

## **July 6, 1976**

### **Current Situation of Chinese Party Leadership**

#### **Citation:**

"Current Situation of Chinese Party Leadership", July 6, 1976, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archive, Prague, CPCz CC presidium 1976-1981, box 12, arch. Sign. 12. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/113242>

#### **Summary:**

Discusses at length the issues and struggles in China resulting after the death of several leaders such as Zhou Enlai, and now with Mao Zedong in power.

#### **Original Language:**

Czech

#### **Contents:**

Translation - English

Information from allied consultative meeting July 6, 1976  
628/23

T O P S E C R E T !

#### Current Situation of Chinese Party Leadership

The current situation of Chinese leaders was discussed in great detail at the alliance meeting held on 6th July 1976. Fellow find the summary of common opinions expressed at the meeting:

1. Any attempt to assess the distribution of powers held by individual competing fractions within the Maoist government hierarchy is not possible due to lack of reliable facts about the true structure of individual opinion groups, which are not always possible to identify. Besides, as the fight for power is culminating, true facts are being carefully camouflaged, opinions changed and new combination are arising. Another important role is also played by subjective factors (reciprocation, personal ambitions, family relations). Thus, long-term monitoring can only result in identifying general tendencies and structure of the ever changing distribution of power within the government.

Moreover, the assessment is largely influenced by the fact that it is not possible to reliably describe the true health condition of Mao Zedong, even though individual findings suggest that it is getting worse. This opinion is shared by many western diplomats, who are - based on a long-term analysis - coming to the conclusion that the Chairman's end is inevitably approaching and that all the groups are preparing intensively for the decisive round of the fight for succession.

2. China is entering an exceptionally important period of its development concerning the decision about its future political orientation. Since the death of Dong Biwu, Kang Sheng and Zhou Enlai, there has been a continuous process of changing balance of power among the leaders. Besides Mao Zedong, the oldest veterans holding an office in the present politburo are only Ye Jianying, Liu Bocheng and Li Xiannian. The leaving generation of political leaders has been governing the party and the country since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Not only they did not manage to develop China in the socialist way, but they have also forced it to adopt conflicting stances.

The tortuous development of the party and continuous internal political collisions and fights reflects the ongoing crisis of Maoism, which has been increasingly becoming the opposite of the real needs of life. Even though the necessity of changes has already been evident for a long time, the complicated conditions we find in China make it impossible to identify any real powers which could stand up to Maoism with the platform of Marxism-Leninism and internationalism.

This is clearly evident from the systematic liquidation of Mao Zedong's opposition as well as the continuous indoctrination of the party and the whole country with Maoism. Only after the death of the dictator it will be possible for various and so-far brutally oppressed political forces to show.

The internal political fight, which is a permanent factor of Chinese reality, is clearly evident mainly at present, due to the process of rejuvenation of the Chinese political leaders, which has already started. However, this process, which is natural and so desirable in China, is carried out in the form of implacable fight for power, affecting all governing bodies of the Maoist system of power. In fact, the fight is between orthodox Maoism and political realism, between radical Maoist dogmatists and those political representatives who - within the Maoist political regime and under Maoist

flags - try to take into account the real needs of the country.

3. All in all, the distribution of power in the Beijing government seems to be as follows: The persons who are closest to Mao Zedong, besides his wife Jiang Qing, are Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Dongxing. The last one seems to have taken over the secret intelligent service after the dead Kang Sheng. This group forms a core of the incomplete politburo and represents a kind of an authorization body of the party. It holds power in the area of ideology, it controls the propaganda machinery of the Central Committee and its divisions in the area of culture and school education. It has strong foundations in the whole area of super-structure and controls practically all media, seized after the "Cultural Revolution". The orthodox Maoists exercise their influence on important units of the garrison and people's militias in Beijing as well as Shanghai, Shengjang [sic] and some other places. It gradually penetrates individual units of the police. For many years they have been preparing their striking force in the form of so called "theoretical brigades", which serve as Maoism watchdogs in primary organizational units. However, their main power lies in the direct support from Mao Zedong. Orthodox Maoists not only demonstrate their preparedness and willingness to use any weapon in their fight, but they also carry out necessary mobilization preparation in all provinces. At present time they refuse any armistice on the basis of "status quo", because the present distribution of power suggests that they would be excluded from the leadership after the death of Mao Zedong.

