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The Origins of « Status Politics »: Family clans and Factions in CCP's Top Leadership During the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976

Xiaohong XIAO-PLANES

Abstract: In a bid to successfully draw his grand blueprint for an anti-capitalist anti-revisionist regime, Mao Zedong smashed the Yan'an Round Table – the power structure established during the Seventh National Congress of CCP, approved the military circle led by Lin Biao and the radical civilian circle led by Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng, and launched a brand-new revolution that struck the Party bureaucracy of the time. Yet it was not enough for these circles to act as an instrument of the Revolution. They preferred growing their family clans' power and their factions' influences in order to scramble for the supreme power. The exclusionism and the cruelty of factionalism compelled the diminished ones as well as their families to put all their faction's resources to use, thus swept up into a desperate struggle. The power structure of the PRC's top leadership during the Cultural Revolution was characterized by the numerous family clans and factions, a phenomenon that was in great contrast to CCP's conventional system and to the objective proclaimed by the Revolution: fighting against capitalist roaders. The resulting "Status Politics" seriously affected the proper functioning of public power, which led to abuses of power, inequitable distribution of resources, and distorted standard of values.

In western countries, specialists in Chinese political history call the leadership formed during the Seventh National Congress in 1945 "The Yan'an Round Table". It refers to the power structure established by CCP's top leaders with Mao Zedong in command and factions brought together, each faction comprised of military or civilian officials. In 1954, the leadership went through a crisis of division due to the Gao Gang - Rao Shushi affair¹. In the aftermath of the affair, the leadership was further consolidated and reinforced during the Eighth National Congress in 1956. American sinologist specialized in political history Roderick MacFarquhar, pointed out that several years before the Revolution started Mao found many of the first-front leaders "*suspect because of their independent stature and authority, and surrounded himself with toadies whose loyalty was to himself rather than to the party, Marxism-Leninism, or their peers. Mao thus stripped China of a priceless asset, a united and capable leadership, the Yan'an Round Table, that 'select group' which had conquered China and guided it through the early travails of nation-building.*"². After the Cultural Revolution started, thanks to Mao's support, Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG) represented by Kang Sheng and Chen Boda occupied high-ranking positions and held great power. Similarly, PLA Marshal Lin Biao, Mao's officially chosen successor, had his family clan and his faction in the PLA stuffed with power before the September 13 Incident in 1971. It can be argued that the power structure of the PRC's top leadership during the Cultural Revolution was characterized by

¹ To know more about how the Yan'an Round Table went through the Gao-Rao affair and how the crisis ended, see Teiwes, Frederick C.: *Politics at Mao's court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s*, N.Y, M.E. Sharpe, 1990.

² Roderick MacFarquhar: *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, t. III: *The Coming of the Catalysme, 1961-1966*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1997.

the numerous family clans and factions, a phenomenon that was in great contrast to CCP's conventional system and to the objective proclaimed by the Revolution: fighting against capitalist roaders (i.e. the forces that would lead a society down a "capitalist road"). Familial politics and factionalism spoil the proper functioning of public power, which inevitably led to abuses of power and a severely inequitable distribution of resources. Drawing on recently published research on the subject, this paper attempts to make a preliminary study of the manifestations of families and factions in CCP's top leadership during the Cultural Revolution.

In order to proceed to an analysis of the "familial politics and factionalism" phenomenon in CCP's top leadership during the Cultural Revolution, I would like to employ the concept of "Status Politics". The term "Status" is borrowed from Henry Sumner Maine, the 19th century English historian specializing in ancient legal system, and it was used in civil law. Henry Sumner Maine pointed out that "All the forms of Status taken notice of in the Law of Persons (Civil Law) were derived from, and to some extent are still colored by, the powers and privileges anciently residing in the Family."³ "Status Politics" implies that a person has been granted power and privileges thanks to his family clan or/and faction (a faction can be considered an extension of kinship), not because of his political achievements or his contributions to the power structure. The "Status Politics" during the Cultural Revolution was characterized by its revolutionary ideology façade. In addition to their status as Mao's wife and the officially chosen successor, Jiang Qing and Lin Biao were respectively entitled "the valiant standard-bearer of the Great Cultural Revolution" and "the deputy commander of the Proletarian Headquarter". At the same time, Mao himself was in possession of an absolute truth – preventing revisionism and capitalism's revival via persistent revolution – and he even became the embodiment of this "Truth". These titles created a context in which Mao's inner circle, made up of his relatives and staff, was granted the privilege of interpreting the Revolution, judging people, and even commenting on state affairs. This inner circle found its source of power closely attached to the leader himself, a phenomenon very similar to that of the legal relation based on kinship: the positions of power of children and wife originate from the father or the husband, and thus the so-called "status" refers to the legal relation based on kinship (as well as the broader kinship network) and one's political performances.

In modern society, Status Politics brings endless harm to public power and to the person who makes use of it. Mao Zedong himself was partly aware of that. According to some China's officially published sources, around the beginning of the Ninth National Congress in April 1969, Mao started taking various measures, in an attempt to restrain factionalism from growing. However, the September 13 Incident in 1971 and the downfall of the Gang of Four proved the failure of his intense efforts. Lin Biao and Jiang Qing's factions were carefully supported by Mao to be used as tools to wage the Cultural Revolution. But tools don't always follow the master's command. Since they were hence in a favorable position, once entered the core of the power community, they could not help following the logic of familial politics and factionalism, thus looked to grab the supreme power and to take over the regime. The endless disputes over the succession to the "pater familias" was over Mao's control. Moreover, familial politics and factionalism were highly exclusive. They can heat up divisions in views and standpoints, and then turn a power struggle into a life-or-death battle. This inevitably leads to desperate struggle of

³ Henry Sumner Maine: *Ancient Law, The Connection with the Early History of Society and Its Relation to Modern Ideas*, (1861). As we all know, the most famous quote from H. S. Maine was: "The movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from Status to Contract."

those who have lost favor. We will see hereinafter that most of the times even the losing ones relied on their families and former factions during their struggle, since these high-ranking leaders who fell into disgrace during political fights had absolutely no other supports to mobilize. In addition, Status Politics in which the high-ranking leaders engaged may result in a power mechanism and a social order that are inequitable and unjust. A person's position in the power structure can benefit his/her family, relatives and attendants, whereas one's failure in political fights may also involve his/her family, relatives and attendants⁴. The power structure of the PRC's top leadership during the Cultural Revolution was highly person-centered and paternalistic. If we define CCP's "top leaders" as key leaders who held ministerial, provincial, municipal, regional (autonomous regions and PLA military regions) or higher ranks⁵ at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, we see that the political life of each of them was in the hands of Mao, the supreme Pater familias⁶. Under the power mechanism of Status Politics, all changes in the status of a top leader implied rise and fall in his power, in his family's power, and in the supporting sources that he could mobilize. Not surprisingly, despite the omnipresence of brilliant revolutionary language, behaviors such as "seeking back door" and "pulling some strings" gradually spread and became the lubricant of the entire power mechanism behind the Party, the government and the army.

The present essay brings in an initial interpretation of the evolution of CCP's power mechanism during the Cultural Revolution. I look forward to receiving your criticism of this essay for its mistakes due to limited references about the Cultural Revolution and CCP's top leadership.

⁴ After the Cultural Revolution, many of those from Lin Biao and Jiang Qing's factions and family clans considered that they were treated unfairly. Indeed, as they claimed, their "unfair treatment" was very often due to ruthless disposal of their affiliated institutions. Some of these institutions even refused to carry out decisions made by higher-ups that were meant to be put into effect. This can be considered as one of the consequences of Status Politics.

⁵ It is quite difficult to determine the total number of in-service senior cadres holding these ranks and working for the central government, the local government and the army. They were probably between one thousand and two thousand. In order to have an idea about their background, we can refer to analysis made by historian Shen Zhihua of the Eighth Party Congress and the composition of the Politburo. According to Shen, "As for the electoral principles, CCP confined itself to the 'seniority-based system' and the idea of 'he who wins a kingdom rules a kingdom'. Mao Zedong suggested not to consider the electability for the Party Congress of most of the 'cadres of the 1938 era'. Consequently, the cadres with the minimum level of modern education were excluded from CCP's leadership. Among 170 official and alternate Congress members, the great majority were career military men who just returned from the battlefield. These seasoned fighters were used to following and issuing orders, but they lacked experience and essential knowledges in economic construction. This reflected CCP's composition. By the time of the Eighth National Congress, among 10.73 million CCP members, 14% were workers, 69.1% were farmers, whereas intellectuals were only 11.7%. This composition reflected the actual backgrounds of chiefs leading central ministries, provinces, cities and autonomous regions. For Mao Zedong, his suggestion was kind of a last resort." In Shen Zhihua 沈志華: *Sikao yu xuanze: cong zhishi fenzi huiyi dao fanyou yundong* 思考與選擇：從知識分子會議到反右派運動 (1956-1957) (*Reflections and choices: the consciousness of the Chinese intellectuals and the Anti-Rightist campaign (1956-1957)*), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi dishanjuan* 中華人民共和國史第3卷 (*The History of the People's Republic of China, Volume 3*), Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008, p. 317. For further analysis, see p. 317 to 322.

