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## ARMY FACTIONS

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# The PLA: a restive element

The current status and political role of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been the subject of very little attention over the recent period. However, despite the considerable efforts of the current Peking leadership to "depoliticize" the PLA, there is ample evidence that the PLA remains a major political factor and perhaps the only reliable unifying force in China.

Since the so-called Lin Piao affair—the alleged attempted coup by PLA chief Lin Piao and his subsequent purported death in a plane crash in Mongolia while fleeing to the Soviet Union—the PLA has suffered a significant downgrading as a political institution. Moreover, there is no clear person or group of persons within the PLA who exercise a commanding role in the institution, as did Lin, particularly during the period from the late 1960s until the affair in 1971.

Nonetheless, over the recent period there are significant signs that the PLA is a base of resistance to the domination of the Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-ping) group, and that in the future, control over the PLA or elements of it may be crucial in the power struggles to come. The recent meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC) spurred such speculation when cuts in the current defense budget were announced. There were signs that senior PLA commanders were unhappy over such moves, particularly because there is a demand for a significant upgrading of the PLA's professional status and modernization of its military hardware.

The fact that one of the grand old men of the PLA, Marshal Ye Jianying (Yeh Chien-ying), remained in his position of chairman of the congress, despite the resignation of almost all the other leading figures of that body, is the most suggestive event. Some speculation has been that Ye's resistance to resigning reflects PLA discontent with the economic and de-Maoification policies of the Deng group.

Evidence cited to back this speculation includes Ye's closing speech to the NPC which gave specific praise to Party Chairman Hua Guofeng's major speech to the congress, and also highlighted the need to strengthen national defense as a priority alongside that of the "Four Modernizations." Also, Hua, himself, in his speech, gave strong praise to the PLA, calling it "a strong pillar of the dictatorship of the proletariat" and expressing dissatisfaction over the fact that "in the

coming years it will be impossible to sharply increase our defense spending."

The context for examining the circumstances in the PLA at this time must include the upcoming trial of the Gang of Four and the Lin Piao group, a trial which will necessarily include sensitive issues regarding the PLA. This is due to the inclusion in the 10 defendants of five senior military officials, identified as collaborators of Lin Piao, who disappeared shortly after the 1971 events.

The trial indictment, so far as it is known at this time, includes charges of conspiring to carry out a coup and assassinate Mao, charges coming out of the Lin Piao affair itself. As we will discuss below, there was much reason to doubt the veracity of these charges at that time, and there still is. It will be very interesting to see how the Deng group presents the charges and evidence to back them up. Suffice it to say that the downfall of Lin can be traced directly to Chou En-lai, as a principal competitor for the succession to Mao.

### The PLA and Lin Piao

The mystique of Lin Piao can be expected to provide one of the more sensitive themes to be handled during the Gang of Four trial. Next to Mao's name, Lin Piao's is certainly the most revered among the PLA rank and file. He was most highly regarded both for his tactical and strategic abilities. He was always referred to affectionately as "Lin Zong" ("Chief Lin") by the fighters and commanders of the PLA. This was not just limited to the famous Fourth Field Army, which he personally commanded, and led all the way from the northeast region to the southernmost fringe of the PRC on Hainan Island, from 1946 to 1949.

It was Lin Piao's forces that turned the tide and spelled the end of the Kuomintang (KMT) on the mainland. It happened in the first of the "Three Great Campaigns" of the 1946-49 civil war. This was the campaign in the Liaohsi-Shenyang region which enabled the PLA to establish a foothold in Manchuria, the rich, most industrialized part of China. The control of this region enabled the PLA, until then hopelessly outnumbered, to destroy the KMT divisions, cross the Shanhaikuan barrier and stream into the heartland of China. After this nothing could check it.

The strategic doctrines developed in this campaign

and the tactics employed became operations manuals for use right down to the PLA's battalion and company levels. It was this institutional reverence for Commander Lin that the post-Lin Piao leadership has attempted to obliterate through mass campaigns. Yet the memory has persisted in the minds of the fighters and commanders of the PLA.

