

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.