⁶ The Volume 6 of *Chronicles of Mao Zedong* was full of Mao's instructions about each of the top leaders, indicating if the person could be "liberated" and determining his/her political status. See: *Mao Zedong nianpu* 毛澤東年譜 (1949-1976) (*Chronicles of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976*), Vol. 6, edited by Party Literature Research Center, CCP Central Committee, 2013.

1. Mao Zedong, Jiang Qing, their family and attendants

The structure of CCP's top leadership was highly patriarchal. Men occupied predominant positions in the core of the power community, whilst the number of women was very low. And of the handful of women, most worked as leaders of institutions like All-China Women's Federation and cultural propaganda services, among which Cai Chang (Deputy Prime Minister Li Fuchun's wife), Kang Keqing (Zhu De's wife), Deng Yingchao (Zhou Enlai's wife). For many male leaders, their young wives were appointed to be the husbands' secretaries and were mainly in charge of daily life. For instance, Jiang Qing worked as Mao Zedong's secretary, Wang Guangmei as Liu Shaoqi's secretary, Ye Qun as Lin Biao's secretary, etc. For some leaders, such as Liu Shaoqi (wife: Wang Guangmei) and Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Chen Yi (wife: Zhang Qian), their wives became public figures with filmed images since they accompanied their husbands in diplomatic activities and often showed up in public. As for Jiang Qing, she only started to make frequent appearance as Mao's wife in the top circle two or three years before the Cultural Revolution. Thanks to Mao's significant support, Jiang Qing played an active role in the fields of culture and propaganda by promoting reforms of modern Peking opera, writing revolutionary model operas, and participating in the exposure and the critique of "incorrect" songs, paintings, plays, films and other art pieces. In November 1965, as instructed by Mao, Jiang Qing took charge of the publication of "*Notes on the New Historical Drama Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*", an article considered to be the flashpoint leading to the Cultural Revolution. In February 1966, with Lin Biao's approval, Jiang Qing hosted the Military Literature & Arts Work Conference in Shanghai and was then appointed at the Enlarged meeting of the Central Politburo in May 1966 first deputy chief of the newly established Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG). Later, she became acting chief of the Group, and consultant of People's Liberation Army's Cultural Revolution Group⁷. According to the memoirs of Jiang Qing's secretary Yan Changgui and of other members of the CCRG, Jiang held huge authority in the Group, since she often passed on the latest "supreme orders" from Mao⁸. As chief of the CCRG, Chen Boda was absolutely incapable of giving her orders; at the same time, Kang Sheng, consultant of the CCRG, was Jiang Qing's most powerful backer of the period. When receiving the Red Guards or the Rebel factions, or showing up in front of public assemblies, Jiang Qing often claimed that she came to visit the people "on behalf of Chairman Mao", declared that she approved or opposed to some factions, and called by name the individuals who should be "unmasked" and criticized. For a long time, Mao tacitly allowed this kind of "status transplant". After the February Countercurrent which was the joint efforts by a group of veterans to oppose the ultra-leftist radicalism, the (enlarged) brief meeting of the Standing Committee of the Central Politburo in charge of ordinary State affairs was suspended. The responsibility of the brief meeting was taken over by the Brief meeting of the CCRG, until April 1969 when

⁷ The main sources of information for the pre-Revolution background are as follows: aforementioned Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, t. III: *The Coming of the Catalysme, 1961-1966*); Qian Xiangli 錢瑛理: *Lishi de bianju — cong wanjiu weiwei dao fanxiu fangxiu 歷史的變局——從挽救危機到反修防修 (1962-1965)* (*Historical Turn: Responding to Crisis and Combating Revisionism (1962-1965)*), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi diwujuan 中華人民共和國史第5卷 (The History of the People's Republic of China, Vol. 5)*; Bu Weihua 卜偉華, "*Zalan jiushijie*" — *wenhua dageming de dongluan yu haojie* 「砸爛舊世界」——文化大革命的動亂與浩劫 (1966-1968) ("*Smashing the Old World*": *Havoc of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1968)*), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shi diliujuan 中華人民共和國史第6卷 (The History of the People's Republic of China)*, Vol. 6, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008.

⁸ Yan Changgui and Wang Guangyu, *Wenshi qiuxin ji 問史求信集 (Reflections on History)*, Beijing, Red Flag Publishing House, 2009.

the new Politburo was established during the Ninth National Congress. That was the time when Jiang Qing's power was at its peak. It was quite often that a simple word from her could decide about someone's political life or even life or death. After the downfall of Lin Biao's faction, Jiang Qing and the leading members of the CCRG, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen, gained enormous power. During the Ninth and the Tenth National Congress, Jiang was member of the Central Politburo. In the administration system, she enjoyed great influence over culture, science and education, and even had the final decision on these fields. But Mao had always been containing her attempt to join the Standing Committee of the Central Politburo and to grab even more power in state institutions. After 1974, Mao drew a line between him and Jiang Qing by claiming publicly at the meeting of the Politburo that "She doesn't represent me; she only represents herself". Yet, for all that, Jiang Qing remained an irreplaceable key figure of the new campaigns started by Mao, such as "Counterattack the Return of Right-Deviationists", "Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius", "Pro-Legalists and Anti-Confucianism", "Counterattack the Capitulationism in 'The Water Margin'", "Criticize Deng", and so on⁹.

Let's take a look at other members of Mao's family.

Li Na (1940 -) is the only child of Mao Zedong and Jiang Qing. In 1965, she graduated from Peking University in history, and then joined the Four Cleanups Movement for one year. In early July 1966, the CCRG set up an office in Diaoyutai Hotel Beijing, and Li Na, who changed her name to "Xiao Li", began to work in the office. Her main duties were inspecting higher education institutions for more information about their status quo, getting in touch with Rebel leaders, and travelling with schoolmates for revolutionary tours. Li Na frequented Zhongnanhai, her parents' residence, as well as Diaoyutai, and it seemed that her primary missions were inspecting the grassroots on behalf of her father and passing information. Moreover, she was granted access to the same files as the members of the CCRG¹⁰. In early 1967, she returned to her affiliated institution, The *People's Liberation Army Daily* (*PLA Daily* for short), rebelled and seized power with some others, which was an action supported by Lin Biao and approved by Mao himself. Half a year later, she rebelled again, displacing the newly appointed chief editor and party secretary, and became leader of the Chief Editor Leading Group of *PLA Daily* (the equivalent of chief editor)¹¹. However, during the Ninth National Congress, Mao Zedong didn't accept that Li Na and Mao Yuanxin become delegates, despite that many well-known Rebels turned into delegates or even were promoted to exalted delegates of CCP Central Committee¹². In early 1970, she followed her father's instructions and got trained at the May Seventh Cadre Schools of Jiangxi General Office of the Central Committee.

⁹ The main sources of information for the development of the Cultural Revolution are as follows: aforementioned Bu Weihua, "Zalan jiushijie"...; Shi Yun 史雲 Li Danhui 李丹慧: *Nanyi jixu de "jixu geming"—cong piLin dao piDeng (1972-1976) 難以繼續的「繼續革命」——從批林到批鄧 (1972-1976)* (*When the "Continuous Revolution" Goes Awry: From the Anti-Lin Biao Campaign to the Anti-Deng Xiaoping Campaign (1972-1976)*), *Zhonghua renmin gonghefuo shi dibajuan 中華人民共和國史第 8 卷 (The History of the People's Republic of China, Vol. 8)*, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008; Macfarquhar Roderick et Schoenhals Michael: *La Dernière Révolution de Mao — Histoire de la Révolution culturelle (1966-1976)*, Paris, Éds. Gallimard, coll. nrf, 2009 ; Walder Andrew G.: *China under Mao, A Revolution Derailed*, Harvard U. P., 2015, Chap. 9-13, p. 180-314. This footnote will not be repeated unless necessary.

¹⁰ " Yan Changgui: "Xiao Li (Li Nan) zai Zhongyang wenge xiaozu" 肖力 (Li Nan 李讷) 在中央文革小组 (*Xiao Li (Li Na) in Central Cultural Revolution Group*), in *Wenshi qiuxin ji* p. 167-177.

¹¹ Bu Weihua: *Zalan jiushijie...* p. 440-442; *Mao Zedong nianpu*, Vol 6, p. 35. In January 1969, Mao wrote in his instructions: "Li Na and Mao Yuanxin shall not be delegates".

¹² *Mao Zedong nianpu*, Vol 6, p. 226.

During the Tenth National Congress in August 1973, both Li Na and Mao Yuanxin became delegates, but they didn't join the CCP Central Committee. From 1974 to 1975, she successively served as the Party Chief of the CCP Pinggu County Committee and Deputy Secretary of the CCP Beijing Committee. Apparently, she was a practitioner loyal to her father and to the "revolutionary line" of the Leader. Although Mao didn't make his descendants his heirs apparent, he allowed them to serve in top leadership positions.

