

The Wuhan Incident: Local Strife and Provincial Rebellion during the Cultural Revolution

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Introduction

The Wuhan Incident of late July 1967 represents the apex of revolutionary violence in 1967 and a turning-point in the Cultural Revolution. Before mid-July, the Maoist group¹ seemed relatively permissive in allowing, and even instigating, clashes throughout the country between various revolutionary factions, each claiming to be more loyal than the other to Mao and the Party Centre. From mid-July to early August, regional military authorities in Wuhan not only sided with the “conservative” revolutionary rebel faction (in violation of a Central Committee directive instructing them to promote unity among revolutionary forces) but also threw down a direct challenge to Peking. This had some of the markings of warlord politics and Peking had no choice but to deal severely with the regional authorities.

Although successful in the end in dealing with Ch'en Tsai-tao and his cohorts in Wuhan, Peking was confronted in August with further violence and disorder, leading to anarchy in some places. Peking responded by moving even further left in the decision to arm certain Red Guard units and to extend the “power seizure” to the military itself. The revolutionary forces were given a hunting licence to drag out not only the “handful” in the Party, but those now also in the army. Only when the level of bloodshed, disorganization and factionalism threatened the army itself did the Mao-Lin faction decide that it was time to pull back. Only then did Mao moderate his ideological course and, through Lin, order the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to restore order by forcibly confiscating arms possessed by dissident elements. These actions combined, after September, gradually to bring about a period of relative calm.²

It was at Wuhan that the Maoist leadership was confronted with the results of its policies of the previous six months and it was the Wuhan

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1. This term is used to refer to Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao, Chou En-lai, Ch'en Po-ta, K'ang Sheng and Chiang Ch'ing, who collectively served as the directorate of Cultural Revolution policy initiatives.

2. See Philip Bridgham, “Mao's Cultural Revolution in 1967: The Struggle to Seize Power,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 34 (April-June 1968), pp. 27-29.

Incident, more than any other single occurrence, that forced Mao to change his course. For this reason alone, a full review of the facts relating to the events in the Hupeh tri-city seems desirable. Moreover, the Wuhan Incident provides us with the best example of the fragile nature of relations between province and Centre during the Cultural Revolution. Finally, it is a well-documented illustration of how local authorities and revolutionary groups conducted themselves when left relatively free of direction from Peking.³

Background

Aside from events in Wuhan itself, an important element in the outbreak of provincial insubordination was the Maoist policy, evident from the last stage of the "January Revolution" period, of approving the political intervention of the PLA.⁴ The original purpose of intervention was to halt the most extreme of the disorders wracking major Chinese cities in December 1966 and January 1967, and to throw the army's influence behind the revolutionary left in its bid to "seize power." That the army, which had always supported the Red Guards, was at last taking a more active part was indicated by its participation in and leadership of the "seize power" activities and the new "three-way alliances," and also by its presence in almost all organs of the economy, administration and communications. Military control commissions were established in all those provinces and cities – the great majority – where revolutionary committees had not yet been established. Thus, in the absence of an effective

3. A fourth reason for studying the Wuhan Incident in detail is that the source material is much richer than in other cases. Although we could wish for testimony and documentary material from the losing side (Ch'en Tsai-tao and the "One Million Warrior" organization in particular), there are available not only the usual newspaper and radio reports from Peking, but also Nationalist Chinese, Japanese correspondent and Red Guard materials in sufficient abundance to enable us to make an approximate reconstruction of the actual events.

4. The official Eight-Point Directive to this end was issued on 28 January, but wall-posters reported that Mao had instructed Lin on 21 January to command the PLA to intervene. See "Order of the Military Commission of the Central Committee," 28 January 1967 (included in *Collection of Documents Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, May 1967, issued by the "Propagandists of Mao Tse-tung's Thought Peking College of Chemical Engineering," and translated in *Current Background* (Hong Kong), No. 852 (6 May 1968), pp. 54–55); and Sofia BTA International Service, 23 January 1967, reporting on a revolutionary rebel poster of 22 January. The poster repeated a conversation purportedly taking place between Mao and Lin on the night of 21 January. The poster was reputed to have been put up by the "Revolutionary Rebel Red Flag Regiment 1226," presumably the detachment inside the New China News Agency (NCNA) (Radio Tokyo, 23 January 1967), and is included in the *Collection of Documents*, pp. 49–50. The Chinese rendition can be viewed in *Hsing-huo liao-yüan* (*One Spark Ignites the Plain*), 27 January 1967, p. 4 (copy on deposit at Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor).

Party and governmental apparatus, the army constituted the locus of power throughout the country.

The army was, understandably, somewhat confused and not a little reluctant to undertake its new task. It had a tradition of non-involvement in politics (although it had been closely intertwined with the Party during the revolutionary takeover era) and had a professional interest in national defence from which participation in domestic political strife could only detract. It also found that Mao's terms of reference for intervention were either insufficient to cope with the complexities of the local situation or were mutually contradictory.⁵ The army thus moved cautiously in its initial involvement; when left to itself to establish priorities among divergent goals, it tended to stress restoration of order, at whatever the cost in violence, over support of leftist forces. Moreover, for about a month after late January it was necessary to tone down the leftward impetus until military control commissions had established themselves and to convince all concerned (including even some army units) that the army was now to be the leading element in the Cultural Revolution.⁶

To foster more and genuine power seizures, however, the political safety of the revolutionary forces would have to be guaranteed by the army, which up to then had evidently co-operated with those already in power to suppress the rebel elements. Thus, the army would have to be prohibited from interfering in power seizures. On 6 April the Military Affairs Committee issued such an order prohibiting the army from opening fire on the mass organizations, from terming them counter-revolutionary, from arresting them, or from taking any action at all towards them without prior instructions from Peking.⁷ In this manner, the Party Centre hoped to weld together the mass organizations and the army in the seize power task. But the assumption of a natural harmony of interests was not justified, for the army continued to be responsible for political and economic administration, a naturally conservative function.

The upshot was military paralysis and renewed leftist violence. Revolutionary forces continued their attacks against the "small handful" (a task facilitated by the massive campaign organized by the Centre to

5. This is true, for instance, of the aforementioned Eight-Point Directive: the army was enjoined from using violence and yet was told to remove anti-Maoists from power at all costs. It was to side with the leftists, who were creating the disorders, but at the same time it was supposed to restore order.

6. For further analysis and exposition of the "January Revolution" and its sequel, see Bridgham, in *The China Quarterly*, No. 34, pp. 7–15; Charles Neuhauser, "The Impact of the Cultural Revolution on the Party Machine: Some Observations on a Revolution in Progress," *Asian Survey* (Berkeley, Calif.), Vol. 8, No. 6 (June 1968), pp. 465–488; Chalmers Johnson, "China: The Cultural Revolution in Structural Perspectives," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 1968), pp. 5–8; Neale Hunter, *Shanghai Journal* (New York: Praeger, 1969); and Evelyn Anderson, "Shanghai: The Masses Unleashed," *Problems of Communism* (Washington), Vol. 17, No. 1 (January–February 1968), pp. 12–21.

7. "Order of the Military Commission of the CCP Central Committee," 6 April 1967, in *Collection of Documents, Current Background*, No. 852 (6 May 1968), pp. 115–116.

criticize "China's Krushchev"),⁸ but they split into violently contending factions. Initiated in part to oust the "small number of capitalist roaders" from power at the Centre, the Cultural Revolution now became an ever-widening struggle for the spoils of power at all levels of the state. The local authorities who thereby came under attack struck back by allying with, and providing material incentives to, the more "conservative" of the revolutionary rebel factions among the workers. Their actions led in many places to violent repression against the Red Guard leftists. Finally, the revolutionary forces began to attack the army, verbally and physically, for carrying out their administrative and economic duties. Thus in the spring of 1967 and beyond, the level and extent of violence throughout China quickly escalated.⁹

It appears, in fact, that at least four Chinese provinces aside from Hupeh (of which Wuhan is the principal population centre) experienced a high degree of revolutionary turmoil in the months before July.¹⁰ In Honan, workers evidently were instigated to leave their jobs, the railway system was struck, and major incidents of bloodshed allegedly occurred in Chengchow.¹¹ In Yunnan, Provincial Party First Secretary Yen Hung-yin reportedly persecuted and arrested Red Guards and revolutionary rebels, mobilized the masses against them and sent them to labour reform camps.¹² Although Yen in early July committed suicide ("in the barracks of the army units vainly attempting to oppose Chairman Mao's revolutionary line"),¹³ local military backing for the more conservative of the two contending Red Guard factions was disfunctional enough to require Peking to send Hsieh Fu-chih, of the Central Committee, and Wang Li, member of the Cultural Revolution Small Group, to Kunming in early July to attempt to improve the situation. In Sinkiang, Wang En-mao so successfully defied Peking's wishes in carrying out the Cultural Revolution in his province to its satisfaction that on 25 February (after a period of extraordinary turmoil and subsequent negotiations with Wang) the

8. Party work conferences were reported to have been held on 14–18 March to discuss the "February adverse current" and on 27–28 March to consider the new movement to denounce Liu and Teng. See *Nihon Keizai* (Tokyo), 6 April 1967, and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 10 April 1967, as translated in *Daily Summary of the Japanese Press*, 8–10 April 1967, p. 11, and 11 April 1967, p. 13.