The anti-pole to this orthodox group is formed by old influential party, state, economic and army representatives, who - despite the repressions of "Cultural Revolution" - managed to hold their positions. Mainly in the last two years their number increased thanks to the so called "rehabilitation". They are experienced leaders who - under cover of faithfulness to the "way of Mao" - prefer the methods and orders which existed before the "Cultural Revolution". The recent period of time showed that also the largest group of middle-aged representatives tends to cling to this group. It is not practically possible for Mao Zedong and his closest camarilla to fight against these people, who form the vital backbone of the whole state mechanism. This group is trying to hold their positions and survive until Mao leaves. Then they will be able to exercise their power. Their main weakness is that at present they do not have any active and authoritative leader.

In the recent years, there has also been forming a new group of representatives who were holding important provincial and local positions in the period before the "Cultural Revolution". Even though they got promoted to the top level of the government thanks to this "chaos" organized by Mao Zedong, they are trying to stay in the centre between the two anti-poles. However, it was mainly them who largely supported the internal political and economic measures which are now being associated with the name of Deng Xiaoping. Also, this group includes Hua Guofeng, Zhang Chunqiao, Chen Xilian and Ji Dengkui. This group holds a strong position among party representatives, in the state as well as economic mechanism, in the army and in the bodies of the police. It is not a homogeneous group, there are evident divergences of opinion and competitiveness among the leaders of this group and Mao is probably taking advantage of this (e.g. by placing Chua in a higher position than Chang). In general, the chances of this group to reinforce their position at the top of the government is quite realistic, because in this situation of relative balance of powers this can serve the objectives of both the orthodox Maoists and to the representatives of the Old Order.

(Note: Hua Guofeng and Zhang Chunqiao are controversial figures. For example, it is interesting that the Vietnamese rank them among the radicals, but in economic matters they tend towards the concept of Zhou-Deng)

4. The political liquidation of Deng Xiaoping has complicated the solution of the

problem of succession and power hand-over. There is no person among the top leaders who would be authoritative enough to take over the post of the Chairman of the Communist Party without any problems. Ye Jianying is not in a good physical condition and other representatives of the "old boys" do not have enough authority over the whole country. Hua Guofeng, promoted under very complicated circumstances to the second position after Mao Zedong, does not yet possess the qualities which are necessary for such a high position and the enormous power held by the Chairman of the Party. Despite indisputable abilities and managerial experience he could be easily knocked down by the same turmoil which promoted him to the post of Prime Minister.

Thus, in the current situation it is not possible to rule out the possibility that in case of Mao Zedong's sudden death, the competing factions would use extreme fascist methods to liquidate their opponents or seize power through military dictatorship. In this case, we could expect a greater manifestation of regionalization tendencies in the country, which are already quite visible and pose a certain threat to the central power. Under this pressure it seems to be probable in the nearest future, or at least as long as Mao Zedong stays alive, that the formation of the new government will be carried out on the basis of periodical compromises ("unity through fight") between various powers. However, it will be increasingly more and more difficult to reach such compromises for two reasons: the fight between factions becoming acute and a lack of an experienced leader of Zhou Enlai type. Also the existing balance of power, where no group has reached a decisive majority, will influence the formation of the succession team, who must proceed very carefully for the sake of the regime as a whole and must not allow things to get out of their control.

5. The future formation of the central power and the overall distribution of powers will largely depend on the attitude of the army and provinces. Military commanders and local leaders, who had to face the accomplished fact resulting from the decision made by the politburo on 7th April 1976, expressed their formal support to the adopted measures taken against Deng Xiaoping, but at the same time they resisted any attempts to use this affair against any party representatives.

Mainly the local political leaders, who largely rely on old party representatives, sympathized greatly with what is now criticized as the "right-wing deviation". This can be assumed from the numerous meetings and conferences of party activists during the last year, where the main attention was not paid to the rigid directives from the Chairman, but to various economic and organizational matters and putting managerial links at all levels into order. These meetings criticized the extremist elements and "bourgeois functionaries". It is quite probable that such meetings and gatherings were held under cover of studying the experience of Dazhai and Daqing, or even perhaps under the pretense of political campaigns.

(Note: According to the British, Chinese provinces are full of various false instructions referring to Mao. This contributes to the chaos in the minds of local political leaders who cannot be sure of the right governmental policy. )

A new efficient internal political power has been growing in Chinese provinces. This is where army corps are located together with basic components of the state and economic machinery, this is where values are being created. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai have always been keeping an eye on the movement of this "third power" and tried to paralyze it. Also today, Mao's orthodox activists focus on a strike against provincial and local leaders. We cannot rule out the possibility that even the selection of Hua Guofeng has been influenced by Mao's effort to appoint "his own person" to the top of these provincial pressures and thus to get them under his control. (There is no other explanation to the fact that the same Hua Guofeng, who last year supported many requirements now addressed as the "right-wing deviation", was later chosen by Mao to be a way out of the prolonged crisis within the leaders of the party.)