This "Lin Zong" legend, and the general attitude toward discipline and order inherent in the professional military, which allowed the PLA to weather the general turmoil of the Cultural Revolution relatively intact, makes it imperative for the Deng Xiaoping regime to handle the PLA carefully as it rehabilitates and consolidates the position of the civilian sector, i.e., the party and the government.

The battered sensibilities of the PLA must be taken into account not only because of the summary dismissal, formal disgracing, or general harassment over the years of such prominent military figures as Peng Dehuai, Lo Juiching, Ho Lung, Chu Teh, and Lin Piao. There also remains some resentment in the ranks because of the way the PLA as a whole was forced during the Cultural Revolution to act as gendarmes against the Red Guards and their violent factional strife.

The PLA knows on the basis of putting "theory into practice" that waving Mao Tse-tung's little red book, or expounding the current ideological variant, is not as efficacious a "norm of truth" (Deng's current favorite phrase) in developing a "fine [military] work style," such as live fire practice and frequent combat maneuvers. This is particularly true when it is put to the test as in the February-March 1979 incursion into Vietnam. Whatever the lack of equipment or defects in preparedness that resulted in the PLA's drubbing at the hands of local and regional Vietnamese troops, this action must have resulted in a general, if inarticulate, disaffection from the CCP leadership of the Cultural Revolution decade.

The above factors may account for the speculation about the role and status of senior military officials still in positions of authority. Among them, as noted above, is Ye Jianying, 84, one of the five still-living marshals from the famous 12 appointed in 1955. Such speculation must revolve around the question of the political position of the army, rather than any question of Ye's political stand on the Gang of Four versus Deng, or the more mundane matter of his age.

Ye, like Deng, was attacked, directly and indirectly, by the Gang of Four, though unlike Deng, he was not purged. There is the matter of the "Shangtung Question," for example, an exercise of Madame Mao and her dilettante literati, who, while ostensibly on vacation in August 1972, decided to take over, or at least "investigate," a military base and check out the political condition of the troops there. Ye objected, whereupon

the vituperative Madame Mao embarked upon an attack on Ye and the whole general staff. Between December 1972 and January 1973, the general staff was forced to "reveal their crimes" three times. Ye was accused of opposing the Party Central, the general staff was depicted as a "pitch-black organization," and the general staff of Lin Piao. (Ironically, Lin is now lumped with the Gang of Four as an antagonist to the true line of Mao Tse-tung Thought.)

In pursuing the matter of Ye's status, the question has been raised as to whether he "really" offered to resign as chairman at the recent National People's Congress. It has been noted that on Sept. 19, Hua Guofeng stated to a prominent foreign visitor that Ye had submitted his resignation, but it was not accepted. It was also noted, however, that Deng and his followers have remained silent on the matter. One observer cites this episode as an indication that personnel changes at the senior levels of the government may not have been as smooth and amicable as they are presented to the masses of China and the West.

Another aspect in the relationship between the military and state involves the exercise in multiple transfers at the regional level. Early this year most of the PRC's 11 military regions underwent leadership changes. Deng relinquished his position as PLA chief of staff in favor of Gen. Yang Dezhi (Yang Teh-chih). It has also been suggested that the transfer to Peking of a number of the most prestigious senior officers to the Military Affairs Commission, and their replacement in the provinces with little-known individuals, is in part an effort to diminish the tendency toward the development of the dreaded "independent kingdoms," or factionally dominated regions.

In sum, then, it may be said that Ye, as a certified anti-Gang of Four type, is still a focal point of some controversy in Peking. This may be explained in terms of his role as one of the few surviving mentors of the essentially apolitical role of the body of the PLA (leaving aside for a moment the question of the political proclivities of the host of PLA senior officers cited above). His situation may also be explained as representing a faction, including significant supporters of the pace and direction of Deng's current line.