9. The Party Centre on 6 June issued an obviously unenforceable order prohibiting "armed struggle, assaults, destruction, pillage, house raids, and unauthorized arrest" (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 8 June 1967, translation in *Daily Summary of the Japanese Press*, 8 June 1967, p. 29). Although reports of bloody struggles mounted in every province, and although industrial (if not agricultural) production reportedly began to show significant declines, the army continued to be enjoined from using force to restore order (*Chieh-fang-chün pao* (*Liberation Army Daily*), editorial of 27 June 1967).

10. There was, to be sure, some degree of disorder in almost all Chinese provinces.

11. Radio Honan, 26 May and 1 June 1967; *Honan jih-pao*, 27 May 1967; *Erh-chi tung-hsin* (7 February Bulletin), 5 June 1967.

12. Radio Kunming, 29 July 1967; *Yunnan jih-pao*, 11 and 12 August 1967.

13. Radio Kweiyang, 13 July 1967; Radio Kunming, 13 July and 23 August 1967.

Central Committee reportedly announced the temporary suspension of the Cultural Revolution in Sinkiang.¹⁴ Disorder continued, however, in which "conservative" organizations set themselves against Red Guards, bridges were allegedly blown up and bloodshed rose to a new peak.¹⁵

In Szechwan, the question of whether Li Ching-ch'uan, Politburo member and for many years the primary authority in that province, should continue his activities came to a head in the late spring. Li's actions in supporting local military, worker and peasant groups against invading Red Guards had resulted, among other things, in the injury of 2,500 people in Chengtu, the seizure of arms by dissident groups in Chungking, fratricidal struggle among revolutionary rebels in a number of provincial cities and even reports of guerrilla warfare in the countryside.¹⁶ In May, the Central Committee issued the "Red Ten Articles"¹⁷ dismissing Li and appointing a Preparatory Group for a Szechwan Revolutionary Committee in his stead. However, Li's dismissal (and his replacement by Chang Kuo-hua, brought in from Tibet, and by Liang Hsing-ch'u, from Canton) did not lead to a cessation of violence, which continued into July and August.

The Central Committee was evidently divided (if we accept Bridgham's argument) on how to cope with the problem of provincial disorders, which was fast approaching the crisis stage. As in other situations wherein a division in the country at large caused a division (although not necessarily along the same lines) within the Party leadership, the method chosen for dealing with the problem was to dispatch investigative teams to ascertain the real situation and to mediate between the contending groups. By late June and early July two such teams (in Yunnan and Anhwei provinces) had managed to negotiate cooling-off agreements among the parties concerned. Had they been successful throughout the country, a new phase of relative moderation might have set in. At this point (by then, mid-July), however, the Wuhan Incident occurred.

The Wuhan Incident

The kidnapping on 20 July of the two Central Committee emissaries, Hsieh Fu-chih and Wang Li, by dissident worker and military units in Wuhan, forms the most spectacular of the events collectively known as

14. Radio Urumchi, 4, 10, 12 January; 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 18, 19 and 25 February; Prague Domestic Radio, 2 March; and Prague CTK International Service, 9 March; Belgrade Tanyug International Service, 23 February 1967.

15. Radio Urumchi, 9, 13, 19, 22, 30 March; 2, 3, 5, 12, 13, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 28 April; 2, 4, 5, 14, 20, 24 May; and 6, 10, 16, 24 and 25 June 1970.

16. Radio Kweiyang, 4 June 1967; and "Stalemate in Szechwan," *Current Scene* (Hong Kong), Vol. 6, No. 11 (1 July 1968).

17. "Decision of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Concerning the Question of Szechwan," 7 May 1967, in *Collection of Documents, in Current Background*, No. 852 (6 May 1968), pp. 128-130.

the Wuhan Incident. This was by no means an isolated event. Rather, it was the culmination of a long series of violent occurrences in the tri-city region dating as far back as early 1967.¹⁸ That more than spontaneous disorder was involved is shown by the fact that industrial workers went on strike in large numbers¹⁹ and that revolutionary rebel and Red Guard organizations were conducting internecine political struggles on a large scale.²⁰ If these developments were not enough in themselves to bring the situation to Peking's attention, interruption of railway service across the Yangtse was. The new bridge was closed several times: first around 10 June, then 17 June and, finally, from 14 to 22 July, when troops loyal

18. Thus, from February to mid-April, 300 persons were said to have been assassinated; from 19 April–3 June, there were reportedly more than 120 armed incidents in which over 700 were killed, wounded or disappeared; from 4–15 June, more than 500 suffered the same sorts of fates in more than 80 armed incidents; from 16–24 June, over 50 such incidents allegedly occurred, with 350 killed and 1,500 injured, while from 26–30 June, eight were killed and 25 seriously injured in six armed incidents. See *Sankei* (correspondent Shibata reporting), 29 September 1967, and *Mainichi Shimbun*, 24 and 30 July. Wuhan was one of the cities reportedly in turmoil during the "January Revolution" period.

19. Shibata reports that from 29 April to 3 June alone, over 2,400 factories and mines in the Wuhan area suspended production or dropped to less than half capacity, and that 50,000 workers were involved in armed incidents of one sort or another. *Chinese Communist Affairs* (Taipei), Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 8, reports the figure as 500,000 workers. *Mainichi Shimbun* on 24 July stated that Peking wall-posters said the Wuhan Iron and Steel Corporation had suspended production in mid-June and that "appeal teams" had been dispatched to Peking to explain the situation.

20. Ch'en Tsai-tao, Head of the Wuhan Military Region and the villain in the July events, was said to be suppressing and arresting revolutionary rebel organizations as early as January. More than 300 such organizations in Hupei Province (of which Wuhan is the major city) were termed counter-revolutionary between February and mid-April, and more than 10,000 people were arrested. In March, the One Million Warriors (Ch'en's) organization arrested more than 3,000 of its opponents and disbanded their organizations on the ground that they were being manipulated by counter-revolutionaries. Not all the punishment was being meted out by the "conservative" (as later judged by Peking) organizations, however: on 12 July, revolutionary rebels (later judged by Peking to be pro-Maoist) were said to have captured the heads of the Department of Military Operations, the Political Department and the General Staff of the Wuhan Military Region and confiscated their "secret codebooks" for maintaining contacts between Ch'en Tsai-tao and the One Million Warriors. In early June (possibly on the 12th), the One Million Warriors reportedly seized control of two large membership organizations, the "*San hsin*" ("Three News"), a Red Guard college student composite organization, and the "*San kang*" ("Three Steels"), a steelworkers' composite organization. As a result, the displaced leadership appealed to the Wuhan Military District and, when this was apparently rebuffed, to the central Military Affairs Committee and the Cultural Revolution Small Group. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967; *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5; *Facts and Features* (Taipei), Vol. 1, No. 14 (11 May 1968); *Mainichi Shimbun*, 30 June 1967; and *Union Research Service*, "The Wuhan Incident," Vol. 48, p. 141, a translation of parts of two Red Guard newspapers, the *Wuhan Iron and Steel Works Second Command News* and the *Chuchiang (Pearl River) Motion Picture Studio East-is-Red News* for 1 August 1967. These newspapers in turn report testimony of eyewitnesses and publish relevant documents. From 12 June onwards, the local army 8201 Unit sided openly with the One Million Warriors.

to Peking seized control back from Ch'en's forces.²¹ The crisis began on the 14th with the arrival from Kunming of a high-level Central investigative team, headed by Hsieh Fu-chih, Vice-Premier of the State Council and newly appointed Head of the Peking City Revolutionary Committee, and Wang Li, then member of Chiang Ch'ing's Cultural Revolution Small Group and deputy editor of the Central Committee's theoretical journal, *Hung-ch'i* (*Red Flag*).²² They immediately met with both sides and inspected the institutions involved.

It may be appropriate to speculate why Wuhan was in such turmoil in the first place and why a series of local incidents, violent and serious as they were, turned into a full-blown mutinous challenge to the Centre. Unfortunately, we have no documents from the now-defeated One Million Warrior organization or from any of the principals at the Wuhan Military Region District Headquarters. We do have the series of accusations against them, however, and we can use these, albeit with caution, to build up an image of the attitudes of Ch'en Tsai-tao; Wang Jen-chung, the former first Secretary of the Central Committee Central-South Bureau; Chung Han-hua, Second Political Commissar of the Wuhan Military District; and Niu Hai-lung, Division Commander of the 8201 Unit (the former Ninth Division of the public security forces).²³ As in other cases when events get out of hand and move in a direction that none of the contending parties initially desired, only an explanation composed of several elements will suffice as a first approximation. Perhaps several such elements can be identified. First, there is the obvious factor of competition among local Red Guard, revolutionary rebel, military, and Party units for power. Legitimacy would be established through demonstrating which was most loyal to Mao and most zealous in carrying out the Party Centre's policy. This competition took place in an atmosphere, purposely

21. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967; *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5; *Mainichi Shimbun*, 30 July 1967.