Among Mao's close relatives, both his nephew Mao Yuanxin (1941-) and his cousin's granddaughter Wang Hairong (1938-2017) got rapid promotions during the Cultural Revolution. In addition, they both played significant roles in politics thanks to their special connection with Mao¹³. This "special connection" was born out of a series of conversations between Mao and the two about educational revolution from 1964 to 1965¹⁴. Revealed by Higher Education authorities, the army and some internal sources, these conversations were known to many students, especially the children of senior local and military cadres. Mao retained a distrust and discontent with a lot of cultural and educational institutions within the system, thus by discussing with the young generation of his family he passed messages and listened to feedback from grassroots students. However, in Beijing and other cities, colleges where the offspring of cadres were put together saw these conversations as another signal. Many of these school's directors believed that the children of senior cadres were born to be successors to the revolutionary cause, and thus should be given priority in terms of training over students from other family backgrounds. According to the memoirs of relevant people, their schools had set up classes specifically for cadres' offspring, or they had organized political study conferences that only cadres' offspring could attend.

Mao Yuanxin graduated from PLA Military Institute of Engineering (also called "Harbin Military Institute of Engineering") in 1965 and was soon assigned out of a missile division in Yunnan by Wu Faxian, commander of the Air Force of the time. There he served as platoon cadre¹⁵. In September 1966, following Mao's instruction, he joined the Rebels of his old school, Harbin Military Institute of Engineering, and became leader of a famous Rebel faction. From spring to summer 1967 he returned to Beijing from the northeastern region to work as Zhou Enlai's liaison officer, helping Zhou to deal with the problems in the alignment between the Eastern and the Western factions. After that, he worked as vice-president of the Revolutionary Committee in Liaoning Province, Secretary of Liaoning Provincial Party Committee, and Political Commissar of Shenyang Military Area. Mao Yuanxin had always been a loyal follower and practitioner of his uncle's revolutionary ideology and guideline. Historian Shi Yun indicates that Mao Yuanxin should bear some responsibility for the case in which the Liaoning authorities executed Zhang Zhixin in April 1975. Zhang was charged of criticizing the Cultural Revolution and pointing out Mao Zedong's mistakes. From 1973 to 1974, in response to Mao's expectation of an education reform, Mao Yuanxin set up some role models and school managing experiences (i.e. the Zhang Tiesheng affair, in which Zhang handed in a blank paper; students from the Chaoyang Agricultural Institute "come from the communes and return to the communes after graduation") that counterattacked the "Return of Right-Deviationists". Nevertheless, his political influence probably reached its peak at the end

¹³ The main source of information for how Mao Zedong appointed Wang Hairong, Mao Yuanxin, Chi Qun, Xie Jingyi and others in this paragraph: Shi Yun and Li Danhui: *Nanyi jixu de "jixu geming"...*

¹⁴ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* 建国以来毛泽东文稿 (*Mao Zedong's Manuscripts Since the Founding of the State*), Vol. 11, Pékin, Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1996, p. 96-97; p. 177-178.

¹⁵ The author would like to thank Mr Yu Ruxin for providing this information.

of Mao Zedong's life: from October 1975 to September 1976, he became the liaison officer between Mao Zedong and the Central Politburo. At that time, both Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong's health were deteriorating, which heated up the disputes over succession among different factions of high-ranking politicians. As a strong believer in the Cultural Revolution, Mao Yuanxin used the convenience of passing messages to Mao Zedong. It is said that he thus played a highly active role in the political struggle that led to the second downfall of Deng Xiaoping¹⁶.

Wang Hairong began to work at the General office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1965. Since 1971, she served as Deputy Director of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Assistant Foreign Minister. From July 1974 to February 1979, she became the influential Deputy Foreign Minister. She and her colleague, the interpreter Tang Wensheng, met Mao Zedong frequently, passing messages to Mao and communicating Mao's instructions. Some historians believe that they have been planted by Mao within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to watch Zhou Enlai. From 1973 to 1975, they became Mao's de facto liaison officers, and they were so powerful that even Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng and Deng Xiaoping should count on them to send messages to Mao or to figure out Mao's opinions of relevant affairs.

Apart from his family members, Mao also put his closest staff in important positions. Before the Cultural Revolution, he already replaced the former Secretary General of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee, Yang Shangkun, by his long-time chief of personal bodyguard force Wang Dongxing. In 1968, Mao sent several military officers (including Chi Qun) of the Zhongnanhai Security Guard Regiment - Unit 8341 - as well as a member of his confidential department, Xie Jingyi, to run Peking University and Tsinghua University. Since then, both Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi remained leaders of the two universities for a long time. Following Mao's direct command, they took control of the two universities and made them the front of educational revolution, an important position for public opinion, as well as the test site of brand new criticism movements ("Counterattack the Return of Right-Deviationists", "Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius", "Pro-Legalists and Anti-Confucianism", "Counterattack the Capitulationism in 'The Water Margin'", "Criticize Deng", etc.). Chi Qun had also held some significant positions at the Ministry of Education and the Science and Education Group of the State Council. At the same time, Xie Jingyi was particularly appreciated by Mao. She had served as member of the Standing Committee of Beijing Municipal Committee, the secretary of Beijing Municipal Committee, and became a member of the CCP Central Committee during the Tenth CCP National Congress in 1973. Two years later, she became a member of the Standing Committee of the Fourth National People's Congress.

Mao Zedong started the Cultural Revolution as Supreme Leader, consequently, his family and those close to him gained a sort of special "political status": they are regarded and regard themselves as born revolutionaries more than any others, and they are considered and consider themselves to be more capable of comprehending the will of the Leader and getting his support. Their "revolutionary nature" was unparalleled, since it comes from bloodline and marriage (Mao's closest staff could be seen as part of an extended kinship network). All these people won their power and status from their pater familias in common - the Leader, and they unconditionally approved the Cultural Revolution started by their Leader. According to recent studies, Mao had no intentions of anointing his wife or children his successors, and he did not want to promote them into

¹⁶ Shi Yun and Li Danhui, *Nanyi jixu de "jixu geming"...*, p. 588-589, p. 613, p. 639-640.

positions of power, either. Instead, during the last years of his life, he kept warning Jiang Qing and her faction not to build “mountain tops” and to avoid factionalism. However, by grooming family clans and factions and putting them in important positions, he deeply corrupted the core of the CCP’s power community. Thus, a mechanism supposed to coordinate all factions degenerated into a battlefield where factions fought fiercely and rejected each other. Mao set a precedent, which allowed other clans and factions to grow their influence by the same means.

2. Lin Biao and Ye Qun’s family and its military circle

Lin Biao’s faction was based on the army and consisted mainly of high-ranking officers from the First Front Army of the Red Army that fought during “the age of Ruijin” as well as the First Army Group that he reorganized. For Mao Zedong, this army was also his pillar of strength in the power structure¹⁷. Since July 1967 Lin Biao’s faction held great power over the major services and branches of the Central Military Commission: it took control of the Central Military Commission Office and was in charge of the army’s daily routine by following instructions from Mao Zedong, Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai. After March 1968 when the acting Chief of Staff Yang Chengwu was purged, an inner circle took shape consisting of Lin Biao-Ye Qun, Huang Yongsheng, Wu Faxian, Qiu Huizuo and Li Zuopeng. During the Ninth National Congress in April 1969, Lin Biao became Vice-Chairman of the CCP Central Committee, Mao’s officially chosen successor, and all the five others (including Ye Qun) became member of the Central Politburo. Both Lin Biao’s faction and the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG) had a large number of followers join the CCP Central Committee, and both parties got involved in intense disputes over the succession thereafter.

Lin Biao’s faction was featured by a strong family context. For example, when Lin used his health problem as an excuse for missing some public events or important meetings, his wife Ye Qun often showed up in his place. In late 1965, she was involved in the Luo Ruiqing affair; when the Cultural Revolution started, she became member of the All Forces Cultural Revolution Group, deputy head of the Group, Director of Lin Biao’s office, and member of the Central Military Commission Office. In February 1967, military and political leaders of the Central Military Commission and the State Council opposed the way in which the Cultural Revolution was conducted, so they had a series of stormy debates with the CCRG (which became the famous “February Countercurrent”). Consequently, Mao ordered these leaders to make self-criticism, some were even forced to step aside. After that Mao made Ye Qun attend in Lin Biao’s place Enlarged meetings of the Central Politburo and Brief meetings of the CCRG organized by Mao himself or Zhou Enlai. Hence Ye Qun enjoyed the same privilege as Jiang Qing: taking part in ultimate decisions on the CCP and the country’s day-to-day issues¹⁸. Generally speaking, Ye Qun kept being cautious with Jiang Qing and avoided direct confrontation.

Although Ye Qun was apparently inferior to Jiang Qing in terms of status and position, she got the powerful army in her pocket. For both of them, their power depended on that of their husbands’, but it seemed that Ye Qun had way more supporting sources to mobilize, and that her supporting sources were much more accessible, because the army is a system of its own within the state apparatus and is endowed with rich resources. As

¹⁷ To know more about the factions that were Mao’s pillar in the “Yan’an Round Table”, See Huang Jing: *Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics* (2000).

