, became ill and needed a period of sick leave. Apparently, the only person capable of carrying on Zhou's work was Deng Xiaoping, who was still in exile. Without further delay, Mao decided to recall Deng to Beijing. On 10 March 1973 Deng took up his post as a vice-premier of the State Council, as Zhou became hospitalized. Before the Cultural Revolution in 1965, there were 16 vice-premiers, of which Deng was one. Currently, before Deng's recall, there was just Li Xiannian. The staggering amount of work, and the need to ward off incessant attacks from Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution radicals, as well as to satisfy Mao Zedong's demands, had no doubt taken a toll on Zhou's health. Deng carried forward Zhou's efforts to restore the wrecked economy to health. He also stepped in to manage China's foreign relations, and to receive visiting foreign heads of state and other important foreign visitors.

During the same year Mao decided to call the Tenth National Congress, to alter many of the actions and decisions of the Ninth Party Congress which had named Lin Biao as Mao's successor and had put many of his PLA supporters on the Central Committee. Mao worried about the position of Lin: If he acknowledged that choosing Lin Biao had been a mistake, people might begin to think that the Cultural Revolution itself had also been a mistake.

The Tenth Party Congress that took place on 24 August was to address this question, to elect a new slate of members of the Central Committee, to revise Party documents, particularly those sections related to Lin Biao, and to find another successor to Mao. This congress acknowledged the 'left' errors associated with Mao Zedong and his supporters. Mao proposed the liberation of several old cadres, who were among the top Party leaders toppled by the Cultural Revolution and not yet restored to grace by Zhou Enlai. Many of the liberated pre-Cultural Revolution leaders of the Party succeeded in being elected as members of the Central Committee. However, the Cultural Revolution radicals associated with Jiang Qing saw their greatest gain in the Party's power centre. Three of the five vice-premiers of the Party were radicals. Five out of nine members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, including Mao Zedong, were radicals. Members of the Politburo were evenly balanced between the radicals and the moderates.

Regarding the Cultural Revolution, Mao reaffirmed his commitment to it. He considered the launching of the Cultural Revolution to be one of the greatest achievements of his life; the other was uniting China after victory first against the Japanese, and then Chiang Kai-shek. On the question of a successor, which had come to the fore after Lin Biao's demise, Mao appeared to focus his search on someone who would continue his policy of Cultural Revolution, to build a Marxist-Maoist egalitarian society that would be a new kind of economically prosperous society, different from the capitalist one. For this reason, the obvious choice

for him would be one of the prominent members of the Cultural Revolution Group, who were Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Kang Sheng and Yao Wenyuan. For one reason or another he had ruled them all out. His choice alighted on Wang Hongwen, a more recent and junior attachment to that group.

Wang Hongwen was a radical cadre in a Shanghai textile mill, who had made a name for himself during the time of the 'January Storm' on the rebel side, fighting with firearms against the establishment forces. He had caught the attention of Zhang Chunqiao, who was supervising the political restructuring of Shanghai at that time. The support of the Cultural Revolution Group helped Wang to ascend the ladder of power rapidly in Shanghai, where he became a member of the revolutionary committee, as well as the Party Secretary of Shanghai. Considering that Wang had been a peasant, a worker, and a soldier, as well as being a product of the Cultural Revolution, he might be relied upon to follow this road firmly. Looking into the future, Mao also wanted someone from the younger generation if possible, and Wang was only in his thirties.

Being so young and relatively inexperienced was also a liability, for he had not demonstrated his capacity for governing the country. As a result, Mao did not actually name him as his heir, but boosted him, like a rocket, up the power ladder to become one of the vice-chairmen of the Party, and a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, ranking just behind Zhou Enlai in both. Wang's rank indicated that if Mao approved of him as time went on, he might well be named as Mao's successor. Wang's steep ascent helped to strengthen the power of the Cultural Revolution Group, which was locked in a continual power struggle against the moderate pragmatic Party leaders, who supported Zhou Enlai.

While Mao continued to favour the Cultural Revolution Group, he also supported the efforts of the moderates in their efforts to rehabilitate the fallen cadres, restore order, improve the economy, and manage the foreign affairs and the day-to-day business of running the country. Having learnt a lesson from the Lin Biao episode, Mao decided to put the PLA firmly under firm Party control again. Before the close of the Tenth Party Congress, Ye Jianying, as Vice-Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission under Mao as the titular Chairman, suggested to the latter to make Deng Xiaoping a member of this commission, to help him with the work of enforcing this policy.

After a period of observing Deng since his return to work, Mao was obviously satisfied with Deng's attitude and performance, and he decided to give him more important roles. He made Deng not only a member of the Military Commission, but also a member of the Politburo, which he had once been. To give Deng more authority in these organizations, Mao gave Deng the title of 'Chief-of-Staff'. Deng now played an important part in the military through working closely with Ye Jianying, and in the State Council through cooperating closely with Zhou Enlai. Deng was put in this powerful position clearly as a successor to Zhou, should the latter pass away. This arrangement, in addition to the rehabilitation of the old Party leaders, bolstered the

strength of Zhou Enlai's camp of moderate pragmatists. Sensing that the sombre-looking Deng Xiaoping, who worked single-mindedly and smiled rarely, inspired fear in others, Mao advised him to adopt a milder outward appearance while keeping the steel inside. Mao made the personnel arrangements among the leaders at the centre of the Party carefully, for the purpose of achieving a balance of power between the moderate pragmatists and the Cultural Revolution radicals.

After the Tenth Party Congress, with Lin Biao and his crimes officially condemned, with a tentative new successor to carry on his revolutionary legacy, with the moderate pragmatists ably managing the new order, and with the Cultural Revolution radicals keeping watch against any new sign of return of bourgeois capitalism and revisionism, Mao believed that he had balanced the contending forces in his universe to achieve a stable equilibrium. It had already been more than 6 years since the start of the Cultural Revolution, and Mao as well as the people of China were thoroughly tired of chaos and disorder. He now longed for unity, stability and security. As regards his pragmatic colleagues, the time for more constructive developments was long overdue. However, so long as Mao also insisted on hewing to the Left line, and continued to foster the Cultural Revolution radicals, destructive struggles and criticisms would remain a part of China's political scene.

The Anti-Lin Biao, Anti-Confucius campaign

Around the time of the Tenth Party Congress, when Lin Biao was criticized, Mao suggested criticizing Confucius also. The virtuous sage of Chinese history had been blamed for holding China back by the 1919 May Fourth Movement⁵, of which Mao was a member. This movement was partly responsible for the creation of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. Notwithstanding that fact, Mao's Cultural Revolution radicals did not spare their criticism of major figures of the May Fourth Movement, such as Hu Shi. In Confucius' own time, followers of his school and the Legalists were enemies. A Legalist statesman helped Qin Shi Huang to unify China for the first time in 221 BCE, and the new regime introduced some revolutionary social changes. Under his rule, Confucian texts were burnt, and scholars buried alive. Regarding himself as another ruler who had unified China, and had tried to introduce revolutionary changes, Mao appeared to feel an affinity with Qin Shi Huang, and praised him highly. In contrast, Chinese historians in the past, who were mostly of the Confucian School, saw Qin as a tyrant. Mao took the view, in line with the Marxist theory of history, that the new feudal Legalist state was more progressive, while Confucius was a reactionary, whose ideas belonged to an earlier 'slave' society.

⁵ We recall that the May Fourth movement grew out of student protests in Beijing on 4 May 1919. The students protested against the government's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles decision to allow Japan to retain territories in Shandong, which had been surrendered to Germany in 1914.

Whether or not Mao intended his remark to spark another political campaign that would recreate disturbance in a country slowly returning to order, Jiang Qing's clique promptly seized upon it to promote Anti-Lin Biao and Anti-Confucius campaigns with their 'Attack the Returning Tide of the Rightists' movement, which Jiang Qing had already started at the universities of Peking and Tsinghua. Although the radicals had made enormous political gains at the Tenth Party Congress, they were unhappy at the return to power of so many old veteran leaders, especially Deng Xiaoping, whom they thought they had overthrown. They lost no time, in the winter of 1974, in sending out propaganda materials for the Anti-Lin and Anti-Confucius campaigns, which were approved by Mao. Because the name of the target was not explicitly mentioned at first, as was often the case with these personal attacks, Mao seems not to have been aware that the target was actually Zhou Enlai.

What had Zhou Enlai to do with Confucius? The Confucian School held the powerful Duke of Zhou of the Zhou dynasty up as a paragon of virtue, because he most ably served his nephew, King Wen, without attempting to usurp the throne. Zhou Enlai shared a surname with the noble Duke, who was considered virtuous by a reactionary school of thought, and this, together with his vigorous support for China's opening to the West, rendered Zhou vulnerable to being attacked as a reactionary by the radicals. Jiang Qing invited university scholars to write articles making connections between Confucius and Zhou Enlai, to discredit Zhou. Since Jiang Qing's radicals lacked military power, and since their aim was to capture supreme power after Mao, they tried to use mass movements and propaganda to discredit the current leaders of the PLA, and to gain army support.

On 24 and 25 January 1974, without securing the agreement of the Party centre, Jiang Qing and her supporters called Anti-Lin Biao and Anti-Confucius meetings of 10,000 people in Beijing. The radicals made speeches which criticized neither Lin Biao nor Confucius, but rather the leaders of both the State Council and the Military Commission, vilifying and slandering them. The point was that the actual leaders of these two organizations, Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying respectively, were present at these meetings. After the meetings, Jiang Qing, who had no official positions in either the army or the State Council, personally addressed many letters with propaganda materials to various units of the PLA and organs of the State Council, attempting to win the staff of these organizations to her side, as a prelude to seizing power.

During February and March members of the Gang of Four continued to attack the PLA, making outrageous statements at meetings, such as 'the chief of staff of the PLA was further to the right than the extreme right'. At the same time, Jiang Qing attempted to seize the leadership of the cultural work in the PLA. The new campaigns again fanned the flames of factional warfare, just as order was in the process of being restored in China, after so much effort on the part of Zhou Enlai and those who supported him. Discipline at work, productive activities, and the economy, all started once again to decline.

To counter these movements, Zhou Enlai, with the support of Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping, promptly took several measures to stop the spread of rebel organizations and disorder. Then they appealed to Mao Zedong, the final arbiter of political confrontations among his subordinates. Ye Jianying showed Mao the contents of the inflammatory speeches given by the subordinates of the Gang of Four at the January mass meetings. Mao was not pleased that Jiang Qing's gang were stirring up trouble, when he wanted order and improvement in the economy. He rebuked Jiang and stopped these speeches and other propaganda materials from being disseminated throughout China. Refusing Jiang Qing's plea to see him afterward, Mao sent her instead a scolding letter:

'What is the point of seeing you? So many things I told you over the years, you did not act upon them. You have my books and Marx's book, and you did not study them. I am 81 and seriously ill, and you do not seem to care. You have special powers. What would you do after I die? You do not discuss important matters, but every day you send people trifles. Please consider'.

Mao did not seem to realize that the despatches from Jiang Qing's faction were stirring up conflicts and doing harm to the country. For their part, her colleagues would not have dared to act in such a flagrant manner, without her special connection to Mao. And they knew that the Supreme leader might scold her, but he would never 'overthrow' her. Confident of Mao's protection, and his reliance on her colleagues to carry his revolutionary line into the future, Jiang Qing and the radicals continued to pursue their goals without paying too much attention to Mao's rebukes.

Deng Xiaoping and the UN Special Conference

Another round of battles between the radicals and moderates occurred in March 1974, when Deng Xiaoping, who had a good track record in representing China at international meetings, was chosen by Mao to lead a Chinese delegation to attend the Sixth United Nations Special Conference, which was to be held in New York during April 1974. Zhou Enlai would normally have been expected to attend such a conference, but he was too ill to do so. Jiang Qing, already intensely piqued at Deng's rise after his recall, could not bear to have this enviable post, which was likely to attract world attention and accolade, go to Deng. After the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Zhou's State Council, had accepted Deng's appointment, Jiang Qing tried obstinately to block it, from her position on the Politburo. When Mao heard about the situation, he informed Zhou that it had been his idea to appoint Deng Xiaoping, but if the Politburo members were all against it, he would not insist on it. Zhou then transmitted what Mao had said on this matter to members of the Politburo. When the Politburo met on 26 March everyone, except Jiang Qing, supported Mao's idea of sending Deng Xiaoping to this meeting. The thwarted Jiang Qing made a scene at this meeting. She eventually had to back down, because Mao stepped in to control her.

In his battle against Jiang Qing's clique, Zhou Enlai at least had Deng Xiaoping, Ye Jianying and other rehabilitated Party leaders standing with him now. Previously, he was battling single-handedly against the forces of disorder and destruction unleashed by both Lin Biao and Jiang Qing's cliques, with Mao's blessings. He carried on against many odds, suffering humiliation and personal slander, to save the Chinese economy from collapse, to rehabilitate the victims of injustices, to restore order to a ravaged society, and to keep the machinery of a large country running. With his body racked with cancer, he still worked long hours, in and out of hospital. Now he laboured with hope that his like-minded colleagues, Deng Xiaoping in particular, would continue the battle without compromise, and carry on the work of modernizing China.

At that point China was so isolated that the Chinese airline had no air traffic routes to the West. Zhou inquired into the smallest details of the UN delegation's travel arrangements, including applying for air traffic routes. He wanted to ensure that Deng's group had a safe journey, and that the international event would be a success. He gave Deng's delegation a big farewell party to enhance their prestige. Despite his illness, he personally saw Deng off at the airport.

Deng's well-prepared speech that elucidated Mao's theory of the 'Three Worlds', emphasizing that China promised not to dominate other countries as a hegemon, was received with enthusiasm by many of the third world countries. During the period of the conference, Deng had the opportunity to meet many foreign leaders. His long conversation with Henry Kissinger, then U.S. Secretary of State, helped the two statesmen to develop mutual respect and a true friendship that lasted fifteen years.

Returning to China, Deng anticipated a further vicious round of battles with the radicals. In fact, there were going to be many rounds of such battles with the Jiang Qing clique. There was much work awaiting him. His presence was required whenever Mao, Zhou Enlai and Wang Hongwen received important foreign visitors. Wang was included because Mao wanted to give his possible successor diplomatic experience. Deng was asked to be there because Mao wanted Deng and Wang to work together, and Mao wanted to have more opportunities to observe Deng's attitude and performance more closely, to judge his suitability for greater power and responsibility.

Zhou and Deng push the Four Modernizations; the Fengqing Lun affair

An important part of Deng's work at the State Council was to assist Zhou Enlai in long-term economic planning that advanced the policy of the 'Four Modernizations', which referred to the modernization of agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology. In all these sectors, the emphasis was on central planning, pragmatic management, material incentives, interdependence, and the actual achievement of positive economic results. By contrast, the Maoist approach stressed decentralization, moral incentives,

self-reliance, and putting politics in command. In order not to cause offence to Mao, Zhou and Deng tried to dress up their undertakings in Maoist terminology where possible.

To speed up China's economic development, Deng's team began to import entire industrial plants for producing petrochemicals, iron and steel, fertilizers, coal and electric power, and other products, from the United States, Europe, and Japan. From late 1972 to the end of 1974, they committed over \$2 billion to these purchases. These plants were partly paid for by a reduction of the military budget after Lin's death, and partly by petroleum exports. In addition to complete plants, they also imported a lot of machinery and equipment. Because China's exports were insufficient to cover these large imports, there was a temporary balance of payments deficit between 1973 and 1975.

Zhou and Deng's approach made them vulnerable to relentless attacks by the Maoist Cultural Revolution radicals. But it did produce positive economic results. The national income continued to rise during the 1970s. By 1975, availability of grain per capital finally recovered to the level that had been reached prior to the launch of he was kept fully informed the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s. Since Mao did want it to improve, he went along with the way Zhou and Deng had been handling the economy. Mao still had the final say in all important decisions. He was kept fully informed even though, because of his poor health, he seldom appeared at official meetings or conducted public ceremonies during the 1970s.

Before the middle of 1974, Zhou Enlai's illness became worse. It was decided that he should move from his home and live permanently in the hospital from 1 June of that year. He continued to work from the hospital with Deng Xiaoping and others, who reported to and received instructions from Zhou regularly, and liaised between him and Mao Zedong.

While others were concerned about Zhou's illness, Jiang Qing and her clique were delighted, and they planned to step up their campaign of criticism and slander against Zhou by referring to him as the 'Confucian scholar' (*rujia*) in the Party. Mao became angry after he heard about Jiang's activities. Having reprimanded her so recently, Mao thought she would have exercised some restraint. He chided Jiang Qing in front of other Politburo members at a meeting in his famous study, where meetings with Mao often took place. Mao exhorted Jiang 'not to keep two factories, one for steel and the other for hats', meaning she was as hard as steel herself, but quick to place hats with names like 'rightists', 'revisionists' and 'Confucian scholar' on other people. Mao told others that 'Jiang was partly good and partly not so good'. 'Jiang Qing represents only herself', Mao continued, 'not me'. Mao told Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan, and Wang Hongwen not to act with Jiang as a 'Gang of Four'.

As Zhou Enlai's illness became yet more serious, Mao decided to ask Wang Hongwen, the radical and one of the Gang of Four, to take over the day-to-day work of the Party centre, and Deng Xiaoping to take over

the day-to-day work of the State Council. Since Mao had a habit of going south for the winter, he was at Wuhan at the time. Mao's secretary phoned Wang Hongwen on 4 October to let Zhou Enlai know that Mao wanted Deng Xiaoping to become the first vice-premier of the State Council. Instead of informing Zhou straight away as he was expected to do, Wang took Mao's instructions to Jiang Qing and her radical associates. They were very displeased with Mao's decision. They kept Mao's directive for two days, before transmitting it reluctantly to the Politburo and Zhou Enlai. Zhou was delighted. He spoke with Deng on 6 October, vesting in his colleague his hopes and all his unfinished work.

Deng Xiaoping's rapid and continuing rise made it more urgent for the Gang of Four to look for an opening to strike him down. Soon they picked on the issue of the purchase of an ocean-going vessel from abroad, to strike at Deng and possibly Zhou also. In 1974, a Chinese-made ocean-going vessel called 'Fengqing Lun' had returned to China after a successful long sea voyage. Because there was a shortage of ocean-going freighters, the State Council and the Ministry of Transport had decided to import a suitable number of ships from abroad. Jiang Qing and her allies asked why it was necessary for China to buy this number of ships from foreign countries, when they could be built in China. Jiang Qing and her allies castigated the Ministry of Transport for 'selling out' and 'worshipping things foreign'. They called what had become known as the 'Fengqing Lun Affair' a case of 'dictatorship of people with comprador capitalist mentality'. They detained for criticism several members of the Politburo and others who did not agree with them and defined this case as a reactionary political event. They concluded, ominously, that there must be 'people at the central government (the State Council) behind this Ministry of Transport decision'.

At a Politburo meeting on 17 October, Jiang Qing and her cohorts sought to provoke a showdown on the 'Fengqing Lun Affair', labelling it as a case of 'selling out the country'. In her usual bullying manner, she threatened to seize the 'big backer of the comprador capitalists'. She then approached Deng Xiaoping, asking Deng belligerently to clarify his attitude on this subject. Deng replied calmly that he had read the materials, and he thought further investigations needed to be made. Seeing that Deng had the courage not to agree with her, she asked testily: 'What is your attitude regarding the judgment on the foreign slave philosophy?' Deng answered her severely, saying that discussions at the Politburo should be conducted on a civilized footing, and people should not be treated in this manner. He questioned how members of the Politburo could work together, if Jiang were only interested in compelling people to agree with her. Taken aback by someone daring to stand up to her, Jiang Qing started to shout and make a big scene. Deng got up to leave, asking angrily how the meeting could proceed when such labels were being put on people, before the issue to be debated was even clearly understood. After he left, Zhang Chunqiao remarked that Deng Xiaoping had escaped yet again.

