

# The Role of Zhou Enlai in the Cultural Revolution: A Contradictory Image from Diverse Sources\*

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*The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has worked hard of late to create a larger-than-life and infallible image of Zhou Enlai's role in the Cultural Revolution through the use of massive, inaccurate data in numerous official publications. At the same time, the CCP also keeps thousands of archives of Zhou's activities in the Cultural Revolution as "top state secrets." Based on newly published materials including memoirs, interviews with participants of the Cultural Revolution, and many party leader speeches both reprinted in the West as well as delivered to the "masses" in China during the Cultural Revolution, this paper strongly challenges the perfect image of Zhou that exists in these official publications in China. According to author's textual examination, Zhou was the one who served as Mao's enthusiastic helper and strong supporter for launching the cataclysm. Zhou was the one who cooperated with the so-called "arch-criminals" of the Cultural Revolution—Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four"—on many occasions. Zhou tried his best to follow Mao closely by supporting the chaotic mass movements of the period.*

**KEYWORDS:** Zhou Enlai; Mao Zedong; Cultural Revolution; contradictory image; Gang of Four; Lin Biao

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\*Revised version of a paper presented at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Boston, March 13, 1999.

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The role of Premier Zhou Enlai (周恩來) in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) has always been viewed by scholars both inside and outside China as a particularly thorny issue. Many factors have contributed to the complexity of this issue; one such as Zhou's image as one of the most hard-working and talented central leaders in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, the most important factor stems from the fact that the massive amounts of archival materials about Zhou still remain closed to both Chinese and Western scholars. Ever since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government has successfully maintained a brilliant image of Zhou by using inaccurate and false data.

Generally speaking, the Chinese government opposes or seeks to prohibit any independent scholarly research on the Cultural Revolution, yet has published approximately two hundred new "official" memoirs, biographies, collected works, and articles by and about Zhou in the Cultural Revolution since the 1980s. Praise for the role Zhou played in the Cultural Revolution reached a new high in China in the past few years, especially in 1998—Zhou's 100th birth anniversary. A great number of memoirs, biographies, and chronicles have emerged all over China; two huge series of films—*Zhou Enlai* and *Bainian Enlai* (百年恩來, The 100th birth anniversary of Zhou Enlai)—were shown on China's Central Television Station almost daily; and museums and statues were unveiled in several cities. In these new official publications, Zhou is described as "the solitary rock in a turbulent stream"<sup>1</sup> that resisted the Cultural Revolution. These publications claimed that "Premier Zhou had fundamental disagreement with Chairman Mao in terms of how to carry out the Cultural Revolution and how to assess the domestic situation in China."<sup>2</sup> In other words, these new official publications were trying to create a perfect image of Zhou as the

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<sup>1</sup>Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi (CCP Central Documentary Research Office) and Zhongyang dianshitai (Central TV Station), *Zhou Enlai: Daxing dianshi wenxian jilupian* (Zhou Enlai: A huge TV documentary series) (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1998), 227.

<sup>2</sup>Wu Qingtong, *Zhou Enlai zai "Wenhua dageming" zhong* (Zhou Enlai in the "Cultural Revolution") (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1998), 6.

nation's historical hero during the Cultural Revolution.

At the same time, new memoirs, fresh interviews with participants of the Cultural Revolution, and many reprints of party leader speeches delivered to the "masses" during the Cultural Revolution have appeared or will be published soon in the West and China, providing valuable new sources for the study of Zhou. In these sources, the image of Zhou in the Cultural Revolution is chiefly negative. Therefore, a careful comparison of these new sources and a reexamination of the historical context have begun to create a clear picture of Zhou's role in the Cultural Revolution.

### **Launching the Turmoil**

Like any historical drama, the Cultural Revolution has its prologue, acts, and epilogue. Commenting on some important early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong pointed out in his conversation with an American journalist Edgar Snow on December 18, 1970 that, "In October 1965, I initiated the criticism of the play *Hai Rui Baguan* (海瑞罷官, Hai Rui Dismissed from Office). On May 16, 1966, the Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo decided to launch the Cultural Revolution. The Eleventh Plenary Session of the CCP's Eighth Central Committee was convened in August 1966 and the 'Sixteen Articles' (十六條) were issued."<sup>3</sup> In order to establish the historic truth of launching the cataclysm, one should first reanalyze Zhou's activities in these events. Was he a supporter, neutralist, or resister in terms of his relationship to Mao during that crucial period?

Neither recorded in full nor described distinctly, Zhou's activities in the prologue to the Cultural Revolution were very murky in the accounts of China's official historians. The only thing that is clear in most of the official publications in China is that Zhou was not involved in Mao's planning for the Cultural Revolution, such as Mao's criticism of the play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*. Thus Zhou "was not mentally prepared for the

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<sup>3</sup>Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (The writings of Mao Zedong since the founding of the PRC), 13 volumes (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998), 13:174.

Cultural Revolution; he was unsure of Mao's intention for this 'Revolution' beneath the surface of things. Based on his consistent trust in Mao, Zhou, along with other CCP leaders, agreed with the two documents on the 'Cultural Revolution' created under the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought."<sup>4</sup> Other sources, such as the film series *Zhou Enlai*, have suggested that Zhou did not bear any responsibility for the launching of the Cultural Revolution because "he was driven directly into the party's meeting when he arrived at the airport from his overseas trip."<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Zhou's position on the Cultural Revolution was quite "neutral." In a four-volume biography, *Zhou Enlai zhuan 1949-1976* (周恩來傳 1949-1976, The biography of Zhou Enlai 1949-76), and a three-volume chronicle, *Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976* (周恩來年譜 1949-1976, A chronicle of Zhou Enlai 1949-76) compiled by the CCP Central Documentary Research Office (中共中央文獻研究室), the authors implied throughout the books that Zhou tried to resist Mao's launching of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>6</sup>

However, a contradictory image of Zhou is evident in other sources, including the newly released CCP official documents and records of his speeches. As a formal prologue, the Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo produced a programmatic document for the Cultural Revolution—the May 16 Circular (五一六通知), which contained an appendix entitled "A Chronicle of the Struggles Between the Two Lines on the Cultural Front from September 1965 to May 1966" (1965年9月到1966年5月文化戰線上兩條路線鬥爭大事記). Zhou's performance was covered in four brief paragraphs, and those paragraphs were so blatantly proactive as to be confusing:

November 28 [1965]. Urged by Comrade Zhou Enlai, Comrade Peng Zhen (彭真) was forced to hold a meeting in the west chamber of the Great Hall of the People to discuss the question of reprinting the article by Comrade Yao Wen Yuan (姚文元) ["Criticizing *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*" 評《海瑞罷官》] in Beijing newspapers...

<sup>4</sup>Wu, *Zhou Enlai zai "Wenhua dageming" zhong*, 2.

<sup>5</sup>*Zhou Enlai: Daxing dianshi wenxian jilupian*, 228.

<sup>6</sup>Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan 1949-1976* (The biography of Zhou Enlai 1949-76), 4 volumes (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998); *Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976* (A chronicle of Zhou Enlai 1949-76), 3 volumes (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998).

March 31 [1966]. Comrade Kang Sheng (康生) communicated in great detail the instructions from Chairman Mao to Comrade Zhou Enlai and Comrade Peng Zhen. Comrade Peng Zhen explained that he did not shield Wu Han (吳晗) but only advocated "*fang*" [放 "allowing different views"]. Peng agreed to revise "The Reporting Outline from the Group of Five" (五人小組彙報提綱), but he stubbornly resisted Mao's criticism.