22. The Red Guard pamphlet translated by *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, lists Yu Li-chin of the army Cultural Revolution group as a member of the delegation. The group was accompanied by personal secretaries of the principal members and bodyguards.

23. These speculations are derived from the following: Fang Chun-kuei, "Realities of the Wuhan 'Anti-Party Revolt,'" *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (October 1967), pp. 7-16; "The Conspicuous Wuhan Incident," *Facts and Features*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1 May 1967), pp. 25-28; "The Wuhan Military Incident," *Chung-yang jih-pao* (*Central Daily News*) (Taipei), 29 January 1968, p. 1; "The Wuhan Incident," *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, pp. 138-150; *Sankei*, 29 September 1967; "Public Notice of the Wuhan Military Region of the People's Liberation Army," 26 July 1967, and "Criticism of the Report on the Wuhan Cadre Question of the Central Cultural Revolution Central-South Group," August 1967, both included in *Collection of Important Documents on the Communist Bandit Great Cultural Revolution* (in Chinese) (Intelligence Section of the Ministry of National Defence, Taipei), September 1968, pp. 165-169; "Heroes Rescue Kinsman from Tiger's Mouth," *Wuhan K'ang erh-szu* (*Wuhan Steel Second Headquarters*) (Canton), 8 September 1967, in *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 4095 (9 January 1968), pp. 6-19; and other sources noted below.

created by the Centre, of suspicion, purge, revolution from below for its own sake and intramural ideological enemies and spies presumed to exist everywhere. When officially sanctioned ripping away of the established political and social institutions of society was combined with the inability or unwillingness of the central military authorities to hold things together by force, it is easy to understand how anarchy at local levels was accelerated.

A second element, already noted, is *de facto* political and military autonomy at the regional, provincial and local levels. *De facto* local autonomy, however, tended more and more to become local autonomy as a right. It is difficult to understand why such slogans as “Down with Hsieh Fu-chih,” “Hang Wang Li,” and “Long Live Ch’en Tsai-tao” would have been permitted by the local authorities had they not assumed, by 20 July, that the autonomy they had experienced since the beginning of the year was by now their right. On the military side, we have mentioned the 6 April Military Affairs Committee directive forbidding local army units from interfering in revolutionary activities (a directive that, incidentally, Ch’en Tsai-tao openly flouted throughout the period before 20 July). Perhaps there was an additional directive, although we have no direct evidence, which in essence empowered regional military commanders to make their own arrangements for local security. It is otherwise difficult to explain why Ch’en so blatantly suppressed many of the Red Guard and revolutionary rebel organizations in Wuhan.

Other elements must be added to these two factors. One concerns the sociological and economic composition of the contending parties. On one side were grouped representatives of those organs and institutions that had the most to lose from a revolutionary purge from below: the military high command, the city government, the public security apparatus, the courts and the senior workers. Thus, the One Million Warriors organization was allegedly composed of workers *and employers*, government cadres and militia, while the *Kung chien fa* organization consisted of cadres in the public security apparatus, the procuracy and the courts. It seems probable that a majority of the workers in the tri-city were members of the One Million Warriors: not only did the other side consist mostly of non-workers (in an industrial city, they must have therefore been in the minority), but the workers probably thought that widespread imposition of the Maoist economic programme would lead both to a new “Leap Forward” syndrome in the economy, with its attendant emphasis on ideological and coercive, but not economic, incentives, and to interruptions in production that could only lower their material gains. At the military level, the leadership seems to have been composed of those who operated at a high level and had been in their posts for a lengthy period of time.²⁴ Attacks against the “small handful of Party powerholders pur-

24. Thus, Ch’en Tsai-tao had held positions in the Central-South area for over a decade, while his deputies, Yang Hsiu-shan, Yao Che, Tang Chin-lung and Niu Hai-lung, had been there since the early 1960s, as had Chung Han-hua, Second Political Commissar of the Wuhan Military Region. Wan Jen-chung, the leading

suing the capitalist road" could only be directed against them. On the other side were ranged a much younger group, composed mostly of Red Guards (*i.e.*, students) and some workers. Thus, the "*San kang*" was an organization of workers at the Wuhan Iron and Steel Company, the "*San hsin*" was made up of university Red Guard organizations, and the "*San lien*" ("Third Association," a contraction of "*San-szu ko-lien*," "Third Headquarters Revolutionary Association") was composed of representatives of middle-school Red Guards in Wuhan. These appear to have been supported by outside Red Guard forces sent from Peking, such as the "Southbound Revolutionary Rebel Brigade of the Capital," the Wuhan Liaison Centre of the East-Is-Red General Command of the Peking Mining and Industrial College and the Red Flag Warriors *Ching kang shan* of the Peking Aviation College. Although they numbered over 400,000, these Red Guard groups were definitely in the minority. They had nothing to lose and everything to gain from Peking-sponsored revolution from below. Away from the centre of power, however, local revolutionary groups found that minority-based power seizure from the bottom up was difficult, if not impossible; that the chief product of their efforts was to unite the majority against them; that they risked and often suffered disastrous defeat; and that, therefore, the only recourse was to appeal to Peking for even more support. As Wuhan shows, that support could come only when the strength of the opposing forces had grown to extreme proportions.

A fourth element, akin to the differences in composition of the disputants and to the problem of relative autonomy, concerns the question of the allegedly overt nature of the opposition to the Peking regime. The official Maoist line, of course, was that anyone perceived to be in opposition to the policy line was *ipso facto* a member of an organized faction within the Party "taking the capitalist path" and adhering to the leadership provided by Liu Shao-ch'i and his close associates. Thus, Ch'en Tsai-tao, Wang Jen-chung and their cohorts were quickly branded (after 20 July to be sure) as the "agents in Wuhan of China's Khrushchev." While little credence should probably be given to this thesis (no confirming evidence is at hand and its self-serving purposes are clear), two variants, one less and the other more likely, are of greater interest. One is the Ho Lung thesis. Its essence is that, throughout Chinese Communist history and especially since 1949, there has been a kind of regionalism among "Field Army Systems," that there has been surprisingly little movement from one such system to another, that each system has developed intrasystemic loyalties, that the Peking regime has ruled the country partly through these systems and over the systems themselves by perpetuating the balance among them established in 1949, and that each system can be identified with a particular senior-level military figure.

political figure in the area and, according to Peking's later allegations, one of those behind Ch'en Tsai-tao, was not only a native of the region (although not of Wuhan itself) but also had held posts in the Central-South area since 1949.

Thus, in the Wuhan Military Region, Liu Po-ch'eng is the person in question, and the Second Field Army System is in control.²⁵ This would seem to indicate no particular problems, since Ho Lung's First Field Army System is located for the most part in North-West China and not in the Wuhan Military District. But, so the argument goes, Ho Lung did attempt a *coup d'état* against Peking in February 1966, which, after it was quashed, set the Maoist leadership on edge, looking for remnants of Ho's co-conspirators around the country. In Wuhan, significant elements were in fact loyal to Ho and may have played a part in helping him (or his unnamed successors) to take revenge upon Peking. Thus, the division-size Unit 8201, which formed the principal force in Wuhan opposing Peking on 20 July and after, was said to be loyal to Ho Lung, and Yang Hsiu-shan, Yao Che and Tang Chin-lung, Ch'en Tsai-tao's subordinates, were said to be Ho's men.²⁶ Ch'en himself might be listed tentatively as one of Ho's men, since he first was a member of Hsu Hsiang-ch'ien's original Second Field Army in 1931, which later was led by Ho.²⁷ Even though Ch'en may not have intended to side with Ho Lung's "group," Peking may have imagined such a conspiracy, given the history of the rebelling units and their leaders.²⁸ Local leaders, knowing this conspiratorial predisposition upon the part of the political centre, may have reacted over-defensively.²⁹

A more likely variant of this thesis is that Ch'en Tsai-tao considered himself a "Lin Piao man," that Ch'en felt that Lin trusted him because of their personal contact over many years.³⁰ Hence, Ch'en possibly felt Lin would feel the situation in Wuhan to be in good hands (thus, when Lin failed to interfere when Ch'en began repressing local Red Guard groups in the first half of 1967, Ch'en may have concluded that Lin was giving tacit approval to his acts). Ch'en may have therefore felt he had a relatively free hand throughout the Wuhan Military District to do as he

25. For an elaboration of this thesis, long held to be true by Nationalist Chinese military scholars, see William Whitson, "The Field Army in Chinese Communist Military Politics," *The China Quarterly*, No. 37 (January-March 1969), pp. 1-30.

26. Fang Chun-kuei, "Realities," *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5, pp. 14-15.

27. Ch'en later became a Regiment Commander of Lin Piao's 115th Division, which marked him as a Lin Piao man. Since then he generally was regarded as one of Lin's entourage. This variant of the conspiratorial thesis is discussed below.

28. The Peking correspondent of *Yomiuri Shimbun* copied a Red Guard poster of 20 January 1967, of the Tsing Hua University, purporting to list the organization chart of the Ho Lung Group.

29. As for Niu Hai-lung, the Unit 8201 Commander who reacted so emotionally to Hsieh Fu-chih's and Wang Li's presence, no information seems to be available.

