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OCI NO. 1506/62  
COPY NO. 132

9 April 1962

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs  
EO 12958 3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs  
EO 12958 6.2(c)



THE  
DECLINE  
OF  
MAO  
TSE-TUNG

REFERENCE TITLE:  
POLO XV-62

CURRENT  
INTELLIGENCE  
STAFF  
STUDY

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

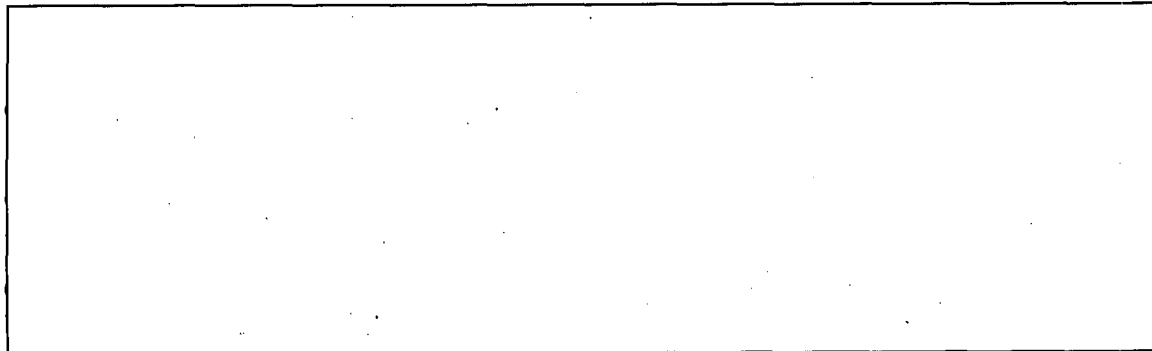
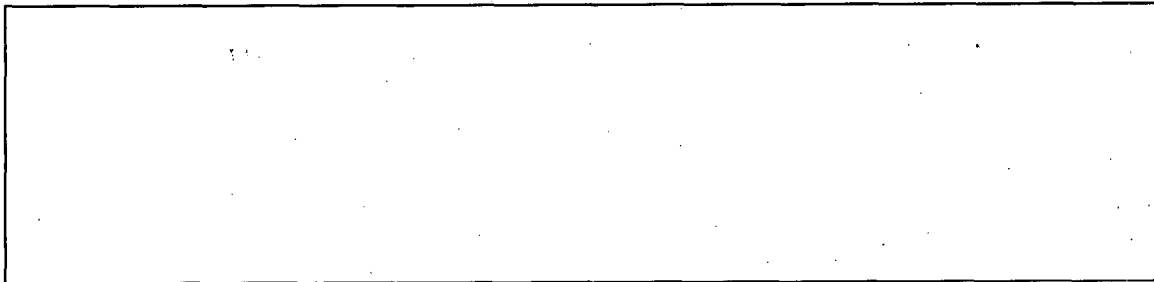
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THE DECLINE OF MAO TSE-TUNG

This is a postscript to POLO XIV-61, "The Chinese Communist Leadership, 1958-1961." It recapitulates the evidence for the probability that Mao Tse-tung has been deteriorating in recent years, and for the possibility that he is suffering from a serious medical disorder which could soon lead to his death or retirement or overthrow. The paper speculates on the implications of this probable deterioration and possible illness for the Chinese Communist party and the Sino-Soviet relationship. An appendix provides a record of information bearing on Mao's health which has come to hand since 1945.



The Sino-Soviet Studies Group would welcome comment on this paper, with respect either to the conclusions or to the record on which the conclusions are based. Comment should be addressed in this instance to the coordinator of the group, at [redacted]

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THE DECLINE OF MAO TSE-TUNG

SUMMARY

There is good evidence that Mao Tse-tung has been deteriorating in recent years, if only in the sense of declining energies and abilities. Evidence of this kind includes his own statements about weakening powers and his own preparations for possible retirement; his generally unimpressive performances in speeches and interviews; the apparent sharp decline in his productivity; and the failure of the regime to publish anything of Mao's except brief remarks.