April 2 [1966]. Comrade Zhou Enlai reported to Chairman Mao that he completely agreed with Mao's instructions and pointed out that "The Reporting Outline from the Group of Five" was wrong. He prepared to convene a meeting of the Secretariat to discuss Mao's instruction...

April 9 to 12 [1966]. Comrade Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) took charge of the meeting of the Secretariat, and Comrade Zhou Enlai participated. First, Comrade Kang Sheng passed on Chairman Mao's instructions.... Finally, Comrade Zhou Enlai and Comrade Deng Xiaoping stated that Comrade Peng Zhen's erroneous line was contrary to Chairman Mao's Thought and in fact opposed Mao himself. This group decided to: (1) write a circular to completely criticize the mistakes of "The Reporting Outline from the Group of Five," and then withdraw the Outline; and (2) set up a small group for drafting the documents of the Cultural Revolution, which will be submitted to Chairman Mao and members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo for approval.<sup>7</sup>

Compared with Peng Zhen's stubborn resistance, Zhou appeared to be a firm and conscious supporter of Mao in this document. One can arrive at this conclusion through simple statistics. Of all the CCP leaders who were in charge of the party's Secretariat in Beijing from September 1965 to May 1966—such as Liu Shaoqi (劉少奇), Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Peng Zhen—only Zhou was praised four times in the record throughout the whole period for launching the Cultural Revolution. In contrast, Peng Zhen and his colleagues in the Beijing Municipal Party Committee were frequently criticized in this document. In addition, Deng's name was mentioned with a positive tone, but only once at the end of the document, which implied Deng had moved to Mao's side at the last moment. The fact that Liu's name was never mentioned in this document could be viewed as a significant sign of Mao's latent hostility toward him. Considering this programmatic document was written directly under the guidance of Mao who actually drafted a large part of it himself, Zhou's role in the early stages

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<sup>7</sup>See Wang Nianyi, ed., *Wehua dageming yanjiu ziliao* (The research materials for the Cultural Revolution), 3 volumes (Beijing: Guofang daxue dangshi dangjian zhenggong jiaoyan-shi, 1988), 1:4-13.

of the Cultural Revolution would not have been as obscure as depicted thus far.

In order to further clarify Zhou's true position, helpful is to read Zhou's speech of May 21 at the Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo (from May 4 to 26). After Lin Biao's (林彪) significant speech about coups on May 18, Zhou's followed suit. In discussing "Preventing the counterrevolutionary coups," the first statements Zhou made were "I fully agree with Comrade Lin Biao's speech, which is great." "Currently, our major problem is how to guard against revisionists who wish to wield power. Peng (Zhen), Luo (Ruiqing 羅瑞卿), Lu (Dingyi 陸定一), and Yang (Shangkun 楊尚昆) usurped our power one by one: in ideology, in the army, and in the party. Secondly, we should prevent coups mounted by revisionists. Thirdly, we should prevent revisionist military coups." Zhou went on to say, "Peng, Luo, Lu, and Yang, who were exposed by the Central Committee, are capitalist-roaders within the party's center. It seems that we cannot avoid the occurrence of revisionism in both central and local committees.... Speaking of the danger of the coups, I agree with Comrade Lin Biao's remark; the coups will have happened mainly in the center rather than the localities, inside rather than outside the party, in the top rather than the grass-roots level of the party..."<sup>8</sup>

Evident from Zhou's speech above is that there is no political difference for estimating the political situation prior to the Cultural Revolution between Mao (Lin) and Zhou. If there was a difference, Zhou's analysis was much more serious than Mao's because he and Lin repeatedly stated the danger of coups, which had never happened in China up to that time. Therefore, unsurprising is that Zhou became one of Mao's strong allies during the Cultural Revolution.

How could "counterrevolutionary coups" be prevented? The answer was in Zhou's speech:

Have confidence. Hold high the red banner of Mao Zedong Thought and rally behind Comrade Mao Zedong, adhere to the policy of "peeling the bamboo skin" [guarding against coups] from generation to generation. Mao Zedong

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<sup>8</sup>Premier Zhou's Speech on May 21, 1966," *Ziliao xuanbian* (Selected materials) (edited by Qinghai 8.18 geming zaofanpai lianhe weiyuanhui xuanchuanzu), December 5, 1967, 10-11.

Thought is the peak of Marxism-Leninism. Mao Zedong Thought is the summit, the highest peak of the great era when imperialism and capitalism become extinct, and socialism and communism march to victory. Like Lenin, Chairman Mao is a genius leader and the leader of the people of the whole world.... Through the Cultural Revolution, we should give wide publicity to Chairman Mao's leadership in China and the whole world. While we should remain modest and prudent, we should not hesitate to do full justice to Chairman Mao's contributions and achievements.<sup>9</sup>

In the end of his speech, Zhou talked about "maintaining integrity in one's later years" for the whole body of the CCP's old cadres. Zhou called on all cadres to "follow closely behind Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao is our leader today and will still be the leader after his death. If we are not loyal to him in our later years, our previous merits and achievements will be written off at one stroke...." Zhou also warned them that one would become a betrayer of the Revolution if he or she were not loyal to Mao. Zhou took the extremely radical step to express his loyalty to Mao by employing Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白) and Li Xiucheng (李秀成) as examples: "I propose to move Qu Qiubai's tomb out of the Babaoshan Cemetery (八寶山公墓) and destroy Li Xiucheng's 'Loyal King Mansion' in Suzhou (蘇州). These people are shameless."<sup>10</sup> Sure enough, three to four months later, some Red Guards followed Zhou's suggestions and destroyed both Qu's tomb and Li's mansion.

The Eleventh Plenary Session of the CCP's Eighth Central Committee is regarded as the event marking the full-scale launching of the Cultural Revolution. According to official sources, Zhou chaired the session on August 8, 1966, in which the "Sixteen Articles" were passed. Although no documents about his role in that session have been released, a speech by Zhou later revealed something about his actions on that important occasion. After strongly denouncing an "adverse current" against Lin Biao and Chen Boda (陳伯達), Zhou observed during his meeting with the students from some military colleges in the Great Hall of the People on January 21, 1967:

At the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee, I highly recommended Comrade Lin Biao. He is the best person for understanding and

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 11-13.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 13.

practicing Mao Zedong Thought and follows Chairman Mao most closely. I recommended him to be the vice-commander-in-chief. He holds the red banner of Mao Zedong Thought the highest and is the best in using Mao Zedong Thought to educate the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The other one is the outstanding theorist of our party, Comrade Chen Boda, who is the best in understanding, theoretically interpreting, and propagating Mao Zedong Thought. They have stood and passed decades of severe tests. We should eliminate any libels to them to the best of our ability.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to recommending Lin Biao, according to the newly published memoirs by Chen Boda Zhou also strongly recommended Chen to head the Central Cultural Revolution Group (中央文革小組) and was deeply involved in organizing the whole group prior to the turmoil.<sup>12</sup> According to newly released CCP secret archives in June 1966, Zhou was the person who "recommended Comrade Jiang Qing (江青) to be the deputy head and the first deputy head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group in a Politburo meeting to discuss who should be the members of the group."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, a secret document that came from Chen Boda's prison confession has revealed that Zhou knew that Mao's real intention for launching the Cultural Revolution was to overthrow Liu Shaoqi as early as December of 1965.<sup>14</sup>

The passages that have been cited for examining Zhou's position all link to the significant events during the Cultural Revolution. Mao not only obtained a general vote from Zhou but also most significantly obtained Zhou's proactive support. Zhou helped Mao to crush the so-called "Peng, Luo, Lu, and Yang Anti-Party Clique"; Zhou was one of those who initiated and promoted the personality cult of Mao; Zhou highly recommended Lin Biao to be the vice-commander-in-chief for both the party and the nation; and Zhou was thus the initial force behind the organization of the Central

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<sup>11</sup>"Comrade Zhou Enlai's Speech in Receiving Students from Military Institutions in the Great Hall," in *Zai wuchan jieji wenhua dageming zhong zhongyang fuze tongzhi jianghua chaolu* (Speeches from central leaders in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) (edited by Wuhan zaofanpai, 3 volumes), 3:191.