After this confrontation, Jiang Qing and her gang stayed up all night on 17 October plotting to send Wang Hongwen to see Mao in Changsha, with accusations against both Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai. Wang accordingly flew to Changsha on 18 October 1974, and told Mao that the four of them had decided, after an all-night meeting, that he should report to Mao certain matters concerning Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai. He told Mao that the atmosphere at Beijing was like that at the Lushan Conference⁶, suggesting that it was full of intrigue and conspiracy. Wang made various false accusations against Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai, and heaped praise on Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, the other three of the Gang of Four. Being aware of the frequent attempts by Jiang Qing's clique to destroy the political careers of both Zhou and Deng, Mao must have understood Wang's accusations in that context, rather than taking them at their face value. In any event, Mao exhorted Wang to settle the issues with those he accused, by discussing with them face-to-face, and he added in an avuncular way that what Wang was doing was not too good. Mao advised Wang to unite with Deng, who was a good fighter and strong in political matters, and to talk more with Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying. Mao told him to beware of Jiang Qing, and not get mixed up with her.

On 18 October, even before Jiang Qing and her associates knew that Wang's mission had failed, they sought out Mao's two female interpreters, Wang Hairong and Tang Wensheng, who had opportunities to see Mao when he received important foreign dignitaries. They told these interpreters, whom Mao trusted, that Deng Xiaoping had quarrelled with Jiang Qing at a Politburo meeting, making it impossible for the meeting to continue, and that Deng Xiaoping's attitude on the 'Fengqing Lung Affair' was like that of the 'February Adverse Current'⁷. Zhang Chunqiao told them that there was a negative balance of foreign trade because the State Council 'worshipped things foreign'. It was also alleged that the leaders of the State Council, especially Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Ye Jianying, were seeing each other frequently, using work as a pretext, to engage in conspiratorial activities. The two interpreters were asked to report these accusations against Zhou and Deng to Mao.

Instead, the two ladies prudently went on 19 October to see Zhou Enlai in hospital, thinking they ought to report this matter to him first. Zhou Enlai had already seen Deng and other members of the Politburo on the matter of the 'Fengqing Lung Affair' and knew about Deng's confrontation with Jiang Qing. After hearing what the interpreters told him, Zhou explained the situation to them fully. He told them that Deng had long suffered many premeditated attacks by the Gang of Four, who had plotted to topple him many times.

⁶ Held in July-August 1959; party leaders openly disagreed on Mao's Policy of the Great Leap Forward.

⁷ The name refers to a series of meetings in February 1967, at which senior veterans challenged the basis of the Cultural Revolution.

On 20 October the two interpreters reported what Zhou Enlai had said to Mao, after the visit of the Prime Minister of Denmark. Mao was displeased with Jiang's conduct. He asked the two ladies to request the three male members of the Gang of Four not to follow Jiang in unrestrained criticisms. Mao praised Deng's strength of character in crossing swords with Jiang Qing. He asked his interpreters to let Zhou know that he was suggesting that Deng should take up the offices of the vice-chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, and the general chief of staff of the PLA, as well as the first vice-chairman of the State Council. Zhou Enlai felt greatly encouraged.

On 22 October Deng Xiaoping accompanied the President of Yemen to visit Mao. After the foreign visitors had left, Deng personally reported to Mao what had taken place during the Politburo meeting on 17 October. Mao told Deng that he was not happy with Jiang Qing's bullying of people, and that 'it was good that Deng possessed a steel company', meaning that Deng had the strength to resist Jiang. Deng said that it was not the first time; Jiang Qing had acted like that at the Politburo seven or eight times, and he really could not take it any longer. He told Mao that he felt the situation at the Politburo was abnormal, and he wanted to see Jiang Qing to talk about it with her, one steel company to another. Mao was pleased that Deng could stand up to Jiang Qing.

The Fourth National People's Congress

As Mao was already eighty years old, with his health deteriorating, he began to make plans to ensure that after his death China was going to successfully follow the path he had chosen for it. To achieve this aim, he wished to select, or supervise the selection of, the top leaders of the three institutions - the Party, the civil administration, and the PLA - which together made up the government of the PRC. Once the choices had been made, he proposed to convene the Fourth National People's Congress as soon as possible, to legitimize the disposition of the leaders of the entire government, and to revise the Constitution. Although only a little over a year ago the Ninth National Party Congress had already legitimized the disposition of the top Party personnel, this congress was still necessary because of its greater scope. It was decided that this congress was to take place near the beginning of 1975. From October 1974 onwards, the permanently hospitalized Zhou Enlai worked intensely with Deng Xiaoping, Wang Hongwen and their senior colleagues on the preparation of this important meeting.

Their opponents, Jiang Qing's Cultural Revolution radicals, were eager to take this opportunity to form a 'cabinet' (*zu ge*), with the intension of putting their people into key positions of all branches of the government. With the support of her colleagues, Jiang Qing plunged herself into a feverish round of lobbying Mao Zedong for this purpose. In November 1974 Jiang Qing wrote Mao a series of letters

recommending various members of her faction to key offices, but Mao rejected all her recommendations, and advised her not to try to form a cabinet with herself as the power behind it. She then complained bitterly to Mao that she was without any office herself. Mao replied that she had a very important job, which was to study the developments in both China and the world. Despite the rebuffs, Jiang asked Mao's two interpreters to petition Mao on her behalf, to make Wang Hongwen a senior vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress. Mao rejected Jiang's proposal, and put Song Qingling, Sun Yat-sen's widow, in that position. He told his interpreters that Jiang Qing's ambition was to become the chairperson of the Party.

After naming several people to various high-ranking posts, including the top leaders of the Standing Committee of the Fourth National Party Congress, Mao left the rest of the disposition of the leaders of the three branches of the government to be worked out by Zhou Enlai and Wang Hongwen. There were to be two reports at the national people's congress: the radical Zhang Chunqiao was to report on the revision of the Constitution, and Zhou Enlai was to report on the work of the government.

Since Zhou Enlai was too ill to prepare his own report, Deng Xiaoping, who was already chairing meetings on behalf of Zhou at the State Council, was authorized by Mao and Zhou to write the report for Zhou to read out at the congress. Because of Zhou's state of health, Deng thought it wise to make this report short and extremely concise. With Mao's consent, the length of the report was limited to 5000 characters. It had been ten years since the Third National Party Congress, and the government had done a lot that was worth reporting during that period. This was therefore a challenging assignment for Deng. He worked hard on it, because he wanted it to stand as a 'brilliant milestone' for Zhou's 50 years as a revolutionary, and over 20 years as the Premier of the PRC. After some revisions, the Politburo, Zhou, and Mao gave their approval to Deng's draft. Following Zhou's guidance, Deng was also deputed to prepare a draft on the personnel disposition of the leaders of the various ministries, committees, and the supreme people's court under the State Council.

During most of October and November 1974, Zhou Enlai met leaders of the State Council and the Politburo, day after day, working out the personnel dispositions for all branches of the government, and other details for the forthcoming national people's congress. He also kept in touch with Mao Zedong in Changsha by letter, or through visiting intermediaries, keeping Mao thoroughly briefed on the work in progress and continually seeking Mao's comments and guidance.

By the middle of December, the preparations had reached the final stage. From then on Zhou held many Politburo meetings, during one of which Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao crossed swords with him, demanding aggressively and vociferously that the positions of minister of education, minister of culture, and chairman of the physical education committee be given to their favoured candidates. After consultation

with other members of the Politburo, Zhao stood firm on the matter of the ministry of education but yielded to Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao's demand on the ministerial portfolios for culture and physical education.

On 23 December the Politburo suggested that Zhou Enlai and Wang Hongwen should go to Changsha to see Mao, because only he had the authority to make the final decisions on the personnel dispositions. Zhou's doctor did not think it was advisable for him to make that trip, since he had to undergo a procedure at that point. But the view of the Politburo was that, considering how much work and effort had been put in by Zhou and his moderate colleagues, if only Wang Hongwen, who represented the interests of the radicals, were to go alone, a great deal might be lost, and such a situation must be avoided at all costs. Zhou had been so dedicated to working for his country and its people that considerations for his health had often been pushed aside, and so it was in this case. From 23 to 27 December a very sickly and tired Zhou Enlai, accompanied by Wang Hongwen, flew to Changsha to speak with Mao.

During their meetings, Mao admonished Wang not to act as a member of the Gang of Four and not to form cliques. He also asked Wang to write down self-criticisms. He returned to the theme that 'Jiang Qing has ambitions'. Mao said that he had suggested to Jiang the following three 'nots': 1, not to organize the government; 2, not to court publicity, and 3, not to engage in irresponsible criticisms.

On 26 December 1974, Mao's eighty-first birthday, he spent the day alone with Zhou, talking mostly about subjects that obsessed him politically, such as the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and the 'prevention of revisionism'. Zhou took the opportunity to remind Mao that Jiang and Zhang Chunqiao had 'problems in their history', meaning that they had committed such serious misdeeds in the past that they could be purged if the case against them were proven by investigations. Mao refused to consider these issues. Although he wanted to curb Jiang Qing, he believed that she and her cohorts were still needed as his watch dogs against the reappearance of revisionism.

Regarding Deng Xiaoping, Mao said that someone with Deng's ability was hard to find, and that Deng had strong political ideas. In addition to the office of the first vice-premier, Mao would like Deng to be the vice-chairman of the Military Commission, and the general chief of staff of the PLA. Zhou suggested that Deng be made a vice-chairman of the Party or a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. Mao said that Deng should be both. It was rare for anyone to hold posts near the top of all three of these governing institutions.

At that point Deng ranked just behind Zhou in the State Council and was groomed to succeed Zhou. He ranked third in the military, behind Mao and Ye Jianying. When he had first returned from exile, he had worked only as a vice-premier of the State Council. He was not even a member of the central committee of

the Party, let alone its Politburo. Now he was a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo as well as a vice-president of the Party. Deng Xiaoping was indeed put into a very powerful position, more so than he had ever been before he was 'overthrown'. But Deng was not meant to be Mao's successor. He was given such powers because of his great ability, which was to be used to serve the chosen successor, who was still possibly Wang Hongwen. Mao made this arrangement to enable Deng to play the role Zhou had fulfilled in relation to himself. Mao obviously trusted Deng sufficiently to allow him such preponderance of power, while trusting him to remain subordinate to his heir.

On the overall arrangement of the top leaders of the three branches of the government for the time after his passing, Mao was still juggling with the idea of the balance of power between those faithful to his Cultural Revolutionary line on the Left of the political spectrum, and those who were politically moderate, but capable of managing the affairs of the country and improving its economy. Mao provided some concrete propositions on the final personnel dispositions presented to him by Zhou and Wang. Seeing that the Left had no voice in the military, Mao suggested that the radical Zhang Chunqiao should lead the political department of the PLA.

At this juncture, Mao desired stability and unity, and he wanted the radicals and the moderate Party veterans to work together. He hoped that his leadership plan for China's government would carry forward his revolutionary vision for China, as well as making China prosperous and strong. Unfortunately, the equilibrium between the two sides was extremely fragile. It was a product of Mao's will, and its continuation depended on Mao being there. The Gang of Four and the veteran Party leaders were so hostile to one another that the possibility of their working together cooperatively was essentially nil, even at that point, never mind at a future time without Mao.

Zhou was pleased to have the chance for a heart-to-heart talk with Mao, their last with one another. He was gratified that Mao continued to emphasize stability and unity and supported his and Deng's work. Although Mao continued to try to discourage the Gang of Four and their followers from obstructing his work and creating disorder, Zhou failed to get Mao to remove Jiang and Zhang, their core leaders, from the political scene. Unity was only going to be possible in the absence of this disturbing and destructive faction.

Zhou was quite satisfied with the outcome of his consultation with Mao, because by and large Mao accepted the arrangements he and Wang had made on government leadership, and because Deng Xiaoping, his trusted old comrade-in-arms, would be put in a powerful position to continue his work of repairing the damage of the Cultural Revolution, promoting economic production, and modernizing China, against many odds. After returning to Beijing, he called a series of Politburo meetings to report back, and to implement

Mao's directives and guidelines. From 1 to 8 January 1975, Zhou convened the Second Plenum of the Tenth Party Congress to discuss the plans for the coming National People's Congress, and to authorize the presentation to this congress of the proposed reports, and the list of the names of the leaders of the entire government of the PRC.

The Fourth National People's Conference opened on 12 January 1975, in the Great Conference Hall of the People. Sitting around the chairman's platform were Zhou Enlai's camp on one side and Wang Hongwen and Jiang Qing's on the other, without any pretence of bipartisanship. The appearance of the emaciated Zhou Enlai aroused prolonged and enthusiastic applause from the 2,864 delegates of the congress. Zhou's report 'On the Work of the Government', which emphasized the modernization of China's agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology to enable the Chinese economy to join the major world economies, brought ardent applause and tears to the eyes of many in his audience. The delegates voted for his report, and for the one delivered by Zhang Chunqiao entitled 'On the Revision of the Constitution'. They also voted for leaders of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and the slate of the leaders for different branches, ministries, and committees of the entire government of China, as proposed by Mao and Zhou.

Deng Xiaoping's drive to restore rail transport; the Gang of Four lose ground

Disorder during the Cultural Revolution had spread rapidly, but to restore order was a laborious and uphill struggle. By 1975, nine years had passed since the beginning of this destructive movement. Despite Zhou Enlai's and his colleagues' efforts to restore order, especially during the last six years, the overall picture was still full of chaos. A typical example was the Chinese national railway network, the efficient operation of which was vital for the economy of the country. For many years, many important junctions and long stretches of the railway had been in a chronic state of breakdown, making it impossible to transport goods, move passengers smoothly, and fulfil the government's plans for coal haulage. Deng identified it as an exceptionally weak link in the nation's economic development. He also identified the persistence of factionalism as the main problem. Because of Mao's continuing support for the Cultural Revolution and the radical leaders of this movement, the cadres who managed and provided services in the railway administration were divided between the radicals, who had joined and risen during the Cultural Revolution, and the veterans. The ideological conflicts and power struggles in the railway service had a large negative impact on the whole system.

On 5 March 1975, after studying and investigating with Wan Li, the Minister of Railways, the entire system as well as the specific junctions and segments where blockages and stoppages were especially severe, Deng issued a document on 'The Decision as Regards Strengthening the Work of the Railways'. This empowered

the Ministry of Railways to establish and implement the necessary regulations and enforce discipline to control factional struggles and destructive behaviour, starting with the leading cadres of each area. Wan Li went to each of the 20 regional railway bureaus and called meetings of up to one hundred thousand of the locals, to explain to them how the government planned to restore the railways to good working order, and to secure their cooperation to ferret out those leading railway officials who figured prominently in factional fights, work stoppages, or other bad behaviour. They were to be criticized by the masses and given a period to change their ways. If they failed to do so after the time limit, they would be dismissed or posted elsewhere. To restore the ailing railway network to a healthy state was Deng's first campaign in correcting the 'mistakes' of the Cultural Revolution. It was an unqualified success. By June, the entire railway network was running smoothly with all blockages removed.

The leaders of the Cultural Revolution were not going to let Deng's challenge to them go unanswered. Chang Chunqiao, as the head of the Political Department of the army, spoke to the leaders of this department on the peril of 'Experiencism' on 1 March 1975. Since this faction controlled much of the official press, the *People's Daily* and the *Red Flag* were full of articles such as *On the Dictatorship of the Capitalist Class* and *Experiencism Aids Revisionism* during March and April that year. These articles suggested that Deng and other *experienced* veteran leaders like him were capitalists and revisionists, who did not understand Marxist theories. Around the middle of April, Deng rejected Jiang Qing's request to hold a Politburo meeting to discuss 'Experiencism'.

On 18 April Deng accompanied the leader of North Korea, Kim Il Sung, to visit Mao, who had returned to Beijing. After the visitor had left, Deng took the opportunity to tell Mao in a forthright manner that he disagreed with Jiang Qing's assertion that 'Experiencism' was a major current peril. Mao could see that Deng's diagnosis and treatment of the railway systems had restored that patient to health. The relentless attacks on Deng and his work around this time by Jiang Qing and her clique, though cloaked in Marxist language, went against Mao's desire for unity and security.

A few days later, Mao wrote his authoritative comments on the margin of an official report, to the effect that anti-revisionism included both anti-Experiencism and anti-Dogmatism, both of which were guilty of revising Marxism, and that one should not be mentioned without the other. Not many people in the Party really understood Marxism, he continued, though some thought they did. He characterized those, who were ever so ready to grasp at opportunities to lecture others, as showing a lack of understanding of Marxism-Leninism. He ordered the Politburo to discuss these questions.

Mao's comments enabled Deng and his colleagues to criticize Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao severely at a Politburo meeting held on 27 April. The Politburo also raised the question of the Gang of Four's various cliquish activities, including sending out printed propaganda material in their own names, without official

approval. Jiang was obliged to make a self-criticism at this meeting. Although Deng's side won this round, Jiang Qing's gang licked their wounds and sharpened their weapons ready to do battle with Deng and his like-minded colleagues again.

Soon after, believing that Mao still favoured Wang Hongwen, the other radicals put Wang up to write a letter to Mao, accusing Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Ye Jianying of painting the situation in China as too black, and of encouraging the worst rumours in the Chinese society. Mao was very displeased at receiving a letter from one of Jiang Qing's gang so soon after he had criticized them. On 3 May 1975 Mao went to the length of chairing a Politburo meeting himself, with the aim of curbing the radicals' continuous hostile campaigns against Zhou, Deng, and other veteran leaders, whose work he supported. At the meeting, Mao stressed repeatedly the importance of unity and security. He exhorted the Party leaders there not to split into factions, not to engage in intrigue, and to be open and above board. Then he turned to Jiang Qing's group, urging them not to act as the Gang of Four. 'Why could they not unite with the other 200 and more members of the Central Committee?' Mao asked in frustration. 'If they have concerns, they should discuss these with the Politburo', Mao told them. Mao enjoined them to act in a disciplined manner, not to send printed documents in their own names, or to use his name (such documents were normally sent out with the permission of the whole Politburo only).

If other officials had acted like the Gang of Four, they would have lost their office positions long ago. Mao criticized the group only superficially, without looking into the roots of their animosity against the other Party leaders. He continued to protect them and minimized the damage they caused. He told the veteran leaders that the problems of the Gang of Four were not big ones, and if they were not solved this year, perhaps they would be next year, or year after that. In deteriorating health and with cataracts in both eyes, this was the last time that Mao, then 83, chaired or attended a Politburo meeting. On 4 and 8 May Zhou Enlai twice came out of the hospital to chair Politburo meetings, to act on Mao's critical comments regarding the Gang of Four, and to oblige them to rein in their hostile activities towards Deng Xiaoping's forthcoming major consolidation campaign.