¹⁸ Wu Faxian, *Suiyue jiannan — Wu Faxian huiyilu* 岁月艰难——吴法宪回忆录 (*Rough Years: Wu Faxian’s Memoir*), Hong Kong: North Star Publishing Company, 2006, p. 659. To know more about how the “February Countercurrent” happened, see p. 657-667.

a mother, Ye Qun was extremely concerned about the future and the marriage of her daughter Lin Liheng and her son Lin Liguó¹⁹. To pick the potential partners for her children, she never hesitated to resort to the mighty army for nationwide selection. As for their career, the Lin siblings were appointed to serve in the Air Force, a service considered to be highly skilled. Lin Liheng (1944-) started to work for *Air Force News* in 1965 and was promoted to Deputy Chief Editor of the newspaper after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Her little brother Lin Liguó (1945-1971) majored in physics at Peking University. During the Cultural Revolution, since classes were suspended, Lin Liguó joined the Air Force in April 1967 and served as military staff at Air Command (some say he worked as office secretary), and was soon admitted to the CCP. In October 1969, thanks to Wu Faxian, Lin Liguó was appointed deputy director of both the Office of the Air Force Command and its combat division. Wu recalled precisely in his memoir that the Lin siblings were promoted to positions ranked a little bit lower than those of Mao Yuanxin and Li Na²⁰. Wu Faxian notified his colleagues at the Air Force that “The fact that Vice-President Lin entrusted Liguó to us is a symbol of his trust and support towards the Air Force. We must do the best to train Liguó.” Wu provided Lin Liguó with all kinds of conditions that assert his authority and gave him the right to organize research teams and to visit subordinate units of the Air Force. Wu even allowed him to report directly to Lin Biao some missions of the Air Force and enabled him to mobilize and to command the Air Force. The recklessness of Lin Liguó and his fellow young officers eventually led to the September 13 Incident in which he died with his parents, Lin Biao and Ye Qun. Mao Zedong used to sharply criticize Lin Biao and his wife for letting their son abuse power: “Those are the few sworn followers, among which Ye Qun is the main character, and from last year to this year it becomes Lin Liguó. Even his parents can’t believe that²¹.” Mao also accused Lin Biao of making his wife his office director, however it was Mao himself who approved this assignment, and it was also Mao who allowed Ye Qun to attend in Lin Biao’s place Enlarged meetings of the Central Politburo and Brief meetings of the CCRG.

To some extent, Ye Qun truly tended to manage the Central Military Commission like an enlarged family issue. When Yang Chengwu was purged in March 1968, she made the wives of Huang Yongsheng, Wu Faxian, Qiu Huizuo and Li Zuopeng office directors of their

¹⁹ Marshal Chen Yi’s son Chen Xiaolu was Lin Liguó’s schoolmate at Beijing 4th Boy Middle High School. He recalls: “My father never talked about his work with us. He didn’t allow us to read documents, neither. But some children of high-ranking cadres had access to that kind of information, such as Lin Liguó. Lin Biao had been training him on purpose. He made his son read confidential documents and internal reference reports. That is why everybody at school loved listen to him sharing inside information. Cadres’ children usually cared a lot about politics, so we often flocked together gabbing about that.” “Chen Xiaolu fangwen jlu” 陈小鲁访问记录 (*Interview with Chen Xiaolu*), 1st May 2013 (The interview transcript has been reviewed by the interviewee).

²⁰ Wu Faxian, *Suiyue jiannan*, p. 708-711, 769-771. According to Gu Xunzhong’s “Wo zai kongjun budui jili ‘jiuyisan’ 我在空军部队经历“九•一三”(The September 13 Incident that I Witnessed at the Air Force): “In those years, the Air Force was the PLA’s example set by Deputy Commander Lin Biao himself. When Mao Zedong put forward the idea of ‘Following the example of the PLA’, Lin Biao called ‘the PLA to follow the example of the Air Force’. His two children were assigned one after another to posts at the Air Force: in early 1965, his daughter Doudou became journalist of Air Force News and was later promoted to Deputy Chief Editor of the newspaper; his son Lin Liguó worked as secretary of the Office of CCP committee of the Air Force (later on changed into ‘the Office of the Air Force Command’) in the beginning of 1967, and then became deputy director of the Office and deputy director of the Air Force Command’s combat division. Both of them had a skyrocketing rise, skipped several grades and were promoted to cadres of deputy division rank.” <http://prchistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/REMEMBRANCE-No-75-2011年9月13日.pdf>

²¹ Shi Yun and Li Danhui, p. 14.

husbands, which was a measure to ensure stability in the faction's backyard in order to prevent internal disputes from weakening its power. At the same time, these women were actively involved in the "spouse selection" for Ye Qun's son and daughter across the country²². Ye Qun was also very concerned about Huang, Wu, Qiu and Li's children, and she particularly cared about young adult boys, because she saw them as legitimate successors of their fathers in the army, just like Lin Ligu. Most of Huang, Wu, Qiu and Li's children joined the army at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and got promoted within short time. Due to the September 13 Incident in 1971, these four people as well as their wives and children were implicated, most of them have been imprisoned and put under investigation for many years. After that, many suffered from discrimination and rejection. For a long time, they had no way to be employed or to get enough living treatment. They could only rely on the personal intervention of important figures such as Hu Yaobang or Zhao Ziyang to hope for a better situation, but even so, the staff did not always carry out the orders²³. The difficult situation of those who lost ground in political fights reveals the disadvantages and the harms of "Status Politics" – which means kinship determines one's power and profits, social position and reputation. Lin Biao was the chief of his military faction. It is said that the September 13 Incident led to a collective punishment for hundreds of thousands of military cadres, many of which have been purged from the PLA as part of "three kinds of people". Similarly, in 1959 criticism of "Peng Dehuai's anti-Party clique" extended to counties and even smaller scale areas, in consequence millions of "Peng Dehuai" have been rooted out. Yet that could be more or less explained by the divergence of political guidelines. However, the political fights during the Cultural Revolution usually aimed at power and benefits for the faction and the family, as well as individual power and interests.

3. Struggles of factions that lost ground

During the Cultural Revolution, the political fights among high-ranking CCP politicians were extremely relentless. Once a male leader fell, his wife, children, and even his close relatives and subordinates might be subject to collective punishment. Facing the brutal situation, the family clans that fell into disgrace had no choice but to put up a fight, by mobilizing any existing contacts and resources. The family was obviously out front in this fight, especially its female members and children, while its original network became the main resource that it could mobilize. We may take a close look at this through Ye Fei, Zhong Qiguang, Chen Pixian and others who were the key leaders of the First Division of the New Fourth Army and the Central Jiangsu Military Region.

²² Qiu Huizuo's wife, Hu Min, was transferred to the PLA's General Logistics Department in October 1968 and worked as office director. After the September 13 Incident, she has been imprisoned with hard labor for ten years due to her husband's implication. However, Qiu thinks that "*Hu Min's real mistake was her active efforts to help Ye Qun 'select the beauty queen'. Such 'beauty pageants' reflected extremely corrupt morals and brought about serious problems...At that time, a lot of high-ranking cadres' wives contributed to the 'beauty pageants' of Ye Qun's family.*" Qiu Huizuo 邱会作, *Qiu Huizuo huiyilu* 邱会作回忆录 (*The Memoir of Qiu Huizuo*), Hong Kong New Century Press, 2011, Volume 2, p. 958-963.

²³ Cheng Guang 程光: *Wangshi huimu* 往事回眸 (*Looking Back at the Past*), Hong Kong North Star Press, 2012 (Cheng Guang is the second son of Qiu Huizuo) ; —, *Guanghuai yu yinying — Huang Chunguang koushushi* 光环与阴影—黄春光口述史 (*Halo and Shadow - Oral History by Huang Chunguang*), quote from chapter compiled by Mi Hedu 米鹤都: *Guanghuan yu yinying — huiyi yu fansi koushu lishi zhisi* 光环与阴影—回忆与反思口述历史之四 (*Halo and Shadow - Memories and Introspection, Oral History, Part 4*), CNHK Publications Limited, 2013, p. 2-121 (This chapter quotes Qiu Luguang, Qiu Huizuo's eldest son. He made the remarks during an interview).