<sup>12</sup>Chen Boda, *Chen Boda yigao* (Posthumous works of Chen Boda) (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1998), 79.

<sup>13</sup>Luo Bing, "Zhou Enlai Joined the Struggle Against Liu Shaoqi," *Cheng Ming* (Contending) (Hong Kong), 1999, no. 3:20.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

Cultural Revolution Group. Perhaps no exaggeration is to conclude that Zhou served as Mao's enthusiastic helper and strong supporter for launching the Cultural Revolution. However, nearly all official publications in China conveniently "forgot" to record such basic facts, not to mention Zhou's political activities.

Early on during the Cultural Revolution Mao may well not have involved Zhou in his campaign to criticize *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, as suggested by China's official historians in their publications. The question why Mao did not let Zhou become involved in this campaign may be answered, however, by Mao's personal physician Dr. Li Zhisui (李志綏) who indicated in his book: "Zhou Enlai, more than any of China's top leaders, had remained loyal to Mao—so faithful, in fact, that Lin Biao had once characterized him to Wang Dongxing [汪東興] as an 'obedient servant.' Zhou was more than loyal. He was subservient, sometimes embarrassingly so." Dr. Li commented, "Nowhere were the contradictions of Mao's dictatorship more pronounced than in his relationship with Zhou. Mao demanded Zhou's absolute loyalty, and had he not received it, Zhou would no doubt have been overthrown. But because Zhou was so subservient and loyal, Mao held the premier in contempt."<sup>15</sup> In other words, Zhou was too loyal for Mao to respect him.

### **Relationship to the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing Cliques**

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government has stressed how Zhou fought with the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing counterrevolutionary cliques for the benefit of the people and the nation. In the conclusion of the CCP's official document in 1980, "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China" (關於建國以來黨的若干歷史問題的決議 hereafter "Resolution on Certain Questions"), Zhou was praised because "he made

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<sup>15</sup>Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao's Personal Physician* (New York: Random House, 1994), 509-10.

unremitting efforts to protect a great number of cadres inside and outside the party and minimize damages from the Cultural Revolution. He confronted the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing counterrevolutionary cliques in a variety of ways about the destruction they had brought about."<sup>16</sup> Since 1998, the exaggeration of Zhou's "fighting" with the Lin and Jiang cliques has gone much further than the praise above. First, party historians made up stories of the so-called "infighting" between Zhou and the Lin-Jiang cliques. Second, these historians shifted surreptitiously the power struggle between Zhou and the Lin-Jiang cliques after 1970 into the early years of the red terror to highlight Zhou's "long-lasting fight" with Lin Biao and Jiang Qing. Finally, official historians simply left out a number of deeds that Zhou committed together with the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing cliques in order to hide the historic truth or lead unwary readers astray by selective omission of detail.

Since the CCP's "Resolution on Certain Questions" pinned the criminal responsibility for the historical turbulence on Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four" (四人幫) only, necessary is to carefully examine the relationship between Zhou and these actors during this period. As an interesting example, one significant early account of "infighting" between Zhou and Lin was recorded in *A Chronicle of Zhou Enlai 1949-76*:

July 26 [1966]. In the CCP's Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo, [Zhou] said, "I had discussed with Chairman Mao and also exchanged opinions with Lin Biao about the use of terms such as 'peak,' 'the highest and most flexible,' and 'the highest instructions' [for describing Mao Zedong Thought] by Lin Biao. The use of words should be as scientific, accurate, and proper as possible."<sup>17</sup>

From the above quotation, two things stand out. All along, Zhou opposed these terms for the establishment of Mao's personality cult, and he did criticize Lin Biao for doing that at the outset of the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, a number of historical records depicted a totally contradictory image of Zhou. In the Cultural Revolution, both prior to and after

<sup>16</sup>*Guanyu jianguo yilai dangde ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi* (xiuding) (Resolution on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the PRC), revised edition (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), 55.

<sup>17</sup>*Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976* 3:42.

July 26, 1966, Zhou flattered Mao and extolled Mao Zedong Thought by using the same antiscientific, inaccurate, and improper terms. A case in point was the synopsis of Zhou's aforementioned speech at the Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo on May 21, 1966. Another even more significant illustration is Zhou's welcome speech to the delegation of the Albanian Communist Party and Government on April 30, 1966, which was also printed in the *People's Daily*: "Comrade Mao Zedong has completely developed Marxism-Leninism with genius and creativity. Mao Zedong Thought is Marxism-Leninism in the era when imperialism starts to fail and socialism advances toward victory in the entire world." Zhou went on to say, "Mao Zedong Thought is the peak of contemporary Marxism-Leninism."<sup>18</sup>

The textual reexamination of the diverse sources leads one to assume that the account in China's official publications is false or inaccurate. While entirely possible is that the official account was integrally made up by the official historians for propaganda purposes, there still exists yet another possibility. On July 8, 1966, Mao wrote a letter to Jiang Qing who circulated it to Zhou and other central leaders. In this letter, Mao seemed to mildly criticize the ongoing adulation of him by Lin and others, but Mao's criticism was only an act. Both Zhou, as a major adulator of Mao, and Lin Biao must put on an act when presenting their mild self-criticism under Mao's instruction.<sup>19</sup> This matter may be the basis of this early "infighting" story, although the event was far from being a "fight" between justice [embodied by Zhou] and evil [Lin]. Since Mao, Lin, and Zhou all behaved in an affected manner in this matter, understandable is that Zhou and Lin continued to flatter Mao by using the same terms just a few days after their self-criticism.<sup>20</sup>

In stark contrast to the depiction of Zhou's so-called "long-lasting fight" with Lin Biao, a great many documents show that Zhou actually flat-

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<sup>18</sup>*People's Daily*, May 1, 1966, 3.

<sup>19</sup>Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 461-62; *Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976* 3:40.