A special category are military commanders, who are responsible for the fact that the army as a whole did not respond to the series of political campaigns held last year even though they were promoted by the authority of the Chairman himself. Even though the army did not obstruct the removal of Deng Xiaoping, they apparently did not actively participate in this matter. This kind of "neutralism" of the army, which is mainly under the control of the old leaders and middle-level representatives necessarily irritates the extremists as it virtually supports the direction towards stabilization and modernization of the country and refuses any other political adventures such as the "Cultural Revolution". Chinese army is, at present, an important stabilizing factor in the country. However, this does not mean that its basic units are not influenced by the ongoing fight between individual fractions.

(Note: Moreover, if the news from Hong Kong are true, there has been a fierce disagreement between the radicals and military commanders over the armament of the People's Militias by medium and heavy weapons. The Army is said to have categorically refused to provide this equipment to the uncontrollable masses of millions of militiamen)

6. It is very difficult to predict the next development in the fight both fractions are intensively preparing for. The orthodox Maoists, shouldering their way to seize power, have probably made their life more complicated by attacking the other fractions under Mao's slogans from the beginning of the "Cultural Revolution", i.e. that – like at that time – even now the main attack should be focused against the Party and the "new and old bourgeoisie" within it, which means against leading bodies of various levels. What is typical for the latest campaigns is the fact that they are not aimed at the members of the party but that they seek activists outside the party. They are trying to repeat the standard Maoist attempt to tear apart the party bodies using forces from the outside.

This situation itself can be regarded as evidence of the fact that the Party created by Mao Zedong is once again coming into conflict with himself and his attempts to reinforce the regime of his personal power. That is why Mao Zedong and his orthodox followers regard this Party as a potential source of opposition against Maoism. They want to knock down its bodies while simultaneously disintegrating them by the Hongweibing's [Red Guards] masses of "theoretical brigades".

Finally, it is necessary to take into account another factor whose importance cannot be yet precisely determined, not to speak about its potential influence on the future internal political development. This involves critical attitudes and evident dissatisfaction not only among party members but also among the inhabitants. State propaganda is continuously confronted with this discontentment. The fact that Maoists are greatly alarmed by this public mood can be testified by their angry campaign commenced in April 1976 "for the uprooting of the contra-revolutionary public opinion".

Opposition tendencies within the society is a fact which must be more and more taken into account even by the top Maoist leaders. This may become a decisive factor in the future selection of forms and methods used in the internal political struggle. At present, any government which wants to avoid the risk of explosion of open dissatisfaction in the country must take into account all the forces coming from various directions and must carry out their policies very carefully. It is of no wonder that despite exaggerated announcements by various extremists appealing for the intensification of the political situation in the country and for setting "revolutionary masses" into motion, the Beijing leaders keep a tight rein on any initiatives which could pose a risk to the Maoist regime.

7. It is not yet possible to rationally assess to which extent the radicals are able to manipulate with the authority of Mao Zedong. The factor of time forces them to hurry

up and so they are intensifying their effort. They are trying to open a way to new cleansings and to long-term fight between individual factions. They demagogically repeat an old Mao's quotation about fight "against the bureaucratic class" hoping that this motive which is very popular in China will help them gain support from the Chinese public. They launch discrediting campaigns against local functionaries calling them "bourgeois elements of Deng type". Their uncontrolled actions and intrigues suggest that Mao still have some influence on the course of the current events and actions and that he is still fiercely pressing for the course announced in the article dated 1 January 1976. However, it is questionable to what extent he will manage to break through the barrier of the old and middle-aged party members.

Even though there can be adopted a range of temporary compromises, we can assume that the fight for the key leading positions will continue even after Mao Zedong dies. An idea of collective government is very improbable under current conditions found in China. Such a collective government would only be possible under Zhou Enlai, who was a leader among leaders. Maoism, facing strong internal and international pressure, cannot survive without permanent fight. That is why we cannot expect any immediate crucial changes in the Maoist regime after Mao Zedong dies.