There is also some evidence to suggest a specific medical disorder from which Mao might be suffering. Such evidence is consistent with a picture of either cerebral ischemia (insufficient flow of blood to the brain) or senile dementia (senility). The evidence for a serious degree of either disorder, however, is not impressive, and our ability to make a diagnosis on the available evidence is quite limited.

The total evidence in both categories--for deterioration and for a specific disorder--affects to some degree certain conclusions we have previously offered about Chinese Communist party affairs and the Sino-Soviet relationship. While we believe that Mao still dominates the Chinese party, the question seems open for the future. We see a stronger possibility than before --now almost an even chance--that Mao will step aside and become honorary chairman of the party at the next party congress, perhaps this year. We see only a slightly stronger possibility than before that Mao will be pushed out--a weaker possibility (we think now) than the possibility that he will voluntarily step aside. And while we continue to believe that Liu Shao-chi will probably succeed Mao and will probably pursue much the same policies, we think that Mao's decline could give Liu a reason or pretext for changing Mao's policies. Mao's departure, for whatever reason, might well lead to an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, although probably not to a resolution of the Sino-Soviet dispute.

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## THE DECLINE OF MAO TSE-TUNG

We have offered the view at intervals since 1956 that Mao Tse-tung has been deteriorating, if only in the sense of declining energies and abilities. The only time that we have conjectured as to a specific medical disorder, we were mistaken--in late 1957, when we speculated that he might conceivably have cancer: which counsels us to offer all such conjectures with much caution. However, there has continued to be evidence of his general deterioration, and we have continued to look for a specific disorder as well.

A case for Mao's deterioration can be made solely on the basis of his conduct of the Chinese party's affairs in recent years. Until 1956, Mao, from any point of view, had a very impressive record of successes. Since that time, however, he has been in trouble. We have examined in various POLO and ESAU papers certain of his misadventures in domestic and foreign policy and his conduct of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Some combination of the following decisions and initiatives would appear in any case for Mao's deterioration, whether the case was made by a Western or a Communist observer, and whether by a hostile or friendly observer: in spring 1956, his incitement of the wildly unrealistic goal of an increase of 150 percent in agricultural production in 12 years, and his introduction of the ill-fated experiment with liberalization in China (encouraging criticism from outside the party); in autumn 1956, his interference in the USSR's troubles in Eastern Europe, which made them worse; in early 1957, his reaffirmation and expansion of the "hundred flowers" experiment, which collapsed within three months; in autumn 1957, his decisions to undertake a new course of socialist construction in China which was to rely on an unprecedented organization and exploitation of the human material, and concurrently, to challenge Soviet strategy for the world Communist movement; in early 1958, his formulation of the "general line" ("aim high, go all-out," etc.), his introduction of the concept of "uninterrupted revolution" in economic development, and his incitement of the "leap forward," all of which were to lead to the preposterous production claims of 1958 and to a humiliating withdrawal later in the year; in spring 1958, his inspiration of the commune program,