<sup>20</sup>It can be seen in the number of speeches Zhou and Lin delivered to "masses" from 1966 to 1968. Also see the speeches given by Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai at the CCP's Ninth National Congress, in a CCP Central Committee document dated May 1969.

tered Lin in the same manner he flattered Mao. In his speech at the Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo on May 21, 1966, Zhou said: "Comrade Lin Biao is the one who promotes Mao Zedong Thought the soonest; holds it the highest; elaborates it most abundantly; applies it in the most flexible ways and has the most success."<sup>21</sup> At a mass rally of over one hundred thousand people in Beijing Workers Stadium on March 27, 1968, Zhou Enlai was the one who, as the first person among all the CCP central leaders in such a huge mass assembly, shouted the slogan of "I wish Vice-Chairman Lin, the closest comrade-in-arms of our great leader, the best of health, the best of health forever, and the best of health forever!"<sup>22</sup> Zhou's speech at the CCP's Ninth National Congress on April 14, 1969 was full of flattering words to Lin Biao as well. Zhou stated, "Comrade Lin Biao is Comrade Mao Zedong's close comrade-in-arms and successor. This is the most correct conclusion that results naturally from Comrade Lin Biao's more than forty years of revolutionary struggle. It is totally in accordance with the facts." Zhou continued with adulating expressions for Lin that he had not used before:

[Lin] has won the enthusiastic support of the whole Party, the whole army, and the revolutionary people of different nationalities in China, and he has also been given the backing of the broad revolutionaries of the whole world. Not only do we feel boundless joy because we have as our great leader the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era, Chairman Mao, but we also feel great joy because we have Vice-Chairman Lin as Chairman Mao's universally recognized successor.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, Zhou cooperated closely with Lin by showing strong support for some of Lin's henchmen. Qiu Huizuo (邱會作), director of the PLA General Logistics Department, was a case in point. In the spring of 1967, Qiu was overthrown by the mass movement because of his alleged crimes, including rape. Lin Biao tried to protect Qiu. Having heard about

<sup>21</sup>"Premier Zhou's Speech on May 21, 1966," 12.

<sup>22</sup>See the speeches by Zhou Enlai, Chen Boda, Kang Sheng, Jiang Qing, and Yao Wenyuan to a mass rally in Beijing Workers Stadium, in *Beiyou Dongfanghong* (Beiyou "East-Is-Red") (edited by Beijing youdian xueyuan geming weiyuanhui), no. 76 (March 29, 1968): 4.

<sup>23</sup>See Zhou Enlai's speech at the CCP's Ninth National Congress (source cited in note 20 above), hand-written copy, 50-51; translated by Michael Schoenhals, "New Texts: Speeches at the CCP's Ninth National Congress," *Stockholm Journal of East Asian Studies* 2 (1991): 91-102.

Lin's firm support of Qiu, Zhou, along with Chen Boda and Jiang Qing, went to Qiu's department to deliver their speeches to support Lin. First, Zhou referred to Qiu as "Your Director, and our comrade-in-arms, Comrade Qiu Huizuo." Zhou then told the so-called history of his revolutionary experiences with Qiu:

I have known him for about thirty-six to thirty-seven years now since I first met him in Jiangxi Province (江西省), especially since we reached Shaanxi Province (陝西省) through the Long March.... I was in charge in the rear-area and Comrade Qiu Huizuo also participated in our underground work and was involved in logistics services. We saw each other almost daily in order to make plans regarding the supplies for the front, the troops crossing the Yellow River and marching east. We thus worked very closely at that time. I considered him a young, capable, and promising comrade. He has followed Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Lin. Thirty years later, I think my impression of him was about right.<sup>24</sup>

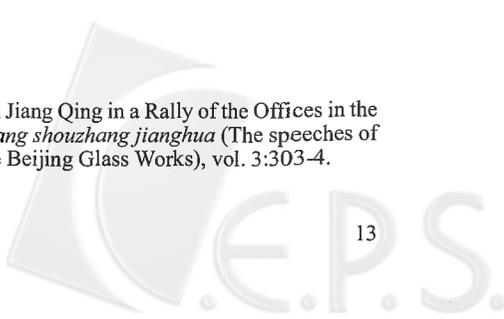
Finally, Zhou compared Qiu with his three predecessors—Huang Kecheng (黃克誠), Hong Xuezhi (洪學智), and Yang Lisan (楊立三)—and praised that "[Qiu] is not only well qualified for the post, but also an outstanding director of the Department as well."

Notwithstanding Zhou's high praise of Qiu, the simple historic fact is that Zhou was one of the top leaders of the CCP in both Jiangxi and Shaanxi provinces about thirty-seven years ago, whereas Qiu was only a middle- or even lower-level cadre there. It was impossible for them to make daily "plans" together as equal "comrades-in-arms." When Zhou called Qiu a "comrade-in-arms" and recalled that kind of "histories," his purpose was merely to provide political support for Qiu in order to curry favor with the man standing behind Qiu, Lin Biao. After Zhou's speech, the mass movement was ruined and hundreds of people who opposed Qiu were persecuted, exiled, or imprisoned by Qiu.

During the period 1966-70, Zhou actually seemed closer to Lin than Mao. As indicated in Mao's personal physician's memoirs, Zhou had violated the party's most rigorous discipline by revealing secret health

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<sup>24</sup>"The Speeches of Premier Zhou, Chen Boda, and Jiang Qing in a Rally of the Offices in the PLA General Logistics Department," in *Zhongyang shouzhang jianghua* (The speeches of central leaders) (edited by the Red Guards of the Beijing Glass Works), vol. 3:303-4.



information about Mao to Lin, his successor and hidden rival.<sup>25</sup> Dr. Li also witnessed another notable incident: "Wang and the 8341 Corps were responsible for searching Lin Biao's residence in Maojiawan [毛家灣] after his death. They found many photographs of Zhou Enlai and his wife, Deng Yingchao [鄧穎超], with Lin Biao and Ye Qun [葉群]. The photographs could be used by Zhou's enemies to criticize him for his relationship with Lin. Wang personally delivered the pictures and other potentially damaging documents to Zhou's wife, who remained forever in his department."<sup>26</sup> Until the beginning of the Second Plenary Session of the CCP's Ninth Central Committee in August 1970, Zhou was a close "comrade-in-arms" to Lin as he initially supported Lin to be the president of the state.<sup>27</sup> However, as soon as the topic of the presidency had turned into an open power struggle between Mao and Lin, Zhou quickly shifted his position to Mao's camp. During the succeeding year of the conflict, Zhou helped Mao to destroy Lin and his clique.

One contradictory question naturally arises: If Zhou was absolutely loyal to Mao, why did he reveal many of Mao's health secrets to Lin? If Zhou was closer to Lin than Mao, why did he change his position so quickly and help Mao to destroy Lin? Answering these questions may be the key to understanding Zhou as a crafty politician playing games among various factions in the CCP. As a Chinese saying goes, skillful politicians always "have a foot in both camps." Zhou's flattery of, and revealing of Mao's secrets to, Lin all can be properly understood as an advanced political investment in Lin's camp. If Lin had seized the highest power in China, there was little doubt that Zhou would have at least kept his own position or received a promotion. Since the serious conflict between Mao and Lin emerged so early, however, and there was no chance for Lin to win, Zhou thus changed his position very quickly to Mao's camp. Based on Zhou's aboutface, quite possible is that there was really no "fighting" in principle between Zhou and Lin—except Zhou's expediency-driven maneuvering.

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<sup>25</sup>Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 539.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>See Zhang Ning, *Chen jie* (Predestined fate) (Hong Kong: Ming Pao chubanshe, 1997), 184-88. Also see *Zhou Enlai zhuan 1949-1976*, 1012-16.