30. While Ch'en's earlier career had been spent largely in the military precursors of the Second Field Army, after 1950 he was a member of the Central-South Military Administrative Committee, under Lin Piao's chairmanship, and commanded troops within the Fourth (Lin's) Field Army area as the Army's third deputy commander. From 1955, he was Commander of the Wuhan Military District. See Huang Chen-hsia, *Chung-kuo chün-jen chih* (Hong Kong: Research Institute of Contemporary History, 1968), pp. 343-344.

wished and that, should the worst come to the worst, he could deal with Lin directly and personally instead of through such State Council-Cultural Revolution Small Group emissaries as Hsieh and Wang. Hence, he elected to question both their credentials and the veracity of their charges.

While some or all of the above factors may hold some truth, it is impossible to explain the Wuhan events without a final factor, a combination of fatalism and the human propensity to misinterpret the signals of others. Both Centre and locality worked themselves into corners, as we shall see, from which they found it difficult to extricate themselves. Thus, for instance, by 20 July Ch'en Tsai-tao and Wang Jen-chung had invested too much in their support of the One Million Warriors and their repression of the Peking-oriented Red Guard-revolutionary rebel organizations. They could scarcely retreat gracefully before Chou En-lai's four-point order (detailed below) read out by Hsieh and Wang. Ch'en had to prove he was right and thus had no choice but to impugn the credentials of the central emissaries and appeal over their heads to Lin and Mao. Peking then learned that two of their chosen representatives were being held captive by a local military man who showed all signs of the old warlord style. Finding also that a direct slap in the face had been handed to Chou En-lai himself, and that military units were in direct mutiny, Peking probably felt it had no choice but to intervene militarily to make an example of that sort of behaviour. With communications broken and lines of combat drawn tight, the battle began in earnest and continued to the very end.

Having thus attempted to present a range of explanations for the outbreak of the Wuhan Incident, let us detail the actual train of events. As we have stated, Hsieh Fu-chih and Wang Li arrived in Wuhan on 14 July, on the continuation of an investigative mission that had already taken them to Yunnan, Szechwan and Honan provinces.³¹ Chou En-lai was already in Wuhan, "settling armed disputes."³² On the 14th, Chou spoke at the Headquarters of the Wuhan Military District, outlining in four points his terms of settlement:

- (1) The *San kang* and *San hsin* are the "correct" (i.e., Maoist-approved) revolutionary rebel and Red Guard organizations;
- (2) The Military District (i.e., Ch'en Tsai-tao) was mistaken, in both direction and line, in supporting the One Million Warrior organization;
- (3) The General Workers Council Headquarters (the leadership of the *San kang*, *San hsin* and *San lien*) "must have its honor restored";

31. *Mainichi Shimbun*, 30 July 1967. This report had them arriving on the 16th. However, all other sources agree that it was the 14th. The Japanese correspondents' reports are based on their reading of usually unidentified Red Guard posters in Peking. Where possible, confirmation has been made by reference to available Red Guard publications.

32. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967. Shibata's report is derived from a reading of Peking wall-posters and newspapers during the July–August period. Unfortunately, with the exception of *Jen-min jih-pao* (*People's Daily*), he does not cite his sources precisely.

(4) The One Million Warriors is a conservative organization and the *San-szu* (an organization of three workers' groups) tends to be conservative.³³

Chou departed for Peking, leaving Hsieh and Wang to iron out the details. The two emissaries immediately called on both sides in the dispute, but did not hide their sympathies for the Red Guard-revolutionary rebel minority. They encouraged the local Red Guards at Hupeh University, expressed support for the *San kang*, *San hsin* and *San lien* and wanted to "reverse the verdict" in the so-called *Kung cheng* case (a revolutionary rebel headquarters in Wuhan disbanded by Ch'en).³⁴ Ch'en Tsai-tao reportedly became angry at this (he probably thought Hsieh and Wang had prejudged the situation) and threatened to have the One Million Warriors cut off the water, transit and power in the city if the *Kung cheng* case were indeed reversed. As if to demonstrate what power he held over the fate of non-co-operating Red Guards, Ch'en reportedly supported a sanguinary suppression of the "Ninth Rebel" Commune by the One Million Warriors.³⁵

Hsieh and Wang spent the next few days, from the 15th to the 18th, inspecting the situation and expressing their support for the pro-Maoist groups.³⁶ Tension in the city was apparently rising, however, for during demonstrations on the 15th by rebel factions welcoming Hsieh and Wang, the One Million Warriors carried out an ambush, throwing stones and surrounding and beating up Red Guards of the Central China Technical College. Eight were allegedly killed and "scores" injured.³⁷

By the 19th, Hsieh and Wang had evidently seen enough to arrive at some conclusions. Chou apparently approved their report and authorized them to read out the verdict to both sides. After meeting with the rebel factions, they called a meeting in the evening at the Military District Headquarters, to be attended by all top leaders in the area. The gist of the report was essentially equivalent to Chou's earlier four-point statement: The Military District was mistaken, the One Million Warriors was

33. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967, and *Union Research Institute*, Vol. 48, p. 142. The latter source reports that Yang Ch'eng-wu, then acting Chief of the General Staff of the Army and other leading Central officials also delivered reports at the Regional Headquarters. Ch'en confronted with this array of authority, was reported to have said, "We will carry out your instructions [as] if they were signed by Chairman Mao personally."

34. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967; *Facts and Features*, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 7; and *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 6.

35. *Sankei*, 18 July 1967.

36. Thus, on the 15th, they met representatives of the Central China Technical College, presenting arm bands and badges; paid three separate visits to the Wuhan Iron and Steel Company Second Command on the 15th, 16th and 17th; met on the 17th with leaders of the Workers General Council and the 13 September Red Guard group; and on the 18th met "until night" with various rebel organizations. They also participated in street demonstrations by the rebel organizations and witnessed a swim in the Yangtse of several thousand Red Guards celebrating the first anniversary of Mao's own natatory feat.

37. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967.

indeed a “conservative” organization, the *Kung cheng* case must in fact be reversed, and the “Three Commands” (*San lien*, *San hsin* and *San kang*) were to be recognized as genuine revolutionary rebel groups.³⁸ At this point, Niu Hai-lung, Commander of the 8201 Unit, became incensed, jumped up, announced his opposition to the four points, shouted “I am prepared to risk my life!” and stormed out of the meeting. Together with Ch'en Tsai-tao and the local Party secretaries of the Tung hu (East Lake) district of Hankow, Niu mobilized his troops and a large number of the One Million Warriors converged on the Tung hu Hotel where Hsieh and Wang had now returned, and, despite the presence of a guard platoon of the loyalist 8199 Unit, from 9 p.m. on laid siege to the building. By early morning (about 1 a.m.) of the 20th, the district was sealed off and soldiers of the 8201 were patrolling the streets and had placed machine guns on buildings.³⁹

At this point, Ch'en Tsai-tao appeared at the hotel, confronted Hsieh and Wang, and said that the workers were now beyond his own control, that there was nothing that he could do for them and that they would have to cope with the workers as best they could. Although Hsieh and Wang apparently tried to reason with the workers, the latter, together with Niu's troops, stormed the hotel, broke into the rooms where the two were staying (overpowering their Peking Aviation College bodyguards and reportedly stabbing to death Hsieh's personal secretary), separated Hsieh from Wang, tied up Wang and proceeded to kick and beat him. Wang was then taken to the District Military Headquarters and subjected to further manhandling until 3 p.m. of the next afternoon. He was bruised, one eye was said to be swollen, at one point a clump of his hair was pulled out and his left leg broken. Hsieh himself was also said to have been beaten, but only initially in his hotel room. Hsieh tried to rescue Wang from his captors by driving after Wang's car, but when stopped by roadblocks and threatened by workers, reportedly escaped towards the Hydroelectric Institute, pursued by workers armed with swords and spears. Hearing that Wang had been taken to Military Headquarters, however, he elected to go there, where he was immediately placed under guard, together with Wang.⁴⁰

In the city itself, the One Million Warriors and the 8201 Unit were in full control. They replaced the regular guards at the District Military Headquarters, sealed off the area, blocked traffic from the bridges over

38. *Sankei*, 20 July and 29 September; *Mainichi Shimbun*, 30 July 1967; *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48; *Facts and Features*, Vol. I, No. 4; and *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5.

39. Reportedly Ch'en had at his disposal in the local area more than 400 trucks, 30 fire engines and many motorcycles and armoured cars. The men of the 8201 Unit put on the armbands of the One Million Warriors to show their solidarity.

