

Approved For Release 25X1
2008/11/18 :
CIA-RDP85T00875R001100130

De

Approved For Release
2008/11/18 :
CIA-RDP85T00875R001100130

Secret



25X1



25X1



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

CIA 10CI/IM/2075/72

Intelligence Memorandum

The People's Liberation Army at the Crossroads

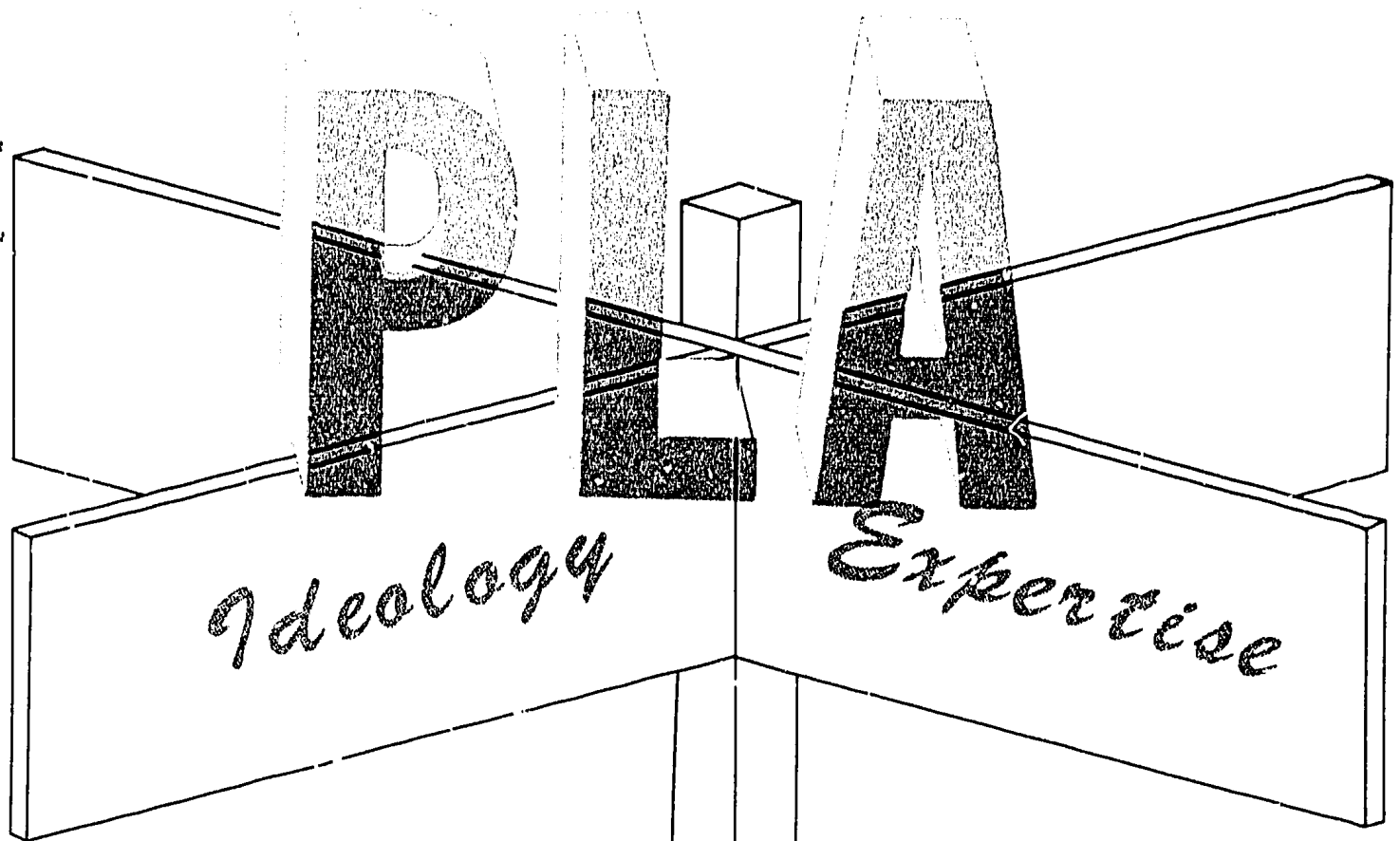
Secret

73

10 October 1972
No. 2075/72

Page Denied

CHINA'S



at the
CROSSROADS

SECRET

25X1

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
10 October 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The People's Liberation Army at the Crossroads

Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communists have been attempting to reconcile the revolutionary legacy of a guerrilla army with the requirements of national defense in the nuclear age. This split in personality was underscored in 1965 when China abruptly abolished ranks in its armed forces only a few months after successfully detonating its first atomic bomb.