Another military figure who may represent a category of skeptical moderates between the two contending factions (Deng and the remaining vestigial elements loyal to the Gang of Four at the middle and lower level of cadre) is Xu Shiyu (Hsu Shih-yu). Xu, as commander of the Canton Military Region, had a prominent role both in the recent Vietnam campaign and earlier, in a critical moment of Peking palace politics, when the Gang of Four was arrested in October 1976. (Xu, then stationed in Canton as commander, returned to Nanking, whose command he held for 20 years, one can

presume he did this to forestall any manifestation of support for the Gang of Four from their strong power base in Shanghai, which lies within the purview of the Nanking Troop.)

Xu is credited with protecting Deng in the aftermath of his latest fall from grace. Thus, when the commanders of the Military Regions were reshuffled in February 1980, it was expected by authoritative sources that Xu would be honored with a significantly higher position—logically this would mean in Peking. However, no such honor has yet been bestowed upon the faithful Xu.

Earlier this year, speculation concerning Xu's status ranged from his personally attempting to assassinate Deng, to his being kept at a distance from Deng by other senior military men who are not in full accord with the pact of change advocated by Deng and who feared Xu's strong personality. It is also noted that it was not Xu but the number-two man of the Vietnam War, Yang Dezhi, who was promoted to chief of staff. All that can be said of the "number-one mystery man," Xu, is that he did appear at the recent National People's Congress, and is evidently a member in good standing with the Military Affairs Commission.

### **Background of the Lin Piao affair: Chou's revenge**

The background of the Lin Piao affair forms an important part of the current events, the trial, the power struggles within the Chinese leadership, and the status of the PLA. The dramatic charges of Lin's leadership of an anti-Mao coup that surfaced in China following the September 1971 flight of Lin from China are clearly only a part, and perhaps a small part, of the truth. One element is strategic—Lin's opposition to Chou En-lai's entente with the United States that was manifested in the July 1970 visit of Henry Kissinger to China and also in the late 1969 armed border clashes with the Soviet Union. Evidence suggests these clashes were engineered by the Chinese, perhaps by Chou and Mao, with the aim of discrediting Lin's opposition to an axis with the U.S. and his rumored support for some kind of limited rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

However, there are also internal aspects relating to Lin's role as heir-apparent to Mao and the tremendous political power exercised by Lin and the People's Liberation Army resulting from the PLA's role in ending the chaos of the Cultural Revolution under conditions of almost complete destruction of the party as an organized institution. The origins of this can be traced to the Ninth Communist Party Congress in April 1969. This congress officially ended the disorder of the Cultural Revolution.

It was at the time of the Chou group's resurgence that Lin began to turn to his military comrades and to Chen Boda (Chen Po-ta) for support in the struggle for

## **The trial defendants**

**Jiang Qing:** widow of the late Chairman Mao and one of the main protagonists during the Cultural Revolution. She has been identified as the leader of the Gang of Four.

**Zhang Chunqiao:** leading protagonist and publisher of fellow Gang of Four member Yao Wenyuan's radical writings. Zhang grabbed control of China's propaganda apparatus during the Cultural Revolution. He formerly was a Politburo Standing Committee member and was once viewed as a likely successor to Premier Chou En-lai.

**Yao Wenyuan:** leading radical theorist and propagandist who worked closely with Zhang Chunqiao from their base in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution. Yao was a member of the Politburo.

**Wang Hongwen:** the Shanghai "boy wonder" who was promoted from a factory security job in his home city to the Standing Committee of the Politburo and to party vice-chairman by Mao himself. These were the "Gang of Four."

**Chen Boda:** Chairman Mao's private secretary and chief propagandist for over 30 years, and one of the leaders of the Cultural Revolution group that carried out attacks against "revisionists."

Five former military leaders accused of collusion in Lin Piao's alleged assassination attempt on Chairman Mao in 1971:

**Huang Yongsheng:** former chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army.

**Wu Faxian:** former commander of the Air Force.

**Li Zuopeng:** former Chief Political Commissar of the Navy.

**Qiu Huizuo:** former director of the General Rear Services Department.

**Jiang Tengjiao:** former commander of the Air Force Central Headquarters.

succession, a succession in which Lin had already been formally designated the heir-apparent. (Chen is one of the 10 trial defendants.)