In analyzing "a long-lasting fight" between Zhou and Jiang Qing's clique, one simple but essential historical fact should not be overlooked: the so-called "Gang of Four" was indeed the "Gang of Five," namely, Mao was the true leader behind the clique. Based on Zhou's servility and subservience to any superiors, one cannot imagine that Zhou could have been in any serious conflicts with Mao. Likewise, Zhou was never in any serious conflicts with Jiang and the Central Cultural Revolution Group in the turbulent decade, especially during the most chaotic period of the Cultural Revolution (1966-71). Only words of boasting and mutual protection could be heard between Zhou and Jiang's clique. Aside from much flattery of the Central Cultural Revolution Group members by Zhou, there was another important illustration of Zhou's performance in the rally at Beijing Workers Stadium on March 27, 1968 that shows how Zhou flattered Jiang and how CCP official historians have today covered up Zhou's dark side. In the middle of Jiang Qing's remarks on some rivals' plot to kill her, Zhou suddenly shouted "Defend Comrade Jiang Qing with Our Lives!" In his speech following the one where he shouted two usual slogans of "Defend Chairman Mao with Our Lives" and "Defend Vice-Chairman Lin with Our Lives," Zhou shouted the same unusual slogan for Jiang Qing again.<sup>28</sup> Zhou's shouting actually promoted Jiang up to the number three figure in China, when Jiang was only the deputy head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group. Only one year later, according to newly released CCP documents, Zhou officially nominated Jiang as a member of the Politburo Standing Committee at the Party's Ninth National Congress.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to being the first person to create the slogan above, Zhou was also the first person among all CCP central leaders who publicly tried to cover up Jiang Qing's inglorious history in the 1930s. "Here, I want to mention something about Comrade Jiang Qing's life story of fighting," Zhou stressed in his remarks at the rally above:

Comrade Jiang Qing fought a number of battles in the past, especially the 1930s. As soon as she joined our party, she encountered persecution from the

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<sup>28</sup>See note 22 above.

<sup>29</sup>Luo, "Zhou Enlai Joined the Struggle Against Liu Shaoqi," 20-21.

Kuomintang (KMT 國民黨), traitors, spies, and fake members of our party. As dauntless as Lu Xun (魯迅) with "hard bone," Comrade Jiang dared to fight back against those who slandered and persecuted her in her youth. The articles she wrote were all fighting articles. They are certainly red articles when read today. To persecute Comrade Jiang Qing, reactionaries fabricated a number of "black writings" that were published in Taiwan and Hong Kong. They are not Comrade Jiang Qing's writings. Therefore, whoever collects such materials (the libel articles written by the 'black gang' (黑幫), reactionaries, and imperialists) must be a member of the "black gang." We should investigate them. These materials are nothing but libel! Lu Xun also encountered these kinds of libel, let alone Comrade Jiang Qing who did underground work while keeping up her work in art! It was really not easy at that time. For that alone, she deserves our admiration. After arriving in Yan'an (延安) at the beginning of the War of Resistance Against Japan, Comrade Jiang Qing became Chairman Mao's close comrade-in-arms and diligent student.<sup>30</sup>

As the top leader of the underground system of the CCP in the 1930s, Zhou obviously knew Jiang's history as an actress with a dubious reputation. However, he blurred black and white by denouncing those who had exposed Jiang's true colors in the Cultural Revolution as being part of the "black gang." Over half of Zhou's four-thousand-word speech was pure flattery of Mao, Lin, and Jiang. About one thousand words in that speech were devoted to Jiang Qing. However, the most ridiculous was Zhou's comparison of Jiang to Lu Xun, one of the preeminent founders of modern Chinese literature and culture. This association runs counter to any common sense.

Just as Zhou had the habit of distorting history, so do present-day Chinese official historians responsible for recording Zhou's history. None of the new official publications by such historians have recorded Zhou's blatant flatteries of those whom he was so eager to please. However, there is a cleverly distorted story reported in *A Chronicle of Zhou Enlai 1949-76*:

March 27 [1968]. Zhou attended the rally of one hundred thousand people in Beijing entitled "Oath-taking rally for completely repulsing the new repeated counterattacks by the February Adverse Current (二月逆流), and striving for all-round victories of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." At the rally, Zhou announced the Resolution by the CCP Central Committee, the State Council, the CCP Central Military Commission, and the Central Cultural Revolution Group about the new appointment of Huang Yongsheng (黃永勝) as the chief of the General Staff, and of Wen Yucheng (溫玉成) as the commander for

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<sup>30</sup>See note 22 above.

the Beijing Garrison Command while removing Yang Chengwu (楊成武), Yu Lijin (余立金), and Fu Chongbi (傅崇碧) from their posts. [Zhou] delivered a speech regarding the incident of Yang, Yu, and Fu. Talking about "launching a revolution to bring an advance in production," Zhou pointed out that: Since the vast majority of people attending this rally are workers, they [you] have high responsibilities. Not only should they [you] carry on the revolution, but they [you] should also engage in production under the united base of revolutionary principles. Don't be absent; don't fail to show up for work.<sup>31</sup>

The impression the compilers want to give readers in the quotation above is that Zhou's remarks focus as much attention as possible on production rather than politics. Comparing this version with Zhou's original speech, however, one can see a difference between the two kinds of sources. While mainly flattering Jiang Qing and Lin Biao and denouncing Yang, Yu, and Fu, Zhou spent only about one hundred words discussing production, which was also cited from the "New Year Editorial" of the *People's Daily*.<sup>32</sup> Because the history recounted by the court historians in China is intentionally misrecorded, omitted, and even "re-edited," it is easy to see why Zhou's image in the Cultural Revolution becomes highly complex.

Another key to understanding the relationship between Zhou and Jiang's clique is looking at how Jiang and the members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group treated Zhou. In contrast to the myth of "a long-lasting fight" between Zhou and Jiang portrayed by China's new official publications, some documents demonstrate that Jiang and her clique protected Zhou for a long period of time. The first attack on Zhou was by some left extremists in the Red Guard organization called "Jinggang Mountain" (景崗山) at Qinghua University (清華大學) in November 1966. As soon as Jiang Qing heard about the message, she severely blamed her trusted followers: "Premier was entrusted by the Chairman and the Party Central Committee to go to Qinghua to resolve problems. If you oppose him, it is the same as opposing the Party Central Committee!"<sup>33</sup> From 1967

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<sup>31</sup> *Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976* 3:227.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> See the speeches of Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, and others in receiving the representatives from Beihang "Red Flag," Qinghua "Jinggang Mountain," and Diyuan "East-Is-Red" on November 19, 1966, in Wuhan zaofanpai, ed., *Zai wuchanjieji wenhua dageming zhong zhongyang fuze tongzhi jianghua chaolu* 2:137.

to 1968, there were several attacks on Zhou from an ultra-left organization called the "5.16 Clique," but the Central Cultural Revolution Group stopped them all. Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, and other members of the group firmly protected Zhou: "The 5.16 Clique is a counterrevolutionary organization. They attacked the premier, and actually attacked the Party Central Committee," and "Premier Zhou is Chairman Mao's closest comrade-in-arms. No one should suspect him; writing a big-character poster to oppose him is absolutely forbidden."<sup>34</sup> True, there were some differences or conflicts between Zhou and Jiang's clique. Also true is that these differences or conflicts were mainly in terms of unlike responsibilities, working styles, and class struggle methods.