The purge of Defense Minister Lin Piao, Mao Tse-tung's heir designate, in September 1971 ended a 12-year period of increased political activity by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during which it became deeply involved in the turmoil created by the Cultural Revolution. Since Lin's demise, the Peking regime seems to have been trying to reduce the army's participation in political affairs and to redirect it toward a more conventional military role. It is clear, however, that proponents of continued heavy military participation in economic and governmental affairs are not giving ground willingly, and tensions over the PLA's proper political role remain high.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

Lin Piao and the Army

Lin Piao became defense minister in September 1959, following the dismissal of Marshal Peng Tehuai, with a mandate from Mao to repoliticize China's armed forces. Under Lin's guidance, the armed forces--known collectively as the People's Liberation Army--became the model for political emulation throughout the country. The eminence of the army reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution when the PLA, ordered by Mao to "support the left," supplanted the shattered civilian party structure and, as the sole remaining national administrative hierarchy, was obliged to run the country. Ironically, despite their years of political indoctrination, most of the officers who were thrust into governing positions sided with moderate, not Lin's leftist, elements, and the PLA proved to be one of the major forces in undermining Mao's "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." With Lin's removal, the high-water mark of army involvement in civil political affairs passed.

The PLA now is clearly in a state of transition. A new set of priorities is being forged, with more emphasis on military tasks and less on political and economic pursuits. During the Cultural Revolution, the PLA's combat readiness suffered because of its heavy involvement in civil affairs. Efforts to determine the extent of the army's continuing political involvement are hampered by the significant overlap between the party and military hierarchies, particularly in the countryside. For example, orders flowing from Peking through party channels to the provinces are implemented by men who are at once party leaders and military cadres. This ambiguity will remain until the party-army cadres drop their military titles or are replaced by civilians.

The purge of Lin Piao was accompanied by the removal of over half of the PLA high command, including the chief of staff and the heads of the

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

air force, the logistics arm, and the political commissar of the navy. Although these top leaders have not yet been replaced, the PLA probably remains the most powerful of the three major hierarchies of political power in China--the party, the state, and the military. This is not to say that the army has escaped the divisive factionalism that virtually destroyed the party and crippled the government administration. The same strong and persistent disagreements over policy and personnel issues that rend the party cut across the military establishment too. Thus, the intensity of the personal conflicts generated by the Cultural Revolution and the depth of distrust among the prominent participants have combined to delay the resolution of questions concerning the PLA's future politico-military role. Whatever else happens, it seems safe to assume that as long as Mao, the architect of the politicization of the PLA remains on the scene, political activity will remain an important, although certainly not the dominant, part of the army's mission.

The Impact of the Lin Piao Affair

Chinese Communist government spokesmen have officially affirmed the story that Lin attempted an armed coup against Mao and then died in an aircraft crash while fleeing to the Soviet Union. This story repeats the essentials of the explanation of Lin's downfall circulated by the regime throughout China beginning in October 1971. Since then, the campaign to discredit Lin has gone through two major stages, and there are indications that a third and perhaps final stage has recently been launched. Soon after the affair, some documents related to it were issued by the central committee. But the most detailed exposition of Lin's alleged activities was presented in documents released during the second phase.

25X1

25X1

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

From the point of view of the military establishment, the most damning charges leveled against Lin were that, with the assistance of various central and provincial military officers--most of them reportedly from the air force--he plotted an armed coup that had led to several assassination attempts against Mao and other top leaders in Peking. The central military leaders implicated in the plot were quickly removed, and the PLA was placed under a cloud of suspicion. For a month, virtually all air force flight activity ceased, and normal activity did not resume for at least another month. During this hiatus, a thorough investigation of a number of air force officers was probably conducted. Few leaders of the other services appeared in public, and a strident propaganda campaign was launched calling for the army to place itself under firm party control. In the New Year's editorial, the slogan "the PLA must learn from the people of the whole country" was added to the old refrain that "the whole country should learn from the PLA"--a line that was symptomatic of the army's heightened prestige under Lin in the 1960s.

A mixture of old veterans and second echelon officers began to perform the public, and presumably the actual, duties of their departed colleagues. The military's status remained uncertain until 1 August, Army Day, when the regime felt obliged--and confident enough--to issue an authoritative joint editorial that absolved the PLA of any lingering guilt-by-association with the Lin Piao affair. Stressing that the army was united both internally and with the people, the editorial gave the military its cleanest bill of political health in a year. This was the first major holiday celebrated in traditional style since Lin's downfall, which suggested that the dust was beginning to settle in Peking. The editorial skirted most of the important issues, however, including the army's future political role, indicating that political unity within the regime had not yet been achieved.