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which was to prove a disaster, and of the "mass line" for industrial development (the "backyard steel" program and related ventures), which was to prove an expensive failure; in summer 1958, his approval, if not conception, of the Taiwan Strait venture on the basis of various mistaken calculations, which led to another humiliating withdrawal; throughout 1959, his continued challenges to Soviet strategy and to Khrushchev personally, and his border dispute with India; in spring 1960, his fresh attacks on the conservatives and his incitement of large increases in output over the 1959 claims which had again been grossly inflated (which forced another retreat later in the year), and his encouragement of the urban commune program (a total failure); also in spring 1960, his systematic attacks on Soviet strategy in the Lenin Anniversary articles, apparently on the mistaken assumption that this could be done without provoking sanctions; in June 1960, his defiance and personal criticism of Khrushchev (through his spokesmen) at the Bucharest conference; in summer 1960, his persistence in this course despite Soviet retaliation by the withdrawal of the technicians, which greatly damaged the Chinese program of economic and military development; in November 1960, his continued intransigence (through his spokesmen) at the Moscow conference of Communist parties; through the first nine months of 1961, his continued defiance of Moscow on the matters in dispute (in particular, his support of Albania) and, in October, his open defiance (through Chou En-lai) on the issue of Albania at the CPSU congress; and, since then, his increased support of Albania and his resumption of polemics in the Sino-Soviet dispute, despite several Soviet warnings that extreme measures would be taken if necessary. We ourselves have regarded many of his domestic misadventures and much of his conduct of the Sino-Soviet dispute as evidence of a defective and deteriorating sense of the realities of the world, but we are forced to concede that from other viewpoints--the viewpoints of many Communists and even of some non-Communists--the case would not be persuasive. That is, two opinions were possible as to the prospects for many of his domestic and foreign ventures, at the time they were launched, and in most cases he has made the necessary retreats; and two opinions are still possible, as the evidence is not all in, as to what strategy would best serve the interests of the world Communist movement and China itself, what terms should be accepted for Soviet aid, and what the relations should be among the parties of the movement.

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Thus we have looked for evidence of a decline in Mao's abilities in recent years (apart from the question of whether he suffers from a specific medical disorder) in matters which are not so debatable as his conduct of the party's affairs. We think that the evidence falls into four main categories: his own statements about weakening powers and his own actions expressing such a feeling; his generally unimpressive performances in speeches and interviews; the apparent sharp decline in his productivity; and the failure of the regime to publish anything of Mao's except brief remarks.

As for his general weakening: Mao's first reported assertions that he was tired, in spring 1956; the provision in the party constitution of September 1956 for an "honorary chairman"; other statements by Mao in late 1956 and early 1957 about his weariness and expectation of death; his resignation from the government chairmanship in December 1958, partly on the stated ground of the need to conserve energy; his statement in early 1959 that he was old and sick; his apparent failure to make tours of inspection after spring 1960 (although one trip in early 1961 might have been such a tour); and whatever statements or actions, in addition to Mao's appearance, led Edgar Snow to conclude in autumn 1960 that Mao was tired of his problems and led Marshal Montgomery to note in autumn 1961 that Mao had aged considerably just since 1960 (together with Montgomery's observation that Mao kept his physician around at all times).

As for his performances in speeches and interviews: his February 1957 speech on "contradictions" was reported by sources who heard it as a poor job; his public speeches in Moscow in November 1957 were pedestrian, and his private address to the Soviet party central committee, in addition to showing poor organization and the defective sense of reality previously mentioned, was enlivened, according to one source, by a temper tantrum; his last-known speech, in August 1959, seems to have been at least in part a foolish performance; and virtually all accounts of interviews with Mao in recent years have indicated that these interviews were thin in content, including the long talks with Snow in autumn 1960 and with Montgomery in autumn 1961.

As for his declining productivity: since 1956, Mao has written for publication only one article (April 1958), and that of only one page, plus two brief poems (before October

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1958); only one source has asserted that Mao has written anything else (despite his resignation from the government chairmanship in December 1958 in part on the stated grounds of wanting more time to write), a claim qualified if not countered by other statements about the article in question (one of the Lenin Anniversary articles in spring 1960); he was silent even on the party's 40th anniversary in July 1961; there has been no known major speech by Mao since 1958; it has not even been asserted that he has made an "important speech" since April 1959; and we have no evidence that he has made any kind of speech since August 1959. As a caveat on this observation, much of the production recently attributed to Mao in the period 1941-1949 was not identified at the time, and it is possible that Mao has in fact been producing important things--statements issued as collective pronouncements, editorials in party journals, articles under a pseudonym such as "Yu Chao-li," and speeches to party meetings. On the other hand, subsequent claims for Mao need not be accepted at face value: Khrushchev has credibly stated that Stalin became the "author" of various works (e.g. the CPSU's short history) by appointing a group to do the work, then advertising his participation in the work of the group, then presenting himself as the sole author. We suspect that much of whatever work may later be credited to Mao will in fact have been written to Mao's vague prescription by Chen Po-ta, Lu Ting-i, Hu Chiao-mu and others.