Some sources believe there were differences between Lin and Chou even before the Ninth Party Congress. Specifically, these involved, or were articulated, as differences over the manner and extent to which the purge of the party was to be carried out. What it comes down to is who was to be axed and by whom. The outcome of the struggle between the “radicals/Reds,” and “moderates/experts” would determine the post-Cultural Revolution power structure.

Mao and Chou first attempted to undercut Lin by initiating a low-key rectification campaign against Lin’s power base in the military apparatus.

Also at this time, the “Central Cultural Revolution Group” headed by Chen Boda was abolished, and he was relegated to an unimportant post.

Lin’s increasingly precarious position was manifested dramatically in March 1970, when Mao deleted the office of chairman of the state from the new draft constitution. This decision, which confirmed Premier Chou En-lai as de facto head of government, thus outranking Lin in both his government position of vice-premier and minister of national defense, indicated that Mao had abrogated his plan for a single successor, Lin.

At the Lushan Plenum of the CP Central Committee in August 1970, Lin and Chen openly challenged Mao’s authority on fundamental questions concerning the power structure and the correct line. The subsequent charges against Lin and his military supporters—that they had practiced “revisionism, splittism, and conspiracy”—refer to this challenge to Mao’s leadership at Lushan.

The aftermath of the August plenum was characterized by a subtle undercutting of Lin’s power base in the PLA. Once Lin’s power base had been dissipated, it would be relatively simple to render him harmless.

The principal charges in the indictment against Lin Piao were: that he plotted a coup d’état; that he attempted to assassinate Mao Tse-tung; and that when these efforts failed, he attempted to defect to the Soviet Union (with which he had had “illicit” relations not further specified).

Sources here say that following the Second Plenum, the struggle had reached a stalemate. Confronted by a powerful coalition of PLA leaders, the Chou element, using Mao as their ideological front man, were compelled to move cautiously and indirectly. Presumably they were constrained from taking direct action against Lin until serious proof of conspiracy was at hand. The party documents characterized the situation as one in which both sides “were riding the tiger and finding it difficult to dismount,” and that they were involved in a “superficial equilibrium which cannot last long.”

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## SECURITY APPARATUS

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# Discredited and dysfunctional

China’s security and intelligence apparatus is rarely a subject of public discussion in either China or the West—yet it is one of the most important power centers in China, one which has held power equal perhaps to that of the much-discussed Soviet KGB. In the recent period, however, the Chinese security apparatus has come to bear little resemblance to its Western counterparts, including the Soviet, in form, content or direction. In earlier years it was under the command of the shadowy powerful Kang Sheng, once trained in the Soviet Union but a known architect of the anti-Soviet policy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from its inception.

Kang Sheng is now the subject of intense attack in the Chinese media as the architect of the personality cult of Mao and the perpetrator of various crimes, through the security apparatus, against those cadres who were purged various times over the past 20 years. Once head of the “Social Affairs Department” of the CCP (an intelligence bureau whose continued formal existence is uncertain), toward the end of his life Kang had reached the highest ranks of the Chinese Communist leadership. His status as a member of the Politburo of the CCP and fifth-ranking vice-chairman of the party, remained intact at the time of his death in 1975.

Kang Sheng has since had the unusual status of being purged from the CCP after his death, along with another top figure in the security/intelligence apparatus. There have been numerous indications that his “crimes” will be a part of the trial of the Gang of Four and that he will be posthumously tried with them, as their “godfather.” It is important to note that as late as the Eleventh Party Congress in 1977, Chairman Hua listed him among the most venerated of the departed CCP leaders.

### The departed chiefs

A quick review reveals that every known top leader of the security/intelligence apparatus (leaving aside foreign intelligence operations, particularly those under Chou En-lai’s command) has suffered a grim fate. The minister of public security (formally the state apparatus