Compiled by: K. Kurka

#### On the situation in the Communist Party of China and on the ideological front-line

The ongoing crisis of Maoism, which is evident in every area of the life of Chinese society, has hit even the main pillar supporting Mao and his group - the Maoist Party. At the 9th Congress Mao, supported by the army, created a more-or-less obedient organization aimed to put his ideas into action. However, as early as after the 10th Congress, even though at this congress Mao's ideas were incorporated into the statutes as a theoretical basis for any activities carried out by the party, we can see a development which has been in conflict with the intentions of the Chairman. The course of the present political campaigns confirms the ongoing erosion of Maoism and the political power of Mao Zedong and his closest followers. Mao is not able to mobilize his party. Not even against dangers resulting from the announced program of the 4th Session of All Chinese People Assembly. Mao cannot rely on any support from the army, which is controlled by old cadres and stands aside the current political campaigns. The cult of Mao's personality has not been long a reflection of his authority and ideas but a personification of fear which Mao uses to paralyze any independent activities. An analysis of Chinese history leads us to the conclusion that when a dictator leaves, this barrier of fear also disappears and releases powers and forces which has not been yet manifested to the full extent. Maoist Party can be now regarded as one of such forces. The changes which are taking place in the party are a reflection of complicated fight between various tendencies and the distribution of power among competing groups within the top levels of government. They are affected by the fact that Mao's days are numbered so the best strategy for the people who hold positions at various levels within the party and state government is to wait and survive his death.

On the eve of the 55th anniversary of the establishment of the Communist Party of China, Mao has been forced to admit that "besides the Party" there is another party, that there is a faction inside the party" and even to declare that "because of the Party is a party of revolutionary proletariat, we are able to admit that there is bourgeoisie inside the Party" (Renmin ribao 29th May 1976). This is an open confirmation of the existence of strong opposition inside the party, confession of the hopelessness of Maoism. Mainly after the events that took place in April this year, Mao and his group have been showing increasing dissatisfaction with the development of their own party, Mao's warnings that "bourgeoisie exists inside the party" and "the most dangerous is the one which holds powers within the party" and

that "our fight against them can only be a mortal combat" (Renmin ribao 16th May 1976) are repeated more and more often and more and more vigorously. The real power Mao and his group holds at present is reflected in the fact that there is no response to the appeals for political cleansing and that critical campaigns are focused on the area of studies or serve as an "impulse" for the development of production. It is evident that Mao has no organization he could lean on when asserting his power.

Concerning the "bourgeoisie inside the party", it involves older rehabilitated cadres who are forced - on everyday basis - to resolve the conflicts between Mao's dogmas and the needs of real life. Despite this, the machinery of the Central Committee is still working, its representatives appear in the public, but they do not get much engaged in the current political campaigns and they remain quite reserved. For this reason, the campaign takes place largely outside the party. Party organizations spend their time solving their everyday problems and their attitude is demonstrated by statements like "the fight between the two front-lines is the matter of those at the top, not us - people working with a hoe" (Renmin ribao 2nd June 1976). That is why Mao tries to apply his old method of dissension trying to drive a wedge between the leaders and ordinary members of the Party, to disunite them and play one off against the other while establishing himself in the position of arbiter.

At present, the majority of leaders of provincial committees, and even the 2nd and 3rd secretaries are cadres from old or middle-aged generations with experience from the 50s. Even in such a seedbed of radicals - the City committee of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai - the activities of the Party are controlled by Ma Tchien-Shuej [sic] who worked here even before the VPKR. The position of old cadres in the provincial bodies did not change at all, not even in relation to the latest changes in the command of some departments. Party organizations within the army guard their privileged position and do not get involved in the ongoing political campaigns.

It was announced at the 10th Congress, that the Communist Party of China has 28 million members. Today's development shows that neither the recruitment of young hongweibings [Red Guards] and "revolutionary rebels" into the Party nor the promotion of the strategy of the "interconnection of three generations - old, middle-aged and young cadres" in the governing bodies of the Party managed to contribute to the reinforcement of the position of radical Maoists.

In relation to the activities of Deng and the course adopted after the 2nd Assembly of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in January 1975, the management of the party activities at various levels was taken over by older and rehabilitated cadres. Even though the number of old party members is decreasing due to old-age, their influence is still enormous mainly thanks to their experience. This is probably one of the reasons why the group surrounding Mao is not successful in their attempts to fill various positions in primary organizations with young people who has been brought up under the influence of radical Maoism. Because party organizations do not get sufficiently involved in the political campaigns, the Mao's group is trying to create a new striking force of Maoism outside the party by establishing so called "theoretical brigades" which are "under the guidance of party organizations". What is the real role of these groups is not yet absolutely clear, because party organizations let the brigades to be joined by older laborers and cadres.