As for the failure of the regime to publish the little (we think) that Mao does produce: although the practice of not publishing Mao's major speeches at the time they were given predates by several years the first evidence of his deterioration, the last major speech to be published at all was published in a much-revised version in 1957; and not even his minor speeches have been published since December 1957. It is not credible that every topic discussed by Mao since 1957 has been too sensitive to permit the publication of his statements about it, because other CCP leaders have published on extremely sensitive topics. We think that a more credible explanation is an unimpressive content (in Mao's speeches): a content which is evidently passable for an off-record occasion, but is not suitable for exposure to the great world.

In the past year, there have come to hand some interesting clues as to the specific medical disorder or disorders from which Mao might be suffering. The most interesting of

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these items have been: a report that Mao himself said in 1957 that he had "brain anemia"; some observations by Edgar Snow in autumn 1960, not reported at the time, about the unsatisfactory character of Mao's talks with him; and the observation by Marshal Montgomery in autumn 1961 that Mao needed assistance in walking.

The total evidence is consistent with either or both of two possibilities as to a specific disorder: cerebral ischemia, perhaps with multiple strokes; or some degree of senile dementia (hereinafter described as senility), which could exist concurrently.

Cerebral ischemia is an insufficient flow of blood to the brain, a condition common in older people, deriving from arteriosclerosis. The evidence consistent with the possibility of cerebral ischemia in Mao's case--symptoms which as a group do not point to any other particular disorder--is as follows:

(a) Mao's own description of his illness in 1957 (reported last year by a good source) as "brain anemia," which is a layman's term for cerebral ischemia.

(b) The apparent weakening of Mao's left side: an eye-witness account in early 1956 that Mao did not have the use of his left hand; and an eye-witness account of Mao's slumped left shoulder in spring 1960, which has been confirmed by several films since that time.

(c) Mao's observed difficulty in walking since 1957: Chinese press suggestion of difficulty in fall 1957; delivery of his speech in Moscow in November 1957 in a seated position, and Chinese press confirmation at the time of his difficulty in walking; further press confirmation of this difficulty in early 1958; Mao's again speaking from a seated position in May 1958; further press confirmation of difficulty in early 1959; indications in films of late 1960 and early 1961 of uncertainty in his movements; and Montgomery's observation in fall 1961 that Mao was weak on his legs and had to have a constant male attendant to help him walk (in Western countries a wealthy person who had had a stroke would be likely to do exactly that, i.e. get an attendant).

(d) Mao's sharply decreasing productivity in recent years, consistent with the declining productivity or non-productivity

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of one suffering from cerebral ischemia, and possibly related to some degree of the motor aphasia (difficulty in speaking and writing) which often accompanies cerebral ischemia: see the record of non-productivity and performances in speeches and interviews set forth above on pages 3 - 4.

Other aspects of Mao's activity which, while not evidence for cerebral ischemia in the same sense that the above information qualifies as evidence, are also consistent with such a possibility, are:

(a) Mao's general weakening (which of course, might be observed in connection with many forms of illness): see the record set forth on page 3.

(b) Mao's interest in swimming: first publicized in 1955, Mao's swimming has often been reported in recent years; swimming could be reasonably used as a form of physiotherapy to rebuild the patient's strength after a stroke.

It must be emphasized, however, that the evidence is not impressive--simply interesting, consistent with the possibility of cerebral ischemia. This caveat is strengthened by the review of many films of Mao. We did not find such "classical" signs of the disorder as asymmetry of the face (especially the mouth); the adducted-and-flexed position (a sort of cramped position) of the arm and leg; or a serious degree of paralysis of any part of the body. (In this latter connection, the observed limitation of motion in Mao's left shoulder might well come from rheumatism in or around the joint--an insignificant disorder.) While it is true that Mao could suffer from a significant degree of cerebral ischemia without showing any of these classical signs, the case for a serious degree is weakened by the review of the films.