The New Fourth Army was built up in the early days of the Anti-Japanese War. It consisted of the guerrillas left by the former Central Red Army in the south, and a portion of the Eighth Route Army sent down south by Yan'an, the revolutionary base. During the Anti-Japanese War, this troop built the CCP base area and expanded its armed forces in central China, and was reorganized into the East China Field Army and the Third Field Army during the War of Liberation. After 1949, many New Fourth Army generals and cadres from base areas became leaders or army leaders in East China. Before the Cultural Revolution, the first secretaries of "the six provinces and one city" in East China were Tan Qilong (Shandong Province), Jiang Weiqing (Jiangsu Province), Chen Pixian (Shanghai), Li Baohua (Anhui Province), Yang Shangkuai (Jiangxi Province), Jiang Hua (Zhejiang Province) and Ye Fei (Fujian Province)²⁴. Several of them used to be members of the former New Fourth Army. The parallel military authority, the Nanjing Military Region, was in charge of five provinces and one city in East China except Shandong. Its basic troops also consisted of the former New Fourth Army, East China Field Army, and later reorganized Third Field Army and East China Military Region. In Beijing, the respectable leaders of these local military and political officials were mainly Marshal Chen Yi and General Su Yu. The CCP authorities strictly forbade cadres from taking part in factional activities and periodically carried out criticisms and rectifications against "mountain tops" and factionalism. But as Chen Yi's son, Chen Xiaolu said, "The 'mountain tops' within the party were the product of history. My father was the founder of the New Fourth Army in the Anti-Japanese War and the leader of the Chinese East Field Army in the War of Liberation. As he settled in Beijing after the liberation, he had more frequent exchanges with his old comrades of the New Fourth Army. When old comrades working in their local areas came to Beijing for a business meeting, my father would invite them to dinner." When the cadres of the former New Fourth Army had disagreement with other factions about personnel organization, Mao Zedong would also send Chen Yi to act as mediator²⁵. When it came to be serious family difficulties or political failure, the cadres of the New Fourth Army and the Soviet Central base would also actively provide support²⁶.

²⁴ The Local Bureaus of the CCP Central Committee were established during the War of Liberation in 1945. When "Gao-Rao affair" occurred in 1954, and the six Local Bureaus of the CCP Central Committees (Northeast, North China, Northwest, East China, Central South, Southwest) were subsequently abolished to prevent local power from expanding. However, they resumed in January 1961. The "six provinces and one city" in East China affiliated with the East China Bureau were Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Anhui, Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Fujian.

²⁵ "The 'mountain tops' within the party were the product of history. My father was the founder of the New Fourth Army in the Anti-Japanese War and the leader of the Chinese East Field Army in the War of Liberation. As he settled in Beijing after the liberation, he had more frequent exchanges with his old comrades of the New Fourth Army. When old comrades working in their local areas came to Beijing for a business meeting, my father would invite them to dinner. The review of ranks in 1955 was made according to one's background and all others aspects, while paying special attention to veterans from the First, the Second and the Fourth Route Army of the Red Army, the four major Field Forces, and the North China Field Army, etc. In 1958, when Mao heard about the friction between Peng Dehuai and Su Yu, he sent my dad to contact Su Yu for more details about the situation. Later, when the commander of the Fujian Military Region Han Xianchu (the Fourth Field Force) had conflict with the political commissar Ye Fei (the Third Field Force), Mao also asked my father to resolve it. Before 1964, during the Spring Festival, central leaders still had dinner parties and mass greetings, but as struggles within the CCP got more and more fierce, there were less contacts between them." *Interview with Chen Xiaolu*, 1st May 2013.

²⁶ For example, Shanghai Municipal Party Committee Secretary Chen Pixian and his wife have helped Chen Yi's son and Zhong Qiguang's daughter come to Shanghai for treatment. In summer 1958, the army fought against the "dogmatic" military line, consequently, Liu Bocheng, president of the Nanjing Military Academy, and Zhong Qiguang, political commissar, were publicly criticized. Afterwards, Ye Fei, the first secretary of the Fujian Provincial Party Committee, and his wife Wang Yugeng specially invited Zhong Qiguang and his

In October 1966, the CCP Central Committee held a central working conference attended by key leaders of various provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions to criticize the “bourgeois reactionary line”. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were forced to review their mistakes. The purpose of this conference was to criticize the institutional repression of the rebellion of those who worked for the institution. Local officials got lost between being loyal to Mao Zedong's line and not understanding Mao's Cultural Revolution. Ye Fei told his wife Wang Yugeng that during the meeting Chen Yi had invited the first secretaries of provinces and cities in East China to dinner, admonishing everyone that “No matter how difficult it can be, we must adhere to principles and persist in struggle. We must not be a weathercock that goes with the flow²⁷.” However, half a year later, Chen Yi, who was trying to uphold the principles of the party's system, was taken down by the stormy “February Countercurrent”. From the end of 1966 to the beginning of 1967, key leaders of most provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions were struck down and detained for review, leaving their wives and children who stepped up to rescue their husbands and fathers.

Women soldiers of the New Fourth Army

Chen Danhuai, another son of Marshal Chen Yi, and Ye Waiwai, General Ye Fei's daughter, wrote an interesting book depicting the life of three women soldiers of the New Fourth Army, including their respective mothers Zhang Qian and Wang Yugeng, and Ling Ben, the wife of another General of the New Fourth Army, Zhong Qiguang. The three women joined the Communist Party in the early days of the Anti-Japanese War, and later married New Fourth Army generals. After marriage, they continued their revolutionary work while raising children. Their life stories were legendary, and they were all charismatic figures.

In the late 1950s, Zhong Qiguang was criticized as belonging to the so-called “wrong line”. This made Ling Ben realize earlier than her friends the possible family misfortunes brought about by the intensified struggles within the party. In early 1960, she made a deal with two of her comrades of the New Fourth Army, Wang Yugeng and Yu Ling (wife of Qiao Xinming, a cadre of the New Fourth Army) that if one day someone is in trouble, the two others shall support each other and raise the children of the one in distress. In the 1960s, Zhong Qiguang and his wife moved to Beijing to work at the PLA Academy of Military Science. After the start of the Cultural Revolution, in the compound of the Academy of Military Science at the foot of Western Hills in Beijing, Ling Ben led her children to take sides with her husband who was criticized, and to help and support the superiors and comrades who had also been struck down. Wang Yugeng, the director of the Fujian Provincial Education Department, and her husband, Ye Fei, the first secretary of the Fujian Provincial Party Committee, were the first to be struck down, and their children drifted from one place to another. Regardless of obstructions, Ling Ben kept her promise made with her friends, and took in their two daughters who studied in Beijing, as well as up to 19 children of the first secretaries of provincial committees in East China. Some of these young people were studying at universities in Beijing, some stayed in

wife in adversity as well as two other sick comrades-in-arms couples from the New Fourth Army to recuperate in Fujian. See Chen Danhuai 陳丹淮 Ye Weiwei 葉葳葳 : *Sange Xinsijun nübing de duocai rensheng:Huiyi muqin Zhang Qian, Wang Yugeng, Ling Ben* 三个新四军女兵的多彩人生: 回忆母亲张茜、王于畊、凌奔 (*Colorful Life of Three Women Soldiers of the New Fourth Army – to Memorize Mother Zhang Qian, Wang Yugeng and Ling Ben*), Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2011.

²⁷ Chen Danhuai and Ye Weiwei: *Sange Xinsijun nübing...*, p. 247.

Beijing to shelter from the tide, and others were sent to Beijing by their parents to inquire about more information or to find ways to improve their parents' situation.

After the September 13 Incident in 1971, the political situation became loose, and Wang Yugeng was released from detention and assigned to a military retirement home in the northern Fujian mountainous area. She began to have frequent contacts with her children, relatives and friends, exchanged information and made plans to rescue her husband Ye Fei. In the spring of 1972 she managed to send her daughter and son to Beijing to ask for permission to visit their father, who had been held for six years. The request was approved. When she was "liberated", she immediately wrote to Zhou Enlai, asking to meet her husband, and then requested that Ye Fei be hospitalized. In Beijing, Wang Yugeng and her children were looked after and helped by Chen Yi's wife Zhang Qian and other women comrades of the New Fourth Army, but instead of transferring their petition by other people, she insisted on handing in the petition by her family members to the Bureau of Letters and Calls of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee at the West Gate of Zhongnanhai²⁸. Women soldiers of the New Fourth Army clearly knew how to fight for "legitimate" rights for their husbands and families, both formally and informally. In addition to Zhou Enlai – the government channel, Marshal Ye Jianying, the newly appointed Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, soon became the second channel. With his military resources (such as the military hospitals), he could to a certain extent help ease the plight of former military and political officers. However, Zhou and Ye's power was limited to granting visits, sending doctors, or approving hospitalization. The women soldiers soon understood that the true "liberation" depended on Chairman Mao Zedong. In August 1972, after writing to Mao Zedong Deng Xiaoping was restored to office in the next spring. This example inspired lots of CCP senior officials who were waiting for the final judgement. Driven by Wang Yugeng and Zhang Qian, Ye Fei wrote to Mao on June 17, 1973, asking to lift custody and to work for the party. Fortunately, a week later, he received Mao's approval of his liberation and his job assignment. Even so, he would have to wait a year and a half before actually receiving a new job appointment²⁹.

For senior CCP cadres who were struck down during the Cultural Revolution, "liberation" was their most important "identity card", which indicated the beginning of the gradual achievement of political status and various related rights: reappearing at regular activities of the party, reading internal reference documents, being treated in accordance with their ranks, assigning jobs, and so on³⁰. When Chen Yi, the leader of the New Fourth Army, died in January 1972, Wang Yugeng had worried that it would be even more difficult to get her husband out of the woods. She envisaged bringing her children home to Baoding and living the lives of ordinary people once there was no other way out. However, the September 13 Incident has greatly changed the previous power structure, which led to the expansion of other factions' living space and to the turn of fortune for individuals and families.