While the PRC was still mired in internal conflicts arising from the Cultural Revolution, France sent China an invitation for a state visit. The PRC and France had established formal diplomatic contacts in 1964, and since then the two nations had maintained friendly relations. While the French President Claude Pompidou had paid China a visit in 1973, no Chinese leader had visited France since 1964. Having established normal state contacts with the United States and Japan, Mao wanted to strengthen the ties between China and France. Normally, Zhou Enlai would have led such an important visit. But Zhou's illness again prompted Mao to decide on sending Deng Xiaoping as the head of a delegation to France, for a state visit from 5 to 12 May 1975.

Even though Deng Xiaoping was only a vice-premier of the State Council, the French laid down the red carpet for him and treated him as the head of a state in diplomatic etiquette and formality. Deng could not help remembering that fifty years ago, as a left-wing Chinese student-worker in France, he had been wanted by the French military police; now he was a VIP warmly received by the French heads of state, and crowds of French people. Deng had talks with President Francois Mitterrand and Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, discussing the international situation and how to develop further the political and commercial relationship between the two countries. Deng also took the opportunity to visit French industrial facilities. He saw how much France had changed and developed during the fifty-year period, and the distance China needed to cover to catch up with the advanced economies. Deng's visit to France, and the one in 1974 to the UN, served to build up Deng's reputation as a world-class statesman on the international scene.

After his return to China, Mao and Zhou decided to let Deng chair the meetings of the Politburo and conduct the day-to-day affairs of the Party from the centre. To learn from and to carry out thoroughly the spirit of Mao's critical comments at the meeting on 3 May, Deng convened Politburo meetings towards the end of May and around the beginning of June, to subject the Gang of Four to rounds of severe criticism from him and other Party leaders. The four leaders of the radicals were obliged to criticize themselves and submit self-criticisms in writing. The tables were being turned.

When Deng had another chance to see Mao after meeting some foreign visitors later in June, Mao seemed to think that the problem of the radicals upsetting Deng and his work had been resolved by their self-criticisms. Mao said that Jiang Qing's group had done well in the anti-Liu Shaoqi and anti-Lin Biao campaigns, but now they were not doing the right thing by attacking Zhou, Deng, and others. Deng told Mao that the members of Politburo were very angry with the Gang, and that some of them thought Wang Hongwen's statements lacked truthfulness. Curiously, Mao said that Jiang Qing did not like him either. Mao also complained 'He kept on coming to me to accuse others'. Mao did not defend Wang, whom he had personally raised to the position of vice-chairman of the Party, ranking third after himself and Zhou Enlai. Finding Wang unable to measure up to his high expectations, Mao said 'He should focus on doing his work well'.

From this meeting, it emerged that Mao was having second thoughts on Wang as his successor, but he still wished to train Wang for high office on account of the young man's radical views. He said to Deng, 'Wang does not have high prestige. I am going to ask him to seek your company and listen to you.' To separate Wang from the other members of the Gang in Beijing, Mao had him transferred to Shanghai to 'help with

some work there'. Although Mao did not change Wang's rank downward in the line-up of vice-chairmanships of the Party at this point, Mao bypassed Wang when he did finally choose his successor.

Referring to Deng and his rectification work, Mao remarked: 'A tree that stood out in the forest was bound to attract wind', and he urged Deng to go ahead and get on with the work. 'I am still determined on that matter', Deng assured Mao. This conversation between Mao and Deng showed that Mao approved of Deng's work and gave him solid support, including a big effort on Mao's part to curb the activities of the Gang of Four.

Deng's bold Comprehensive Consolidation drive; a judgement on the Maoists

Encouraged by his recent success on improving the performance of the railway system, Deng wished to speed up the rectification work on the problems created by the Cultural Revolution, which had accumulated over nearly a decade. Unless these problems were addressed and eliminated, the four modernizations would remain a paper scheme or an empty slogan. Attacking these problems in a piecemeal fashion seemed much too slow. Seeing that Mao was eager for economic growth, Deng decided to take the opportunity of the strong support Mao was currently offering him, to carry out a three-month blitz during July, August, and September 1975 to push a bold and comprehensive consolidation drive to the Party and to the PLA. It would eradicate the roots of the malaise and administer broad remedies, in areas ranging across agriculture, industry, science, technology, education, and culture.

In order to inform the public and to guide the administrators on the implementation of this ambitious policy and its purpose and goals, Deng's colleagues produced three documents: 1. 'Questions in Connection with Increasing the Speed of Industrial Development'; 2. 'Questions Relating to the Work on Science and Technology'; and 3. 'The General Guideline on Each Type of Work of the Party in China as a Whole' (to be abbreviated as 'The General Guideline'). Deng carefully thrashed out the details of these documents with his colleagues and held many meetings with leaders in all the areas in connection with the overall or comprehensive consolidation work.

On the question of how to speed up industrial development, Deng and his colleagues felt an urgent need to begin by correcting the malfunctions in personnel and management of the various industries, starting with steel production and the industries connected with defence. Deng found many leaders of factories were too soft, lazy, or unfocused on production. According to Deng, they ought to be like leaders in a battle, fighting for production. During the Cultural Revolution, the wrong kind of people had usurped the leadership positions of many enterprises. They knew more about revolution than production. They did not try to maintain discipline and allowed many necessary rules and regulation to be set aside. They did not encourage technical staff to use their expertise. They presided over a system where everyone was paid the same

whether they worked well or poorly, and whether they turned up to work or not. These leaders were too afraid of being criticized for ‘productionism’ or ‘economism’, if they worked to improve production, or the workers’ material lot.

Deng wanted to retake these leadership positions and give them to people who dared to enforce the policy of focusing on increasing production, rewarding workers according to their input, and enforcing strictly the rules and regulations of a new management regime, without fear of being attacked as ‘restoring the old regime’. They would be made responsible for fulfilling production targets, for curbing factionalism and for disciplining those staff who tended to accuse others of political crimes in an irresponsible way. They were asked to courageously involve the masses in struggling against factionalism. They were not to admit those who wanted to join the Party and become cadres simply by claiming to be ‘rebels’. The industries connected with defence were examples of having too many ‘rebels’ leading the enterprises. Deng used a strategy of transferring the ‘rebel’ leaders of these enterprises to Beijing, to attend conferences and training classes, and replacing them with staff possessing special expertise and management experience.

The document on speeding up industrial production stressed the need to import state-of-the-art technology and equipment from abroad in a deliberate and planned fashion, for the sake of upgrading the domestic technology more rapidly, and to increase productivity. It stated that if China were to catch up with the more advanced nations, the people here must have the humility to try to learn from them, and Chinese creativity must be combined with learning from abroad. In addition to calling for better management, it emphasized the need for quality control, for increasing imports and exports, for more scientific research at the enterprise level, and for trusting the technical personnel more. The document maintained that to achieve socialist modernization required a lot of able people with good training, and these people should be rewarded according to their individual contributions. Paying everyone the same irrespective of his or her contribution would not stimulate production. The document also urged the management to pay attention to the living conditions of the workers.

The document on science and technology emphasized the importance of these subjects to China’s development. It asserted that without science and technology leading the way, it would not be possible to modernize agriculture, industry, and defence. For this reason, science and technology were also forces for production. It pointed out the need for establishing new specialized scientific research institutions, and for increasing the number of scientific specialists. The document tried to make a case for strengthening basic

theoretical research, even though applied research had the priority. It declared that not all scientific research had to be applicable to solving problems on factories and farms. Noting the big gap between the level of science and technology between the more advanced parts of the world and China, it suggested selective importation of technology and equipment to speed up China's developments in these fields. Self-reliance, while a good thing in general, must not be equated with keeping China in isolation. This document revealed that Deng and his like-minded colleagues wanted to provide a stimulating and lively atmosphere to nurture a scientific community, which would engage actively in the pursuit of their studies. The scientists would be encouraged to hold meetings and conferences for exchanging information, discussing and debating freely with each other.

Like the document on speeding up industrial production, this one also emphasized the importance of proper leadership. Discussing it with his colleagues at a meeting, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that many of the weaknesses in China's scientific establishments had to do with poor leadership. For example, despite a shortage of scientific specialists, many of them had been shifted to work in areas other than their speciality. Deng raised questions, such as why scientific institutions had retained leaders who did not understand science and technology, who lacked enthusiasm for the work, and who tended to operate as cliques; and why had scientists of high calibre not been promoted to direct research institutions. He said that scientists should be given the facilities and support of the leaders of their institution to do the work they were best at. Clearly political correctness had been more important than professional excellence.

Deng pointed out that the crisis in education could affect finding successors for the current generation of scientists. He noticed that some universities were no better than middle level technical schools: what was the point of making them into universities, he asked. Deng Xiaoping also said that abusing and degrading teachers did not help to encourage them to perform well.

However, Deng and his colleagues were not prepared to point their fingers at the root cause of many of the problems troubling education, science, and technology: namely Mao Zedong's ideas, attitude, and policies on these subjects. Mao had never spent time in Japan and Western Europe to acquire even a rudimentary familiarity with how scientific research was carried out, and how it was applied to technology to transform the economy. He seemed to know little about modern industrial production. Mao mocked expertise and professionalism and lowered the standing of the teaching profession. He did not understand the scientific and technological basis of the wide gap between the economic development of China and that of the West and Japan. Otherwise, he might not have insisted on transforming China's economy simply through mobilizing the energy and will of the masses to increase production. For 20 years, from 1956, one of the high tides of the radical movement of agricultural collectivization, until Mao's death in 1976, the

development of science, technology, and education in China was severely limited by the Mao's attitude and ideas on these subjects.

The third document, 'The General Guideline on Each Type of Work of the Party for China as a Whole' (to be abbreviated as 'The General Guideline') was a spirited attack against positions taken by the Cultural Revolution radicals. It was also an attempt at a theoretical justification for Deng's rectification campaign, by appropriating Mao's strongly expressed desire for an order based on unity and stability, and for the economy to grow. With their control of major newspapers, these 'ultra-left' radicals were usually the ones doing the attacking. After nine years of Culture Revolution, this was the first time someone had attempted to strike back at them, using their abusive style of name-calling.

The General Guideline asserted that according to Chairman Mao's teachings, politics and economics were so closely related to each other that they should be understood in terms of a unity of dialectic elements. Politics, being in command, should serve the economic base, and ensure the completion of the economic tasks. The General Guidelines pointed out that 'some of our comrades', meaning the radical leaders of the Cultural Revolution or the Gang of Four, divorced politics from economics, and revolution from production. As a result, they only talked about politics and revolution, but not about economics and production. They labelled people doing economic reconstruction as revisionists. Referring to these radicals, the document denounced them as anti-Marxists who had hijacked the revolutionary slogans as Lin Biao's clique had done, and had then twisted and distorted them, turning right into wrong. They had confused the masses and caused them to break into factions, splitting up the Party at the centre, causing disorder in Party organizations all over China, overthrowing many good cadres, usurping leading positions, and seizing power to control many governmental and socio-economic organizations.

The General Guideline went on to invoke Lenin and Mao's authority. Both had stated that the success of a political party and its policies had to be measured by whether they liberated or restricted the forces of production, and by the extent to which they liberated the forces of production. This measure also distinguished true socialist revolutionary societies from false ones, and correct policy lines from mistaken ones. Faced with a very bad situation in production, some people were insisting that the revolution was going well; apparently, they thought that a good revolution would automatically lead to increasing production. The General Guideline concluded that 'only those who were intoxicated by the idea of turning stone into gold' could still indulge in thinking that growth in production could come so effortlessly.

Despite Deng's careful attempt to provide correct political justification for his economic policies, this General Guideline was plainly a concerted attack on the disastrous economic outcome of the Cultural Revolution. This perfectly justified judgement was bound to land Deng in deep trouble with the Maoists.

Deng's wholesale consolidation campaign did reverse the economic stagnation and decline in production which had happened as a result of the Cultural Revolution. During 1975, the value of the combined agriculture and industrial production increased by 11.9% from that of the year before. Within this figure, growth in the production of grain, steel, coal, crude oil, electricity, the amount of goods transported by rail, and investment in infrastructure had all contributed to the increase. The success gave the people hope that improvements could be made, with different leaders in power implementing different policies.

A host of positive results in many other areas were rapidly achieved. During the past 9 years of the Cultural Revolution, no books had been published. With Zhou Enlai's authorization, Deng pushed forward a National Publication Bureau Ten-Year Plan for publishing dictionaries of Chinese and foreign languages. The Cultural Revolution radicals' reign over culture had created a cultural desert. Published works were narrowly dogmatic and standardized. People in the Arts exposed themselves to criticisms and punishments for the slightest deviation from the norm laid down by the ultra-leftists. Apart from a few approved books and films, everything else was banned. Even Mao Zedong in his seclusion noticed that there was a dearth of new novels, drama, poetry, and songs. With Mao's support, the ban on many literary journals and films was lifted in 1975.

In the field of education, the Red Guard movement and student factional fights, manipulated by the Cultural Revolution radicals with Mao's support, had wrought havoc in universities, schools, and in the lives of the intelligentsia. With the encouragement of Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Rongxin, the Minister of Education, led meetings with cadres and teachers to discuss ways to mend the broken educational system, and restore the reputation of the intellectuals and the teaching profession. The public welcomed these moves.

Regarding the campaign to purge the Party itself, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping secured the support of Mao and other leaders for releasing most of the people still under arrest or investigation, with the exception of cases relating to Lin Biao. Depending on the degree of the offence, the former detainees were resettled, offered suitable employment, paid backdated salaries, had their party membership restored if wrongly taken away, and given medical treatment if needed. Among these were over 300 high-level Party cadres.

The military was a major target of the consolidation campaign. In the summer of 1975, the Central Military Commission called a conference of the leaders of the PLA and heads of the military academies to discuss

reorganization, restoring the fine tradition that had been abandoned under Lin Biao, improving leadership, and fighting factionalism. At one of the meetings, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that, owing to the legacy of Lin Biao, the PLA had become arrogant, extravagant, unfocused, and swollen. He exhorted the army leaders to make efforts to correct the behaviour of their officers and troops. Ye Jianying exposed the Gang of Four's plan to split the army into factions and to seize control. Invoking Mao's call for unity and stability, Ye urged the military leaders to resist the influence of the Gang of Four. The army responded well to these moves. Ye submitted the speeches and reports of this conference to Mao, who indicated his approval.

The Renewal of the Revolution

The Gang of Four fight back

As Zhou Enlai had expected, the Gang of Four were not going to let Deng Xiaoping pursue restoring order and reconstruction without interference. In July 1975 articles were published in major newspapers, the *Wenhui Daily*, the *Guang Ming Daily*, and the *Liberation Daily*, criticizing Confucius and recalling a historical episode that occurred over two thousand years ago, when the prime minister of the Qin dynasty attempted to usurp the throne. These criticisms were obliquely aimed at Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping as the forces of 'restoration'. The articles also attacked 'empiricism', contrasting the value the veteran leaders attached to pragmatic experiences, with their lack of dedication to revolutionary ideals. Jiang Qing used academic hacks, under the pseudonym of Liang Xiao, to write articles for an important historical journal, characterizing Deng's and his colleagues' call for importing Western equipment and technology as 'wholesale Westernization'. This process would lead China to lose national sovereignty and political independence, becoming economically a complete appendage of imperialism, so these writers claimed.

Wang Hongwen called many meetings in Shanghai, warning people of the rise of 'revisionism'. He also inspected the weapons of the local militia and led practice drills in preparation for fighting a guerrilla war in the alleyways of the city. Deng Xiaoping decided to ignore these challenges, which made him feel all the more anxious to use the small window of opportunity to push his rectification campaign through. Deng correctly gauged that the window would soon close.

During the summer of 1975, Mao was losing his sight as his cataracts progressed, depriving him of the ability to see documents and to read books for entertainment. In July, disregarding his own serious illness, Zhou Enlai held two enlarged meetings of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, to discuss the best treatment and cure for Mao's eye condition. Although the 82-yearold Mao disliked surgery, he was persuaded to undergo a procedure to remove his cataracts by a famous eye specialist on 23 July. On that

day, Zhou Enlai travelled from hospital to Mao's place, and waited there until the procedure was completed successfully.

After the surgery, although Mao's eyesight improved, he expressed a preference to have books read to him. On 18 August Lu Di, a woman teaching at the Chinese faculty of the Peking University, was asked to come to Mao's residence to read novels to him. As Mao heard the familiar stories from the classic novels, such as *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *The Dream of the Red Mansions*. Mao liked to make comments and criticisms on them. After hearing the stories of the *Water Margin*, Mao pointed out that the book was excellent on capitulationism. He expressed an opinion that it could be used as a negative lesson to teach people about capitulationist factions. In the story, the peasant rebels were against corrupt officials, but not against the emperor. The rebel leader, Sung Jiang, *capitulated* to the emperor's forces and became a 'revisionist'. Sung then represented the landlord class in the fight against other peasant rebels. Mao concluded that Sung was a bad leader of this ill-fated peasant rebellion. He concluded that 'the peasants reverted back into their former condition of slavery'.

After Lu Di left Mao, she wrote down Mao's comments on the *Water Margin* that same day. Anyone else making this kind of comment on a book would not have amounted to much. But from a semi-deified figure like Mao, even his most casual remarks could be perceived by the public as nuggets of wisdom or dressed up as political directives to fit the agenda of some cliques. New political directives credited to Mao had the power to stir people to come out into the streets to shout slogans, start marches, or start a new political movement. This was how many events of the Cultural Revolution had taken place. The Gang of Four were always watching avidly for any words from Mao that they could use as weapons against the 'moderate' wing (*wen he pai*) of the Party. Yao Wenyuan, the scribe of the Gang of Four, read Lu Di's collection of Mao's comment on the *Water Margin* on that same day, and he was not slow to recognize that he had hit upon a deadly weapon against his political adversaries.

Yao immediately sent a letter to Mao regarding the importance of what he had said about the *Water Margin*. He wrote that Mao's comments had profound significance for the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese proletariat, the poor and lower middle peasants, and all the revolutionary masses in connection with their present, future, and even the next century's persistent pursuit of Marxism, and the Maoist revolutionary line against revisionism. He requested permission from Mao to publish Mao's comments, and to have his letter sent to the Politburo, and published by the major newspapers, such as the *People's Daily*, the *Red Flag*, and *Guang Ming Daily*, as well as other propaganda organizations for comments and further dissemination. With Jiang Qing's propaganda machine working full steam, a deluge of publications on this subject, with many twists and turns, followed the first appearance of Mao's critical comments on the *Water Margin*.

What ensued was an active nation-wide campaign against capitulationism and people who pursued a capitulationist foreign policy. Who were the capitulationists? Although no names were mentioned at this point, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping knew that the campaign was directed against them and other moderate leaders of the Party, insinuating that they were *capitulating* to revisionism or bourgeois capitalism. At the same time, Jiang Qing held a meeting with the Minister of Culture and others, pointing out that the key point Mao was trying to make was the usurpation of Chao Gai's leadership of the peasant rebel movement by others. The parallel she saw with the present situation was that some members of the Politburo wanted to usurp the leadership of Chairman Mao.

During September and October 1975, a wider and less destructive left wing of the Party at the State Council sponsored a large national 'Learning from Dazhai Agricultural Conference'. We have met Dazhai previously as a celebrated model people's commune in Shanxi which faithfully put Mao's ideas to work and apparently achieved enormous production increases. (As mentioned previously, Liu Shaoqi sent a team to investigate and found the production figures to be grossly exaggerated, and the leader of the commune corrupt.) Among the 7,000 attendees were Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Qing. Deng made a speech about the importance of modernization of agriculture, which was the foundation of the Chinese economy, and about the need for rectification⁸ (*Zheng Dun*), a process strongly supported by Mao, though the Chairman called it adjustment (*Tiao Zheng*). The keynote speech was made, however, by neither Deng nor Jiang, but by a new political star called Hua Guofeng.