Purging Lin Biao's clique from the highest level of the CCP had a bearing on the almost harmonious relationship between Zhou and Jiang. First, Lin's clique left a number of empty posts in the highest levels of power, which were quite attractive to other factions in the CCP. As a matter of fact, Zhou and his followers gained most of those positions at the outset. In order to seize back power, conflicts occurred frequently between Jiang (Mao) and Zhou. However, there was no "long-lasting fight" throughout the whole Cultural Revolution. After Deng Xiaoping reappeared on China's political stage in 1973, some meaningful conflicts concerning economics and education occurred between Jiang's clique and Deng (and his supporter Zhou). However, Jiang and Zhou still cooperated in many areas and on many occasions. For instance, together they unleashed a movement called "Purging Members of the 5.16 Clique" that lasted from 1970 to the end of the Cultural Revolution. An important standard for deciding who was to be purged was based on who had opposed Zhou. This movement resulted in a large number of innocent people being persecuted, arrested, and killed throughout the Cultural Revolution.

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<sup>34</sup>See Shoudu bufen dazhuan yuanxiao, zhongdeng xuexiao Mao Zedong sixiang xuexiban (Seminar of Mao Zedong Thought in Some Beijing Colleges and High Schools), ed., *Tianfan difu kai'er kang: Wuchanjiuji wenhua dageming dashiji* (In heroic triumph heaven and earth have been overturned: A chronicle of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) (Luoyang: Henan erqigongshe, 1968), 202, 231, 262, 272.

## **In Mass Movement**

Chinese historians frequently describe Zhou as someone who fought fire. One example is taken from the memoirs of Wang Li (王力), the former member of the Central Cultural Revolution Group. The story used concerns how Zhou opposed Mao's notion of the "Bourgeois Reactionary Line" (資產階級反動路線), which is recorded in China's official publications as follows:

On the National Day [of 1966], Liu Shaoqi still appeared on the rostrum of Tiananmen (天安門) as the head of state through the careful arrangement of Zhou Enlai. In his speech, however, Lin Biao directly attacked Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping and stated, "The fighting with the Bourgeois Reactionary Line has continued." Lin also asked the Red Guards to dare to fight, and work hard to develop the movement in depth.

Zhou disagreed with the formulation of the "Bourgeois Reactionary Line," and expressed his own opinion to Mao Zedong in Mao's presence. What Zhou worried was that this formulation might result in mass movements attacking more leading cadres.<sup>35</sup>

In a passage like this, history is distorted in several ways. First, there is no evidence that Zhou arranged for Liu to be the head of state on the Tiananmen rostrum. Second, Lin Biao did not create the term "Bourgeois Reactionary Line"—Mao himself did.<sup>36</sup> This formulation did not appear in Lin's speech but in a *Red Flag* (紅旗) "Editorial" entitled "Marching Forward on the Broad Road of Mao Zedong Thought" (October 3, 1966). Third and the most important, the story leads readers to assume that Zhou personally "fought" with Mao over their great differences for the mass movement of "Criticizing the Bourgeois Reactionary Line." However, the original story in Wang Li's memoirs states the opposite:

After reading the "Editorial" in *Red Flag*, Premier Zhou asked Wang Li: "On the line problem inside the party, only the terms 'Left' opportunist line and Right opportunism were used before. I do not understand why we used the terms 'Bourgeois' and 'Reactionary Line' this time. I should ask Chairman Mao." After he did that, Premier Zhou told Wang Li, "Chairman Mao explained to me

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<sup>35</sup>Zhou Enlai: *Daxing dianshi wenxian jilupian*, 231; *Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976* 3:73; and *Zhou Enlai zhuan 1949-1976*, 921.

<sup>36</sup>See Lin's speech in the *People's Daily* on October 2, 1966.

in English about the differences among the terms 'Counterrevolutionary Line,' 'Antirevolutionary Line,' and 'Reactionary Line.' I said to the Chairman 'I understand now'.<sup>37</sup>

Comparing the passage above with its "official version" in China, one can tell that the original story was obviously edited because these official historians cut off Zhou's final reaction to Mao's explanation. Nevertheless, this part is too crucial to be omitted. Zhou's answer "I understand now" indicated explicitly that Mao had convinced Zhou, and Zhou promised to support Mao's mass movement strategy although he might still have some reservations. Moreover, the tone of the original story is very mild, and the situation was more like that of a humble pupil asking his knowledgeable master a question. Since the significant end was deliberately omitted, the whole tone of the story became very strong.

Just like his positive answer to Mao above, on the whole Zhou tried his best to follow Mao closely by supporting the mass movement during the Cultural Revolution. For instance, his first speeches delivered to mass rallies were on August 4 and 22 of 1966 at Qinghua University. Zhou stressed: "Last time I said, 'I am here to ignite and fan fire to make it burn brighter. I am here to fan the flames of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution with socialist wind.' Now you have already set the fire, and therefore you should solve the problems on your own. I believe the fires [the mass movement] will spread quickly all over the China."<sup>38</sup> An analysis of his many other speeches delivered to the masses at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution reveals that igniting and fanning fire was a fundamental theme.

Several positive aspects of the role Zhou played in the mass movement are overpraised by the official publications in China. First, these historians emphasize that Zhou fully implemented the party's policies, notably in stopping the beating and torturing of people. However, Lao Gui (老鬼),

<sup>37</sup>Wang Li, *Xianchang lishi: Wenhua dageming jishi* (Scenes of the history: Factual records of the Cultural Revolution) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1993), 67.

<sup>38</sup>"Comrade Zhou Enlai's Speech at the All-University Meeting of Qinghua on August 22, 1966," in Wuhan zaofanpai, ed., *Zai wuchanjieji wenhua dageming zhong zhongyang juze tongzhi jianghua chaolu* 1:77.

a fifteen-year-old high school student in Beijing in 1966, witnessed a totally different scene. In his recent memoir, Lao Gui recollected how the "Red August" (紅八月) movement of beating and torturing people began:

[On August 15, 1966], a rally of a hundred thousand people was held in Beijing Workers Stadium for criticizing and denouncing some "young rogues." The student group "Red-Red-Red" [an "Old Red Guard" organization] in my high school was one of the organizers of the rally. Because a member of the group was wounded by these "young rogues" in a scuffle, the members of "Red-Red-Red" brutally tortured these "young rogues" in public. However, not one of those central leaders sitting in the rostrum, including Premier Zhou, tried to stop the torture. From that time on, a tide of beating and torturing people [by the Red Guards] in Beijing became very popular.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the fact that some parts of Zhou's speeches that were delivered to the "masses" mentioned the need to stop the beating and torturing of people, hard is to find a case where Zhou actually stopped the beating and torturing of people in "Red August." Incidentally, Zhou was a formal advisor and strong supporter to the "Xicheng District Pickets" (西城糾察隊), which was unfortunately a leading organization of "Old Red Guards" (老紅衛兵) who tortured and killed innocent people. The other CCP leaders, such as members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, also denounced the beating and torturing of people after the red terror. For instance, Mao had several instructions about "Stop violent struggle but continue verbal struggle." Chen Boda, the head of the group, went to several private houses of detention by the "Xicheng District Pickets" to stop the torturing of people.<sup>40</sup> Jiang Qing also denounced the "Old Red Guards" for torturing and beating people in several speeches at the end of 1966.<sup>41</sup> However, these measures from all of the CCP central leaders were far from enough to stop the tide of the red terror in a timely fashion. As a result, according to the CCP's official documents, over 1,772 innocent people were killed and 85,198 people expelled from their residences in this

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<sup>39</sup>Lao Gui, *Xue yu tie* (Blood and iron) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 304.