40. This is a summary of the principal sources noted above, with the addition of “The Appalling July Mutiny,” *Wuhan Kang-erh-szu*, Huichow edition, No. 38 (22 August 1967) translated in *Joint Publications Research Service*, No. 44, 241 (Washington) 5 February 1968 (*Communist China Digest*, No. 194), p. 124.

the Yangtse and Han Rivers (thus isolating the opposition in the three portions of the tri-city), seized the railway stations, the radio station and the airport and garrisoned strong points throughout the city. The workers' organization proceeded to carry out forays against the Red Guards, to set fire to schools and to kill and injure those who chose to oppose them. The proceedings in Wuhan reportedly affected the surrounding areas, where demonstrations against Chou, Hsieh and Wang, and in favour of Ch'en, were held in a number of rural towns. In order to justify these actions, the One Million Warriors, the "Third Headquarters" and the 8201 Unit issued an "Urgent Notice," claiming that the *Kung cheng* organization was a counter-revolutionary group that must be destroyed; that the Revolutionary Rebel Workers General Headquarters, the Second Command and the *San hsin* groups must be suppressed; that the One Million Warriors was itself a genuine revolutionary organization; and that their actions were taken for the purpose of holding high the banner of Mao's thought.⁴¹

News of these events evidently first reached Peking shortly after Wang and Hsieh were abducted (*i.e.*, sometime after 4.30 a.m.). Reaction was immediate. On the one hand, the Military Affairs Committee, through Yang Ch'eng-wu, reportedly ordered Ch'en to release Hsieh and Wang and to escort them to Peking, condemned the actions of the 8201 Unit, ordered the 8191 Airborne Division (already in the Wuhan area) and the 15th Army from Hsiao-kan (Hupeh Province) into action against Ch'en's forces and dispatched five gunboats of the East Sea Fleet up the river to Wuhan.⁴² From this point onward, what had been a political dispute with military overtones became a direct military confrontation between Centre and region. On the other hand, Chou himself left Peking by plane for Wuhan, apparently as part of Peking's plan to bring Hsieh, Wang and Ch'en back to the capital. Two planes were said to have flown towards Wuhan, one carrying Chou and the other for the purpose of taking back Hsieh and Wang. Ch'en apparently knew of Chou's imminent arrival (probably as a part of the Military Affairs Committee order communicated to him), and proceeded to surround the Wuhan airport with trucks full of One Million Warrior workers. But Chou, "in top secrecy," contacted the Air Force in Wuhan, which, being loyal to Peking and not to Ch'en, informed Chou of the possible plan to kidnap him also. Chou's planes therefore set down at another airport south of the city and the plan was foiled. Immediately upon arriving, Chou ordered the Military District to release Wang.

Meanwhile, Wang had been trying to effectuate his own release. He talked his guards into coming over to his side, and the Political Commis-

41. *Facts and Features*, Vol. I, No. 4, p. 27, and *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, p. 147. The latter source claims that the declaration was issued on 21 July and, in fact, there may have been more than one such statement. We have treated them as if they were only one document, since we lack further information.

42. *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 9; *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, p. 148; *Sankei*, 29 September 1967.

sar of the 8201 Unit seeing this and confronted with Chou's orders, agreed to move Wang away from the Military Headquarters and the One Million Warriors to Lo-chia-shan, outside the city. The Warriors evidently discovered that Wang had been moved and went in pursuit, with the result that Wang and the Division Political Commissar reportedly spent the night of the 20th–21st hiding near Red Mountain, the 8201 Unit area around Lo-chia-shan. On the morning of the 21st, he co-operated in a ruse that freed him from the 8201 cordon and by late afternoon he had successfully reached Chou's airport. Hsieh Fu-chih apparently reached the airport independently of Wang. Seeing that his two colleagues were safe (the airport was probably by now garrisoned by the intervening army troops), Chou flew back to Peking to arrange their reception. Hsieh and Wang flew back on the afternoon of the 22nd.⁴³ Thus ended the kidnapping episode.

The military phase, however, was about to begin. The major concern of this article, apart from relating the events of the struggle, is the duration of local resistance. On the basis of the sources at hand, it would seem that the One Million Warriors and the 8201 Unit resisted much longer than has previously been thought. There certainly was some resistance as late as the first week in August, for the insurgents had enough strength to stage a counter-attack at that time before finally being beaten. Government operations began, as we have noted, as soon as Peking received notification of Niu Hai-lung's and Ch'en Tsai-tao's insubordination. Lin Piao evidently considered the situation serious enough for him to fly to the scene of action, arriving in the area on the 21st and reporting on the situation to the loyalist forces there.⁴⁴ Lin then apparently put Yü Li-chin, Political Commissar of the Air Force, in command of the operation who, with Liu Feng, Deputy Commander of the Air Force and leader of the 8190 Airborne Division, proceeded to invest the city. Participating, aside from the 8190, were the 8199 Unit (possibly another airborne division), the 15th Army (which, if fully activated, could have been as many as six divisions) and ships from the East Sea Fleet (reportedly numbering from five to 12 vessels).⁴⁵ The airborne divisions apparently were used because they could be brought to the scene rapidly, while the ships and the 15th Army would have to enter the fray later, given their slower speeds.

Sources disagree as to when the loyalist forces actually first invested

43. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967, and *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 9. It is not clear whether at this time Ch'en also returned to Peking. He was definitely in the city from the 26th onwards, and there is no report of his presence in Wuhan after 20 July.

44. *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, p. 149; *Mainichi Shimbun*, 20 July 1967. The *Mainichi Shimbun*, quoting unspecified Red Guard posters in Peking, reported on 23 September 1967 that both Lin and Mao Tse-tung had gone to Wuhan on 21 July.

45. *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, p. 148; *Mainichi Shimbun*, 30 July 1967; *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 9; *Sankei*, 29 September 1967. It is not clear whether one or two airborne divisions were used: some sources may have confused the 8199 and the 8190.

Wuhan; some say as early as the 21st (this would be consistent with Hsieh Fu-chih's and Wang Li's safe escape to Peking),⁴⁶ others as late as the 24th. Probably they arrived at different times and were thrown into action differentially. In any case, paratroops of the 8190 Unit seized the Yangtse Bridge, entered the city and liberated the communication facilities from rebel hands, disarming the One Million Warriors as they proceeded. Other troops were said to parachute down upon the Central China Technical College and Hupeh University. Evidently by the 24th large areas of the city were under governmental control: 8199 Unit personnel protected the Red Guard-revolutionary rebel units loyal to Peking⁴⁷ and the fleet by this time had trained its guns on the rebel-held part of the town.

Our sources also tend to contradict each other as to when military operations ceased. On the one hand, correspondent Shibata, writing in September in *Sankei*, says that:

The 8201 Independent Division, when faced with overwhelming military strength, hardly put up any resistance, and was quickly disarmed. The "conservative" One Million Warriors organization was also disarmed in about 12 hours. Weapons seized from the One Million Warriors organization filled 30 trucks. The leaders and ringleaders of the 8201 Division and the One Million Warriors organization . . . were arrested one after the other and were taken to Peking.

And on the 26th, the Wuhan Military Region command, now apparently reconstituted to suit Peking, issued a "Public Notice" admitting their past sins and pledging to be good in the future.⁴⁸

But on the other hand, there is much evidence, both direct and indirect, to indicate that the battle was hardly over. Careful reading of the documents indicates that some level of conflict continued until at least

46. Peking wall-posters on the 21st were quoted as saying that the 19th Army Division rescued Wang Li on that day.

47. Including the Headquarters of the Wuhan Iron and Steel Company Second Command, the Wuhan Academy of Water Conservancy and Electric Power, the New Wuhan University, the Red Wuhan Academy of Surveying and Cartography, the New Wuhan Academy of Technology and the New Central China Academy of Technology, in addition to the two institutions already noted, *Union Research Service*, Vol. 48, p. 148.

48. The Public Notice was essentially the Military Headquarters' assent to Chou's four points enunciated on the 14th and, through Wang Li, again on the 19th. It said, in part:

(1) We are resolutely determined to draw a clear line between Ch'en Tsai-tao and ourselves and to beat him down; (2) Our cadres have committed mistakes in orientation and line; (3) We shall allow the Workers' General Headquarters to restore its name and reputation, support its revolutionary activities, and actively help it restore its great revolutionary column;

(4) We will resolutely support the proletarian Revolutionary Rebels of the Headquarters of Steelworkers, the Second Command of the Steelworkers, the 13 September Group of Steelworkers, the Revolutionary United Command of the Third Command, the New China Engineering College, New Hupeh University, and the New China Agricultural College (NCNA, 28 July 1967).