Hua was born in Shanxi in 1920 and was posted to Hunan in the early 1950s. Mao first met him when he was the prefectural Party Secretary in Xiangtang, Mao's home prefecture. In 1959, Hua caught Mao's attention by his favourable assessment of the progress of the Great Leap Forward in Hunan. He also won Mao's approbation by founding a model Dazhai brigade in Hunan in 1964, promoting Red Guards' pilgrimages to Mao's home village, and supervising a factory that produced 30 million Mao buttons in a year. Recognizing Hua's personal loyalty to himself and to his ideals, Mao promoted him from being the Party Secretary in Hunan to one of the 12 vice-premiers of the State Council, in charge of agricultural development. Hua Guofeng remained an independent Maoist without joining Jiang Qing or Lin Biao's group and kept clear of factional fights. Unlike Wang Hongwen, he worked cooperatively with the veteran Party leaders. His investigation of Lin Biao's alleged plot to kill Mao earned him the position of the Minister of Public Security in 1975.

In his long speech, drawing on the language and ideals of the Great Leap Forward, Hua held up Dazhai as a model for China's future development. He claimed that Dazhai was proof that China's communes, being

⁸ A traditional Communist concept, meaning the overcoming of anti-proletarian and anti-Marxist-Leninist ideology, and replacing it with proletarian and Marxist-Leninist ideology.

large and with a high degree of public ownership, were just the kind of organizations that could successfully combine agriculture, industry, commerce, education, and military affairs as basic societal units. Hua asserted that properly developed communes would realize Mao's goal of 'narrowing the gaps between town and country, between worker and peasant, and between manual and mental labour'.

As regards increasing agricultural yield, Hua did acknowledge, besides self-reliance, the importance of mechanization, and of using scientific knowledge and traditional experience and skills on such practical matters as soil improvement, seed selection, planting, water conservancy, field management and so on. Full of enthusiasm, he claimed that if the agriculturally poor Shanxi province were composed of all Dazhais, using modern agriculture production methods, the provincial grain output could then reach 2.5 times the current levels. Extrapolated to China as a whole, the prospects would really be exciting.

According to Hua, if the Party were to extend the modernization of Dazhai throughout China, the rich agricultural sector would effectively spearhead the Four Modernizations. To someone like Deng Xiaoping, who had had to deal with the aftermath of the agricultural disaster associated with the commune movement, Hua's projections were likely to sound wildly over-optimistic and highly unrealistic, though Deng knew better than to knock Hua's faith in Dazhai publicly. On Mao's favourite theme of class struggle, Hua suggested that the local Party committees should help the poor and lower middle peasants to dominate the well-to-do middle peasants, to prevent rural capitalism from rearing its ugly head. Hua Guofeng's speech, after a report of it was submitted to Mao, must have sounded like music to Mao's ears.

Although Jiang Qing was not formally slated to make major speech at this conference, she lost no opportunity to harass Deng Xiaoping from the gallery when it was his turn to speak. She had also managed to gather some educational and cultural groups to talk about the book *Water Margin*, to prepare the ground for her attack on Deng for 'capitulationism'.

Speaking from the gallery, Jiang Qing insisted that this historical novel was highly relevant to China's present situation, because it told the story of Song Jiang, a new peasant rebel leader, who had usurped the position of Chao Gai, the original rebel leader. Then Song Jiang had invited the rebels' former enemies, the Sung government officials, to take over the leadership positions of the peasant rebel movement, which thereby effectively surrendered itself. The obviously parallel was that Deng Xiaoping (as Song Jiang) aimed to usurp the position of Mao Zedong (as Chao Gai). The part of the Sung government officials was played by the previously overthrown 'revisionist' Party leaders, now restored to their positions of authority. Deng Xiaoping was like Song Jiang, a villainous capitulationist, someone who had *capitulated* to capitalism and revisionism. After giving this highly inflammatory talk, Jiang Qing requested that its sound recordings be broadcast, and its printed version be sent all over China.

When Mao heard about Jiang Qing's disruptive behaviour at the conference on Dazhai, he was angered by her not listening to his repeated admonitions against such disorderly conduct. Hua Guofeng consulted Mao about whether he should publicize Jiang Qing's talk as she had requested. Referring to her talk, the infuriated Mao swore, and said it had nothing to do with the conference. Mao did not give permission for it to be broadcast or sent anywhere.

After this conference, a left-wing leader of the State Council proposed using the commune as the basic accounting unit, as against the current practice of using production brigades or even, in many cases, production teams. This was an attempt at equalization of rewards. The State Council resisted this proposal, and other pressures from the Left, with the justification of maintaining continuity and stability of policy. Because of Mao's support, Deng's rectification policy remained in force, despite opposition from Jiang Qing's gang. As long as Mao remained alive, Jiang Qing's gang would not cease trying to overthrow Deng and overturn his work on reconstruction. Before very long they would regain the upper hand, after Mao became mistrustful of Deng.

Deng faces severe criticism; Maoists once more in the ascendant

Around the time when of Gang of Four were busy blasting capitulationists, Zhou Enlai's illness was spiralling downwards. He needed another major operation. On 20 September, the day for the performance of the procedure, Zhou's wife Deng Yingchao, Deng Xiaoping - the two Dengs were not related - and some other Politburo members were waiting on him at the hospital. They saw him writing a note with shaky hands that read: '[Before] entering the operation room on 20 September 1975: The 'Gang of Four' conspired together to frame Zhou Enlai as a traitor', and then he signed his name. Still lying on the trolley, Zhou called for Deng and held the latter's hand tightly saying, 'you have done very well this year; much better than I!' Then rallying all the strength of his frail body, he shouted with a voice full of anger and sorrow, 'I am loyal to the Party, faithful to the people! I am not a capitulationist.'

To Deng and those present, it seemed profoundly sad that someone who had given his life unreservedly in the service of his country, its people, and the CCP which he had joined as a patriotic young man, should feel compelled to defend his character and clear his name so near the end of his life. Death for Zhou, who served meritoriously as China's premier for over a quarter of a century, should have been peaceful and honourable. Instead, physical illness aside, he was deeply troubled by emotional stress and mental anguish about the fate of China, for which he had laboured tirelessly, and that of his colleagues, Deng Xiaoping in particular, because of the hostile activities of the Gang of Four and Mao's unpredictable behaviour. Zhou

did survive the 5-hour long operation, but his cancer had spread to such an extent that he was not expected to live for very much longer.

Zhou had been right to worry. The mercurial Mao was soon to change his attitude towards Deng. Between August and October 1975, Deng passed on to Mao two letters from Liu Bing, a vice-secretary of the CCP at Tsinghua University, who made a complaint against Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi, two radical Party officials at Tsinghua, whose behaviour and lifestyle, according to Liu, had offended Party policy. In Mao's eyes, however, Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi had played a useful part in the Cultural Revolution, and he thought Deng was obviously biased in favour of Liu Bing and against Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi. Deng had probably incurred Mao's displeasure, but the matter did not seem that important at the time.

Before long, Mao requested to have his nephew, Mao Yuanxin, to serve as his liaison with the outside world. Apparently, the elderly Mao had become less trustful of outsiders in comparison to his own relatives. Mao Yuanxin was an engineering student in Harbin during the Cultural Revolution. He rose quickly to become the leader of a rebel group, before becoming the head of the Liaoning Revolution Committee and the Shenyang Military District. Summoning Mao Yuanxin to the centre of power fitted Mao's strategy of balancing the power of the radicals and the moderates. Mao Yuanxin was not close to Jiang Qing and her gang at first: they had drawn closer together during the Cultural Revolution. It was very difficult to have an opportunity to speak with Mao, so that his nephew's unlimited access to him, and his closeness to the Gang, provided an undreamt-of opportunity for the Gang of Four to put their messages across to the Chairman. The Gang were overjoyed, and straightaway they plotted in secret with Mao Yuanxin on how to hit Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping hard.

Deng Xiaoping sensed the danger in this new development immediately. On 31 October 1975 he wrote to Mao, requesting an audience. Mao saw Deng the following evening and criticized him for passing on Liu Bing's letters to him. Because he was anxious about Mao's attitude towards his comprehensive consolidation work, Deng asked Mao whether the policy he had pursued and the work he had carried out during the recent past were correct. Mao gave him an affirmative answer.

Meanwhile, Mao Yuanxin lost no time in proving his usefulness to the Gang of Four, by turning Mao against Deng Xiaoping. On 2 November he initiated a long conversation with his uncle, commenting on how the achievements of criticizing Lin and criticizing Confucius had not been sufficiently acknowledged, and that the campaign on criticizing Liu Shaoqi had been almost forgotten. On the Cultural Revolution, he said many comrades dwelt on its dark side, looking at it as a disaster. He pointed out that Deng Xiaoping was someone who seldom mentioned the achievements of the Cultural Revolution or talked about class struggle. He also did not hear Deng criticizing Liu Shaoqi, or discussing how to criticize revisionism, or expounding the lessons of *Water Margin*. In his analysis, the basic issues had to do with whether such

people considered the Cultural Revolution as the policy mainstream or as a small tributary, and whether they evaluated it as 70% achievements and 30% mistakes, or vice versa. He also said that he disagreed with Deng Xiaoping, when he claimed that his drive towards comprehensive consolidation was based on Mao's three principal norms, which were - according to Deng - class struggle, unity and stability, and increased production. In his opinion, only class struggle was the norm, or the key held up by Mao; the others were goals to be achieved. Mao Yuanxin denied Deng's achievements in his consolidation work.

Agreeing with most of what his nephew had said, the elder Mao showed him the letter from Liu Bing. Of the many issues raised by his nephew, Mao focused on a subject which was of the deepest concern to him, at this point of his life, which was his legacy to posterity. He wanted to predetermine how he was going to be remembered and judged by the Chinese people after his death. He was particularly concerned about the Party leaders' judgement on the Cultural Revolution, a movement dear to his heart. Mao rated this movement on a par with his role in the unification of China, as the two signal achievements of his life. He admitted that although the movement had made mistakes, such as the widespread civil disorder and the attempts to overthrow everything, its achievements, such as eradicating revisionism and preventing the restoration of capitalism, far outweighed the mistakes. According to Mao's verdict, the Cultural Revolution was 70% good with 30% mistakes. He wanted to make sure that those who became rulers of China after him would acknowledge this positive verdict on the Cultural Revolution and would not overturn or reverse it. This therefore became a definitive criterion for being accepted by Mao into the leadership circle.

Mao told his nephew that many Party officials were dissatisfied with the Cultural Revolution and wanted to settle scores with it. He thought that the ideas of many of the veteran Party leaders had stopped at the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution, and that they did not properly understand socialist revolution. As a result, they resisted or even opposed this movement. The trouble at Tsinghua University was not something that stood by itself alone; it reflected the present struggle between the two lines, according to Mao. He believed that Liu Bing's motive was not pure. Ostensibly Liu wished to overthrow the two radicals, Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi, about whom he was complaining, but the real target, so the Chairman asserted, was he himself. And he concluded by saying 'Deng Xiaoping sided with Liu Bing'.

Mao became angry, reflecting on how he had been so patient and forbearing, allowing the verdict against so many veteran leaders overthrown by the Cultural Revolution to be reversed, and letting them resume their previous positions. Yet there were people who still nursed grievances against the Cultural Revolution and wanted to render a negative verdict against a movement of fundamental importance to him. A person's attitude towards the Cultural Revolution was now taken by Chairman Mao as the touchstone to determine whether they were for him or against him. His nephew's accusations and criticisms against Deng reinforced Mao's suspicion that Deng harboured negative thoughts and opinions on the Cultural Revolution. Mao was

roused to take action on this issue with Deng. Although Mao had not chosen Deng as his successor, he wanted a man as capable and experienced as Deng to serve his heir, as Zhou Enlai had served him. In short, Mao did not really want to overthrow Deng, but he did want to make sure that Deng shared his view on the Cultural Revolution.

Mao Yuanxin's criticisms against Deng did not achieve the purpose of provoking the Chairman to overthrow Deng, as he and the Gang of Four had hoped. They did prompt the elder Mao to let Deng be criticized by his nephew in front of others, and to try to make Deng accept his nephew's views on the Cultural Revolution, which corresponded well with his own. Mao asked his nephew to call a meeting with Deng and two other Politburo members, Wang Dongxing and Chen Xilian, whom Mao trusted, to tell Deng, bluntly and unreservedly, the criticisms and accusations that he, Mao Yuanxin, had just made against Deng. Should Deng agree with Mao Yuanxin's views on the Cultural Revolution, and accept the latter's criticism of him, the Chairman might be prepared to let the matter rest. In order not to let the situation get out of hand, the elder Mao admonished his nephew not to let the Gang of Four know about this meeting. At this point, Mao no longer had the energy to overhaul the leadership dispositions he had so carefully arranged, with the help of Zhou Enlai, for the Twelfth Plenum, and which had been approved by the Fourth National People's Congress early in 1975. If only Deng would affirm Mao's positive verdict on the Cultural revolution, all would be well.

Mao obviously did not realize that the thoughts and opinions of his nephew were not purely his own, nor that his nephew was hand in glove with the Gang of Four, plotting to strike down Deng Xiaoping. Deng, on the other hand, saw the whole situation clearly. During the meeting called by Mao Yuanxin on the evening of 2 November 1975, Deng listened quietly to his young interlocutor's criticisms and accusations against him, while puffing away at his cigarette. When his turn came to speak, Deng said pointedly to Mao Yuanxin: 'According to you, the whole of the Party centre is enforcing revisionism, and in all areas and fields, Chairman Mao's line has not been implemented. What you are saying is that, under the leadership of Chairman Mao at present, the Party is actually carrying out revisionism. This cannot be right.'

Then Deng made a brief review of the work he had done and the talks he had given, starting from March 1975, when he had begun to implement the directives of the Number 9 Document authorized by the Party centre and the Chairman, in connection with the drive to restore the national railway system to effective functioning, and ending in July 1975, when he launched the campaign of comprehensive consolidation. 'What line did the Number 9 Document follow?' Deng asked Mao Yuanxin. 'What line did my comprehensive consolidation work follow?' 'Considering my record, from the time of my work in connection with the Number 9 Document to the present,' Deng continued, 'has the situation in China

improved or deteriorated at the completion of my work? Although Comrade Yuanxin evaluates the situation in China after the issue of the Number 9 Document differently, there are facts to show whether the actual situations in China improved or became worse.’ Finally, Deng said that yesterday evening (1 November) he had asked the Chairman whether the policy and direction of his work of the recent past were correct, and the Chairman had given him an affirmative answer.

On 4 November Mao Yuanxin reported to his uncle that Deng not only failed to accept his views, but also maintained a hard-line attitude. The Chairman was disappointed. He asked the young man to hold a larger meeting of the members of the Politburo. In addition to the original four (Deng Xiaoping, Mao Yuanxin, Wang Dongxing and Chen Xilian), moderates like Li Xiannian and Ji Dengkui as well as radicals like Hua Guofeng and Zhang Chunqiao (one of the Gang). were to be invited to participate. Mao reiterated his verdict on the Cultural Revolution: the movement was basically good, although there were some negative aspects. Now he wanted the participants of the meeting, who represented the two current opposing lines, to focus their discussion on this movement, and to reach a verdict on it. The verdict was not meant to be a free decision. The Chairman expected such a representative sample of eight leaders of the Party to reach the same verdict on the Cultural Revolution, after some discussions, as his own. After having done so, they were to unite with each other and together work for a stable order. Again, the Chairman naively requested his nephew not to let Jiang Qing know of the meeting.

With Deng standing firm on the line he had taken in connection with his comprehensive consolidation campaign, and with Zhang Chunqiao and Mao Yuanxin aiming at nothing less than overthrowing Deng again, this meeting could not possibly achieve what the Chairman had hoped for. It ended up as a criticism session against Deng.

Meanwhile, on 3 November Tsinghua University convened an enlarged meeting of the Party Committee, where Wu De, the First Secretary of the Beijing Party Committee, acted as Chairman Mao’s mouthpiece, quoting the contents of an earlier talk given by Mao:

‘Liu Bing and some others of Tsinghua University wrote a letter accusing Chi Qun and Little Xie. I think the motive of the letter [writer] is not pure. [They] would like to overthrow Chi Qun and Little Xie. The spearhead of the [criticisms] in the letter was directed at me. [Since] I am in Beijing, why did he not write to me directly? [It] had to pass through Xiaoping. Xiaoping sided with Liu Bing. The question raised at Tsinghua was not something that stood by itself alone; it reflected the present struggle between two lines.’

Here Chairman Mao not only clearly declared his attitude on the substantive matter: he also named names. He affirmed that the Tsinghua case reflected the struggle between the two lines, the Left and the other, which would soon be called the Right by his radical followers. He supported Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi, who represented the Left. Further, Liu Bing's motive was 'not pure'; and finally - most damning of all - Deng Xiaoping had sided with Liu Bing against, of all people, the Chairman himself.

After Chairman Mao passed his judgement, the Gang of Four felt free to re-ignite the revolutionary fire. On 12 November the Tsinghua Party Committee was prompted by the Gang to convene an enlarged meeting, attended by over 1,700 people, for learning and discussing what Mao had said. On 18 November the Tsinghua Party Committee called a meeting of the entire University for criticizing Liu Bing as well as the Minister of Education, Zhou Rongxin, accusing them of nullifying the revolution on education, and overturning the verdict on the Cultural Revolution. After the meeting, big character posters were put up on the campuses of both Tsinghua and Peking university, repeating these accusations. Party organizations in the provinces were ordered to marshal groups to come to the two universities to see the big character posters. This time Deng Xiaoping was spared, but it would not be for long.

During the final two months of 1975, Deng was still managing the daily affairs of both the Party centre and the State Council. In addition, he was also responsible for meeting important visitors from abroad. In October alone he had received important visitors from Japan and Europe, as well as Henry Kissinger from the United States. From the lively and focused way he conducted business with them, the foreign visitors would not have guessed that Deng was in deep trouble politically with Mao, or that he had become a target of merciless attacks by his radical colleagues.

Sometime in November, Wang Hongwen, who had been posted to Shanghai by Mao, returned to Beijing. Since Wang had been managing the daily business of the Party before he left, Deng wrote a letter to Mao on 15 November, asking whether the Chairman would like him to transfer this function back to Wang Hongwen. Mao returned Deng's letter the same evening with his comment: 'let Comrade Deng continue to manage [it] temporarily'. Mao's decision indicated that although he permitted Wang to return to Beijing, he did not want to give Wang, or the Gang of Four, the power to run the Party centre. It also appeared that Mao had not given up hope at this point that Deng might soften his stand and make the necessary compromise to retain Mao's support for him.

Chairman Mao continued to put pressure on Deng to bow to his demand, even though he was again disappointed by Deng's response at the enlarged meeting organized earlier. Sometime in November, Mao sent his nephew alone to visit Deng in his home. Although Deng's daughters did not hear clearly from a room adjacent to the lounge where the meeting took place, they gathered from the raised voices that the

talk between Deng and the visitor did not go well. Apparently, Mao Yuanxin failed again to move Deng to alter his position.