Perhaps what was most significant about Army Day was what did not happen. Replacements were not named to the high-level military positions vacated

-4-

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

in September, despite rumors that Yeh Chien-ying, who currently functions as de facto defense minister, would be named to that post. Nevertheless, several military veterans who fell during the Cultural Revolution were included in the long list of leaders attending the banquet on the eve of Army Day. Notable among them was the former Wuhan Military Region commander, Chen Tsai-tao, who had openly defied Maoist authority during the "Wuhan Incident" in July 1967. Thus, although there have been some signs of forward movement in reorganizing the military establishment and reasserting civilian party control, progress toward redefining the PLA's political status has been, and will probably continue to be, slow.

The most significant central military figures who have dropped from sight following Lin's removal are listed in Table I. The high-ranking military purgees, Group A, include five politburo members--Lin Piao, Huang Yung-sheng, Wu Fa-hsien, Li Tso-peng, and Chiu Hui-tso--all of whom stand accused of colluding to overthrow Mao. Based on their factional alignments during the Cultural Revolution, the five make an unlikely team; Huang, commander of the Canton Military Region until early 1968, strongly supported conservative forces in South China; the attacks against him by the radical Red Guards were so vigorous that only the personal intervention of Premier Chou, not his direct superior, Defense Minister Lin Piao, ensured Huang's political survival at the time. Lin appeared to favor the radical forces and may well have been one of the leaders of the ultraleftist May 16 Group--as some regime documents now charge. Wu Fa-hsien and Li Tso-peng were clearly associated with leftist elements. But the political position of Chiu Hui-tso is a good deal more ambiguous; he may have been in the conservative camp. The political complexions of other missing PLA leaders also vary widely.

Thus, at first glance, it is difficult to accept the regime's version of the coup plot. It has been several years since the Cultural Revolution, however, and the general left-right split in the

SECRET

25X1

TABLE I (continued)

GROUP C		Last Public Appearance
Hsiao Chien-fei	General Staff Department	May 71
Wei T'ung-t'ai	Member PLA Headquarters	May 71
Li Fu-tse	Member PLA Headquarters	Jul 71
Wang Ping-chang	National Defense Scientific and Technological Commission	Jul 71
Kuei Shao-pin	PLA Navy	May 71
Liu Chin-ping	PLA Air Force	May 71
Lo Yuan-fu	PLA Air Force	Jul 71
Ho Chen-ya	PLA Air Force	Jul 71
Liao Kuan-Hsien	PLA Air Force	Jun 71
Kuo Ch'ao	PLA Artillery	Sep 71
Yen Chia-an	Second Artillery	May 71
Yu Ching-shan	Possible Second Artillery	Sep 71
Wang T'ing	Member PLA Headquarters	Jul 71
Hsiao Ch'un-hsien	Possible Railway Engineer Corps	Sep 71

TABLE I

CENTRAL MILITARY OFFICERS WHO HAVE FAILED TO
APPEAR IN PUBLIC SINCE THE LIN PIAO PURGE

GROUP A		Last Public Appearance
● Lin Piao	Minister of Defense, heir-designate	3 Jun 71
● Huang Yung-sheng	Chief of Staff PLA	10 Sep 71
● Wu Fa-hsien	Deputy Chief of Staff PLA, Air Force Commander	10 Sep 71
● Li Tso-peng	Deputy Chief of Staff PLA, Navy 1st Political Commissar	9 Sep 71
● Chiu Hui-tso	Deputy Chief of Staff PLA, Director General Rear Services Dept.	24 Sep 71
■ Yen Chung-chuan	Deputy Chief of Staff PLA	28 Sep 71
GROUP B		
Ch'en P'ang	Deputy Director, General Rear Services Department	Sep 71
Wang Hsi-k'o	Deputy Director, General Rear Services Department	Sep 71
Tai Chin-ch'uan	Deputy Director, General Rear Services Department	Jun 71
Yen Chun	Deputy Director, General Rear Services Department	Jul 71
■ Chang Hsiu-chuan	Deputy Political Commissar, Navy	May 71
Ts'eng Kuo-hua	Deputy Commander, Air Force	May 71
T'an Chia-shu	Deputy Commander, Air Force	Jul 71
Liu Chin-hsuan	Deputy Commander, Railway Engineer Corps	Dec 71
Wang Tzu-feng	Deputy Political Commissar, Peking Military Region	May 71
Lo Shun-ch'u	Vice-chairman, National Defense Scientific and Technological Commission	May 71
Li Chi-t'ai	Appeared in Peking in March 1972, although listing suggests that he no longer retains his previous title of Deputy Commander, Air Force.	