4 August, *i.e.*, half a month after the rebellion first began. While it is probably true that the loyalist army forces deliberately eschewed using all the force at their disposal in order to lessen casualties, it also seems to be the case that most of the Wuhan population continued until a very late date to side with the insurgents. A summary of the evidence may support this conclusion. On 24 July, New China News Agency (NCNA) announced that only some of the masses who had participated in the “conservative” organizations had withdrawn from them by the 23rd. The Red Guard pamphlet of 1 August (translated by *Union Research Service* and referred to above) stated that “Wuhan’s old T’an” *i.e.*, Ch’en Tsai-tao (the reference being to T’an Chen-lin, by then an acknowledged renegade) and the One Million Warriors on the 23rd “hastily built up defenses to fight the People’s Liberation Army in further resistance.” On the 26th, NCNA, reporting a *Chieh-fang-chün pao* (*Liberation Army Daily*) editorial, admitted that the One Million Warriors still disposed of considerable strength, that rumours of their activities had enhanced their popularity, and that some in the army were still siding with the rebels. The *People’s Daily* on the same day indirectly admitted that the rumours (whatever their nature) spread by the insurgents were effective and stated that “the masses who were once hoodwinked will certainly awake and . . . rise up and rebel . . .,” while speakers at mammoth rallies in Peking the previous day held out the hope that the insurgent leadership in Wuhan “will be overthrown,” that the masses “will come to their senses,” and that the army “will score a victory.”⁴⁹

On 27 July, the four top political organs, the Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Affairs Committee and the Cultural Revolution Small Group (*i.e.*, Mao, Chou, Lin and Chiang Ch’ing) found it necessary to address a public letter to the “broad masses of PLA commanders and fighters of Wuhan,” expressing support in the struggle calling for the overthrow of the insurgents, requesting that the army attempt to integrate itself more closely with the population (“support the Army and cherish the People”), and outlawing revenge upon the “hoodwinked” former members of the opposition who had either come over to the Government side or who had been captured by them.⁵⁰ And while the August Red Guard pamphlet stated that by the 27th, 1,000 of the 8201 Unit had come over to the Government side, on the same day the East China Sea Fleet was still at Wuhan and found it necessary to send out a “request” to the One Million Warriors to lay down their arms.⁵¹ A *People’s Daily* editorial on the 28th stated that “a hard struggle” had

49. NCNA, 25 July 1967.

50. *Chinese Communist Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 5, p. 13. Essentially the same message was contained in two editorials in *Liberation Army Daily* of the same day (as reported by NCNA), the second of which stated, in part, that “the proletarian revolutionaries *will* be able to win victory in Wuhan. The hoodwinked masses *will surely* come to their senses. . . .” (my italics).

51. *Tokyo Shimbun*, 4 August 1967.

been waged “in the last few days,” but that while the enemy was isolated *politically*, he was not reconciled to defeat and was “stubbornly resisting, creating rumours, and trying new tricks.” The *Liberation Army Daily*, too, admitted that the battle was still going on, that it was just then “at the critical juncture,” and that although the “hoodwinked masses” of the One Million Warriors were rapidly awakening and withdrawing “in groups,” nonetheless the insurgent leadership was persisting in the resistance, and was still “suppressing, terrorizing, cheating, deceiving, coercing and poisoning the masses.”⁵² It is difficult on the basis of official Peking sources alone to conclude decisively that fierce battles were being fought on each of these days in Wuhan. It does seem clear, however, that even if the level of violence varied from day to day and even if the Government forces were deliberately scaling down their activities to avoid casualties and destruction, the majority of the local population still held out against the investing forces, while, for their part, the local Maoists tended to wreak retribution upon those who came over to their side. It is otherwise difficult to explain Peking’s constant preoccupation with hopes that the still-deceived masses would come back and with warnings that returnees must be given another chance.⁵³

It seems clear that some sort of talk-while-fighting situation had emerged by the 28th; both sides had something with which to hurt the other (the insurgents could hold out the threat of a permanently alienated population, a city ruined together with its industry, and high casualties on both sides; the loyalists could point to the prospect of certain victory for their side, as well as high casualties). It is probable that the insurgents hoped for a negotiated, forgive-and-forget solution, while the loyalists hoped that the passage of time, the preponderance of forces against them, and their propaganda would combine gradually to drive rebel leader and follower apart, isolating the former. It also seems clear, however, that Peking succeeded only slowly and with difficulty in having its way. A review of the evidence may support these conclusions. On 29 July Peking media⁵⁴ spoke of the struggle “moving into a new stage” and “laying out battlefields along both banks of the Yangtse, and in urban and rural areas.” At the same time, Peking admitted to “mistakes” and “shortcomings” because of “lack of experience” and “because the revolution under the proletarian dictatorship is not well understood.” This obviously indicates that the military battle was far from won, that

52. Substantially the same set of comments was contained in an NCNA dispatch the same day.

53. For instance, the *Liberation Army Daily*, cited above, said: “For some who have taken the wrong path because of an inadequate understanding of the struggle, it will be difficult to about-face suddenly. Others may worry about the masses not trusting them. We should carry out penetrating and delicate political and ideological work among the hoodwinked masses. The enemies are not yet completely destroyed; they are still putting up a desperate struggle. The proletarian revolutionaries should be united more properly in order to concentrate their efforts in hitting hard at the enemy.”

54. *People’s Daily* editorial; and *Liberation Army Daily* editorial, for that day.

the local population was not convinced by Peking's blandishments, and that the leftists had mistreated those who had already chosen to surrender. The two sides were obviously facing each other at gunpoint; thus, Peking could only hope that "so soon as the hoodwinked masses make close contact" with the revolutionaries, they will come together ideologically, and it could only declare that the "struggle is still very arduous."

As for the "agents in Wuhan of China's Khrushchev" (as they were now called), they were resorting to desperate and not totally unsuccessful tactics. They were said to resort to "kid glove tactics" (negotiations?), "disintegrating the ranks of the revolutionary front" (gaining adherents or dividing the leftists?), "scheming, creating rumours, and provoking misunderstandings." That they were achieving some success is shown by Peking's admission that "it is only normal for various differences or contradictions to exist among the various revolutionary mass organizations during the struggle."⁵⁵ A change in the situation seems to have come about just at that time, however, for Peking's line suddenly became much harder. A *Red Flag* editorial of that same day stressed punishment of the criminals, and stated that the "handful . . . have been dragged out" and the "conspiracy . . . has been frustrated." The *Liberation Army Daily* stated that the One Million Warrior organization "is rapidly disintegrating" and that the hoodwinked masses *have* hit back and come over to the Maoist side. A second editorial in the same newspaper on the same day, moreover, said that the proletarian revolutionaries "*have*" achieved victory (my emphasis), since at the crucial moment the army and the masses coalesced. That the battle was indeed a military one is indicated by two different sources. On the one hand, a Singapore report, quoting travellers to Hong Kong, stated that thousands of refugees from Wuhan were flooding into Canton, crowding the streets and railway stations and causing a breakdown in train services. The service to Hong Kong was disrupted, as refugees attempted to board trains but were pulled off by soldiers. On the other hand, the General Command of the Proletarian Revolutionaries in Wuhan issued an "Urgent Notice" stating that the "evil chieftains" in the local party and military had caused the One Million Warriors and the *Kung chien fa* organizations to launch a "frenzied counter-attack" against the leftists. The latter, however, had "defeated" the attack, with the assistance of the army. Further, a joint letter (not released to the public) was said to have been sent to the local Maoists by the Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Affairs Committee and the Cultural Revolution Group, giving "important instructions"; and the letter was stated to have been received just at the "victorious conclusion" of the battle.⁵⁶ Finally, from now on, the slogan "grasp revolution and promote production" reappears in official propaganda concerned with Wuhan-related matters. This would seem to indi-

55. *People's Daily* editorial, 30 July 1967.

56. *People's Daily* editorial, 2 August 1967.

cate that the loyalists were back in control of at least some portions of the city that contained industrial plants.⁵⁷

Even then, however, things were not yet over. Peking continued to use the same July phraseology. The proletarian revolutionaries and the army in Wuhan were now said to be united and “*are becoming braver as they fight*,” while the “hoodwinked masses *are awakening* and turning their spear around” (my emphasis). Although the situation was said to be “steadily improving,” the opposition was still pictured as capable of spreading rumours, smearing the loyalists, causing dissension among the revolutionaries and causing misunderstandings to arise between the army and the people.⁵⁸ A *Hupei Daily* editorial of 3 August (quoted by NCNA) stated that the One Million Warriors “are collapsing,” that the revolutionaries in Wuhan “*will gain their victory today*” (my emphasis), that the “small handful have yet to be totally dragged down and thoroughly discredited” and that they “are still resisting stubbornly and playing tricks.” The editorial went on to stress that “at this critical juncture, even the slightest display of arrogance or complacency would result in an unrecoverable loss to us.” While the meaning of the last phrase is unclear, the *Liberation Army Daily* on the same day did speak of the possibility that there was sabotage of production in Wuhan. Apparently, some of the One Million Warriors who had been put back to work by the Maoists were not reconciled to their fate and were taking revenge upon the leftists through this means.

By 4 August, however, the situation began to improve as far as the Peking-oriented revolutionaries were concerned. While the *People's Daily* the day before had spoken of covert and malicious tactics used by the “handful” to divide the people from the army, and while NCNA on the 4th also referred to such devices as “creating confusion, dispatching fire engines, tailing and surveillance,” Peking also revealed that the *Kung chien fa* “in the past few days” began to “turn around . . . and are now returning . . . resolutely and in great numbers.” The revolutionary forces were also said to broaden their numbers “day after day” and the “conservative and reactionary forces” were reportedly disintegrating. As an indicator of the trend (even then it could be called no more than that), the New China Engineering College at Tsao Yang San outside Wuhan formed a revolutionary committee, the first such in Hupei Province.⁵⁹

57. This slogan, which was generally associated with Chou En-lai, is the first indication that Chou was still involved with the local situation (aside from the fact that he signed the State Council letters to Wuhan). A further indication, however, comes from the wording of one of the sentences of the Wuhan “Urgent Notice.” If the insurgent leaders would not return of their own volition to the fold, then they were to be punished “according to law and with the active assistance of the departments concerned.” The relative moderation in tone of this phrase, together with the obscurity of language, seems to indicate Chou’s hand.