In December 1975 Kang Sheng, who had headed the Cultural Revolution Small Group at the beginning of the movement, died. Kang was notorious for persecuting many Party leaders to death during the movement's height. To gain credit with Mao Yuanxin, Kang told Chairman Mao, shortly before he died, that 'Deng Xiaoping would like to reverse the verdict on the Cultural Revolution'. Kang's remark and Deng's uncompromising attitude prompted Mao to ask Deng to chair a meeting of the Politburo with 17 participants, for the sole purpose of evaluating the Cultural Revolution. The meeting would end with the predetermined conclusion that the Cultural Revolution should be assessed as 70% achievements and 30% shortcomings. Mao reasoned that if Deng, who evidently looked at the Cultural Revolution differently, were to affirm the Cultural Revolution in this way, nobody would then dare to overturn this verdict later. Here again, Mao was also giving Deng yet another opportunity to make the necessary compromise and save himself at the same time. If Deng would comply, Mao would be happy to leave the current arrangements of the top leadership of the Party and government undisturbed. Even though he was so sick and tired, Mao seemed to be willing to fight to the end against anyone who might reverse the verdict on the Cultural Revolution.

However, Deng did not accept Mao's suggestion. He said that he was not the right person to write such a conclusion. 'During the Cultural Revolution', Deng said, 'I was in the 'Peach Blossom Grove'. I did not know Han, let alone Wei-Jin'. The 'Peach Blossom Grove', as described by the famous Six Dynasties poet, Tao Yuanming, was a beautiful and orderly country inhabited by a virtuous and fair people. It was a utopia hidden away from this world of strife. By alluding to the 'Peach Blossom Grove', Deng meant to say that he was a political exile during the Cultural Revolution, a movement he neither participated in nor understood. This was an adroit attempt to side-step the issue. In the final analysis, Deng simply could not bring himself to affirm the Cultural Revolution, either to oblige Mao, or to save his own skin. Given Deng's refusal to compromise, and despite his own failing health and declining physical vitality, Mao decided to launch an official criticism of Deng, and to fight with all his might against any possible reversal of verdict against the Cultural Revolution.

Mao now directed Deng to preside over a large meeting called 'Sounding the Alert' (*da zhao hu*) that was to be initiated by the Politburo. The over 130 attendees were to include all the Politburo members, veteran leaders of the Party, and heads of the government ministries and military organizations at the capital. The purpose of this meeting was to inform these leaders of Deng's mistakes, and to elucidate Mao's attitude and judgment towards them, as a warning to others not to make similar mistakes, either then or in the future.

Mao had arranged that, during the meeting, Deng was to read out a prepared speech written by the Politburo under Mao's direction. The main points of the speech were focused on Deng's mistakes and Mao's criticisms against him. They rehearsed judgements Mao had made earlier. One of Deng's major mistakes was passing Liu Bing's letter to Mao, which 'falsely accused' two radical Party officials of Tsinghua University. Liu's motive in writing that letter was not pure. Although it appeared to have been focused on overthrowing the two radicals, its real target was the Chairman himself. By passing Liu's letter to Mao Deng had shown that he was pro Liu, who represented the Right, and against the two radicals, who represented the Left (and by implication, Mao himself). This incident reflected the current struggle between two classes and two lines, and the right-wing trend for negating the positive verdict on the Cultural Revolution. In short, there were comrades who continued to be unhappy with the Cultural Revolution, and who persisted in wanting to settle scores with it and overturn the positive verdict. After the meeting, the record of the main points of Deng's address was to be sent to the leaders of the Party, the military, and the government, for them to carry out discussions on the issues involved, as well as to report back to the Party centre the results of their discussions.

After reading the speech, Deng added that Chairman Mao wanted everyone to correctly evaluate the Cultural Revolution, and many other items. Chairman Mao, Deng said, taught only the class struggle as the norm and the basic line of the Party; it was incorrect to claim that Mao favoured three norms. Although Deng did not mention that it was he who had placed unity and stability, and increased production - both stressed by Mao at some points - on a par with class struggle, so as to arrive at 'Mao's three key elements', his audience was perfectly familiar with the official document abbreviated as 'The General Guideline', issued in connection with Deng's campaign for comprehensive consolidation, which did rely on these three key elements as having Mao's imprimatur. As we have seen, Mao had not, in fact, taken up this point or made it an issue with Deng at the time when this document was submitted to him. Only after Mao Yuanxin had pointed out Deng's 'error' to the Chairman, did it emerge as a major mistake committed by Deng, which needed public acknowledgement and correction.

After the meeting of 'Sounding the Alert' and the dissemination of the official record of Deng's address, there appeared a nation-wide movement of 'Strike back against the Trend of Right-wing Verdict Reversal'. Deng's nine-month long drive on consolidation was halted or put into cold storage. He became the target of public criticism, at first without being named. This bridge was soon crossed, especially by the Gang of Four, who attacked Deng Xiaoping by name, and maligned him unreservedly.

Deng was not entirely surprised by Mao's campaign of criticism against him. After all, during his comprehensive consolidation campaign, he had quite daringly criticized the Cultural Revolution radicals for splitting the Party and the masses, for overthrowing good and progressive cadres, for causing severe damage to economic production, and for the breakdown of discipline inside the Party and the army. He had asserted that this was because they had focused exclusively on Left-wing politics, while neglecting the economic, educational, cultural, and other dimensions. But, since Mao's support was at the root of Jiang Qing and her radical associates' authority, and capacity for wreaking such havoc on China, Mao might well have felt that, in the final analysis, he was the target of Deng's criticisms. Although time and again Mao expressed his support for Deng's consolidation work, he did withhold permission for the dissemination of the document 'Questions Relating to the Work on Science and Technology'.

If Deng had not been so bold and in such a hurry to effect overall improvements, and if he had carried out the reform little by little, one sector at a time, without the ideological offensive against the radical Gang, Mao Yuanxin might have had more trouble persuading his uncle that Deng might be a threat to his legacy. But after six years in the political wilderness, the already 71 years old Deng felt that neither he nor China could afford to wait. His 1974 state visit to France, together with his tour of some of the industrial establishments of that country, enabled Deng to see how much France had developed economically since the 1920s when he had worked, studied, and engaged in radical politics there. It also made him realize how far China had fallen behind during that fifty-year period. In the past nine years, if China had been developing normally instead of being mired in political turmoil, her national economy would have reached a more substantial level, and many of her people might have emerged out of poverty to reach a better standard of living. Deng thought that China was not that far behind Japan economically during the 1960s. By the mid-1970s, while China was trying to pick up the pieces from the ruins of the Cultural Revolution, and starting to rebuild herself, Japan had already galloped ahead to become a world economic power. Compelled by a sense of urgency for China to modernize and to catch up with the advanced countries, Deng felt that he had not a moment to lose. He had felt driven to take bold actions and make big strides towards modernizing China, despite the great risks.

After Deng had begun to undertake his comprehensive consolidation campaign, he was aware of the possibility that it might upset Mao, not to mention the Gang of Four and their radical supporters. He realized that this campaign might seem to some as a *de facto* overturning of Mao's verdict on the Cultural Revolution, even though Deng had tried hard to secure Mao's approval on each step and had dressed up the language to align with Mao's ideological and policy expressions as much as possible.

To those who worked with him on this undertaking and were fearful of the radicals' backlash, he repeatedly exhorted them to be bold, not to be afraid of criticism, not to waver on account of opposition, be ready to fight hard to retain the power to rebuild all that had been broken, even at the risk of being maligned or, worse, being overthrown by the radicals. How could Deng not be brave, and stand bravely behind this important work that mattered so much to him and to China, after he had strongly urged others to do so? He accepted the risk that by offending Mao he might be overthrown once more. Having prepared himself mentally for losing not only his political career, but also possibly his life, Deng had the courage to hold to his determination not to compromise on the issue of the assessment of the Cultural Revolution, despite enormous pressure from Mao. The comprehensive consolidation he undertook was necessary to repair the movement's immeasurable damage to China and her people. To affirm Mao's positive evaluation of the Cultural Revolution would amount to renouncing the need, value, and ideology of his comprehensive consolidation work.

In addition to fulfilling his responsibility for the Party and the State Council, as well as carrying out Mao's directive to hold Politburo meetings to criticize him, Deng often visited the gravely ill Zhou Enlai at the hospital. Zhou was enraged by the 'Strike back against the Trend of Right-wing Verdict Reversal' movement, as well as deeply worried about the red-hot criticism directed against Deng. Zhou wondered about Deng's capacity to withstand such a fierce storm. On 12 December 1975, referring to the issue of the verdict on the Cultural Revolution, Zhou asked Deng point-blank whether he might not change his attitude on it. Deng replied, 'Never'. Zhou was pleased and relieved to hear that. Deng regarded his reply as a pledge to his political ally and old comrade-at-arms (*zhanyou*). More than 10 years later, he liked to revisit this episode in conversation with members of his family.

During the month of December 1975, there were continuous and intense Politburo meetings criticizing Deng Xiaoping. The Gang of Four abused Deng and his comprehensive consolidation with complete abandonment. Because Deng was still in charge of the daily business of the Party centre, he had to preside over these meetings, during which he was the object of the attacks. Later, he recalled his chairing role of these sessions as a formality: besides announcing the beginning and the end of the meetings, he simply sat in silence throughout them.

On 20 December Deng was obliged to make a self-criticism at a Politburo meeting. Since he did not bring a written text to the meeting, the following narrative of what he said was derived from the record of the meeting: 'First let me thank Chairman Mao's guidance and the help of the comrades, particularly that of the young comrades. As regards recognizing my errors, the process is gradual. Let me first speak about my

thoughts. There was a time, before the issue of the Number 9 document, when I became anxious about the fact that a considerable portion of our industrial base was unable to increase production; there were many accidents, in many places, and there was serious factionalism. During February and March, there were many problems with rail transport that had a [negative] effect on production of many kinds. For this reason, I proposed to solve the problems of rail transport first, and quickly. In addition to putting the emphasis on centralization and unity in the management system, the masses were mobilized to criticize the factionalism of the capitalist class. A minority who continued to engage in factional fighting were transferred or dismissed. This approach solved the rail problems in Xuzhou, and then soon all the features of rail transport improved. It seemed to me at the time, that this method produced the fastest results with very little coercion, and a great deal of educational value. Around that time, I noticed that when we applied the experience of solving the railway transport problem, we were able to resolve speedily and very successfully many other problems in the province of Jiangsu. For these reasons, I thought this method could be applied to many other sectors and areas. Very soon after, it was applied to the steel industry, the seven ministries of machinery, certain areas, certain provinces, and the consolidation of the work of the Academy of Sciences. Before this meeting, I thought this method and kind of approach was correct. Therefore, when the comrades criticized this method and plans, I was surprised and felt somewhat aggrieved.'

Deng continued to talk about his attitude and thoughts on other subjects, such as education, culture, new events, and especially the Cultural Revolution. He now said that his not having worked for eight years, and having been in the 'Peach Blossom Grove', were not the most important reasons for his attitude towards the Cultural Revolution. It was mainly to do with his ideological understanding. Deng probably hoped that by confessing to his problem in ideological understanding, Mao might guide him personally to a position that could be mutually acceptable, and so be reconciled to him.

After the meeting Deng wrote a respectful letter to Mao, enclosing his recorded self-criticism. In his letter he told Mao that he understood this to be only a preliminary self-criticism, and that he hoped to see the Chairman to receive face-to-face instructions and corrections. Apparently, Deng's self-criticism did not satisfy Mao, who did not respond to Deng's letter. Deng's talk no doubt represented his real thoughts and feelings, but to Mao it must have sounded more like self-justification than a confession of errors. Chairman Mao would only be satisfied if Deng directly and publicly affirmed his evaluation of the Cultural Revolution, according to the formula of a 70/30 split between positive contributions and errors. Mao did not want to hear this from Deng privately, because he wanted Deng's affirmation to be officially recorded and publicly known, so that Deng would not be able to reverse this verdict after his death. Since Mao remained dissatisfied, there were to be more meetings to criticize and to 'help' Deng.

1975 was coming to an end. China's economic development of 1975 was the best of the nine years of the Cultural Revolution. Compared with the previous year, the total agriculture production grew by 4.6%, and the total value of industry increased by 15.1%. The production of food crops, steel, crude oil, and electricity all increased significantly, and so did the income of the government. As a result of the comprehensive consolidation, there was a recovery of production, a re-establishment of order, a decrease in factionalism, and an increase in confidence of the cadre and the masses. However, the storm of 'Strike back against Right-wing Verdict Reversal', that had seemingly risen from nowhere, utterly halted many of the measures in connection with the consolidation, and others were put into cold storage. The economy once more fell into a trough. The Chinese people, who had just sampled the coming of better times, became unsettled by the sudden change in the political climate, and the new movement of criticism. After nine years of political seesawing connected with the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese people had gained a certain amount of political maturity. Instead of following blindly and becoming excited about the new movement of criticism and the abrupt turn in politics, they had questions and doubts about the path their leaders were currently taking.

Deng Xiaoping spent the New Year of 1976 writing a 'supplementary self-criticism', because Mao had not been satisfied with the earlier one. Since he had already said everything he wanted to say in the last round, the 'supplementary' criticism was all too similar to the previous one. On a colleague's suggestion, he added that he had made a mistake in lumping unity and stability, and increasing production, in with class struggle as Mao's three norms, without first consulting the Chairman and discussing the matter with the Politburo. After presenting the written text to the Politburo on 3 January 1976, Deng wrote again to Mao, requesting another face-to-face meeting to present his view of the mistakes he made, and to listen to the latter's instructions on how to correct them. Mao declined to see Deng, and on 14 January he sent back to the Party centre the records of both of Deng's self-criticisms with his own comments: 'print copies for Politburo discussions'. 'Discussions' meant that criticism of Deng was to continue.

Zhou Enlai's Death

As 1976 began, Zhou Enlai's life was nearing its end. During the past year and a half, when he had lived in hospital, he continued to work intensely, notwithstanding having to endure 10 operations. His labours included: preparations for the Second Plenum of the Tenth Party Congress and the Fourth National People's Congress, which necessitated a visit to Mao in Hunan; reading and making comments on official documents; conducting over 200 business meetings with leading officials of the Party and ministries of the government; and receiving 63 teams of visiting foreign officials. A little over two weeks before his death,

Zhou asked to meet a high official to talk about Taiwan. It was highly unfortunate for Zhou that, towards the end of his life, instead being able to take comfort in the initial success of Deng's overall consolidation work as a step towards China's modernization, to which he was devoted, he was full of anxiety for the mounting tension concerning the unresolved political struggles. Zhou's final admonition to Ye Jianying, the Vice Chairman of the Party's Military Commission, who often came to see him, was that on no account should Ye allow power to fall into the hands of the 'Gang of Four'. Deng Yingchao, Zhou's wife of over fifty years, and Deng Xiaoping (close friends but not related) were often by his bedside. Zhou expired on the morning of 8 January 1976, at age 78.

The Politburo met that afternoon to make the funeral arrangements. For a week afterwards, Deng Xiaoping, still the person responsible for the daily business of the Party and government, focused all his attention on the arrangements relating to Zhou's death. The criticism and self-criticism sessions held against him were halted for that week. Although Deng wanted to do what was best to honour Zhou's memory, he had very little power to do so. He had to ask Mao's permission for everything, big and small. As mentioned previously, while Mao could not do without Zhou for managing the affairs of the state before Deng's return, he was not happy with Zhou's ideological position, which seemed to differ from his own. Furthermore, Mao was jealous of Zhou's popularity with the people, although, unlike in Mao's case, there had never been a Zhou personality cult, or propaganda that deified Zhou. Mao never visited Zhou in hospital. Although he sent a wreath, he neither attended Zhou's memorial service, nor participated in any condolence activity. He was grudging in honouring Zhou's passing in ways that befitted someone of Zhou's stature, achievements, and service to China.

The Gang of Four, who targeted Zhou for criticism, but never succeeded in overthrowing him, were certainly pleased with the final departure of an arch enemy. Since they controlled the media, they did their best to prevent the national press from carrying the news of Zhou's death as an important event. A great deal more attention was normally paid to the death of revolutionary heroes of much lesser stature than Zhou. There was a noticeable absence of discussion of Zhou's career. The people in Beijing and elsewhere were unhappy with the lack of posthumous recognition for Zhou's achievements and services to China, and they spontaneously expressed this discontent as well as their respect for Zhou.

The public announcement of Zhou's death called forth an intense expression of national grief. Despite official discouragement, large numbers of condolence activities took place not only in Beijing, but also in Shanghai, Tianjin, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Xi'an, and many other cities. Although during the Cultural Revolution, Zhou cooperated with Chairman Mao and his radical supporters, it was also well known that Zhou protected a lot of people, as well as historical buildings, cultural artefacts, national treasures, and other things of lasting value from being destroyed. For many years, it was Zhou's steady hands that had

kept the Chinese state functioning as an entity without being overwhelmed by the mad revolutionary tide. To the Chinese people, Zhou's death brought not only great sadness, but also anxiety concerning their uncertain future. Now without Zhou, who could limit the damage of the Maoist policies and schemes to China and her people?

On the evening of 8 January Deng wrote to ask whether Mao would agree to the draft of the announcement on Zhou's death prepared by the Politburo, and to the list of names of 107 people on the funeral committee, headed by Mao, Wang Hongwen, Ye Jianying, Zhu De and Deng Xiaoping. Mao wrote 'agreed' on Deng's letter and returned it promptly. The same evening, Deng wrote again to Mao, informing him that the heads of government of Japan and Sri Lanka, and the Communist Party chief of Albania, were about to come to China to pay respects to Zhou. Since Mao had decided against inviting any foreign leaders to Zhou's funeral, Deng suggested letting the Politburo make a formal announcement on this matter, while he himself would let the ambassadors of these and other countries in Beijing know that they could take part in expressing their condolences, and that leaders of foreign countries could express their condolences to the Chinese embassy in their own country. Mao was agreeable to Deng's suggestions.

On 9 January China's Xinhua newspaper bureau sought guidance from the Party centre on reporting Zhou's death and matters related to it. Yao Wenyan, one of the Gang of Four, ordered it to ban all articles mourning Zhou. As a result, six days after Zhou's death, there were only two items of news on this event. The Gang of Four ordered the people not to wear the customary black armband for mourning, not to send out floral wreaths, not to conduct meetings on condolences, not to put up photos of Zhou, and not to set up memorial halls for him, not only at their places of work, but also in their homes. Their order enraged the people, who tried to defy the ban.

On 10 January the leaders of the Party and government, and about 10,000 representatives of various organizations, came to the hospital where Zhou's body lay in state to pay their respects, and to say a final farewell to their deceased premier. On 13 January an estimated one to two million people, many in tears, lined the route of Zhou's funeral procession and gathered at Tiananmen Square, despite the lack of news reports and the bitterly cold weather, to pay their respects to him. That afternoon a hearse bearing Zhou's body, trailed by 100 black limousines, solemnly passed the waiting mourners on its way to the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in the Western Hills, for cremation. At one point, the procession of vehicles was blocked by some anxious and brave mourners, who had heard a rumour that Zhou's body was ordered to be cremated by the Politburo against his will, until his widow, Deng Yingchao, assured them that cremation was Zhou's own choice.

On 12 January a photograph of Zhou draped by the Party flag appeared in the *People's Daily*, prompting hundreds of thousands of mourners to go to the Babaoshan Columbarium to visit the wooden casket which contained Zhou's ashes. An estimated two million people went to the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square, mostly wearing black armbands, clutching white flowers or wreaths, to lay their floral tributes with eulogies to Zhou around that monument. White flowers and wreaths covered the fir trees against the walls at Tiananmen Square like a blanket of snow. Despite the Gang of Four's prohibitions, in Beijing the supplies of black cloth for making armbands, and of white silk paper for making chrysanthemums for mourning, all sold out.