As for the other possibility (senility), the evidence consistent with the possibility of some degree of senility on Mao's part (a condition, as noted above, which may exist concurrently with cerebral ischemia) is as follows:

(a) Loss of memory for recent events: the mistakes in fact, digression and excessive reminiscence in Mao's February 1957 and November 1957 speeches as reported; and the unsatisfactory character of almost all of his reported interviews--in

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particular his failure to deal with current events, the slightness and banality of his remarks, and his rambling and reminiscing style, in the Snow interviews of fall 1960, together with the possibility of "confabulation" (fluent speech without regard for facts) in Mao's conversation in those interviews.\*

(b) Emotional instability: suggested in one account from an obscure source of Mao's November 1957 speech (in which Mao was allegedly so overcome by rage or other emotion that for a time he was unintelligible), and by the only report of Mao's last-known speech (August 1959), in which, responding to the challenge to his programs by Defense Minister Peng Te-huai and others, Mao is said to have wept and to have threatened to go back to the masses and raise another and more loyal army.

(c) The failure of the regime to publish anything of Mao's in recent years, a failure consistent with the picture of a senile man who may be productive but whose work is too incoherent or foolish to publish.

(d) The increasing readiness of bloc spokesmen to describe Mao as senile and to encourage this view of him in the world Communist movement (although it is recognized that this description may not be employed responsibly by Mao's opponents): Khrushchev's reported description of Mao sometime before mid-1960 as an old man who had outlived his usefulness, his assertion several times in 1960 that Mao had lost touch with reality, the assertion (as a matter of common knowledge) [redacted] in 1961 that Mao's mind was bad, the assertion by Kadar on Mao's birthday in 1961 that Mao (not named) was suffering from a "senile disorder," and the rumors to this same effect circulating among Western European Communist parties in the same period.

\*There may have been even more evidence in all of Mao's interviews--of Mao's deterioration--than reported by the sources, as Mao is always protected by his interpreter in both directions--listening and speaking; the interpreter can conceal or reduce evidence of a failure to understand or to make a meaningful reply.

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Here again, however, the evidence is not impressive: the case for a serious degree of senility is no stronger than the case for a serious degree of cerebral ischemia, as again important pieces of evidence are missing. We do not have evidence of extreme emotional instability, which would be expected; and we have no suggestion from any source that Mao exhibits dis-orientation (confusion as to time and place), which would also be expected. Moreover, the review of the films provided no evidence of senility.

If Mao is indeed suffering from either cerebral ischemia or senility, his position is of course significantly weakened. The prognosis for a man with chronic cerebral ischemia is poor. Nothing much can be done for the illness, and it might get much worse at any time, i.e. the patient might have another stroke. At a minimum, the result of this disorder is always a reduction in the patient's overall performance. Senility is also a non-correctible disorder, and mental competence is of course greatly reduced, if not eliminated. While the prognosis for survival of a senile man is good, no worse than for a man who is not senile, a senile man would be seriously handicapped in dealing with a genuine (as distinct from fancied) threat to him.

In sum, the evidence of a decline in Mao's abilities in recent years strikes us as good, while the evidence for either cerebral ischemia or senility seems to be simply interesting. We recapitulate here some points made in series of POLO papers since 1956 and ESAU papers since 1959--most of these points made most recently in POLO-XIV of November 1961, our last look at the CCP leadership--and offer a view as to how these assessments may be affected by the total evidence.

