

## = Cultural Revolution Group =

The ( Central ) Cultural Revolution Group ( CRG or CCRG ; Chinese : 中央文化革命小组 ; pinyin : Zhōngyāng Wéngé Xìzǔ ) was formed in May 1966 as a replacement organisation to the Central Committee Secretariat and the " Five Man Group " , and was initially directly responsible to the Standing Committee of the Politburo . It consisted mainly of radical supporters of Mao , including Chen Boda , the Chairman 's wife Jiang Qing , Kang Sheng , Yao Wenxuan , Zhang Chunqiao , Wang Li and Xie Fuzhi . The CRG played a central role in the Cultural Revolution 's first few years , and for a period of time the group replaced the Politburo Standing Committee ( PSC ) as the de facto top power organ of China . Its members were also involved in many of the major events of the Cultural Revolution .

## = = Background = =

In January 1965 , at a meeting of the Politburo , Mao Zedong called on the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party ( CCP ) to implement a " Cultural Revolution " in China . ( The Oxford English Dictionary traces the English @-@ language phrase " cultural revolution " ( defined as " a sudden change in the culture of a people or society " ) as far back as 1929 . ) The meeting established a body known as the " Five Man Group " ( chaired by Peng Zhen , the fifth @-@ ranking member of the Politburo ) , with the aim of overseeing the beginnings of the Cultural Revolution . Of the members of the group , only Kang Sheng was a supporter of Mao . However , the group remained relatively inactive until the spring of 1966 , when it censored the writings of Yao Wenxuan and of other radicals for making an academic debate on the play Hai Rui Dismissed from Office into a political one ( a move which Mao had started encouraging ) .

Unhappy over what he perceived to be an obstruction of the course of the Cultural Revolution , Mao returned to the capital in the spring of 1966 , and the Central Committee formally announced the dissolution of the " Five Man Group " in its May 16 Circular :

The Central Committee has decided to ... dissolve the ' Group of Five in Charge of the Cultural Revolution ' , and to set up a new Cultural Revolution group directly under the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau .

The " Five Man Group " was dissolved immediately and Peng Zhen faced charges of allegedly obstructing the course of the Cultural Revolution . Soon after May 16 he was dismissed from all his offices and the control of the capital passed into the hands of followers of Mao . Chen Boda was selected by Chairman Mao to head the newly formed " Cultural Revolution Group " , which would report to the Politburo Standing Committee . Consisting originally of between fifteen and twenty people , the CRG included , amongst others , Jiang Qing ( the wife of Chairman Mao ) as vice @-@ chairman , Kang Sheng as the Group Adviser , Yao Wenxuan , Zhang Chunqiao , Qi Benyu , Wang Li and Xie Fuzhi . There were also several less well @-@ known members . However , Chen Boda did not chair the CRG 's meetings - this task fell to Zhou Enlai , who held a position of control over the group , and could speak on behalf of the entire group without needing to consult it .

## = = Role in the Cultural Revolution = =

The mandate given to the CRG on its formation was to guide the Cultural Revolution , and it was given many of the powers and the political prestige of the Central Committee and the Politburo . For example , when the order , on 5 September 1967 , was issued instructing the People 's Liberation Army ( PLA ) to restore order to China , it was signed by the CRG as well as the Central Committee , the State Council and the Military Affairs Commission . In addition , the CRG had theoretical control over the People 's Liberation Army , although very soon army commanders wielded enough political power to often act independently of the CRG . The CRG was also given the entire Diaoyutai compound in Beijing to use at its offices . All documents from Mao were sent for approval to the CRG ( as well as Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai ) , while other members of the Politburo Standing Committee were not sent these documents . Gradually , through examples like this , the CRG began

to overtake the PSC in its political stature and importance .

Throughout the early years of the Cultural Revolution , the CRG acted as a body that directed the course the movement should take . Due to Mao 's backing of the group , its orders were of significant importance . For example , after the Wuhan Incident , Jiang Qing suggested in a speech that the Red Guards should ' defend with weapons ' , leading to a surge in the seizure of PLA armaments by rebel groups . In addition , Wang Li and other CRG radicals ( taking their cue from Jiang Qing ) called for the removal of ' revisionist ' elements in the PLA . The radical CRG , however , often found it had to contend with the more conservative view of how the Cultural Revolution should progress promoted by Zhou Enlai and his supporters , who were as interested in stability and the maintenance of some form of government as they were in revolution .