On 12 January Deng Xiaoping sent Chairman Mao the memorial address on Zhou prepared by the Politburo with Mao's approval in mind. After Mao indicated his acceptance of it, the question of who should deliver it was raised. Under normal circumstances, Deng should have been the person to do so. Since the Gang of Four wished to diminish Deng, Zhang Chunqiao proposed the name of Marshall Ye Jianying. Having witnessed the bond between Deng and Zhou, Ye suggested Deng. Since the Politburo had agreed to Ye's proposal, Mao decided to let Deng present the eulogy to Zhou. The day before Zhou's memorial service, Yao Wenyuan used his power over the media to feature topics related to 'Strike back against the Right-wing Verdict Reversal' as the first items on the front page of the *'People's Daily'*, which had nation-wide circulation, to lower the status of the coverage on Zhou's memorial meeting and address. He also complained to the Xinhua news bureau about too much coverage on Zhou's condolences, and he ordered the bureau to put items on Zhou towards the back of newspapers.

On 15 January Zhou Enlai's memorial service took place in the Great Hall of the People. At the front of the hall hung a gigantic photo of Zhou, and a bright red Party flag was draped over the box containing Zhou's ashes. In the solemn atmosphere, Deng stood up to read the official eulogy to Zhou on behalf the Central Committee of the Party, before five thousand carefully chosen attendees. An interpreter for both Deng and Zhou, Ji Chaozhu, recalled: 'When Deng began by saying 'our premier', his voice broke. Everyone was sobbing'. On this occasion, even someone normally as emotionally undemonstrative as Deng was overcome by his feelings.

The relationship between Deng and Zhou went back over fifty years. Both joined the Mouvement Travail-Études (*qingong jianxue*) and went to France as young men in the 1920s. They joined the Communist Party as patriotic Chinese, eager to find a way to save and regenerate China. Since then, their personal and political lives had been woven together as leaders of the CCP, fighting the war against Japan and the civil war for reuniting China, managing China's affairs of state, and endeavouring to develop China into a modern nation. They both witnessed Mao's disastrous policies and schemes, and both suffered under him,

because their vision of how to develop China differed radically from Mao's. However, they remained loyal to Mao, in the manner of traditional Chinese courtiers to their emperor.

Deng read out a eulogy that praised Zhou, saying among other things:

'Zhou contributed to the Communist Party, to the undefeated PLA, to the victory of the New Democratic Revolution, to the creation of the new socialist China, and to the great unity of workers, peasants, and minority groups. He made indelible contributions...in foreign relations.... Throughout his life Comrade Zhou was loyal to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. He always saw the big picture, he respected party discipline, and he was good at uniting with the majority of officials. He was modest, prudent, and unassuming, setting an example by his hardworking conduct and plain living'.

The ceremony ended with everyone making three bows to Zhou's portrait. Shortly afterwards, Zhou's ashes were scattered from a plane over the mountains and rivers of China, according to his wish.

Deng Xiaoping withdraws from public life

Delivering Zhou's memorial address was the last public appearance by Deng Xiaoping until his re-emergence in 1977. As soon as Deng returned to his normal tasks, the Politburo met to criticize Deng, as Mao had directed. Deng was not surprised that the attacks on him escalated to a higher and higher pitch, especially by the Gang of Four. Since Deng had said essentially all that he wanted to say in the previous self-criticisms, he told his critics that he still stood by them. Having made mental preparation for being overthrown again, Deng remained firm on his decision not to compromise on the issue of the assessment of the Cultural Revolution. The continuation of the criticism sessions was not going to produce any result to satisfy Mao, and the Gang of Four was simply using them to destroy Deng's political career. At a Politburo meeting on 20 January Deng suggested to the Politburo that it release him from his duties.

After enduring an evening of verbal abuse by the Gang of Four, he wrote late that night a final plea to Mao, asking for a meeting to discuss his work. He said that if the matter was not settled, his work might be affected, and he might make more mistakes. He also suggested to Mao, in a humble tone, to release him from his responsibility for the daily work of the Party.

On 21 January Mao Yuanxin reported to Chairman Mao the exchanges at the Politburo on the previous day. Mao responded, saying that Deng's problem was still a question of a contradiction among the people. It was different from that of Liu (Shaoqi) and Lin (Biao). With proper guidance, it need not go down the path of becoming a contradiction with enemies. On Deng's request for a meeting and termination of his work,

Mao preferred to reduce Deng's work rather than remove him from all his responsibilities. Mao wanted Deng to take care of foreign affairs still. To replace Deng's responsibility for the daily work of the State Council, Mao Yuanxin named three youngish vice chairmen of the State Council, Ji Dengkui, Chen Xilian and Hua Guofeng as possible candidates for this job. Mao chose Hua Guofeng.

As mentioned previously, Hua had held high provincial office before the Cultural Revolution in Mao's home prefecture in Hunan. He had an impeccable record as a left-wing supporter of the Cultural Revolution, the Dazhai model for agricultural development, and Mao's anti-Peng Dehuai and anti-Lin Biao purges. Unlike Wang Hongwen and other members of the Gang of Four, Hua worked well with veteran officials. Mao felt sure that Hua would not reverse the verdict on the Cultural Revolution, and he was confident about consigning his legacy to Hua's hand. On 2 February 1976 the Politburo issued a 'Number 1' document, in which Chairman Mao proposed, and the Politburo unanimously approved, the appointment of Hua Guofeng as acting premier.

The same document also stated that Chairman Mao proposed, and the Politburo unanimously approved, that during the illness of comrade Ye Jianying, Chen Xilian was to be responsible for the work of the Central Military Commission. In fact, Ye's 'illness' was political. Unsure of Ye's position on the political reshuffling, Mao was trying to forestall trouble from the PLA, which Ye controlled.

After the state-wide dissemination of the Number 1 document down to the basic levels of the Party on 2 February, Deng Xiaoping was no longer involved with the business of governing the country, not even foreign affairs, even though he was not officially dismissed from any of the high posts he held. He would go to the Politburo meeting if he was asked to attend. In any event, he found life more tolerable not having to listen, day after day, to the Gang of Four's shrill denunciations.

During February, Mao's health deteriorated seriously, but he managed to see President Nixon towards the end of that month. Nixon recalled after the meeting that Mao's speech sounded confused. Mao's thinking seemed to remain quick and clear, and he could grasp what Nixon had said. However, when Mao attempted to reply, he was unable to. Mao thought the interpreter was not understanding him correctly, so he would grab a paper and write things down. This was not much help: some months before this occasion, members of Deng's family had already discovered that the writing in Mao's infirm hand was very difficult to decipher.

At a time when China was seriously threatened by political dissension, this frail and severely incapacitated old man still held the supreme power to decide the fate of China and her people. The people who saw this as a fatal weakness of China's current political system were surely not limited to Deng and members of his

family. Some feared that unscrupulous people close to Mao could easily usurp Mao's power for their own purposes.

On 3 March Mao Yuanxin published an article called 'Chairman Mao's Important Directives', and with Mao's permission had the Politburo distribute it to the lower-level Party authorities all over China, as an official guide for the movements 'Criticizing Deng' and 'Strike back Against Right-wing Verdict Reversal'. Its main content was largely reminiscent of an earlier conversation between the Chairman and his nephew, already described here. It emphasized that class struggle was the key or guiding principle of the Party and asserted that the Cultural Revolution was about nothing other than class struggle. The ideas of some comrades, especially the older veteran ones, had been arrested at the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution. They did not understand the socialist revolution. Not being happy with the Cultural Revolution, they nursed grievances against it, and would like to settle scores with it.

The article reiterated Mao's familiar evaluation of the Cultural Revolution, as a 70/30 split between achievements and mistakes. Because of the lack of agreement, there should be further investigation of its mistakes. The article acknowledged two mistakes: all-out civil hostilities and overthrowing everyone. It defended these two mistakes by stating that there had been many years without experiencing war. Most of the guns were issued; only some were seized. A bit of fighting could be seen as an exercise. Regarding overthrowing everyone, Mao Yuanxin wrote that it had certainly been right to overthrow Liu Shaoqi, and Lin Biao and his group. There had been no need to overthrow the old veteran comrades. Some of them had made mistakes, but a little criticism would have been sufficient.

Those who wondered about the whereabouts of the capitalist class could find it right here in the Party, the article went on. The people in authority walking the capitalist road were still going that way. Referring to Deng Xiaoping's admission about not being able to perceive class contradiction clearly, Mao Yuanxin suggested that it was because Deng was himself a representative of the capitalist class. Deng Xiaoping hardly ever mentioned class struggle. What mattered to him was still 'white cat, black cat'. However, the contradiction concerning him, unlike that with Liu Shaoqi or Lin Biao, remained an internal one among the people. Properly guided, he could avoid following an antagonistic path. He must be criticized, but not beaten to death.

After sending out 'Chairman Mao's Important Directives', the Party also instructed Party organizations from the county level and upwards to teach the cadres how to conduct the campaign of 'Criticize Deng / Strike back Against Right-wing Verdict Reversal'. This campaign became a large-scale formal Party-led movement engulfing the cadres of the entire country.

Even before this campaign began, the Gang of Four cranked up the propaganda machine and the major newspapers and journals they controlled, publishing an enormous number of articles in connection with this movement. Deng was variously portrayed as a member of the monopoly capitalist or comprador class, working internally for revisionism, and externally for capitulationism. During a round of 'Sound the Alert' meetings in Shanghai during February 1976, Jiang Qing called Deng a fascist, and the king of an independent kingdom. During that time, Zhang Chunqiao also joined in the attack, not only against Deng, but also against the rehabilitated old Party veterans as 'capitalist roaders'. Early in March, Jiang Qing convened a meeting with leaders of twelve provinces and many autonomous regions to vilify Deng in the most vicious terms, calling him a traitor of the people, an anti-revolutionary teacher, and a representative of international capitalists. The Gang was also producing a documentary newsreel against Deng.

There were relentless criticisms against Deng's comprehensive consolidation. There were criticisms against 'empiricism', the 'black wind' in the cultural field and the overturning of the verdict on education, and against capitulationism in science and technology. Jiang Qing wanted to overthrow the rehabilitated old veteran Party leaders, lump them into a democratic clique, and class them as capitalistic revisionists. This campaign reopened old wounds, economic chaos and disorder, such as armed factional fighting, work stoppages at factories, failure to meet targets by enterprises, and renewed problems with rail transport. Those who continued to enforce Deng's consolidation policy, such as Hu Yaobang, Wan Li, and Hu Qiaomu, were being dismissed and criticized. The Minister of Education, Zhou Rongxin, was forced to submit to many days of criticism and self-criticism until he was taken ill and died.

The Closing Stages of the Cultural Revolution

The popular mood swings against the Gang of Four

The Gang of Four's vicious campaign against Deng backfired. The Chinese people, who had been willing to be led during many years of the Cultural Revolution, were angry with the venomous diatribe against Deng Xiaoping, whose efforts at restoring order and improving the economy had benefited most of the people. They fought back against Deng's attackers. From February through most of March 1976, big character posters attacking the Gang of Four appeared in big cities and many provinces all over China.

One such poster in Fuzhou listed the Gang's crimes, and another in Wuhan denounced Zhang Chunqiao as an ambitious capitalist, to whom the people should not bow or bend their knees. Seven indignant young workers in Guiyang furiously denounced the Gang of Four in a large character poster with the title 'Several Points on the Current Situation and the New Tasks'. They also shipped many copies of this poster, at their

own expense, to be put up in other big cities. Two hundred workers at a furnace factory in Wuhan called meetings to criticize Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao. On the streets of Wuhan there were written slogans calling for 'Realize Premier Zhou's Goal of the Four Modernizations'. As an expression of people's hatred and contempt for Jiang Qing, ugly stories of her unsavoury past spread far and wide, mainly by word of mouth. Unlike the big character posters instigated and promoted by the Cultural Revolution radicals at the beginning of the movement, these posters were spontaneous expressions of the people. The strength of their feelings against the Gang of Four, and the kind of radical political activities associated with the Gang, seemed to have prompted them to take the risk of identifying themselves and their organizations, when they took up a defiant stand against these high Party officials.

Commemoration for Zhou Enlai and the 'Tiananmen Incident'

As the Qingming festival drew near, which in 1976 fell on 4 April of the solar calendar, the Chinese would customarily prepare themselves to celebrate this occasion by sweeping their ancestors' graves. This is a traditional Chinese version of the common 'All Souls Day' for remembrance of the deceased. The people, who still remembered the unsatisfactory celebration of Zhou Enlai's life at his passing, and who nursed a grievance against the Gang of Four on this and other matters, were moved to take actions to vent their pent-up emotions. From the middle of March onwards, large numbers of people in many big cities began taking white floral wreaths to certain sites in their cities and gathering there to commemorate Zhou Enlai's death. This activity was especially notable in Nanjing, the traditional southern capital of China, and, of course, in Beijing.

In Nanjing, the Zhou Enlai commemorative activities became inseparable from demonstrations against the Gang of Four, as the massive gathering that occurred on 24 March in Yuhuatai proved. On 28 March a huge number of university students in Nanjing paraded with a large portrait of Zhou, to demonstrate their opposition to the notorious gang. On 31 March large slogans opposing the Gang of Four appeared all over the streets of Nanjing, and on railway carriages bound for other places. Wang Hongwen, angered by the opposition to him and his cohorts as shown by the public in Nanjing, reacted by claiming that the people who put up these slogans were trying to manipulate public opinion, to favour the anti-revolutionaries' return to power. On 1 April the Politburo sent out telephone notices, stating that the slogans that had recently appeared in Nanjing, targeting leading comrades of the Party centre, were an attempt to split the Party under Chairman Mao's leadership, and to deflect the criticism against Deng Xiaoping. The Politburo urged the local authority to take immediate and effective action to deal with these political incidents and to investigate who was behind them.

In Beijing, on 19 March a group of primary school pupils placed a wreath in memory of Zhou Enlai at the foot of the Monument to the People's Heroes in Tiananmen Square. From that date onwards, the people of Beijing streamed into Tiananmen Square, bearing wreaths and placing them, layer upon layer, on the fir trees lining the walls of this square, and heaping them around the Monument to the People's Heroes. On 30 March a young worker put up on this monument a poem commemorating Zhou Enlai and denouncing the Gang of Four. From then on, more and more people plastered the sides of the monument and wall spaces in Tiananmen Square with slogans, big character posters, and poems. Tiananmen Square was thick with crowds of people, laying down floral wreaths, putting up written comments or poems, and reading or copying poems. These poems soon become the hottest topics of conversation in the streets, offices, schools, and factories of Beijing.

The Gang of Four were alarmed by scale of the people's commemorative activities for Zhou Enlai, as well as by the intense popular hostility expressed towards them. They demanded that all organizations in Beijing should send out the 1 April notices of the Politburo. They dispatched militia and police to stop the peoples' commemorative activities. They also ordered plain-clothes police to follow some activists and arrest them. Yao Wenyuan wrote a directive, stating that Qingming was a devils' festival, and that the offering of wreaths was a throw-back to the Four Olds. For their part, people resisted these repressive efforts, and put up more slogans or poems with fighting words, such as the following couplet written in huge characters on a cloth banner held up by the large crowd at the Monument to the People's Heroes, which read (in English as translated by the present author): 'If the demons and ghosts are making waves, the people will rise up in anger to destroy these monsters'.

Sometime during this month, a lot of small bottles were found hanging on the fir trees in Tiananmen Square. The Chinese word for small bottle, *xiao ping*, sounds the same as Xiaoping, Deng's forename. As an adult, Deng chose this unassuming name himself, to describe his small stature and flat head. The Chinese language is highly homophonic, and Chinese people are accustomed to the use of homophonic puns. The people who hung out the small bottles meant to say that they were calling for Deng Xiaoping, and they expected others to understand readily what they were trying to communicate. Apparently, Deng's achievements in his comprehensive consolidation had won him the goodwill of the people, who had also been given a glimpse of an alternative way, and a more hopeful future. Those who favoured him chose to express their support for him in an oblique way, because he was the target of officially sanctioned attacks at that point.

On the day of the Qingming festival on 4 April, around two million emotionally charged people were gathered in Tiananmen Square to pay tribute with poems and floral wreaths to Zhou Enlai, and express, at the same time, their opposition to the Gang of Four. They were watched by plain-clothes police sent by the

Public Security Bureau, at the instigation of the Gang of Four, to take pictures of the participants as violators of official orders.

During the evening of 4 April, Hua Guofeng called a meeting of the Politburo to discuss the situation in Tiananmen Square. With Deng and the politically 'sick' Ye Jianying and Li Xiannian excluded from the Politburo, the Gang of Four became the dominant voice of the body at the Party centre which ruled China. The Politburo decided that the activities in Tiananmen were fomented by counterrevolutionaries, with Deng Xiaoping as the key figure, who had spent a long time preparing and organizing this 'incident'. After the meeting, Mao Yuanxin wrote a report for Chairman Mao on what had transpired at the Politburo. The report strongly implicated Deng Xiaoping as the prime mover behind the counterrevolutionaries' planned and organized counterattack in Tiananmen Square. After reading this report, Mao put a circle on it to indicate his approval. With Mao's support for characterizing the peoples' activities in Tiananmen Square during the Qingming festival as counterrevolutionary, the Gang of Four was free to take action to suppress these activities. In fact, a few days before the Qingming festival, these radical leaders had already gathered several thousand police, militia, and other security personnel, who were ready to take orders from the officers who had been positioned in an improvised temporary command office near the Great Hall of the People.

On 5 April Wang Hongwen arrived at the command office at 5 a.m. to direct action. From that time until early afternoon, massive numbers of floral wreaths were removed from Tiananmen Square and taken onto 200 trucks to be carted away. When people discovered that the wreaths had been taken away, they were enraged. Although the streets leading to Tiananmen Square were blocked by officials stationed there to stop people entering the square, many forced their way through to lay fresh wreaths at the Monument to the People's Heroes. As the two opposing sides scuffled with each other, more and more people filled the square. When the crowd recognized a policeman in plain clothes in their midst, an angry roar caused the frightened man to run away towards the temporary command office near the Great Hall of the People. Crowds of people started to run after him, and before long several hundred thousand people were gathered in front of one of the entrances of the Great Hall. The command office sent a car with a loudspeaker telling the crowd to leave Tiananmen Square, since the Qingming festival and the commemorative activities had already ended. It also warned the people to be on the alert for the destructive activities of a small group of class enemies. The irate crowd dashed towards the vehicle and overturned it. Then several hundred thousand people shouted: 'Return our floral wreaths!' 'Release our comrades!'

In the afternoon, the people surrounding the building where the command office was located sent out representatives to negotiate the return of their wreaths, the release of those who were detained, and a guarantee of their right to commemorate Zhou Enlai. On being refused, they burned several vehicles

belonging to this office and threatened to burn down the command office itself, which was then hurriedly set up again in another location.

When evening approached, the First Secretary of the Party in Beijing, Wu De, announced from a loudspeaker a message that defined what had occurred in Tiananmen as a `counterrevolutionary incident' and demanded the people to leave that area immediately. Later that night, over 10,000 police and militia surrounded the square, and started to beat up people who were still there; they also arrested and imprisoned 38 people.