58. *Liberation Army Daily*, 2 August 1967. The same source stressed the *emerging* unity between army and people.

59. Wuhan City Radio, 5 August 1967. At the rally were Tseng Szu-yü, newly appointed Commander of the People’s Liberation Army in the Wuhan Military

On 8 August, a *People's Daily* article said that the "handful of class enemies" (which is what they had by now become) had been "completely wiped out" and that the proletariat had "swept away the dark clouds over Wuhan."⁶⁰ It remained for Mao himself to pronounce, reportedly around 21 August, that the situation in Wuhan was "settled."⁶¹

Meanwhile, in Peking the central authorities had taken steps to restore popular confidence in Mao's authority to deal with such regional rebellions as Wuhan, to punish the culprits for their crimes and to replace the discredited local leadership with people of unquestioned loyalty. Chou En-lai attempted to attain the first goal by rolling out the red carpet for the return of the kidnapped officials, Hsieh and Wang, and by following this up with an ostentatious display of public support for the Wuhan loyalists through massive demonstrations. He had returned on the 21st to make arrangements for the reception of the two, who arrived in Peking in the second plane on the evening of the 22nd. Chou led the delegation to the airport, which included, among others, Ch'en Po-ta, Chiang Ch'ing, and K'ang Sheng. Large-scale demonstrations were scheduled along the route into the city.⁶² Mammoth demonstrations celebrating the return of the two continued all the next day and soon turned into rallies supporting the local Maoists in Wuhan.⁶³ These demonstrations reached their peak on the afternoon of the 25th, when one million persons were said to have paraded in *Tien-an men* square. On the podium stood the entire central leadership, less only Mao himself.⁶⁴

Region, replacing Ch'en Tsai-tao; Liu Feng, Political Commissar of the PLA in Wuhan, another new appointee, and Chang Ching, Commander of the 8199 Unit.

60. That article, by Jen Li-hsin, contained the most complete catalogue of methods alleged to be used by the Wuhan insurgents: beating, smashing, looting, confiscating, making arrests, attacking revolutionaries, assaulting mass revolutionary organizations, sabotaging the proletarian dictatorship and extensive democracy under the proletarian dictatorship, sabotaging production, fabricating rumours, hoodwinking the masses, stepping "out before the masses collectively" and "stepping out before the masses with signatures." Although this list was set out for the purpose of vilifying the now-defeated insurgent leadership, its contents reveal both the mass character and the popular nature of the uprising against Peking.

The same article revealed that at least half of the problem in Wuhan concerned dissension within the revolutionary ranks themselves. The following sins were listed: running counter to the will of the masses, over-enthusiasm about fighting "civil war," diverting "serious political struggle onto the path of sectarian struggle," small-group mentality, devotion to petty-bourgeois ideas, mountain strongholdism, individualism, refusal to conduct self-criticism and disrespect of the merits of others.

61. *Sankei*, 22 August 1967, quoting a wall-poster in Peking.

62. *Sankei*, 29 September 1967.

63. *People's Daily*, 23–27 July 1967. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 24 July 1967. Interestingly, Japanese correspondents claimed that the slogans denouncing the insurgent leaders (Ch'en Tsai-tao, Wang Jen-chung, and Chung Han-hua) included Ho Lung among their number, although the latter was not mentioned by the *People's Daily*.

64. Aside from Lin Piao, Chou En-lai, Ch'en Po-ta, K'ang Sheng, and Chiang Ch'ing, were: Li Hsien-nien, Li Fu-ch'un, Nieh Jung-chen, Hsieh Fu-chih, Liu Ning-i, Hsiao Hua, Yang Ch'eng-wu, Su Yü, Teng Ying-ch'ao, Chang Ch'un-ch'iao,

The next task was to mete out punishment to the accused, principally Ch'en Tsai-tao. He apparently came to Peking voluntarily, upon Mao's orders,⁶⁵ probably thinking he could best plead his case personally. An expanded meeting of the Central Committee was convened on the 26th to deal with the case. Chou was said to have presided, and the conference lasted over nine hours. Brought to account, aside from Ch'en, were Chung Han-hua (the Political Commissar of the Wuhan Military District), Niu Hai-lung (the Commander of the 8201 Division), Ts'ai Ping-ch'en (a political commissar) and Pa Fang-yen (Weapons Department Chief).⁶⁶ Four charges were made against Ch'en: (1) he planned to abduct Chou on his second visit to Wuhan; (2) he vilified Chiang Ch'ing by saying that there were only a few able people in the Cultural Revolution Small Group; (3) he disregarded the 6 April Ten-Point order of the Military Affairs Committee (*i.e.*, he went his own way locally, thus provoking his own fate); and (4) he colluded with Wang Jen-chung in perpetrating the events of 20–21 July.⁶⁷ For these crimes he was dismissed from his post and disappeared (along with other principal insurgents) from public view.

Finally, the regime moved to instal new men in the vacated posts. Tseng Szu-yü replaced Ch'en Tsai-tao as Commander of the Wuhan Military District, Liu Chien-hsün (concurrently the First Political Commissar of the Honan Military District) was appointed the Deputy Political Commissar of the Wuhan District, replacing Chung Han-hua, and Liu Feng was assigned to the post of Political Commissar.⁶⁸

Wang Li, Kuan Feng, Ch'i Pen-yü, Yao Wen-yüan, Wang Tung-hsing, Liu Chien-hsün, Wu Te, Chao I-men, Yeh Ch'ün, command personnel from the Peking Military District, responsible persons from some of the other military districts, "others who had returned with Hsieh and Wang from Wuhan," Peking Red Guard representatives, leading members of the Peking municipal Revolutionary Committee, and representatives of workers' and peasants' congresses. Also at the rally were the staff of the Central Committee, the State Council, *Red Flag*, *People's Daily*, *Liberation Army Daily*, and the NCNA. This was obviously designed to be an impressive assembly. One person who apparently was impressed was Wang Li. Later, in the documents published after he had been ousted, he was accused of becoming headstrong and conceited as a result of the demonstrations celebrating his safe return to Peking, a set of emotions that were said to contribute to his desire to better his political standing.

65. *Sankei*, 28 July 1967. One can surmise that Ch'en may have returned on the same plane as Hsieh and Wang.

66. *Sankei*, 3 August and 29 September 1967. The meeting was attended, aside from the normal (and not yet purged) members of the Central Committee, by members of the Cultural Revolution Small Group and military district commanders, and members of the Standing Committee of the Military Affairs Committee.

67. Wang is a very shadowy figure in the entire Wuhan dispute. Although he was sometimes said to be the power behind Ch'en, he never came into the open, nor did he seem to share the guilt, in Peking's eyes, with Ch'en.

68. *Tokyo Shimbun*, 4 August 1967; Wuhan Radio, 5 August 1967. These appointments were confirmed later at the mass leadership appearance at the 1 October National Day celebrations. Of these, at least Tseng Szu-yü is regarded as a Lin Piao man.

In early August, the political wheel finally turned full circle: Hsieh Fu-chih and Wang Li returned to Wuhan to witness the final defeat of the insurgents. This time they were not molested.

Conclusion

The Wuhan Incident was clearly a turning-point in the Cultural Revolution, for a number of changes in direction in August 1967 and after stemmed, directly or indirectly, from the events of 20 July–4 August. These changes in turn fundamentally determined the course of events in China for the next year and a half, up to the Ninth Party Congress. At stake was the Maoist attitude, on the one hand, towards leftist power seizures, and on the other, the degree of direct army intervention in and direction of the “seize power” movement.

Mao first had to make sure that Wuhan-type incidents – *i.e.*, regional military support for the “wrong” political elements, combined with out-and-out military defiance of the central state and Party authorities – did not happen again. Recurrence would mean a severe defeat for the Cultural Revolution but more importantly could place China as a whole in danger of widespread warlord-type conflict leading to incipient break-up. To avoid such an outcome, the army itself would have to be purged of those who had or might defy the Centre. Thus, from the end of July onward, calls⁶⁹ were made to “drag out” the “handful” in the Army itself.⁷⁰

But it was difficult to carry out a selective purge from below of the only institution still relatively intact and capable of maintaining public order without at the same time risking general chaos. A new leftward impetus was bound to (and did) carry factional conflict into all levels of the army, the Red Guards and the revolutionary rebels, while the

69. See, for instance, the *Hung-ch'i* editorial, “The Proletariat Must Take a Firm Hold of the Gun,” No. 12 (1 August 1967), pp. 43–47, (translation in *Peking Review*, No. 32 (4 August 1967), pp. 36–39), in which the call was made to “overthrow and discredit” the “handful of people” in authority “in the Party and the army” (emphasis added). Chang Man, “The Suspension and Republication of *Hung-ch'i*,” *Tsu kou (Fatherland)* (Hong Kong), No. 54 (September 1968), pp. 2–7, claims (p. 4) that Lin Chieh, one of the members of Chiang Ch'ing's Cultural Revolution group and later (along with Wang Li and others) one of the “May 16 Group” purged for anti-Party activities, wrote this editorial.