<sup>40</sup>Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 82-83. See also *Chen Boda yigao*, 85-86.

<sup>41</sup>See Wuhan zaofanpai, ed., *Zai wuchanjiuji wenhua dageming zhong zhongyang fuze tongzhi jianghua chaolu* 2:246-47, 250-51, 258-59; 3:26-28.

so-called "Red August" movement in the city of Beijing.<sup>42</sup> It was also Zhou Enlai who drafted the CCP's instructional document and launched a new so-called "one blow, three oppositions" movement (一打三反運動) (attacking counterrevolutionaries; combating corruption and profiteering; and opposing extravagance and ostentation) in 1970.<sup>43</sup> According to official statistics, 1.84 million innocent people were attacked; about 300,000 people were arrested; and over 9,000 people were executed. Yu Luoke (遇羅克) and Zhang Zhixin (張志新), the two most famous political dissenters in the Cultural Revolution, were either killed or arrested in this movement.<sup>44</sup> Zhou thus seemingly had no sympathy for common people's sufferings, particularly the sufferings of the "counterrevolutionaries" in the Cultural Revolution.

Zhou was also highly praised by these official historians in China who claimed that Zhou protected a great many old cadres—such as Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, He Long (賀龍), Chen Yi (陳毅), and Ye Jianying (葉劍英)—from the mass movement. True, Zhou did protect a number of high-ranking cadres, but only under certain circumstances. As the president of China, Liu Shaoqi should be considered as the number one old cadre purged in the Cultural Revolution. A reexamination of stories about how Zhou shielded Liu in official publications in China will reveal that they mainly occurred before the "January Storm" (一月風暴) of 1967. After further examining the historical context as a whole, particularly Mao's attitude toward Liu up to that time, it is no surprise to see that Zhou protected Liu as per Mao's instructions. Perhaps because Mao still worried about the strength of Liu's faction in the party, he treated Liu gently, until his action for seizing back local power in the "January Storm" in 1967. During the first half year of the Cultural Revolution, Mao was very positive about Liu's self-criticism, and strongly opposed efforts by the masses to

<sup>42</sup>See Wang Nianyi, *Dadongluan de niandai* (The years of huge turmoil) (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1988), 69-71.

<sup>43</sup>*Zhou Enlai nianpu 1949-1976* 3:346-47.

<sup>44</sup>See *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guoshi quanjian 1967-1976* (Completely history of the PRC 1967-76) (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1996), 4290; Chen Donglin and Du Pu, eds., *Gongheguo shiji* (The chronicle of the republic), 4 volumes (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1996), 3:528.

write big-character posters attacking Liu in public. On August 24, 1966, Mao sent Chen Boda to Beijing University to tear from the wall a big-character poster criticizing Liu Shaoqi. Chen Boda stressed to the masses that Mao and the party's Central Committee opposed any criticism of Liu in public.<sup>45</sup> After the spring of 1967, however, Mao changed his strategic plan from protecting Liu from the mass movement to insulting Liu by using the mass movement. Zhou immediately followed Mao's plan to criticize Liu in a number of speeches delivered to the "masses." Moreover, Zhou followed Mao's instruction to lead the Central Special Case Investigative Group on Liu's history. According to the newly released CCP secret archival documents, it was Zhou who invited Jiang Qing to participate in the investigation.<sup>46</sup> After over one year of "investigation," based on much fake evidence, Zhou finally signed the document entitled "An Investigative Report on the Crimes of the Traitor, Spy, and Renegade Liu Shaoqi" (關於叛徒、内奸、工賊劉少奇罪行的審查報告) along with his lengthy speech denouncing Liu at the Enlarged Twelfth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee in October 1968.<sup>47</sup> According to a newly released CCP document, the leadership of Jiang and Zhou in the investigation of Liu's case was highly praised by Lin Biao in his remark at the same session above.<sup>48</sup> Especially worth noting, according to one Western scholar's current research, is that Zhou wrote a ruthless comment "Bastard Liu should be executed" on the investigative report on Liu that was sent to Mao.<sup>49</sup>

He Long was one of the ten well-known marshals in China and one of Zhou's closest friends. His case was rather similar to Liu Shaoqi's in that they both were shielded by Zhou from the mass movement under Mao's instructions at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. When Mao changed

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<sup>45</sup>See Wuhan zaofanpai, ed., *Zai wuchanjieli wenhua dageming zhong zhongyang fuze tongzhi jianghua chaolu* 1:79-80.

<sup>46</sup>Luo, "Zhou Enlai Joined the Struggle Against Liu Shaoqi," 22.

<sup>47</sup>See Han Suyin, *Eldest Son* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1994), 355.

<sup>48</sup>See "Lin Biao's Speech at the Second Meeting of the Enlarged Twelfth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee on October 26, 1968" (reprinted by the General Office of the CCP Central Committee, July 1, 1972), 14.

<sup>49</sup>Sun Wanguo, "Dou'e in the Past, Lin Biao in the Present," *Ming Pao yuekan* (Ming Pao Monthly) (Hong Kong), 1996, no. 7:108 and the author's new interview record with high-ranking Chinese officers in 1999.

his mind and arrested He, Zhou shifted his position very quickly to Mao's side. According to a member of the Special Case Investigative Group on He Long, Zhou "wrote about a one-hundred-word comment on Mao's order to arrest He, in which Zhou swore He Long was as bad as a cur."<sup>50</sup> There are also other similar examples. Ye Jianying, Chen Yi, Nie Rongzhen (聶榮臻), and Tan Zhenlin (譚震林) were all Zhou's old subordinates and closest friends. In the so-called "February Adverse Current," they had a serious conflict with the Central Cultural Revolution Group, while Zhou remained silent as a neutralist. When Mao decided to support the group, Zhou quickly criticized them, forsaking Tan Zhenlin first. At the Enlarged Twelfth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee in October 1968, Zhou delivered a long speech to denounce his old friends one by one, exposing their "crimes" of opposing the Cultural Revolution.<sup>51</sup> Safe is to say that Zhou's protection of high-ranking cadres was generally at the instruction of Mao. If Mao changed his opinion about someone, Zhou would immediately follow suit.

A common defense for Zhou's behavior by some of Zhou's followers and party historians is that Zhou would be surely overthrown by Mao and the "Gang of Four" if he did not say these "words uttered against his conscience."<sup>52</sup> Since Liu Shaoqi and He Long both died during the Cultural Revolution, one cannot use any current hypothesis to assume what could have happened if Zhou had defended them. However, here is a great example from Dr. Li Zhisui's memoirs:

Zhou was almost as obsequious before Jiang Qing. In December 1966, when Jiang Qing arrived at the door of the room in the Great Hall of the People where Zhou Enlai was conducting an important meeting, Zhou's longtime chief bodyguard, Cheng Yuangong (成元功), suggested politely that rather than interrupt the meeting, Jiang Qing might first want to eat and return when the meeting was over.

<sup>50</sup> See Zhang, *Chen jie*, 330.

<sup>51</sup> "Zhou Enlai's Speech at the Enlarged Twelfth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee" (reprinted by Beijing Foreign Trade College), 16-19.

<sup>52</sup> These words come from Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun (陳雲), Ye Jianying, and most of the court historians. See An Jianshi, ed., *Zhou Enlai de zuihou shuiyue* (The last years of Zhou Enlai) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1995), 1-3.