- Politburo Member
- Central Committee Member

SECRET

25X1

PLA at that time may have been superseded by new alliances. While the PLA was running the country, army men began to bear the brunt of the inevitable criticism for mistakes in policy, and this could have drawn the military leaders closer together. A Central Committee document endorsed by Mao and circulated throughout China in the summer of 1971 contained a sharp and detailed criticism of the army's political activities in the Canton Military Region. The choice of this military region must have been a source of personal embarrassment to Huang Yung-sheng, but this was not the major reason for issuing the document. It was clearly meant to be a warning to other regions and to other military leaders in general. Several of the missing PLA leaders, including Huang, apparently were already in some political trouble in the fall of 1970, when they were reportedly required to make a self-criticism at a central committee plenum. Opposition to the foreign policy initiatives toward the US may also have developed within the PLA high command; at least some army figures may have argued that any initiatives toward Washington must be balanced by a matching improvement of relations with Moscow, a position the regime attributes to Lin. These and other less visible issues--such as a purported but uncorroborated shift in priorities away from advanced weapons and other defense spending in the fourth Five-Year Plan (1971-75)--could have prompted a change of alliances among members of the politburo to conform with the picture presented in the documents the regime is now circulating.

Of the 11 next most important missing leaders (Group B), seven are from the air force, navy, or general rear service department. They probably fell as a result of the close connection with their chiefs. When other missing military leaders (Group C) are assessed, it appears that the purge at the center was concentrated at the highest level of the military establishment and has not significantly reduced the PLA's presence in the government bureaucracy. In the provinces, the impact of the purge of Lin is even less evident, perhaps because it is not yet complete. A large number of provincial military cadres--some of whom may be deputy commanders or

SECRET

25X1

TABLE II

HIGH RANKING PROVINCIAL MILITARY OFFICERS WHO
HAVE FAILED TO APPEAR SINCE THE LIN PURGE

		Last Public Appearance	
	Hsu Kuo-chen	Deputy Commander, Lanchow MR	Oct 71
■	Li Shu-mao	Deputy Commander, Lanchow MR	Jul 71
	Ho Lin-chao	Deputy Political Commissar, Sinkiang MR	Sep 71
	T'an Kai-yun	Deputy Political Commissar, Sinkiang MR	May 71
	Wang I	Tientsin Garrison Commander	Sep 71
■	Liu Feng	1st Political Commissar, Wuhan MR	Aug 71
■	Liang Hsing-chu	Commander, Chengtu MR	Oct 71
	Han Tung-shan	Deputy Commander, Wuhan MR	Jul 71
	Hsu Kuo-fu	Deputy Commander, Wuhan MR	Jul 71
	Lin Wei-hsien	Deputy Commander, Wuhan MR	Jul 71
	Min Hsueh-sheng	Deputy Commander, Wuhan MR	Jul 71
■	Wang Chia-tao	Commander, Heilungkiang MD	Dec 71
■	Wang Wei-kuo	Political Commissar, Shanghai Air Force Command; named as plotter in official party documents	Jul 71
■	Chen Li-yun	Air Force leader in Chekiang; named as plotter in official party documents	Jan 72
■	Liu Hsing-yuan	Former Canton MR 1st Political Com- missar; reportedly transferred to Szechwan Province; also reportedly arrested.	Mar 72
	Wang Pu	Commander, Air Force, Canton MR; named as plotter in official party documents	May 71
	Chen An-chih	Deputy Political Commissar, Chengtu MR	Sep 71
	Lu Ting-tien	Deputy Commander, Sinkiang MR	Aug 71
	Chang Chen-tung	Deputy Commander, Anhwei MD	Sep 71
	Lu Yang	Political Commissar, Honan MD	Aug 71
	Yang Min	Deputy Commander, Hunan MD	Nov 71
	Cheng Chi-wen	Deputy Commander, Hunan MD	Sep 71

- Politburo Member
- Central Committee Member

TABLE II (continued)

		Last Public Appearance
Liu Shan-fu	Deputy Commander, Hunan MD	Oct 71
Wang Ken-yuan	Deputy Commander, Hupeh MD	May 71
Li Kuo-hsiu	Deputy Political Commissar, Hupeh MD	May 71
Chung Ying	Deputy Commander, Kirin	Jul 71
Huang Yun-ch'ang	Deputy Commander, Kirin	Jul 71
Wu Chin-feng	Deputy Commander, Liaoning	Jul 71
T'ang Chien-ju	Political Commissar, Shantung	May 71
■ T'ien Pao	Political Commissar, Tibet MD	Aug 71

Page Denied



Still Entrenched in Politics.

SECRET

25X1

in equivalent positions---have been out of sight since 1971, and some of them may have been implicated in the Lin affair. But a host of other reasons could explain their absence from view, including illness, retirement, transfer, or political downgrading unrelated to the purge. A considerable number of army cadres have moved unaccountably into this type of limbo during the last several years.