Early in the morning of 6 April some members of the Politburo met, and they decided to officially define what happened the day before as `The Tiananmen Incident'. They also characterized it as a *bona fide* counterrevolutionary incident. When Mao Yuanxin reported the matter to his uncle at 3 a.m. that morning, the Chairman was pleased with the outcome.

On the morning of 7 April Mao Yuanxin related to Chairman Mao the details of, and the opinions on, the subsequent treatment of what had happened in Tiananmen, based on the `Eyewitness Report of the Tiananmen Incident' composed by Yao Wenyuan, the writer member of the Gang of Four. The `Eyewitness Report' supported the conclusion that had already been reached by the radical-dominated Politburo, namely that the people's activities commemorating Zhou Enlai were counterrevolutionary. It also stated that the `The Tiananmen Incident' targeted Chairman Mao, aimed to split the Party under Mao's leadership, and openly supported Deng Xiaoping. Since Mao permitted the publication of this report, it represented the official pronouncement on this `incident'.

After listening to this report, Mao made two momentous decisions. One was to dismiss Deng from all the offices he held, but to allow him to retain his membership of the Party `to see what would happen subsequently'. The other was to promote Hua Guofeng from acting premier to premier. Mao also proposed to make Hua the first vice-chairman of the Party. This proposal meant that Mao had chosen Hua as his successor rather than Wang Hongwen, who had repeatedly ignored Mao's warning not to take any part in the Gang of Four.

At noon, the Gang of Four had a party in the Great Hall of the People, celebrating their triumph in knocking down Deng once again. Zhang Chunqiao said on that occasion that those who wrote the reactionary poems wanted to wheel out Deng to play the role of Hungary's counter-revolutionary leader, Imre Nagy. In the afternoon, the Politburo held a meeting at the Great Hall of the People, discussing the newest directive on the `Tiananmen Incident' from Chairman Mao. During that meeting the Gang of Four not only insisted that Deng was the overall backstage manager of this incident; it also informed the others that Deng went by car into Tiananmen Square to command the crowd himself. Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao also advanced the

idea that some people wanted to forcefully assault and seize Deng. To confirm the allegation against Deng, Hua Guofeng, who chaired this meeting, suggested that someone should go to ask Deng Xiaoping himself whether he did go in a car to Tiananmen Square, to command the crowd during the incident. Since no one volunteered to perform this task, Jiang Qing proposed that Wang Dongxing, who was at the meeting, should carry it out.

Wang Dongxing remembered that, near the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the radicals controlled by Jiang Qing had organized the seizure and assault of Peng Zhen by the masses. He was concerned that the Gang of Four might do the same to Deng Xiaoping. Wang considered the matter too important not to check with Chairman Mao. Instead of going directly to Deng's house, he made a small detour to see Mao. Wang informed Mao what had just transpired at the emergency Politburo meeting and added that someone might want to seize and assault Deng. Mao said, 'No assault, no seizure'. Mao asked Wang what could be done to avoid that. Wang suggested moving Deng to another house, and Mao agreed.

As the head bodyguard of Chairman Mao and the person responsible for the security of Zhongnanhai, Wang had resources at his command. He immediately arranged with his subordinates to have Deng transferred to a house where Deng and his family had once lived, to be guarded by security personnel. Then Wang went to see Deng there and asked the latter whether he had gone by car to Tiananmen Square to take command of the demonstrations. Deng replied that he had once ridden a car to the Beijing Hotel to have a haircut; that had nothing whatever to do with 'taking command'. Later that day, Wang arranged for Deng's wife to join her husband. They were told not to venture out or be seen by others. Once more, Deng and his wife had lost their freedom, but this time it was for their own personal safety.

When Wang returned the Great Hall of the People that evening to take part in an after-dinner session of the Politburo, Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao eagerly asked Wang about the result of his meeting with Deng. Wang said that Deng had gone in a car to the Beijing Hotel for a haircut only. Zhang was not satisfied with Wang's answer and asked the latter to put it in writing. Refusing to do so, Wang said angrily that next time they should carry out such errands themselves, and not ask him. Wang did not reveal to the Politburo members that Deng had been transferred to another residence. Jiang Qing mentioned on several occasions at Politburo meetings that some people had gone to look for Deng, but no one could find him.

At 8 p.m. on 7 April the national TV broadcast the news that, based on the proposal by the great leader Chairman Mao, the Politburo had unanimously passed two motions. One was to appoint Hua Guofeng to be the first vice-chairman of the Party and the premier of the State Council. The other concerned the counterrevolutionary Tiananmen Incident and Deng Xiaoping's behaviour. After discussing this matter, the Politburo had decided that the nature of the contradiction regarding Deng had become antagonistic. Following the proposal of the great leader Chairman Mao, the Politburo had unanimously passed the motion

to remove Deng Xiaoping from all offices inside and outside the Party, but he was to retain his Party membership `so as to see what would happen subsequently’⁹.

After listening to this broadcast, Deng wrote a letter on 8 April to Chairman Mao and the Party centre, to be passed through Wang Dongxing, stating his support for Hua Guofeng’s appointment and thanking Mao for letting him retain the Party membership. At this point, Deng’s support for Hua as Mao’s successor was genuine, because the alternative, Wang Hongwen, would mean the rule of the Gang of Four, a prospect Deng could not bear to contemplate. During the aftermath of The Tiananmen Incident, Deng and his family members, who were living with him, had expected the worst. When Wang Dongxing’s officers came to take Deng away, his daughters feared for Deng’s life. Apparently, Deng himself did not quite expect that Mao would once more allow him to retain his Party membership and offer him protection. After Deng and his wife left, Deng’s enemies sent officials to his former home to interrogate his sons and daughters, seeking evidence to prove that Deng was behind the `Tiananmen Incident’, but without success.

On 8 April the *People’s Daily* and other important newspapers of nationwide circulation published the two Politburo decisions, as well as detailed reports on `The Counterrevolutionary Incident at Tiananmen Square’. There was a lot of public indignation at these reports. Many people telephoned and wrote letters to the *People’s Daily*, protesting the distortions and falsehoods in the reports. Despite the official policy of repression, people all over China continued to put up posters and slogans attacking Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, and upbraiding them for opposing Zhou Enlai. There were also public expressions praising and supporting Deng Xiaoping.

From the point of view of the Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping’s downfall was a positive outcome of the Tiananmen Incident. However, they were puzzled by Mao’s decision to let Deng retain his Party membership. Another major consequence of this incident was that it precipitated Mao’s final decision on the succession question. The Gang was very disappointed that Mao chose Hua Guofeng as his successor. They felt that they had been denied the fruits of their labour in their determined pursuit of Maoist activities, which were, of course, also closely connected with their struggle for power and dominance.

The Gang began to attack Hua, accusing him of leaning to the right. On 30 April after Hua had accompanied Mao to receive the visit of Robert Muldoon, the prime minister of New Zealand, Hua had the chance to tell Mao that the attacks against him made it impossible for him to serve. Mao gave him three scrawled notes: `With you in charge, I am at ease’; `Act according to the decisions laid down’; `Do not be nervous; take it easy’.

⁹ Deng’s stubborn refusal to agree to the 70/30 formula for evaluating the Cultural Revolution may remind some readers of Sir Thomas More’s refusal, in 1534, to deny the supremacy of the Pope in Rome, and acknowledge Henry VIII as the supreme head of the English Church. At least Deng was not beheaded.

Seeing that Mao's earthly sojourn was nearing its end, the Gang focused their activities on preparing to seize power after Mao. They stepped up the media propaganda against Deng and called mass meetings to criticize him. They also conducted a campaign of 'white terror', arresting, investigating, and detaining those who took part in the Tiananmen Incident, and those who continued to oppose them. In August 1976, they distributed a large consignment of guns, cannons, and ammunition to the militia in Shanghai to prepare them for guerrilla war. These activities were in keeping their aim of seizing supreme power after Mao.

Mao's illness

In 1974, Mao had been diagnosed as suffering from an incurable motor neuron disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. In general, as the disease runs its course, the death of the motor nerve cells in the affected regions that control the muscles of the throat, pharynx, tongue, and the right hand and leg would lead to muscular atrophy, and paralysis of these parts of the body. The person so affected would lose the ability to speak, swallow, and move those body parts. To keep the patient alive, he or she has to be fed through a tube running from the nose to the stomach. As breathing becomes more laborious, the patient would be vulnerable to lung diseases. Most patients die within two years of the initial diagnosis. In Mao's case, there was another serious risk factor: his aging heart, weakened by chronic lung disease, was susceptible to failure. Mao had had two heart attacks (myocardial infarctions) during the months of May and June 1976.

Following Mao's second heart attack on 26 June, his personal physician Dr. Li Zhisui and a medical team of sixteen of China's best doctors in different specialities, as well as twenty-four excellent nurses led by Dr. Li, worked around the clock in three eight-hour shifts to prolong Mao's life. When Mao's condition became critical, four leading Party members, paired by rank and political inclination – the moderately left Premier Hua Guofeng with the radical left Vice-chairmen Wang Hongwen, and the moderately left Politburo member Wang Dongxing with the radical left Politburo member Zhang Chunqiao – kept a twenty-four-hour vigil in twelve-hour shifts at Mao's residence. Imperious, unbridled, mercurial, and disdainful of experts or specialists, including medical doctors, Mao was a very difficult patient to treat and care for. In addition, the doctors were sometimes caught in the crossfire of the power struggle between Jiang Qing's radicals and the more moderate leaders. Their political bosses, who supervised them without medical knowledge, and whose permission was needed for every decision they took on medical grounds, made the doctors' work even more complicated. Jiang Qing, arrogant and domineering, intimidated the doctors and interfered with their work, sometimes to the detriment of Mao's health. Since 1969, she had tried to brand Dr. Li as a counter-revolutionary and insinuated that he was a part of a spy ring around the Chairman, whom the doctor wanted to harm. Mao had stopped seeing foreign visitors after his first heart attack. After the

second, the leaders of the Politburo decided to trouble Mao less with documents which they would normally have passed on to him for his approval.

On 28 July 1976, when Mao was still critically ill, a major earthquake, 7.8 on the Richter scale, hit the region around Beijing and Tianjin, with its epicentre in Tangshan, a city about 224 miles from Beijing in Hebei province. While there was quite a lot of damage in Beijing and Tianjin, Tangshan was flattened, and 240,000 of its inhabitants died as a result of the earthquake. Mao was aware of the earth tremor, and he was moved immediately to a relatively earthquake-proof room. Deng Xiaoping and his extended family survived the partial collapse of their house by gathering in the courtyard. On the same day, Hua Guofeng mobilized the PLA and teams of people to rescue the victims of the earthquake and rushed urgently needed supplies to the disaster areas.

The Gang of Four did their best to attack the media publicity on the earthquake and the rescue activities emanating from the Party centre, as diverting attention from the campaign on criticizing Deng. They denounced the rescue efforts of the provincial leaders of Hebei as 'panicky measures from the capitalist clique'. As a result of their interference, the Chinese government refused all international offers of aid. Targeting Hua Guofeng and his supporters, Yao Wenyuan directed the *People's Daily* to publish an editorial stating that 'the party leaders, taking the opportunistic line, always vainly tried to use temporary difficulties caused by natural disasters to turn around the direction of the revolution, and to restore capitalism'. Jiang Qing demanded a nation-wide criticism of the three seminal documents of Deng's comprehensive consolidation, characterizing them as 'Three Poisonous Weeds'. This priority of the Gang of Four, and their position on earthquake relief, demonstrated to the people their callousness towards the victims of a major natural disaster. The people and the cadres throughout the country strongly resisted their call to criticize Deng Xiaoping.

Jiang Qing's ruthless ambition

Rather than moving her to keep vigil at her husband's side, Mao's impending death roused Jiang Qing to a flurry of activities in preparation for the possibility of taking over Mao's role from Hua Guofeng, by a power struggle or a coup. She had given people the impression that she would like to emulate the Han empress Lu, and Wu Zetian of the Tang dynasty, both women who ruled after the death of their husbands, the former through child-emperors, the latter in her own right. On 28 August she went on a lecture and inspection tour in different parts of the country, including to Dazhai, the model agricultural brigade in Shanxi. Speaking about pre-historical societies in China ruled by women, Jiang Qing claimed that, with the development of the forces of production, women, even under Communism, could govern the country in the future.

Hua Guofeng recalled her to Beijing on 5 September, two days after Mao had suffered his third and most serious heart attack. When Jiang Qing came to see Mao on the day after her return, she stayed only a few moments and did not ask how her husband was doing. The doctors could not understand her callousness. Wang Dongxing's explanation was that she was waiting for Mao to die, since she believed that Mao was the last obstacle for her achieving supreme power. Deng Xiaoping's daughter, Deng Rong, also had the impression that Jiang Qing wanted Mao to die as soon as possible, for the same reason.

During the afternoon of 7 September Mao's condition deteriorated to the point that his death was expected to be imminent. When Jiang Qing came to see him, the doctors gave her the news. When Mao had just fallen asleep and needed the rest, she insisted on rubbing his back, moving his limbs about, and sprinkling powder on his body, even though the doctors protested against moving Mao, and told her that the powder was not good for his lungs. Before she left, she instructed the nurses on duty to repeat, later, what she had done to Mao, and then shook hands with each member of the medical team, saying to each, 'You should be happy now'. The doctors found her behaviour bizarre. Only later did Mao's personal physician, Dr. Li Zhisui, grasp what Jiang Qing meant to convey. She expected the doctors to be happy, as Mao would soon be dead, and she would be in power.

On 8 September Jiang Qing came to visit Mao. Claiming that Mao had been lying too long on his left side, she had Mao moved to the position of lying on his right side, over the objection of the doctor on duty. It later became apparent that she had been trying to find out whether Mao had left a will somewhere about him. Mao had to lie on his left side, because he could only breathe through his healthy lung on the right side, when the big air bubbles on the left side of his lung were compressed by the weight of his body. After the move, Mao's breathing stopped, and his face turned blue. The doctors had to put Mao on a respirator and carry out cardiopulmonary resuscitation. After the Chairman revived, Hua Guofeng exhorted Jiang Qing not to interfere further with the doctors' work.

Mao's death and the end of an era

Mao finally expired early in the morning of 9 September 1976, aged 83. His death marked the end of an era when China experimented on a large scale with building an egalitarian Marxist society. China under Mao was still largely pre-industrial. The CCP's land reform destroyed the landlord class, which was considered guilty of exploiting the peasants. The peasants who owned land through redistribution, had it only for a brief period of a few years before their land was collectivized, which meant being put under the management of the Party cadres, who represented the state. For the peasants, it was a matter of replacing

economic exploitation by political subjugation. They were no longer masters of their own household economy, making decisions for themselves on what products to grow, and what to buy and sell. They became instead serfs of the state. The revolutionary changes did not make China an egalitarian society. China remained a two-class society, with the traditional landlord-gentry-official class replaced by Communist cadres as the ruling elites.

Mao's method of leaping into modernity by energizing the masses through political mobilization and communalization failed. But Mao refused to register it as a failure, for he believed that given more time and more thoroughgoing implementation of his policy, his method would succeed. Apart from Marxism-Leninism, which was a product of the West, Mao had little exposure to the science, technology, manufacturing processes, political organizations, and cultural influences from modern Western countries. Although he thought of himself as a rebel against China's old culture, which was condemned as 'feudal' and 'reactionary' by his regime, he could not escape its grip. Mao was well versed in Chinese history. He could invoke historical episodes to delineate current issues for political discussions and debates. He loved the literature of old China and was highly skilled in writing poetry in a traditional style. Mao's penchant for personal autocracy, and his demand for absolute loyalty from his subordinates, put him in the same league as the Chinese dynastic rulers. It might not be too far-fetched to consider Mao as the last emperor of China (though that would be to assume, of course, that he has no similar successor).

The control of a Leninist party organization, aided by a state-of-the-art propaganda machine and a modern system of communication, enabled Mao to wield far more power than an emperor of a traditional Chinese state. It would be difficult to imagine that even the powerful early Qing emperors could successfully launch the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution, as Mao did. Mao died a beloved and revered leader of China, because the state-controlled media only trumpeted his triumphs and lauded his achievements. The blame for his spectacular failures and mistakes was laid at the door of others. But the bitter lessons from the failure of Mao's experiments made it easier for his successors to move away from dwelling on class struggle and applying Marxism, and to set about building a better Communist society in China after Mao.

The state-led mourning for Mao and the preservation of his body

Shortly after Mao's death, the Politburo met in the early hours of that morning to decide on the wording of the announcement of the Chairman's death, which was to be made at 4 o'clock that afternoon. Because the media had kept on maintaining that Mao was in good health, the people were not prepared for his sudden death. His doctors were fearful of being accused of having mismanaged Mao's treatment, or worse of having poisoned him: indeed, a member of the Politburo had already started to allege that they had. They were

enormously relieved when the announcement said that the deceased Chairman had 'received excellent medical care during his illness' and that 'in the end his condition was beyond help'. Although people were assured that the larger-than-life Chairman Mao, who had dominated the CCP for 42 years, and the nation for 27 years, had died a natural death, they were anxious and uncertain about what was going to happen to them, and to China in the future. Given the tensions within the Party, similar concerns were likely to prevail among its leaders. For the moment, they had to focus on the practical arrangements relating to Mao's death. A funeral committee of 377 members, headed by Hua Guofeng, was soon announced for organizing the state-led mourning. The list reflected the overall ranking of the high Party officials at that time.

The Politburo made the decision to preserve Mao's body, not just for a week's lying in state, but also for a future permanent display. They assigned this task to Mao's personal physician, Dr. Li, who undertook the job only after being assured that if permanent preservation of Mao's body could not be accomplished, a wax figure closely resembling Mao could be substituted for the real cadaver. Dr. Li promptly assembled a team of experts in the relevant fields from around the country, and he even sent people to Hanoi to find out how Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) had been preserved. The Vietnamese, however, would not reveal their secret. The preserving team decided to inject Mao with a large amount (22 litres) of formaldehyde, until his fingers and toes were filled with this liquid. They then had to squeeze the excess liquid out from his neck and face, to restore him to his original appearance. After making him up, clothing him in the regulation 'Mao suit' and draping the red Party flag across his chest, Mao's body was placed, 24 hours after his death, in a crystal vacuum-sealed casket, and transported to the Great Hall of the People where he was to lie in state for a week. Between 11 and 17 September daily memorial services were held there, and thousands of carefully selected people filed past Mao's body to pay their respects.

For permanent preservation, which was to be accomplished after the lying-in-state, the team took out all Mao's visceral organs, but left his brain intact. The viscera were preserved in separate jars of formaldehyde. His visceral cavity was filled with formaldehyde-soaked cotton wool. When the process was completed, Mao's body was placed in a crystal coffin filled with helium, in an underground hospital. The Institute of Fine Arts and Crafts produced a wax figure closely resembling Mao, which was kept as a backup in case it was needed. In 1977 Mao's body was placed in a specially built mausoleum at Tiananmen Square for public viewing.

18 September, the day of Mao's official memorial service at Tiananmen Square, where an estimated one million people gathered to pay their respects to Mao, was a scorchingly hot day. At 3 p.m., all public activities in China came to a halt as the whistles of factories and trains blew a three-minute salute. Then,

following three minutes of silence, all work units in China conducted their own condolence services. At the capital, Wang Hongwen chaired proceedings of the national memorial service, on account of his high ranking as a vice chairman of the Party, while the even higher- ranking Hua Guofeng had the honour of delivering the memorial address, which eulogized Mao as the 'greatest Marxist of our time'.