70. It is not clear whether, aside from Ch'en Tsai-tao and his associates in Wuhan, there were actual purges of army leaders at that time as a result of the *Hung-ch'i* editorial. It may be that Hsiao Hua and others members of the General Political Department of the army were purged in mid-August. At this time he was not seen again publicly, Red Guard posters against him appeared again and he was rumoured to have played a role in regard to Wuhan not to Lin Piao's liking (Lin conspicuously referred to mistakes of the General Political Department in his 9 August speech referred to below). But the purge did not extend to other central military departments nor, more importantly, to regional commands other than Wuhan.

inability of the army to defend itself or maintain order meant that, if not checked, the leftists would be free to carry out destructive activities inimical to China's larger interests. Thus, in the provinces during August and beyond, the level of violence rose to new peaks,⁷¹ while in Peking China's foreign relations stood in shambles as Red Guards took over the Foreign Ministry⁷² and burned the British Chancery. By late August, Mao and his associates probably sensed that a policy of reversal would have to be made if the state itself were to be preserved and the goals of the Cultural Revolution maintained.

Another development during August reinforced this trend. Army leaders, and Lin Piao in particular, apparently did not agree with the wisdom of the Cultural Revolution Group's call for extending the purge of the Wuhan Military Region command to the military as a whole. They seem to have dragged their feet from the beginning,⁷³ decided in early August how they would prefer to deal with the problem,⁷⁴ and

71. These include Chinghai, Fukien, Heilungkiang, Honan, Hunan, Inner Mongolia, Kansu, Kwangsi, Kwangtung, Liaoning, Sinkiang, Szechwan, Tibet and Yunnan. For details, see Chien Yu-shen, *China's Fading Revolution: Army Dissent and Military Division, 1967-68* (Hong Kong: Centre of Contemporary Chinese Studies, 1969), pp. 12-17, 21, 23-25, 28, 30-57.

72. A good analysis is by Daniel Tretiak, "The Chinese Cultural Revolution and Foreign Policy," Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Advanced Studies Group, Monograph No. 2 (February 1970).

73. The *Chieh-fang-chün pao* (*Liberation Army Daily*) editorial of 30 July (reprinted on the same day in *Jen-min jih pao* (*People's Daily*)) set the question of the "handful in the army" clearly in the specific context of the Wuhan Incident and called for "exposure and criticism" but not "dragging out." The *Chieh-fang-chün pao* editorial of 31 July celebrating the 40th anniversary of the founding of the army seemed to attempt to divert the issue to historic questions concerning the "bourgeoisie military line." (For a translation, see *Peking Review*, No. 32 (4 August), pp. 42-45.)

74. Lin Piao made an important speech on 9 August 1967, at a conference of high military cadres in Peking. This conference was probably convened to decide how to prevent repetitions of the Wuhan Incident and how to deal with the Cultural Revolution Group's offensive. Admitting that Wuhan had caused great concern (Lin: "Of all the military districts in the whole country, we were worried about two in the past. One was Peking and the other was Wuhan. There was simply no way to get at them"), he went on to express optimism for the future and to exhort his listeners on the necessity to rectify their mistakes and to deal carefully with the "rightists." The entire tenure of his speech is one of moderation and even conciliation and on avoidance of mistakes and learning from mistakes. It certainly cannot be termed a vindictive or threatening speech.

By stressing intra-army unity, Lin's speech ushers in the second phase of army involvement in the Cultural Revolution; once that unity was assured (at least in the relative sense), the army could undertake the tasks which Mao set for it in September and after. The Wuhan Incident symbolized – and punctuated – the end of the first phase of army involvement. Having solved the Wuhan problem by force and – through Lin's efforts at conciliation and resistance to the Cultural Revolution Group's attacks – preserved its own power, the army was now ready to play a more direct role in the second phase of more direct rule and construction of new political organs of power.

For Lin's speech, see *Chu-ying tung fang-hung* (Pearl [River] Film Studio East-

then successfully turned the tables on the Cultural Revolution Group. Thus, Wang Li himself, together with several others,⁷⁵ was purged.⁷⁶ To satisfy cries for purges within the military, sessions were held, documents released and accusations made against P'eng Teh-huai⁷⁷ (the former Minister of Defence removed from office in 1959) and against the "bourgeois military line." But while it may be that there was something to the Cultural Revolution Group charges against army leaders,⁷⁸ it would not do to debate basic intramilitary problems of policy and personality at just the time when the army was to be called upon to play a much more important role in the Cultural Revolution as a whole.

Hence, leftist-instigated disorders, combined with the proven resilience of the army, caused Mao to decide to revise priorities and emphasize preserving the army as a viable institution, restoring a minimum of public order, reviving production and pushing ahead towards more orderly construction of new provincial organs of power. This meant two things. First, the army was given authority for the first time to use its power to defend itself from attack from without and to pursue the goals just mentioned. From early September,⁷⁹ the Cultural Revolution therefore entered a

is-Red, a Canton Red Guard newspaper), 13 September 1967. An incomplete translation is in *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 4036 (6 October 1967) pp. 1–6. A more complete Nationalist Chinese rendition is in Li Tien-min (ed.), *Chronology of Chinese Communist Leaders* (Taipei: Institute for the Study of Chinese Communist Problems, May 1969), pp. 19–25.

75. Kuan Feng, Lin Chieh and Mu Hsin.

76. The four did not appear in public from 8 August 1967, and later it was revealed that they had been purged in late August. They were also accused in 1968 of having formed the nucleus of the "May 16 Group" allegedly having as one of its purposes the overthrow of Chou En-lai. Since the four purged officials were members of the Cultural Revolution Group and since it seems that the army was responsible – in as yet an unclear manner – for their removal, it is possible to regard the conflict as between the two institutions. While it may be going too far to argue that this merely symbolized opposition between Chiang Ch'ing and Lin Piao it may not be stretching a point to assert that the Wuhan Incident served to bring into the open a dispute between the two institutions that had been smouldering for some time.

77. See *The Case of P'eng Teh-huai, 1959–1966* (Kowloon: Union Research Institute, 1968), pp. 153 *et seq.*, for details. Other explanations for the timing of the belated release of the anti-P'eng documents may exist, but that renewal of the campaign at that particular time served as a diversion from attacks against the army leaders then in office should probably be regarded as a major element.

78. Later, in early 1968, Yang Ch'eng-wu, the Army Chief of Staff, was purged in a manner that sought to link him to the May 16 Group, while, as we have noted, Hsiao Hua was purged in August 1967. The point to note here is that by turning against their Cultural Revolution Group detractors, Lin and his associates postponed the date of coping with internal policy disputes to a time when they could better deal with the matter. They needed a six-month period to fulfil their emerging duty before returning to the charges raised by Chiang Ch'ing's group.

79. The relevant date is 5 September, the day that Chiang Ch'ing gave her important speech advocating cessation of "clashes" and attacks against the army and generally preaching moderation, rectification of mistakes and harmony. On the same day, the Central Committee, the State Council, the Military Affairs Com-

phase of overt military take-over. This development determined the pace of formulation and the political character of provincial revolutionary committees and assured military domination of those new organs of power, of reconstructed central Party organs, and of the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969. It also means that the leftist forces were to be reined in – purged in some cases and put back in their original places in others.⁸⁰ Thus, the army, originally the reserve force of the Cultural Revolution and behind-the-scene supporter of the revolutionary leftist forces, now stepped forward to direct the political cause of China frontally.

To be sure, this solution had the virtue of simplifying matters and, from Mao's point of view, improving the prospects for effectuating the socio-cultural transformations he desired. It also helped increase the authority of Lin Biao as Mao's chosen successor and, as long as Lin was in command, Mao could probably rest assured that his bidding would be done. But it also meant that the popular fervour that had gripped so many of the young people was now to be replaced with widespread cynical withdrawal from political participation and privatization of student outlooks.⁸¹ And it meant that the Cultural Revolution could threaten over the long run to lead to reactionary military rule, to foisting "reforms" upon the people and to questioning the very viability of Mao's drive for continual progress amidst constant revolution. By pursuing policies that brought China close to incipient civil war – as symbolized by the Wuhan Incident – and by finding it necessary to strike off in quite another direction to avoid that threat, Mao may have permanently damaged the prospects for his brand of communism in China and called into question the viability of the Chinese revolution as a whole.

mittee and the Cultural Revolution Group issued a joint directive re-emphasizing its call of 25 August prohibiting attacks against the army and seizure of military equipment by Red Guards and threatening direct use of force against anyone who violated the directive's provisions. For Chiang Ch'ing's speech, see *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 4069 (29 November 1967) pp. 1–9. The joint directive is translated in *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 4026 (22 September 1967) pp. 1–2. The directive gave impetus to a new drive to "support the army and cherish the people" that had been underway since last August.

80. For instance, Red Guards were to be sent to schools that would (finally) be reopened, while revolutionary rebels could no longer receive wages for conducting revolution outside their enterprises.

81. See, for example, the convincing example of Dai Hsiao-ai, as transcribed by Gordon Bennett and Ronald N. Montaperto, *Red Guard* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970).