Jiang Qing was infuriated. "You, Cheng Yuangong, behave like an obedient dog before the premier but act like a wolf to me. I want you arrested." She ordered Wang Dongxing to arrest the premier's bodyguard.

Wang Dongxing refused, agreeing only to transfer Cheng to another job.

Deng Yingchao, Zhou's wife, the premier's closest confidante, intervened. "You must arrest Cheng Yuangong," she insisted to Wang. "We don't want to show any favoritism toward him."

Still Wang refused to arrest the bodyguard. "Cheng Yuangong has worked for the premier and his wife all his life," Wang said, "and they are throwing him out just to protect themselves." He finally sent Cheng off a stint at the General Office's May 7 Cadre School to work in the field.<sup>53</sup>

The end of the story obviously violates Jiang Qing's order, but neither Zhou nor Wang was overthrown by Jiang and her group. This story reveals Wang's basic sense of justice as a human being and Zhou's extreme selfishness and lack of humanity. This is why Zhou could follow Mao and prosecute his comrades-in-arms and friends.

Another important fact is that many old cadres were never protected but rather stricken down by Zhou himself in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. The National Foreign Culture Committee, the National Science Committee, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences were three experimental units used by Zhou to lead mass movement. In the movement of "Criticizing the Bourgeois Reactionary Line," Zhou unfeelingly brought a verdict of three "anti-party cliques"—"Zhang Yan Anti-Party Clique" (張彥反黨集團), "Han Guang (韓光) Anti-Party Clique," and "Zhang Jingfu (張勁夫) Anti-Party Clique"—to all leading cadres in these three units. There was no doubt that these cadres suffered all kinds of torture in these mass movements. Ruan Ming (阮銘) points out that "in the mass movement, Zhou's strategy was to sacrifice some cadres in order to protect others."<sup>54</sup> Needless to say, Zhou usually protected cadres in his faction and persecuted others. For instance, among the vice-premiers he persecuted Peng Zhen, Luo Ruiqing, and Lu Dingyi, but not Li Xiannian (李先念) and Li Fuchun (李富春). On the national industry and transportation front, he shielded Yu Qiuli (余秋里) and Gu Mu (谷牧), but not Bo Yibo (薄一波)

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<sup>53</sup>Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 510.

<sup>54</sup>Ruan Ming, "Zhou Enlai in a Revolving Stage," in *Hongchao zaixiang* (Chief minister of the red dynasty), ed. Jin Zhong (Hong Kong: Kaifang zazhishe, 1998), 37.

and Tao Lujia (陶鲁茄). In order to protect Chen Yi and Liao Chengzhi (廖承志) in the realm of foreign and overseas Chinese affairs, Zhou pronounced Zhang Yan and Fang Fang (方方) guilty as leaders of anti-party cliques and capitalist-roaders at huge mass rallies. Sometimes Zhou even intentionally provided "criminal evidences" of a leading cadre to a mass movement. A significant example is how Zhou forsook Fang Fang, secretary of the party committee in the State Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission in a mass movement. Between the two party leaders in that commission, Liao Chengzhi and Fang Fang, Zhou strongly guarded Liao, his henchman. However, the attack from the mass movement was unfortunately against both of them. To divert public attention from Liao to Fang, Zhou once spoke at a huge mass rally:

I fully agree with your proposal to overthrow a handful of capitalist-roaders inside the party in the State Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission. The representative of the capitalist-roaders you exposed is the right one. Who is he? He is Fang Fang.

I now provide evidence to you, which was exposed by someone last year in the Cultural Revolution. Fang Fang sent a great number of scenery films to capitalist agents in Hong Kong to gain foreign currency. It was almost like selling the rivers and mountains of our country to reactionaries overseas; it betrayed the interest of the nation because these films pictured our rivers, mountains, and buildings.<sup>55</sup>

The "crimes" of Fang Fang Zhou provided above are absolute nonsense, especially Zhou as the premier put selling scenery films on a par with betraying the interest of the nation. However, the other significant sense that has been made of this incident is that Zhou forsook and framed a high-ranking elder cadre to the mass movement because Fang Fang did not belong to his faction in the party. In addition to forsaking individual cadres, Zhou strongly supported Red Guards "bombarding any local headquarters" in several of his speeches.<sup>56</sup> In September 1966, Zhou drafted a

<sup>55</sup>"Comrade Zhou Enlai's Speech at a Rally 'Seizing New Victory of the Cultural Revolution in Returned Overseas Chinese in Beijing'," in Wuhan zaofanpai, ed., *Zai wuchanjiuji wenhua dageming zhong zhongyang fuze tongzhi jianghua chaolu* 3:13. Also see *Geming qiaobao* (Revolutionary Post for Overseas Chinese), March 14, 1967, 2; Pipan Liao Chengzhi, Fang Fang lianluozhan, ed., *Pi Liao zhanbao* (Battlefield Report on Criticizing Liao Chengzhi), no. 9:2.

<sup>56</sup>See Wuhan zaofanpai, ed., *Zai wuchanjiuji wenhua dageming zhong zhongyang fuze tongzhi jianghua chaolu* 1:1, 166, 180, 273-74.

document for the party, in which he proposed to "put all the cadres into the fire of the mass movement to toast." This document was withheld by Mao himself later for being too radical.<sup>57</sup> At least at the outset of the Cultural Revolution, Zhou was not a firefighter but an igniter.

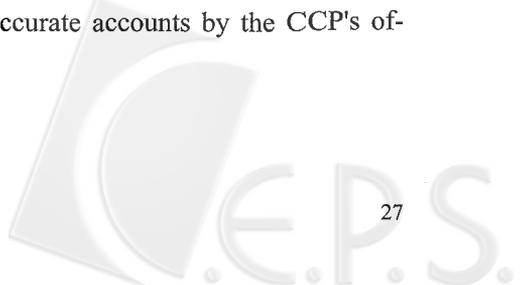
### **Conclusion**

For too long, the Chinese authorities have worked hard to create a larger-than-life and infallible image of Zhou's role in the Cultural Revolution through the use of massive, inaccurate data in numerous official publications. However, these publications all neglect a simple historical logic: for a party and a government leading a nation into an unprecedented catastrophe that lasted an entire decade, one of its top leaders and government officials (namely, the premier) has to bear his share of accountability and responsibility for the dreadful administration. In this lights, how can one believe that Zhou was a completely holy and pure person?

Thousands of archives of Zhou's activities in the Cultural Revolution have still remained closed as "top state secrets" by the CCP, but some newly published materials such as memoirs, interviews with participants of the Cultural Revolution, and many reprints of party leader speeches delivered to the "masses" during the Cultural Revolution have started to expose the true role of Zhou during this period of turmoil. It was Zhou who served as Mao's enthusiastic helper and strong supporter for launching the Cultural Revolution. It was Zhou who cooperated with the so-called "arch-criminals" of the Cultural Revolution—Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four"—in many areas and on many occasions during the most stages of the Cultural Revolution. It was also Zhou who tried his best to follow Mao closely in support of the chaotic mass movement in the Cultural Revolution. Although Zhou's mask will be completely stripped off when all of the secret documents are opened to public, these new materials provide enough evidence to challenge the inaccurate accounts by the CCP's of-

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<sup>57</sup>See Wang, *Xianchang lishi*, 32-33.



ficial publications. The purpose of this essay is precisely an effort to put basic but profound question marks on the perfect image of Zhou and draw people's attention to the historical truth.