Deng Xiaoping, still under protective custody at his home, and the officials closely associated with him in the comprehensive consolidation work – Wan Li, Hu Qiaomu, Hu Yaobang, and Zhang Aiping – were excluded from Mao's public memorial service. Nevertheless, Deng put up a special altar in his own home as a way for him and the members of his family to pay tribute to Mao privately. Mao had been considerate towards Deng during the last months of his life. He had permitted Deng's wife to have eye surgery for the removal of her cataracts. The Chairman had also allowed Deng and his wife to return to a roomy house at Kuanjie, where his daughters and sons and their children could all live together as one family. Probably because he had been twice protected by Mao, and despite the humiliation and personal suffering Mao had let his followers inflict on him, Deng remained loyal to Mao.

A coup by the Gang of Four is foiled, their arrest, and the end of the Cultural Revolution

Moments after Mao's death, Jiang Qing ordered Zhang Yufeng, who was Mao's private secretary and favourite woman companion, to sort out Mao's personal unpublished papers, put them in order, and keep them for her. Possession of these papers would enable her to delete the parts that contained Mao's criticism of her and her close associates, and it might also help her to find Mao's alleged will, or to make one up that favoured the realization of her ambition. Soon Jiang Qing and Mao Yuanxin returned to Mao's former living quarters and took custody of some of Mao's papers from Zhang Yufeng. When Wang Dongxing, who was responsible of the safekeeping of Mao's documents, heard about this, he pressed Zhang Yufeng to retrieve them, for they properly belonged to the central authority of the Party. Jiang Qing refused to give them up, until Hua Guofeng insisted on their return. Wang Dongxing later informed Dr. Li that parts of the documents seemed to have been falsified, implying that Jiang Qing had tried to expunge passages of Mao's criticisms of her. Jiang Qing also tried unsuccessfully to gain access to Mao's materials which had been collected by Lin Biao in Lin's old home at Maojiawan.

The day after Hua's memorial address, the Gang of Four urged Hua Guofeng to convene an emergency meeting of the Politburo's Standing Committee, to discuss the matter of the handling of Mao's papers. During this meeting, Jiang Qing demanded that Mao's papers be handed over to herself and Mao Yuanxin

so that they could put them in order and keep them safe. Despite over four hours of tiresome theatricals by Jiang Qing at the Politburo, she did not achieve her purpose. Later in September, when Mao Yuanxin was due to be transferred back to Liaoning because he was no longer needed as Mao's liaison with others, the Gang of Four again made trouble with Hua Guofeng. For several hours at an evening Politburo meeting they argued, with Jiang Qing making tearful scenes, into the early hours of the morning, until they won the argument for letting Mao Yuanxin stay in Beijing.

Jiang Qing found power intoxicating and seemed relentless in her drive to achieve political ascendancy. She told her American biographer, Roxane Witke, 'Sex is engaging in the first rounds, but what sustains interest in the long run is power'. For many years she had languished as Mao's wife without a political role and was beset by illnesses. Dr. Li was struck by the fact that her illnesses disappeared after she became Mao's battering ram during the Cultural Revolution. Because of her shady past, there was a tendency for people to snub her, despise her, and spread salacious tales about her as a courtesan and a third-rate actress. During the Cultural Revolution, she had the chance to take her revenge against those who slighted her, as well as her class enemies. Many high-ranking Party leaders, marshals, vice chairmen, and ministers, who were veterans of the Long March, were destroyed by her and her colleagues in the Cultural Revolution Small Group. They had made many enemies. But while they were under Mao's protection, no one had dared to touch them.

For her loyalty and services, Mao made her a member of the Politburo, but not of its powerful Standing Committee, the membership for which Mao gave to her male colleagues, Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen. She was not satisfied with merely being on the governing body of China, and complained to Mao that she did not have a real job. Mao resisted her demands for giving her and her radical associates any more power and official posts than he thought proper, in accordance with his scheme of balancing the power of the revolutionary radicals and the moderate pragmatists in the three branches - the Party, the government administration, and the army. She thrived on the public stage as Mao's wife, and the figure she cut was arrogant, aggressive, abrasive, rude, and intimidating – not one that would win her friendship and support. From 1974, when Mao wanted unity and stability, he started to look upon her as a loose cannon and urged her to refrain from public appearances.

Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan and Wang Hongwen had not demonstrated organizational or administrative skills as had Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and other moderate pragmatic veteran Party leaders. Instead, they had focused their activities on culture and propaganda. In these areas they tried to create or mould public opinion, and to influence people's thinking by controlling the media. If Mao had

chosen Wang Hongwen to succeed him, it would have amounted to putting the Gang of Four in charge of the Chinese state. They would have been unable to manage the affairs of the country, without a high degree of cooperation and support from the veteran Party leaders. Since the Gang had antagonized these senior Party officials, including the rehabilitated ones, by branding most of them as `capitalist roaders' while Mao was still alive, the radicals could not expect their support after Mao's death. In contrast, Hua Guofeng, who did not have much experience at running the country either, had reached out to the veteran Party leaders, and he had their support. Since Mao had put Hua in charge, Jiang Qing and her associates' only hope of becoming rulers of China was through a successful *coup d'état*.

Apparently looking to gather a medical team to take care of her, during the week after Mao's memorial service Jiang Qing visited Mao's team of doctors still gathered at Zhongnanhai, because they had not yet received the order to return to their own units. Noticing that some members of the Politburo no longer accorded her the respect they did when Mao was alive, Jiang Qing boasted to Mao's doctors that she had a way of knocking down the highest-ranking revisionists within the Party, but she would not tell them how that was to be done. Dr. Li promptly told Wang Dongxing what Jiang Qing had said. As the head of the Central Garrison Corp and the Palace Guard with the responsibility for the security of Zhongnanhai, Wang was naturally concerned. Wang knew that in Shanghai, the power base of Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, and Yao Wenyuan, they and their supporters were distributing guns and ammunition to the local militia. He was also aware that Chi Qun, the radical party secretary of Tsinghua University, which was under military rule, was working closely with Mao Yuanxin on organizing the Beijing militia. Wang had also received information that Mao Yuanxin, as the political commissar of the Shenyang Military Region, was directing a division of troops with tanks to advance on Beijing. Wang feared that Jiang Qing's group were soon going to stage a coup, and he wanted to take pre-emptive action.

Wang Dongxing hastened to see Hua Guofeng, who however wanted to go slow, because according to Wang, Hua feared that he did not have enough power within the Party, and he also considered that he did not control the army. The person who did control the army was Marshal Ye Jianying, the vice chairman of the Central Military Commission. Although after the Tiananmen Incident Mao had sacked Deng Xiaoping and declared Ye Jianying as being `sick', in order to pre-empt a possible Deng-Ye alliance against him, Ye regained his power after Mao's death. Ye was a Long March veteran, whose military career went back to the first Communist uprising led by Zhou Enlai and Zhu De against the Guomindang in Nanchang in 1927. Since the fall of Lin Biao, Mao had put him in charge of the army. Ye had rehabilitated many high-ranking military leaders who had been purged by Lin and had worked with Deng to restore military discipline and civilian control over the PLA. He commanded the loyalty of the high-ranking officers of the army. Soon

after Mao's death, many veteran Party leaders of the Long March generation visited Ye, rather than Hua Guofeng, to express their anxiety about the future. Among these were Chen Yun, Ni Zhifu, Xu Xiangqian and Zhou Enlai's widow Deng Yingchao, as well as many military leaders. Ye saw the danger ahead, and he decided that without an 'I live, you die' struggle, the problem of the Gang of Four could not be resolved. Ye went to talk to Hua Guofeng, who had to provide the leadership for whatever needed to be done.

Marshal Ye told Hua bluntly that the Gang of Four did not accept his leadership, and they could not wait to seize political power. Since Mao was no longer here, Hua must stand and fight them. Hua replied that he must think about it. Then Ye went to see Wang Dongxing, whose cooperation was essential for any action against the Gang. Wang expressed his readiness to follow orders from both Hua and Ye. Wang also advised Ye of the importance of keeping the matter strictly secret, and of involving only a minimum number of people.

Soon after Mao's memorial service, besides Jiang Qing's indiscreet remarks and the information Wang Dongxing already had, there were many other signs and indications that the Gang of Four were planning a coup. On 21 September Zhang Chunqiao received a report from Shanghai that guns had been distributed to some local militia units. On 23 September Wang Hongwen phoned his followers in Shanghai telling them that the struggle had not ended: the capitalist class inside the Party would not accept defeat, and somebody might bring back Deng Xiaoping. Towards the end of September, Zhang Chunqiao warned his supporters in Shanghai to beware of the revisionists, and to be prepared for war. On 1 October Jiang Qing spoke at Tsinghua University, where she exhorted the youthful audience to take an oath to fight to the end. On 3 October Wang Hongwen tried to rally the people gathered at a talk he gave in a county near Beijing, to strike down the revisionists at the Party centre. The Gang of Four arranged to have the staff of the universities of Tsinghua and Peking, and the Xinhua News Agency, write loyalty letters to Jiang Qing. Some of the letters even proposed Jiang Qing to be the chairperson, like Mao, of both the PRC and the Central Military Commission. On 4 October Chi Qun swore an oath of loyalty to Jiang Qing. On the same day, the *Guangming Daily* featured an article written by 'Liang Xiao' (the pen name of Jiang Qing's writing staff at the two universities, Tsinghua and Peking), urging the public to carry the struggle against capitalists inside the Party to the end. Jiang Qing had a special costume made in Tianjin for her accession.

When Hua Guofeng heard that at some meetings the Gang of Four had told their supporters to expect good news on 7, 8 or 9 October, he decided that he must act quickly. He had already asked Li Xiannian, like Marshal Ye another Long March veteran and a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, to ask Ye to form a plan. Both Li and Ye agreed that they must act swiftly. Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, and Wang

Dongxing promptly conferred. They decided that it would be best to avoid a military clash with the forces the Gang of Four could muster or arrest them at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse where they lived, because that would risk clashing with their bodyguards. Since speed was essential, there was insufficient time, and it was too risky, to go through formal political channels and procedures to indict them.

On 5 October they decided to set a trap for the Gang, such that everything would appear normal until they showed their hand. On the afternoon of that day, Hua Guofeng announced a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Politburo to be held on 6 October at 8 p.m., in Huairen Hall at Zhongnanhai, with three items on the agenda: to discuss the publication of Volume 5 of Mao's *Selected Works*; planning for Mao's Memorial Hall; and policies on the use of Mao's former residence. The items on the stated agenda were important and of interest to Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen, both members of the Standing Committee, and would ensure their attendance. Although the notice was short, it was not unusual. Even though Yao Wenyuan was not a member of the Standing Committee, he had been deeply involved with the publication of volume 5 of Mao's selected works, and it was quite proper for him to be invited to this meeting. Meanwhile Wang Dongxing selected a small group of guards he could trust and gave them detailed instructions.

On the night of 6 October Hua Guofeng and Marshall Ye arrived one hour before 8 p.m. and sat quietly on a sofa inside Huairen Hall. Wang Dongxing's special task force was already also inside, while everything outside the building appeared normal. Wang Hongwen strode into the building just before 8 p.m. He started to strike martial arts postures and fought with the guards when they tried to arrest him. He was soon overpowered and brought before Hua Guofeng. Wang glared at Hua and Ye like a wild animal ready to spring. The guards then pushed him to the floor, and Hua stood up and said, 'Wang Dongxing, you have committed anti-party crimes and anti-socialist crimes. The party centre is placing you in confinement for investigation'. Wang was led away muttering that he had not expected this to happen so soon.

Zhang Chunqiao arrived next, carrying a briefcase, exactly on time. He thought it strange that the guards at the entrance did not permit him to bring his own guards into the building. He asked repeatedly, 'What is the matter?' As he walked into the meeting room where Hua Guofeng was waiting, Hua solemnly declared to him: 'Listen Zhang Chunqiao; you have ganged up with Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, and Yao Wenyuan, committing unforgivable crimes against the party and against socialism.' Then Hua continued to tell him that he was going to be detained and investigated immediately. Zhang was led away trembling and without a struggle. Yao Wenyuan was late. As he was not so lofty in rank, he was ushered by security guards into a room, where a vice-bureau chief of the Central Guard announced Yao's arrest, read out the reasons for it, and put him in detention.

As other members of her gang were being arrested, the head of the Central Garrison Corps led a squadron of soldiers to arrest Jiang Qing at her residence, Spring Lotus Chamber in Zhongnanhai. When this special task force broke into her house, she was found wearing her silk pyjamas, watching an imported video tape and reading some documents at the same time. She shouted sharply at the intruders, asking, 'What are you doing here?' When they told her that she was being detained for investigation, she asked repeatedly 'Why? Why?' They replied, 'You will find out when you get there'. She was escorted to a car by two female members of the task force and driven away. In less than an hour, and without any gunfire or bloodshed, the notorious Gang of Four, who had overthrown so many officials of their party, were themselves overthrown.

Around the time the arrests being made, Hua and Ye sent a PLA unit to take over the broadcasting studios, the New China News Agency (Xinhua), the *People's Daily*, and other major publications, to prevent the followers of the Gang of Four from using these media, and the news of their arrest becoming public knowledge, until threats from their key supporters and any possibility of armed resistance were eliminated. Mao Yuanxin, who had used his influence with Mao to knock down Deng Xiaoping, and promoted the interest of Jiang Qing and her gang, was arrested during the same night. He was the first among the prominent supporters of the gang to be arrested, on account of his link with the threat of possible military action against Beijing,

During the same night, an emergency Politburo meeting that included all members of this body in Beijing, except the Gang of Four, was held at 10 p.m. at Marshall Ye's home in the Western Hills. When Hua Guofeng reported to those gathered there the drama of arresting the Gang of Four, his audience became excited and thrilled. His speech was interrupted with rounds of applause. The meeting continued until 4 a.m., during which time the participants unanimously chose Hua Guofeng to assume the chairmanship of the CCP and the Central Military Commission, both positions vacated by Mao. Had the Gang of Four been at the meeting, they would have blocked the passage of this motion, because Jiang Qing had wanted these positions for herself. Jiang Qing, who had tried to assert control of Mao's unpublished works, surely would not have let Hua Guofeng be put in charge of the publication of volume 5 of Mao's Selected Works. The Politburo decided to give this task to Hua to enhance his prestige as Mao's heir, and to give him the opportunity to define Mao's legacy. The assembled leaders also discussed the actions to be taken regarding the followers of the Gang of Four, the news of whose arrest was kept secret until 18 October.

On 7 October Chi Qun, the first secretary of the Tsinghua Revolutionary Committee, and Xie Jingyi, the deputy secretary of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee, and thirty of the Gang of Four's most loyal followers in Beijing, were taken into custody. A greater threat of disorder came from Shanghai, the power

base of Jiang Qing's male colleagues, who had armed the militia of that city in preparation for a coming power struggle after Mao's death. Ye and Hua first made sure that the PLA at the Nanjing Military Region were ready to counter any insurgency from Shanghai. To avoid bloodshed, a general led a group of senior officials to Shanghai to apparently smooth things over, and to invite the Gang of Four's leading supporter, Ma Tianshui, and others to go to Beijing. This was again a trap, as they became hostages in Beijing. Their subordinates in Shanghai gave up without a fight.

After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping and his family, isolated from the world outside, lived in constant fear of the Gang of Four emerging as the winners of the power struggle. Not only would it be a great misfortune for China to be ruled by such ruthless, unscrupulous, self-seeking, and patently corrupt people; the Dengs and many senior officials, who had been rehabilitated, would probably be executed as capitalists or revisionists in the name of class struggle. On 7 October the parents-in-law of Deng's daughter Deng Rong heard the news from an old comrade. They immediately passed the news on to their son He Ping, who was Deng Rong's husband, and who was at work. He Ping then raced on his bicycle to Deng's home bearing the good tidings. When the Dengs saw He Ping puffing and panting, brimming with happiness and excitement, they quickly gathered themselves together in their bathroom to hear the news, turning the faucets on full blast so that the neighbours would not hear what was said. The Deng family was overcome by feelings of relief and exhilaration as they heard He Ping's account of the fall of the Gang of Four. Deng's irrepressible adult daughters jumped with joy. Deng Xiaoping was noticeably excited – the hand that held the cigarette was gently shaking.

On 10 October, after the good news was confirmed, Deng wrote a letter to be passed by Wang Dongxing to the Party centre and Hua Guofeng. In the letter, Deng congratulated Chairman Hua and the Party for taking the 'decisive and courageous action to shatter the power of the Gang of Four in one stroke'. As a political realist, Deng was expressing his opinion that Hua was the most appropriate successor to Mao, and he gave Hua his sincere support for the latter's appointments to the chairmanships of the Central Committee and of the Central military Commission. Ending his letter on an uncharacteristically high note, he wrote: 'Like the people of the entire country, this victory made us all exceedingly joyful'.

There was indeed universal jubilation in China, when the news of the fall of Gang of Four was released on 18 October. On 21 October the Deng family joined the parade of one and a half million people in Beijing, celebrating the occasion in joyful spirits with drums, cymbals, and firecrackers. Twenty-nine other major cities in China also celebrated the fall of the Gang with large parades.

For most of the 27 years when Mao was at the helm, the long-suffering Chinese people had been pushed, in the name of socialist revolution and class struggle, through the mills of social and economic upheavals that reached back, not just to the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, but to the years before the Great

Leap Forward of 1958. They simply yearned for unity, stability, and cessation of political struggles and movements. After Mao's death, most of the Chinese people, except for some radical remnants, were truly happy with the removal of the Gang of Four, who as the torchbearers of the revolutionary class struggle, had been continuing the factional fighting and power struggles. The people were giving their verdict on the Cultural Revolution. The famous artist Huang Yongyu painted a picture with the title 'Catching Crabs' and presented it to Marshal Ye as a tribute to him for arresting the Gang. (Autumn was the season for eating crabs.) When this story became known, people rushed to purchase crabs for holding celebratory crab feasts, with wine. The combination of three male crabs and one female crab were in such demand that they were sold out.

Despite the people's expression of joy and support for the arrest of the Gang of Four, within the Party there were pro-Mao loyalists, who did not believe that Mao would have had them arrested. Since Mao had not actually pronounced Hua as his successor, there was also some doubt on this point. For the sake of Party unity and for Hua to consolidate his rule, a meeting of the leading central, provincial, and military officials was called, with the support of Marshal Ye and Li Xiannian. At this gathering, they cited the crimes committed by the Gang of Four and explained the necessity for their arrest. Hua also produced the piece of paper on which the seriously ill Mao had scrawled the note mentioned earlier: 'With you in charge, I am at ease'. These leading officials all knew that Chairman Mao had promoted Hua to rank number two in the Party hierarchy when he was still alive and conscious, and this additional piece of evidence was sufficient proof to convince them that Mao had indeed chosen Hua. The meeting concluded with their declaration of support for Hua Guofeng as the chairman of the Party and the Central Military Commission.

With the arrest of the Gang of Four, and the confirmation of Hua Guofeng's leadership, the long travail of the Chinese people under the deeply misguided Cultural Revolution was over. Quite soon Deng Xiaoping would return to take up the reins of power and set China on a course of remarkable economic growth, with his 'Reform and Opening Up' policy.



The trial of the Gang of Four. Left to right: Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan, Jiang Qing.
 (UMKC School of Law: retrieved on 13 November 2023 from
<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/gangoffour/Gangof4.html>)

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