The limited scope of the purge in the provinces in no small measure reflects the army's powerful and continuing role in party and state affairs. Faced with this situation, it is unlikely that civilian party leaders in Peking could have immediately carried out as extensive a shake-up of provincial military leaders as they did at the center. Indeed, the regime has gone to considerable lengths to portray the Lin affair as a palace coup, and it appears anxious to assure provincial military figures that a widespread purge is not in the cards. The overwhelming majority of PLA officers in leading positions in the provinces have in fact appeared since Lin was purged and presumably are in good standing.

The PLA in Politics

Although the political power of the PLA apparently has been brought more firmly within the sphere of civilian party control, military men continue to dominate the reconstituted party apparatus in the countryside. The accelerating campaign to return veteran civilian cadres who were purged or demoted during the Cultural Revolution to their former posts has as yet had little effect at the highest levels of provincial party and government leadership. PLA officers still occupy nearly 70 percent of the top positions on the provincial party committees established last year, and they also dominate the provincial "revolutionary committees"--the local government instruments set up during the Cultural Revolution.

An example of the power of the military cadres was the disclosure in a radio broadcast from Anhwei Province on 4 September 1971 that, since the spring

-7-

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

of 1970, propaganda teams drawn from regular units had been sent to more than a third of the province's 70 counties to perform "ideological and organizational work"--i.e., party building. These mobile military teams were praised for "ferreting out active counter-revolutionaries" on the local revolutionary committees, strongly implying that the army cadres had authority to eliminate anyone they did not favor or who opposed them.

Despite periodic campaigns criticizing army cadres for "arrogance and complacency" in their dealings with the masses (i.e., civilian authorities) and the almost total reconstruction of the civilian party apparatus, only limited inroads have been made against the power of the military in the countryside. This is primarily because the party committees were often established under the tutelage of armed forces cadres, who ensured that military interests were well represented.

There has been a significant change in the media's treatment of the army's role since the Lin Piao affair. Soon after Lin's fall, a number of radio broadcasts and newspaper articles began to stress an old but politically important theme: that the party always controls "the gun," and that army authority must be subordinated to party authority.

25X1
25X1

[redacted] the army's sub-provincial party committees, which--unlike their civilian counterparts--were not decimated during the Cultural Revolution, were then and still are the forums in which decisions are reached and the apparatus through which information and orders flow. Since the leaders of these military party committees are usually also the dominant figures in the counterpart civilian party organization at the local levels, issues tend to be decided within military circles and are presented to the civilian body as faits accomplis.

The military has enjoyed a wider latitude in party reconstruction than might have been expected because of continuing weaknesses in the civilian party structure, both in Peking and in the provinces.

-8-

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

During 1970-71, when most sub-provincial level party committees were being re-formed, the top leadership in Peking was embroiled in a series of political disputes that, while not eliminating central control, reduced the speed and effectiveness with which the central authorities could move in provincial affairs. While a great deal of attention was devoted to the creation of the provincial party committees, it appeared that sub-provincial committees--many of them set up earlier and clearly not under direct central party supervision--operated under a much looser rein. Whether or not the PLA cadres in each province received detailed and explicit instructions for their party-building task, the military had established itself both as the authority for order and civil administration and as the ultimate arbiter of disputes in most rural areas by the time party reconstruction efforts were launched on a broad scale. Since moderate elements had gained the upper hand at the center, most provincial-level party committees came to be dominated by like-minded military officers, and the same pattern probably emerged at the lower levels. Numerous radio broadcasts identifying the top party leaders in counties and communes show that, whatever their orientation, military men were heavily represented at these levels.

Another major factor in the perpetuation of army control over party affairs in the countryside has been the reluctance on the part of the much-maligned veteran civilian cadres to reassume administrative and political responsibility. Despite the open criticism by domestic media of the military cadres' lack of technical and administrative competence and of their insufficient understanding of local conditions, veteran cadres have been slow to reassert themselves. Harassed by a seemingly unending series of political rectification campaigns, civilian cadres have tended to let the soldiers run the show and receive the inevitable criticism from higher authorities. This probably has made life superficially easier for many civilians over the past few years, but the regime's current drive "boldly" to re-employ veteran cadres and reassert party control over the army is ending this relative isolation from responsibility. Nevertheless, in

-9-

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

view of the unsettled leadership situation in Peking and the legacy of past criticism, both civilian and military cadres will tend to move slowly and cautiously, and the military officers on provincial and sub-provincial party committees will not abruptly relinquish their important role.

Perhaps in recognition of the realities of political power in the provinces, one recent theme of domestic propaganda has been the advocacy of "collective leadership" under the over-all authority of the civilian party committee. The army has continually been warned to observe strict discipline and obey orders, and in numerous instances military officers and local civilian cadres have worked together harmoniously. A number of articles published since the Lin purge stress the wisdom of a collective in which civilian cadres hold the majority. This is an inferential criticism of arbitrary rule by the leading figure on a given committee, who is usually a PLA cadre. The actual impact of this call for diluting army control appears, at best, to be mixed. The exhortations may even have prompted a counterattack by advocates of continued military dominance of civil affairs. During most of last year, army cadres were portrayed in propaganda as providing political-ideological guidance, but relying on civilian cadres for advice on technical points and local conditions. Early this year, however, the propaganda line changed, and PLA cadres were urged to "learn techniques and methods in production and management" to enhance "their ability to lead production." This new theme appears to be at cross purposes with the campaign for the "bold" reemployment of veteran cadres and is probably a reflection of a continuing disagreement within the central leadership over the extent of future army participation in civil affairs.