²⁸ This contact channel was likely to have been secretly agreed between Zhou Enlai and some senior cadres. By sending letters, Zhou could keep in touch with them or their families.

²⁹ Chen Danhuai and Ye Weiwei: *Sange Xinsijun nübing...*, p. 245-259. In January 1975, Ye Fei was appointed Minister of Transport.

³⁰ "Reappearing at regular activities of the party, reading internal reference documents" means being qualified to gain the party's trust and powerful enough to hold information. "Treatment in accordance with their ranks" referred to wages and all kinds of tangible or intangible material benefits, such as housing, private car, medical treatment, travel, as well as transportation and accommodation during travel. However, only "assigning jobs" means enjoying one's function and power.

“Sons of senior officials” as “correspondents”

The families of senior CCP leaders in the early days were unstable. With the establishment of Yan'an revolutionary base and other bases in various places after the Anti-Japanese war, many cadres married (or remarried) and had children, thus began to have stable and long-lasting families³¹. The 1940s to 1950s were the baby boom among senior CCP cadres. Due to the lack of the idea of birth control and contraceptive methods, and because of basic living conditions provided by newly established revolutionary bases and CCP regime, most cadres' families had lots of children. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, many of these teenagers were old enough to attend college or high school. After the few months of glory at first, many teenagers started to be “politically involved” in another form as their parents were struck down or stepped aside: they pounded the pavement looking for possibilities of the liberation and comeback of their parents. Chen Xiaojin, the eldest son of the former First Secretary of the CCP Shanghai Municipal Committee, Chen Pixian, was one of the most active teenagers. There is a very detailed and vivid description of this period in his memoir *My Experiences during the “Cultural Revolution” Years*³².

Shanghai was the birthplace of workers' rebellion and the base of the Cultural Revolution. At the end of December 1966, Chen Pixian, the first secretary of the municipal party committee who might be the first to be affected, found that he and his family might be left unprotected. He decided to send his eldest son, Chen Xiaojin (1944.11-), a third-year student at Shanghai Jiaotong University, to meet with his former superior Chen Yi in Beijing, hoping that the latter would report to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai about the situation in Shanghai. At the same time, Chen Pixian also wished to know more about the ongoing Cultural Revolution in Beijing. A few days later, Chen Pixian sent his second son away from Shanghai through military connections. He also told his wife that in case of an accident, she should take the children to meet the commander of the East Sea Fleet, Tao Yong³³. After leaving Shanghai, Chen Xiaojin first went to Nanjing. He stayed with Liu Yan,

³¹ For early CCP leaders' families and children, see *Zai Sulian zhangda de hongse houdai* 在苏联长大的红色后代 (*The Descendants of the Reds*), edited by Du Weihua, Wang Yiqiu, Beijing, World Affair Press, 2000; for the life of senior cadres' children during the Cultural Revolution, see *Zhongguo gaogan zhinü chenfulu* 中国高干子女沉浮录 (*The Rise and Fall of Chinese Senior Cadres' Descendants*), compiled by Shi Xiang, Changchun, Jilin People's Publishing House, 1996. For CCP's rules on senior cadres' marriage after the Anti-Japanese War, see online article of the Museum of the CCP History in Nanjing University, “Er ba wu qi tuan de jiehun zhengce” 二八五七团的结婚政策 (*The Marriage Policy of “2857 and County Regiment”*): “In the context of the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, the central government duly implemented a new marriage standard for party members and military officers, government offices, and localities based on the original marriage regulations in the revolutionary bases: the ‘2857 and county regiment’. Generally speaking, the standard was as follows: military cadres, at least 28 years of age, 5 years of party age, 7 years of military age, and cadres at or above the regimental rank; if they are local government cadres or party cadres, they are required to be at least 28 years of age, 5 years of party age, county-rank or at least section-rank cadres. [...] When the Red Army arrived in northern Shaanxi, Wayaobao and Yan'an experienced a wedding boom one after another. In Wayaobao, only in the month of December 1935, a large number of senior cadres got married, such as Liu Shaoqi, Zhang Wentian, Dong Biwu, Zhou Kun, and Song Renqiong. Newly married couples emerged almost every day, and sometimes even several couples got married in one day.” <http://history.nju.edu.cn/dsbwg/show.php?id=1268&catid=94>, viewed on June 13, 2013.

³² Chen Xiaojin 陳小津: *Wo de wenge suiyue* 我的文革岁月 (*My Experiences during the “Cultural Revolution” Years*), Beijing, Central Party Literature Press, 2009.

³³ Chen Xiaojin: *Wo de wenge suiyue*, p. 126-127. However, Chen Pixian could not imagine that the brutality of the factional struggle in the army eclipsed that of other cities. Tao Yong was one of the main generals of the First Division of the New Fourth Army. He was known for his enthusiasm and boldness and served as commander of the East Sea Fleet in Shanghai. However, Tao Yong was even more misery than Chen Yixian.

the deputy commander of the Nanjing Military Area at the time. Liu was also a general of the Fourth Army and one of Chen Pixian's old colleagues in Shanghai. By mid-to-late January 1967, Commander Liu Yan's house was already full of children of old comrades-in-arms and old subordinates. These children were networking away from home. In Beijing, Chen Xiaojin visited many of his father's former comrades-in-arms or current colleagues, but the "February Countercurrent" prevented him from visiting Chen Yi. After returning to Shanghai, he found out that both his parents were detained for investigation. He himself was detained by the authority of the new Jiaotong University to undergo reform through labor, before being assigned to a military reclamation farm in Hunan Province. After Lin Biao's September 13 Incident, his father's old comrades-in-arms, veteran cadres of Jiangxi Province such as Huang Zhizhen made their comeback³⁴. Jiangxi Province, run by veteran cadres, was regarded by Chen Xiaojin as a "liberated area" during the Cultural Revolution. He first tried to be transferred to a factory in the provincial capital Nanchang in order to pound the pavement for his father under Huang Zhizhen's shelter. Similarly, at the same time, many of the children of senior cadres who had been struck down also rushed to Jiangxi – the "liberated area". They either went to school or worked, and most of them were taken care of by Huang Zhizhen. Huang also tried his best to look after many former CCP senior officials who were sent down to Jiangxi, including Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Wang Zhen, Shuai Mengqi and others³⁵.

Since the spring of 1972, Chen Xiaojin has frequently traveled between Beijing, Shanghai and his workplace, Nanchang (Jiangxi province), visiting his father's old acquaintances, friends and colleagues of the Red Army and the New Fourth Army, passing messages to elders who also lost power, analyzing the political changes with them, and seeking appropriate opportunities and ways to rescue his parents in distress. In Beijing, the elder who met Chen Xiaojin the most was Hu Yaobang, who was also Chen Pixian's old comrade in the Jiangxi Red Army. Before the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth CCP Central Committee in October 1968, in order to make up half of the number of the Central Committee delegates required for the meeting, Hu Yaobang was liberated abruptly, but he was not assigned any job afterwards. Hu remained unemployed and stayed at home for a long time. Except for reading and meditating, he discussed a lot with children of old comrades-in-arms who came to see him from other cities. In comparison with their parents, these children were free-thinking and lively youngsters. Hu Yaobang shared with them his opinion about the political movements in CCP's history and about the Cultural Revolution, while giving them advice and suggestions, encouraging these children to come forward to rescue their parents.

The pro-Cultural Revolution faction in Shanghai being too powerful, Chen Pixian and his wife were detained and put under investigation for a long time since January 1967. Hu started from analyzing with Chen Xiaojin the reasons for Chen Pixian's investigation, and then advised Xiaojin to take his first step: asking for meeting his father. This advice was based on the fact that the spouses and children of senior cadres in Beijing obtained step by step visits, the right for health exam, the right to be hospitalized, the annulment of custody, and assigned jobs. However, this request was rejected by the "Chen Pixian Case

He and his wife suddenly died for no reason one after another in 1967. Their seven children were expelled from home and drifted from one place to another. Later, these children depended on the Chens', the general Xu Shiyong and others to be resettled. For more information about Tao Yong, see p. 159-161 of the book.

³⁴ Huang Zhizhen, Hu Yaobang, Chen Pixian, Tan Qilong, and others were all underage soldiers in Jiangxi Red Army. Huang also served with Chen and Tan in the New Fourth Army.

³⁵ Chen Xiaojin: *Wo de wenge suiye*, p. 248-253.