The changes and new directions in the current development of the Maoist party can also be seen from certain differences in propaganda. Recently, the central press which is under direct control of the propaganda department of the Central Committee has published materials which deal with the same matter using two languages. One is the language of Maoist radicals and the second one is much more moderate and calmer. Their contrast is clearly evident e.g. in the interpretation of the importance of the 10th anniversary of the "Cultural Revolution" in Renmin ribao dated 16.5 and in Guangmin ribao dated 18.5. Even the column in Renmin ribao called "Life of the

Party" holds back in the current campaign criticizing Deng and focuses its criticism on the area of industrial success or looks behind into the past.

After the ten years of Cultural Revolution and a wide range of political and ideological campaigns, Mao and his group now face the same problems as at the beginning of the VPKR. Today, just like at that time, the main task of the ideological front-line is the reinforcement of the unstable positions of Mao and his suite, promotion of Maoist ideology and – last but not least – making sure that it will survive Mao's death. Mass media and the whole cultural front-line: theater, film, literature and arts as well as school education are fulfilling a single common task – to promote Mao's ideas and to prove that it is inevitable and correct to apply them to all areas of the life of Chinese society. However, the harmful influence of Maoist ideology not only made it impossible to use any of the treasures of the old Chinese culture, but also outraged the current culture following the example of so called "revolutionary operas". It does not allow independent and free creativity and creates an atmosphere of fear and numbness. The result of the so called "Cultural Revolution" is a total lack of qualified intelligence – in both the humanities and technical areas. Opening amateur "art" clubs and groups and establishing "labor" and "communist" universities joined with various factories and agricultural communities does not solve the main problems and makes them even worse.

The second main task of the ideological front-line is to defend the "results" of Mao's cultural revolution and to defend their "new features". The current political campaign criticizing the "Teng's right-wing deviation" is nothing more than a defense of Mao's policy of a so called cultural revolution in practically all areas of the life of Chinese society, against the ongoing unrestrained as well as conscious resistance, against political whisper and against slogans such as "the feudal empire of Emperor Qin Shi Huang has already ceased to exist". Mao's declarations that "those comrades who were criticised in the Cultural Revolution should adopt the right attitude towards it" (Renmin ribao 2nd June 1976) will be of very little help here.

A permanent and inseparable part of the Maoist ideology is Anti-Sovietism, which has been recently on the increase not only abroad but mainly in the internal propaganda. Now Anti-Sovietism is used as a weapon against forces which are – under Maoism – trying hard to achieve certain economic development. Anti-Sovietism grows hand in hand with emerging and growing problems and conflicts among Maoist leaders. However, even Anti-Sovietism has not managed to prevent the occurrence and growth of Anti-Maoist tendencies.

Extremely dangerous is the influence of Anti-Sovietism on the Chinese youth trying to infect them with hatred and blind chauvinism. The anti-soviet propaganda now focuses on almost all basic issues of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and its internal political situation. Attacks change according to the latest needs of the Maoist foreign policy and according to the development in the world (25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Angola, international conferences etc.). The propaganda criticism focuses on general tasks as well as on individual steps and declarations made by the Soviet Union in the area of foreign relations.

The ideological contents of the Chinese propaganda is controlled and directed by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which is 100% controlled by Maoist extremists. However, the ongoing erosion of Maoism has reduced the main sources of its activities and initiatives to a few places. Besides the above mentioned department of the Central Committee, these involve both universities in Beijing, the agricultural institute of Chao-Jang [sic] in the province of Liaoning and Shanghai magazines. Nowadays only these centers engage actively in the political campaigns, in the promotion of Maoist ideology and in the determination of its main focus. In some cases they even take over the powers of higher bodies and play the role of spokespersons of the extremist group within the Maoist administration. This is why Mao and his group – trying to increase the number of



people promoting Maoist ideology - has been recently developing the aforementioned network of so called "theoretical brigades" established at various factories, agricultural communities, schools, institutions and bodies including the army. The number of their members in some provinces, according to Chinese press, amounts to several hundreds of thousands. Formally, these groups are controlled by party committees but in reality they are an organization outside the party and a tool of political and ideological pressure exerted on party cadres and a backup solution for potential special tasks.

The inability of the government to resolve urgent problems concerning the future development of the country for the benefit of the whole Chinese nation on the one hand, and the never-ending initiation of various conflicts and chaos in the country speed up the process of Maoism erosion and its deep ideological crisis. At present, not only progressive forces from abroad but even Chinese people themselves reveal and criticize the deficiencies of Maoism.