The CRG also had several supplementary functions . Its Art and Literature Group , headed by Jiang Qing , took over the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture when the latter was dissolved in May 1967 . Furthermore , the group worked closely with the Central Case Examination Group ( CCEG ) , an organisation established in 1966 that investigated the alleged crimes and errors of higher @-@ ranking members of the Party . Practically all the members of the CRG were also members of the CCEG .

The members of the CRG also had important individual roles in two of the important events of the Cultural Revolution , the Shanghai Commune and the Wuhan Incident .

= = = The Shanghai Commune = = =

See : Shanghai People 's Commune

Two members of the CRG played a significant part in the affair over the Shanghai Commune . Due to his connections with the city ( he had been secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee until July 1966 ) , Zhang Chunqiao was dispatched from the centre in November 1966 to mediate the crisis over the siege of some worker 's groups at Anting . Early in January the next year , Zhang Chunqiao was to return again to Shanghai with his CRG colleague Yao Wenyuan to lead the new order established after the fall of the old Party apparatus , and in early February he was to become head of the newly formed Shanghai Commune . However , the combination of questions over the legitimacy of the Commune 's leadership , and a change in attitudes to communes in general at the centre , meant that the Shanghai Commune was to last less than a month .

= = = The Wuhan Incident = = =

See : Wuhan Incident

Despite the CRG 's 1967 orders forbidding violence , in July 1967 the city of Wuhan became a battleground for two large rival rebel groups - the Million Heroes and the Wuhan Workers ' General Headquarters ( WWGH ) . The 400 @,@ 000 strong WWGH was besieged by the Million Heroes , who were being supplied with weapons and manpower by the local PLA commander Chen Zaidao . When Chen ignored Zhou Enlai 's orders that the siege was to be lifted , Wang Li and Xie Fuzhi were dispatched to Wuhan to resolve the crisis . On 19 July the pair instructed the PLA to switch its support from the Million Heroes to the WWGH . In the early hours of the next day however , Xie Fuzhi was arrested by the PLA while Wang Li was kidnapped by the Million Heroes and beaten . After a failed attempt by Zhou Enlai to resolve the crisis , it took a show of military force by other PLA units for Chen Zaidao to eventually surrender .

= = Fall of the Cultural Revolution Group = =

The first two years of the Cultural Revolution witnessed a continued growth in tensions between the People 's Liberation Army and the CRG , due to the PLA 's gradual suppression of the CRG @-@ backed rebel groups and Red Guards . By the October 1967 , the PLA had reached the peak of its ascendancy , which meant the end of the CRG . In November 1967 , the Group 's radical party journal , Red Flag , was ordered to stop publication . In addition , the leading members of the CRG

quickly became scapegoats for the problems of the summer of 1967 , when armed conflict between rebel groups , other groups and the PLA had been the norm . Individuals including Wang Li were soon connected with the " May Sixteenth Corps " , a supposed group that exploited divisions in the Cultural Revolution to cause the anarchy and was plotting to seize power . Although there is evidence that Wang Li and others formed a faction within the CRG that employed the term " May Sixteenth " , and that the CRG did exploit divisions in the movement , there is little evidence known to suggest a plot to seize power .

The fall of the CRG has also been attributed by some to the fact that Mao had become increasingly moderate in his view of the Cultural Revolution since February 1967 , and that others ( like the CRG ) who were still committed to the original aims of the movement remained exposed on the left @-@ wing while Mao moved towards the centre . Comparably , they were now far enough on the left to be considered too radical for comfort .

In September , some of the CRG radicals including Wang Li and Guan Feng were arrested on the orders of Mao , but by the end of the Cultural Revolution the new drive to eradicate ' ultra @-@ leftists ' would see the arrest of nearly all of the CRG 's members ( Jiang Qing would survive until the death of Mao ) .

After the 1967 arrest of some of its leading members , the CRG continued to play a role in the Cultural Revolution , but this was limited . For example , the remaining members were asked to attend the Twelfth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee in October 1968 , where Liu Shaoqi was officially expelled from the Chinese Communist Party . The group was never formally dissolved , but ceased to exist at some point after the CCP 's Ninth Congress in the Spring of 1969 . The CRG 's remaining former members - including Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng - were left to fight their individual political battles in the years that followed .