Unit" in Shanghai and the leaders of the municipal party committee. Following Hu Yaobang's suggestion, Chen Xiaojin immediately sent a letter to Mao Zedong through Central Committee delegate, Wang Zhen, who was one of the first generals to whom Mao gave shelter. In late August 1972, Chen finally met his long-parted parents. Considering that the situation in Shanghai was different from Beijing, Hu suggested that Chen Pixian write to Mao Zedong directly. He also told him through Chen Xiaojin that other veteran cadres of Shanghai who had been struck down also directly asked Mao for the right to see a doctor, to be hospitalized, to study party's documents and to participate in regular activities of the party. Since the "Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius" campaign in 1974, the conflict had intensified between the pro-Cultural Revolution faction on one hand, and Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping (who was restored to office) and others on the other hand. The disturbance of the former probably affected Mao Zedong's deployment of domestic and foreign strategies, therefore it had been repeatedly criticized by Mao. Thus, Hu Yaobang believed it was the perfect time to write to Mao, and he taught Chen Xiaojin how and what his father should write in the letter:

"With Chairman Mao, we must admit our mistakes. We must avoid two approaches: one is to be excessively moralistic, practicing self-criticism by cursing ourselves as worse than useless. Chairman Mao dislikes this kind of self-criticism. He would say that this must be written by the rebels of the Red Guards rather than by ourselves. The other approach should be avoided too. It consists of not mentioning any mistakes, claiming we are always right. So, is Chairman Mao wrong? Never write such a letter. You must tell your father that he must show deep feelings for Chairman Mao, that he has been missing Chairman Mao for many years, and he should ask Chairman Mao for a chance to be transformed and to learn more.³⁶"

After following the instructions, Chen Pixian was permitted to return home in November 1974, as expected. However, he was always under semi-surveillance, and there were neither conclusion of his investigation nor restoration of his wages and participation in regular activities of the party. Chen had no choice but send his son to Beijing again for help from old comrades such as Hu Yaobang and Su Yu. At that time, Deng Xiaoping was appointed to preside over the regular duties of the State Council and the CCP Central Committee, so Hu Yaobang suggested that Chen Pixian write to Deng. With Deng's active intervention, in July 1975, Chen was able to resume his participation in regular activities of the party that had been suspended for nine years, and was subsequently relocated to Beijing. He finally escaped the control of the pro-Cultural Revolution faction in Shanghai.

Around the Tenth National Congress of the CCP in 1973, despite the fact that the pro-Cultural Revolution faction was still powerful, a lot of veteran cadres of the party, government, and army were liberated, among which many even entered the Tenth Central Committee. Chen Xiaojin wrote in his book: *"In this context, many veteran cadres who remained free were trying their best to rescue their old comrades. Uncle Yaobang was the most active. And I naturally got involved in this matter because of my father. I became Uncle Yaobang's 'correspondent'.³⁷"* Of course, Chen was not the only "son of senior official" who pounded the pavement for his parents. He often encountered his peers here and there, especially in the guest house of the Organization Department of the CCP Central Committee on Wanshou Road in Beijing, where many senior CCP officials of ministries, and provincial and municipal cadres lived with their families, waiting to be "liberated" or assigned a job. Since senior officials who had not been assigned a job were neither allowed

³⁶ Chen Xiaojin: *Wo de wenge suiyue*, p. 354.

³⁷ Chen Xiaojin: *Wo de wenge suiyue*, p. 343.

to read the inner documents in time nor to attend meetings of the party, they had to rely on their children to get high-level government information. These “sons of senior officials” were “*all well-informed and had their own channels of information. They could quickly know about the latest news of struggles within the CCP inner circle.*”³⁸

At the end of the Cultural Revolution, many of senior cadres’ children were involved in high-level political affairs, and their intervention was due to the basic needs for survival. Since there existed no formal and legal channels, the spouses and children of senior cadres could only reach their goals through old friends and the network of former superiors and comrades-in-arms. Once restored to office, senior cadres found it legitimate to make arrangements for their children or to help each other make arrangements for the children. In this sense, the “Status Politics” during the Cultural Revolution contributed to the rise of family clans and factions.

4. The protection network of the army

Protection and supervision of the children of senior official

The army is the backbone of CCP’s regime, and it was also what Mao Zedong depended on to start the Cultural Revolution and to go from chaos to order. The army is a relatively independent body in the political system, and it holds a lot of resources. It could serve as an ideal sanctuary to protect the families of high-ranking cadres from hazards and risks in political struggles. Before the Cultural Revolution, the children of senior CCP officials (especially sons), mostly chose famous universities such as Harbin Military Engineering Institute, Tsinghua University, and Peking University to study science and engineering instead of joining the army. Air Force Commander Wu Faxian said in his memoir that in April 1967 Ye Qun made Lin Liguang join the army. Ye Qun did not want him to appear in all kinds of activities after the school was closed. Of course, entering the Air Force was also a guarantee for her son’s future. According to Wu Faxian, the Air Force was a highly technical service, so many senior cadres were willing to send their children to join the Air Force. Apart from Mao’s nephew Mao Yuanxin, “the children or relatives of many leaders, including Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Dong Biwu, Peng Zhen, Liu Bocheng, Ye Jianying, Li Fuchun, Li Xiannian, Yang Chengwu, Xu Shiyong, Han Xianchu, Wang Dongxing and Yang De, rushed to the Air Force one after another. The Air Force was swarmed with children of government and military leaders.”³⁹

Beijing gathered a lot of children of military and political officials, many of whom were the earliest Red Guards at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and heads of Red Guard groups. Influenced by pedigree theory, they had a strong sense of superiority. However, after the campaign in which Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were criticized for following the “bourgeois reactionary line”, veteran cadres were struck down one after another, and their children were not pleased. In December 1966, some of them set up the “Capital Red Guard United Action Committee” (or “United Action Committee” for short) to openly challenge the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG). In the end, they were suppressed by the police as a counterrevolutionary organization, and many members were arrested and detained. In early 1967, the Central Military Commission and the CCRG jointly formulated seven articles defining how the military should carry out the Cultural Revolution. Beyond the seven articles, Mao Zedong “added one more article about how to discipline the children of cadres.” That was the eight articles of the “Order of the Central

³⁸ Chen Danhuai and Ye Weiwei: *Sange xinsijun nübing...*, p. 252.

³⁹ Wu Faxian : *Suiyue jiannan...*, p. 708-709.

Military Commission” issued on January 28⁴⁰. Subsequently the suppression of the United Action Committee by the pro-Cultural Revolution faction became one of the topics that triggered fierce clashes during the “February Countercurrent”. At that time, Chen Yi was left out for being involved in the “February political struggle”. His son Chen Xiaolu had been very active among the middle school Red Guards in the early days of the Cultural Revolution. Although he did not directly participate in the United Action Committee, he was sent away from Beijing in April 1967 by Zhou Enlai to be protected and supervised by the army in order to avoid making more trouble for his father⁴¹. Soon, members of the United Action Committee were released by Mao. A lot of children of senior cadres joined the army at that time, because many of them lost their enthusiasm for the Cultural Revolution, probably also because they were under their parents’ control. When the situation of political struggles is not clear yet, the army can serve as a security blanket for everyone concerned.

Getting drafted through the back door

When the large scale “Up to the mountains and down to the countryside” movement started in late 1968, the army became the first employment expectation for students. A lot of military officers decided for their children to join the army, either serving in various military institutions or working in military schools. The September 13 Incident broke some of the old unwritten taboos. Many of the struck-down military cadres returned to their leadership positions, while other warm-hearted senior generals used their power to help children of comrades-in-arms persecuted to death or children of local cadres still left out. Senior generals arranged for these children to join the army, attend school or enter the factory. Ren Zhiqiang (1951-), a well-known party member and real estate tycoon, openly described how he got drafted through the back door. Ren's father was one of Li Xiannian's subordinates, serving in the Fifth Division of the New Fourth Army. Before the Cultural Revolution, he worked as Deputy Minister of Commerce. In January 1969, Ren Zhiqiang and his schoolmates went to Yan'an to join a production team. Within less than one year, he joined the army in Jinan, Shandong, with the help of his father's old comrades-in-arms. There he came across nearly a hundred young men who joined the army through their parents' network. According to Ren, this was because after getting in touch the old comrades from the Fifth Division of the New Fourth Army who held important positions in the Jinan Military Area, the Jinan Air Force, and the Shandong Province Military Area, decided to jointly help the children of the “struck-down capitalist-roaders” to join the

⁴⁰ *Mao Zedong nianpu (1949-1976)*, Vol. 6, January 1967, p. 39-43. For the formulation of the eight articles, and more details about the United Action Committee and the “February Countercurrent”, see Bu Weihua: “Zalan jiushijie”..., p. 442-455; Wu Faxian: *Suiyue jiannan...*, p. 613-614, 648-649; Wang Li 王力: *Wang Li fansilu 王力反思录 (Reflections of Wang Li, vol. 2)*, Hong Kong: North Star Publishing Company, 2001, p. 652-669. According to Wang Li, Mao Zedong had asked him to talk to the sons of Liu Tao, He Pengfei, and other generals. In his book, Wang described in detail the confrontation between the United Action Committee and the CCRG, how the United Action Committee was labeled as a reactionary organization, and the release of the chief of the United Action Committee who was detained on April 22, 1967. During one of the Politburo meetings of the “February Countercurrent”, Nie Rongzhen, Li Xiannian, Tan Zhenlin voiced their complaints about the suppression of the United Action Committee.