It is clear that regular troop units have been almost totally withdrawn from the myriad order-keeping duties they acquired as a result of the breakdown during the Cultural Revolution. But it is also true that military men continue to play an important political role through continuing "support-the-left" activities. PLA participation has been scaled down

-10-

SECRET

25X1

[REDACTED]

SECRET

25X1

in some schools, factories, and communes and completely eliminated in others, but the military presence apparently is still strong in the remainder. No geographic patterns in the spotty picture have yet emerged. In addition, domestic media articles castigating unnamed class enemies for the "erroneous" view that left-support work is not a long-term task have continued to appear, and the authoritative Army Day joint editorial has praised personnel engaged in such work.

The debate over the army's involvement in civil political affairs has been on for some time. The late Edgar Snow, in a magazine article published in May 1971, quoted Chou En-lai as saying that the PLA officers assigned to civilian jobs had "become government workers and are no longer in charge of army work." Chou's remarks doubtless reflected in part Peking's sensitivity to the charge by foreign observers that the army was running the country, but they also suggest that he and other civilian moderates want to reduce the army's participation in civil affairs. Despite persistent rumors to the contrary, the military was still heavily involved in left-support tasks.

[REDACTED]

25X1

The reason for the slow pace of disengagement may not be so much a lack of agreement on whether to phase the army out of civil affairs duties as it is a question of timing. Many moderate troop commanders, who were thrust into leading civil party positions as a result of the Cultural Revolution, are probably more than willing to return to full-time military duties. Most army officers were ill-equipped to handle the varied civil administrative and economic tasks for which they became responsible, and as a result they became the targets of increasingly harsh and explicit criticism for their errors

-11-

[REDACTED]

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

in policy implementation. While such criticism has been relatively muted this year, the PLA's image of omnipotence that developed under Lin Piao in the 1960s is still tarnished, and many officers are probably anxious to get off the griddle.

A large part of the problem is finding suitable civilian replacements. Peking's current campaign to return veteran cadres, many of whom were removed during the Cultural Revolution, to their former posts has been confined almost completely to the sub-provincial level. It appears that many of the old provincial-level leaders, while acceptable to the moderates, are still too controversial for rehabilitation, probably because of opposition by leftist elements in Peking. On the other hand, the moderates are probably opposed to the large-scale infusion of new blood, and this may have caused a virtual stalemate. The question of replacements for army men on provincial party committees is also complicated by the difficult compromises that had to be made in order to form the committees. This process had not begun to bear fruit until two years after the formation of the last revolutionary committees, which were themselves the products of acrimonious compromise.

The persistence of political uncertainty in Peking may be influencing the return to civilian party control of the countryside in another way. Some military cadres who would prefer to relinquish their military titles in favor of their civilian party posts may be reluctant to move until the political situation becomes more stable. The memory of what happened to their predecessors during the Cultural Revolution may be fresh enough in the minds of these soldiers to counsel caution. Finally, there are undoubtedly some officers who have come to enjoy their political power and are lobbying to maintain both their military and party positions.

As in the countryside, PLA cadres continue to occupy a large number of posts in the central government hierarchy. Six of the nine ministers appointed during 1971 were army men, and no significant reduction of military personnel in the bureaucracy can be detected as a result of the Lin purge--although it perhaps is also significant that only

-12-

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

on: new minister has been identified since last September. Ministers and other high-level bureaucrats in the government who have been drawn from the army have relinquished their military duties-- a very different situation from that obtaining in the provinces, where leading members of revolutionary and party committees remain part of the military hierarchy and frequently command troops.

The Training Issue

Although Peking has been unable to reach a decision on the army's left-support tasks, domestic media since the crisis of September 1971 have indicated a clear change in the relationship between PLA political activity and military training. This suggests that the army's combat readiness, which deteriorated during the Cultural Revolution, was an issue in the Lin Piao affair. The increasing public prominence since Lin's fall of several high-ranking military veterans known for their emphasis on military professionalism is consistent with this shift. The Army Day editorial balanced a call for improved military training with praise for "three support and two military work"--the program that caused training to lapse in the first place--indicating that this change has not yet superseded the army's involvement in civil political affairs. The pressure for such a shift will, however, increase as more time is devoted to training.

The prevalent theme in early and mid-1971 was that political considerations took precedence over military affairs--or, as Lin had put it, being "good" in politics (the "first good") was a prerequisite to success in the other three of the "four goods" he had enunciated in 1961 (work style, military training, and management of living). It is likely that conservative troop commanders, many of whose units were widely scattered during the Cultural Revolution because of their civil political duties, were impatient to restore a high degree of combat readiness. Despite evidence of increased training and the China-wide war preparations campaign following the Sino-Soviet border

25X1

SECRET



Training Advances.

SECRET

25X1

clashes in 1969, the emphasis in early 1971 in domestic media--and probably in the armed forces as well--still was heavily weighted in favor of political considerations. Numerous examples were publicized of troops studying political texts before engaging in field training, or even interrupting their field training to study a newly released Peking editorial. These articles repeatedly criticized the view that expanded civil affairs duties would adversely affect military training, and stressed that supporting industry was an important factor in carrying out Chairman Mao's army-building program.

The vigor and persistence of these articles suggested that there were powerful people within the defense establishment--and possibly within the civilian party hierarchy as well--who were dissatisfied with the state of combat readiness. To be sure, the debate was not entirely one-sided. In a thinly veiled call to strengthen military training, a broadcast from Anhwei on 5 June 1971 recalled that the Paris Commune was overwhelmed by superior armed force and warned that "success or failure in military battles determines the survival or destruction of political power."

But the pendulum did not finally swing toward those who advocated increased military preparedness until mid-September, at the height of the Lin purge. A Peking domestic radiobroadcast on 13 September told of a company commander who interrupted political study to launch a program to improve military training--a scenario that was the exact reverse of many earlier articles. Moreover, when one of the soldiers in this hypothetical company questioned the move on political grounds, the commander was said to have responded that "to carry out military training to prepare against a war of aggression and to defend the socialist motherland is politics in itself"--a clear contradiction of Lin Piao's "four goods." Finally, the broadcast presented a negative example in the form of a communications squad that spent so much time working

-14-

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

in a pig sty that its members were substandard in communications skill. This "contradiction" was said to have been resolved by spending more time on military training and less on production.

The example of the company that had increased its military training was echoed almost immediately in the PLA newspaper, Liberation Army Daily--a further indication of support by powerful elements within the military for the new line. Published on 17 September, the article attacked unnamed comrades who held the erroneous idea that training could be ignored in deference to political or production assignments, adding that "we cannot wait for the fighting to begin before studying military affairs." This new emphasis on upgrading military training has been subsequently reaffirmed, and "swindlers like Liu Shao-chi"--the current term for Lin Piao and his allies--are routinely condemned for setting politics against military affairs. Domestic media now treat political affairs and military training as complementary and mutually supporting pursuits.

The New Leadership

Since the purge in September 1971, a number of second-echelon military leaders have appeared regularly and have been performing the public--and presumably the other--duties of their former superiors. (See Table IV). At the same time, several veteran PLA officers have either re-emerged from long periods of relative obscurity or have become increasingly prominent. But the question of appointments to top-ranking vacancies in the military hierarchy appears to be closely related to other unresolved policy and personnel questions, and the regime has stopped short of filling these vacancies.

The most prominent of the military leaders who have improved their public and probably their real political positions are three of China's "old marshals"--Yeh Chien-ying, Hsu Hsiang-chien and Nieh Jung-chien. Yeh, already a powerful party figure in military and foreign affairs, now functions as

SECRET

25X1

TABLE IV
CURRENT PLA LEADERSHIP

Position	September 1971	September 1972
● Minister of Defense	Lin Piao	Yeh Chien-ying—de facto; but no replacement announced.
● PLA Chief of Staff	Huang Yung-sheng	vacant
■ Deputy Chief of Staff	Chang Tsai-chien	appears regularly
Deputy Chief of Staff	Chen Chi-te	Last public appearance was 29 March 72, may be in trouble.
■ Deputy Chief of Staff	Peng Shao-hui	appears regularly
■ Deputy Chief of Staff	Wang Hsin-ting	appears regularly
■ Deputy Chief of Staff	Yen Chung-chuan	appears regularly
Deputy Chief of Staff	Hsiang Chung-hua, named June 1972	appears regularly
● Director General Political Department	Li Te-sheng	appears regularly
■ Deputy Director GPD	Huang Chih-yung	appears regularly
Deputy Director GPD	Tien Wei-hsin	appears regularly
● Deputy Chief of Staff, Director General Rear Services	Chiu Hui-tso	vacant
■ Political Commissar GRS	Chang Chih-ming	appears regularly
■ Deputy Director GRS	Chang Tien-yun	appears regularly
■ Deputy Director GRS	Chang Ling-pin	appears regularly
● Deputy Chief of Staff Air Force Commander	Wu Fa-hsien	vacant
■ Air Force Political Commissar	Wang Hui-chiu	appears regularly
■ Air Force Deputy Commander	Tsao Li-huai	appears regularly
■ Air Force Deputy Commander	Tseng Kuo-hua	appears regularly
■ Air Force Deputy Commander	Kuang Jen-nung	appears regularly
● Politburo Member		
■ Central Committee Member		