⁴¹ Chen Xiaolu: “Ji suo bu yue, wu shi yu ren” 己所不欲，勿施于人 (*Do Unto Others As You Would Be Done*), quote from chapter compiled by Mi Heduo: *Huiyi yu fansi— hongwenbing shidai fengyun renwu—koushu lishi zhi'er 回憶與反思，紅衛兵時代風雲人物——口述歷史之二 (Memories and Introspection, Influential Men of the Red Guards Era--Oral History, Part 2)*, Hong Kong, CNHK Publications Limited, 2011, p. 36-37.

army⁴². Ren Zhiqiang's unit belonged to the very famous 38th Troop of the Fourth Field Army that went through the Long March and had fought in the Anti-Japanese War. Therefore, it has attracted lots of “sons of senior officials” from all kinds of channels: firstly, children of military cadres of all levels that had served in this troop during the war, i.e. successive corps commanders, division commanders and regimental commanders. Secondly, children of generals still serving in the army. These generals used various networks to send their children to the 38th Troop. Thirdly, children of those who did not serve in the army but had contacts with the former 38th Troop cadres. Fourthly, children like Ren who used the power of their parents’ comrades in the local military area and entered the 38th Troop through a formal recruitment channel, although their families had no historical tie to the Troop. Besides these four channels, other ways such as quota exchange could help to enter the Troop. The number of fresh men got drafted through these channels was so large that the 38th Troop was called “three thousand sons of cadres”. However, becoming a soldier was only a springboard. According to Ren, the promotion was another matter altogether. Generally, they must be excellent in the army to be promoted, although military cadres’ children often got promoted faster than children of local cadres⁴³. Ren Zhiqiang explained that Zhou Enlai had tacitly allowed the practice of “getting drafted through the back door” all over the country, with the purpose of protecting the descendants of the struck-down senior cadres. Joining the army and being promoted to cadres quickly evolved into the privileges of military officials and the interests of different military services. Before the “reform and opening up” opened the way for other channels of social mobility, the “children of the compounds” in Beijing and other military institutions usually enjoyed the priority to join the army. At the local level, getting drafted had also become the prerogative of cadres. Even at the grassroots level in the rural areas, children of cadres enjoyed this priority. The “back door” practice soon engulfed all other public sectors. Powerful people and those who had networks were always the first ones to be given access to enlistment, school admission, employment, CCP membership and promotion to cadres.

High-ranking military officers and the pro-Cultural Revolution faction

In early 1974 the “Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius” campaign was launched. At the Central Mobilization Conference and the Politburo Meeting, Jiang Qing and the pro-Cultural Revolution faction of the Department of Education openly raised criticisms against the unhealthy “back door” practice of military officials for arranging their children to serve in the army, attend college, and join the diplomatic service. The targets of the criticism were clearly the army generals and the veteran cadres restored to office. At the same time, the criticism made innuendo about Zhou Enlai, while Ye Jianying, who presided over the work of the Central Military Commission, was the first to bear the brunt. The move was likely to provoke a new round of power struggles among high-ranking leaders. Mao seemed very dissatisfied with such a disturbance. He wrote an instruction to stop the

⁴² Ren Zhiqiang 任志强: *Yexin youya: Ren Zhiqiang huiyilu* 野心优雅: 任志强回忆录 (*Graceful Ambition-Memoir of Ren Zhiqiang*), Nanjing, Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House, 2013, p. 361-363. Ren highly appreciated the fact that veteran comrades-in-arms helped the children of “capitalist-roaders” to join the army. However, he forgot that taking the recruitment quota of Shandong province was actually depriving other people, especially peasants’ children, of joining the army. The PLA’s fresh men mainly came from rural areas, and before the “reform and opening up” in the 1980s, becoming soldier was one of the very limited social mobility channels for rural youth.

⁴³ Ren Zhiqiang: *Yexin youya...*, p. 437-438; — : “Wo dei zuo wo ziji” 我得做我自己 (*I Should Be Myself*), quote from chapter compiled by Mi Heduo: *Memories and Introspection, Influential Men of the Red Guards Era--Oral History, Part 2*, p. 370-371.

mess: “This is a great matter; it involves millions of people from party branches to Beijing. There are also good people entering through the back door, there are also bad guys coming from the front door... The ‘Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius’ campaign, if mixed with (the criticism of) the ‘back door’ practice, would be overshadowed.⁴⁴” In 1975, during the “Criticize Deng” and the “Counterattack the Return of Right-Deviationists” campaign, the pro-Cultural Revolution faction once again put forward the proposition against “bourgeois rights”, which was approved by Mao. In a series of speeches, he underlined that the so-called bourgeoisie consisted of “the capitalist roaders in power” in the party, which meant the privileged bureaucrats⁴⁵. However, Mao failed to convince his former comrades-in-arms and subordinates to agree with the Cultural Revolution, and it was especially difficult to get the approval of veteran cadres and generals for the targets of the Cultural Revolution and the way it was conducted. The army was the most powerful clan that Mao couldn’t bypass in his power structure. The generation of soldiers who went through the war supported each other. As for their children, they entered the army in large numbers and quickly occupied high positions⁴⁶. Many people wrote in their memoirs that from the “Counterattack the Return of Right-Deviationists” campaign in October 1975 to the arrest of the “Gang of Four” in October 1976, many senior military generals and children of cadres claimed that they would “wage guerrilla warfare in the mountains” once the situation deteriorates. Before his death, Mao had been wholeheartedly promoting General Xu Shiyou to enter the Politburo. During that time, Xu even threatened to lead troops northward to storm Beijing⁴⁷. The number of military leaders who were determined to stand on the opposite side may be minimal, but obviously their voices could not be ignored, especially after the Supreme Leader died. Both the pro-Cultural Revolution faction and those who were middle-level cadres before the Cultural Revolution and diligently supported by Mao afterwards would find it difficult to stand against high-level military generals with latent supportive forces and local political allies with historical ties to these generals.

Conclusion

The high-ranking officers of the party, the government and the army before the Cultural Revolution were founders of various CCP armies and revolutionary bases, and

⁴⁴ Shi Yun and Li Danhui : *Nanyi jixu de “jixu geming”...*, p. 379-340. Mao also said that he himself had used the back door. With the help of Xie Jingyi, he made actresses of Zhejiang Art Troupe and waitresses of Lushan Hotel become worker-peasant-soldier students at Peking University. For more information about the process and consequences of the “Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius” campaign, see p. 329-383 of the book.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, p. 613-618.

⁴⁶ For example, Luo Ruiqing, a high-ranking military officer, had been struck down before the Cultural Revolution. He was in custody in hospital after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. His wife was put in prison. His son Luo Yu (1944-) was a student at Tsinghua University and was also imprisoned for five years. After the September 13 Incident, Luo Ruiqing and his wife were released one after another, their children returned to the city, and the family finally reunited. In July 1975, pushed by Deng Xiaoping, Mao approved that Luo and some other old generals serve as consultants to the Central Military Commission. Ye Jianying wanted Luo Yu to join the army, which got Deng Xiaoping's approval. Thus, Luo Yu served in the equipment section of the PLA General Staff Department. At that time, a lot of children of high-ranking military cadres started to work in various military institutions. Many of them became heads of important branches of the military after the Cultural Revolution. After the Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee in 1978, Luo Ruiqing served as Secretary General of the Central Military Commission. Luo Yu became his secretary, dealing with official documents and working as Deng Xiaoping's correspondent. See Luo Yu 罗宇: *Gaobie Zong canmoubu (Luo Yu huiyilu) 告别总参谋部 (罗宇回忆录) (Farewell to the General Staff Department – Memoir of Luo Yu)*, Hong Kong, Open Books, 2015.

⁴⁷ Shi Yun and Li Danhui : *Nanyi jixu de “jixu geming”...*, p. 688.

leaders of long-term wars. Most of them were strongly convinced of Mao Zedong's authority and wisdom, and they highly agreed with his historical achievements in seizing power and re-integrating China. They could not understand the Cultural Revolution that Mao insisted on, but for Mao it was difficult to remain indifferent to these people who had such a high degree of recognition, because they had jointly created the history and they shared power. To a certain extent, Mao Zedong's relationship with CCP's senior officials was very similar to that between an emperor or a tribal chief and his subordinates. He held the power of life and death of all civil and military officials, never let go until the day of his death. Probably he never intended to eliminate all his comrades-in-arms and subordinates who followed him in the war to seize political power, but neither did he ever consider restoring the power structure before the Cultural Revolution. After the September 13 Incident in 1971, by regulating the personnel system, Mao used his power to achieve his goal: reforming the bureaucracy. In the reorganized party, government, military and state institutions, he tried to keep a power structure in which all generations of leaders and all types of factions – moderate or radical – coexist. He hoped that this power structure would not only ensure the smooth progress and transition of domestic and foreign affairs, but also prevent the purposes and the trajectory of the Cultural Revolution from being abandoned. However, the vision he laid out was already collapsing before he died. That was fundamentally because the success of this vision only depended on one person: the Leader who was identified as the supreme *pater familias* holding the supreme authority.