TABLE IV (continued)

Position	September 1971	September 1972
■ Navy Commander	Hsiao Ching-kuan	also vice minister national defense; appears regularly
● Deputy Chief of Staff, Navy 1st Political Commissar	Li Tso-peng	vacant
Navy Deputy Commander	Wu Jui-lin	appears regularly
Navy Deputy Commander	Chao Chih-min	Last public appearance Jan 72; maybe in trouble
Navy Deputy Political Commissar	Chou Hsi-han	appears regularly
■ Navy Deputy Political Commissar	Wang Hung-kun	appears regularly
PLA Armor Force	(Commander, Political Commissar unknown. One deputy commander, Lin Pin, and one deputy po- litical commissar, Yu Ting, were named in May 1972.	
■ PLA Artillery Commander	Chang Ta-chih	appears regularly
PLA Artillery Pol Commissar		vacant/unknown
PLA Chemical Defense Corps		Leadership unknown
■ Commander PLA Engi- neering Corps	Chen Shih-chu	appears regularly
Political Commissar Engineers	Li Chen	appears regularly
■ Commander Railway Engineers	Chang I-hsiang	appears regularly
Political Commissar RRE		vacant/unknown
Commander PLA Signal Corps		vacant/unknown
■ Political Commissar Signal Corps	Huang Wen-ming	appears regularly
PLA Second Artillery Corps		Top leadership unknown
PLA Public Security Force		Top leadership unknown
● Politburo Member		
■ Central Committee Member		

SECRET

25X1

the de facto defense minister and his politburo ranking has been elevated by several notches. He may be slated for eventual appointment to the politburo standing committee. The other two military veterans may be slated to regain their politburo status, which they lost at the most recent party congress in April 1969. All three have maintained their positions as vice-chairman of the party's powerful Military Affairs Committee, and Nieh was identified last April as a vice-premier of the State Council for the first time in several years. The increasing visibility of these three seems to be more than a coincidence inasmuch as each is almost certainly a supporter of Premier Chou En-lai.

The apparent return to grace of these men, who were deeply involved in political controversy during the most fractious phases of the Cultural Revolution, was probably the subject of debate within the top leadership in Peking. The failure to resolve the debate may be one of the reasons why the regime's program to restaff the numerous vacancies in the military and party hierarchies is hanging fire. Moreover, the failure to fill top-level vacancies in the military establishment after the rehabilitation of these veterans suggests that the cases of other controversial military officers are still under review. While it is not yet clear how active a role the rehabilitated marshals will play--or whether elements in the leadership are touting certain of these veterans as candidates for some of the high-level vacancies--some of the returnees apparently have resumed their duties as deputy commanders or deputy directors of services or arms, and one has been named a PLA deputy chief of staff. To date, most of those few who have been reactivated have appeared in services or branches where vacancies exist. This raises the possibility of friction developing between the rehabilitated leaders and the officers who were on duty when they returned.

Whatever the arrangement finally hammered out in restaffing the top level of the PLA, it is likely to be transitional. The advanced age of China's political and military elite provides a built-in potential for abrupt and unpredictable change. In the

-16-

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

relatively unlikely event that Premier Chou should die before Mao, for example, it is conceivable that a swing away from the current pragmatic domestic policies could occur. Moreover, the death of one of several key military leaders, particularly Yeh Chienying, could seriously complicate whatever "solution" is reached to the problem of staffing the military high command. This uncertainty compounds the already well-established pattern of frequent turnover that has become characteristic of certain high military posts--notably, the Chief of Staff and the Peking Military Region and Peking Garrison commands--over the last several years. Indeed, some army leaders may have concluded that, at least for the time being, there is a serious risk involved in being transferred to any of several high-ranking military posts in Peking. This fear may be further complicating the process of selecting the new military leadership.

Quite apart from these obvious personnel problems, Chinese political and military leaders face a difficult and growing institutional problem. The rapid advance of military technology has created powerful and persistent pressures to downgrade political indoctrination in the army in favor of enhancing its technical capabilities. The Chinese have grappled with this problem for years, stressing that "politics is the commander and soul" and that the ideal is to be "both red and expert." Such bursts of ideological rectification have punctuated, but never stemmed, the trend toward greater reliance on technical and managerial expertise. In the long run, the imperatives of economic modernization and national defense may shape the political role of the PLA as much or more than the politics of the personnel selected to lead it.

-17-

SECRET

25X1