First, we have often made the point that Mao's continued domination of the Chinese party--an absolute domination from 1935 to about 1955, and an apparently qualified domination since 1956--depended on a relationship between the success of his policies, the state of his health, and the structure of power in the party. In the years 1958-1961, despite the failure of his radical domestic policies (as expressed primarily in the general line, the "leap forward," and the commune program), the probable opposition by some important leaders to his intransigence in the Sino-Soviet dispute, the decline in his energy and his prolonged absences from Peiping, he apparently continued to dominate the party--in part because changes in

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the structure of power strengthened the positions of those party-machine figures around Liu Shao-chi and military leaders around Lin Piao who were most closely associated with his policies and most closely identified with him personally. Throughout these years, Mao was said by official sources to have made the key decisions on party policy at party meetings held sporadically in Peiping or at various points in his travels: and in fact the key decisions did reflect positions Mao is known [ ] to have taken. Thus, while in the nature of the case it was not possible to prove that Mao continued to dominate the party, the heavy weight of evidence indicated that, while most or much of the time others "minded the store" in the sense of implementing the party's decisions (whether Mao was present or absent), Mao remained the principal figure in making those decisions.

In the light of the party's provision in 1956 of the post of "honorary chairman" to be filled if necessary, and of Mao's resignation from the government chairmanship in 1958, together with both official and unofficial evidence of his declining energies, in the period 1956-58 we often expressed the view that there was a good chance that Mao would step aside from his party chairmanship at the party's Ninth Congress scheduled for 1961. We thought that he might do this in the interest of conserving his energy and also of ensuring a smooth succession for his favorite, Liu Shao-chi (Mao reaffirmed to Snow in autumn 1960 that Liu was still his choice, and there has been no reason since that time to question this). However, after 1958, with the failure of Mao's radical policies and his entry into a serious "time of troubles," together with the widening scope and increasing bitterness of the Sino-Soviet dispute (entailing Soviet sanctions which made Mao's troubles worse), it seemed increasingly to us that Mao would be reluctant to resign his party posts at such a low point in the Chinese party's fortunes. His vanity would argue against resignation at a time which would encourage speculation (as in December 1958) that he had been pushed; and, as his intransigence in the dispute became increasingly costly and increasingly controversial, it seemed likely that he would become increasingly aware of what has been called the King Lear Problem--which is that of ensuring obedience after one has relinquished the instruments of power. Mao's wish to ensure that both his public image and his basic policies prevailed would have to be balanced against his wish to ensure a smooth transition for Liu, but we thought that, in a balance, the former would probably

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weigh the heavier. Thus, in our most recent assessment of Mao's intentions (November 1961), we expressed the view that Mao would probably not resign at the Ninth Congress.

We have frequently estimated also that Mao and the party-machine figures around Liu would probably stand together successfully against their opponents, foreign and domestic, until Mao retired or died. Beginning in 1961, however, in our discussions of the Sino-Soviet dispute we have noted our belief that Khrushchev would exert some combination of the various remaining pressures available to him--e.g. withholding aid in a Chinese economic crisis, breaking off Soviet camp trade with China, stopping deliveries of military goods, threatening to repudiate or actually repudiating the Sino-Soviet treaty, breaking off party relations--and that this would serve to encourage a challenge to Mao by anti-Mao and pro-Soviet forces in the Chinese party.\* Although we have recognized the possibility that some of the key figures among Mao's lieutenants in the party-machine group and among the military leaders would defect to the challengers, it has seemed to us probable that enough of them would remain loyal so that any challenge would be unsuccessful, owing primarily to the inability of the challengers to bring to bear sufficient military force.

We have further calculated that, whether Mao retired in Liu's favor or instead continued as chairman until he died, Liu would be likely to succeed him and would be likely to continue Mao's basic policies, including his refusal to give in to the Soviet party. We have seen a better chance that Liu would be overthrown than that Mao would be, as Liu has been a less awe-inspiring figure and has probably not been able to command the same degree of allegiance from the military leaders, and we have recognized that Liu might not have the same degree

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\*Should Khrushchev fail to exert any of these pressures in the next few months, one possible explanation (apart from the obvious possibility that we have misread him) would be that he has reason to believe that Mao will resign or be pushed out in the next year or so in any case, so that further Soviet action against Mao would be pointless and might indeed prejudice any effort to reach an accommodation with Mao's successors.

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of allegiance to Mao's policies that Mao has had. But we have thought, on balance, that Liu and his party-machine comrades would prevail, and that they would not depart radically from policies with which they have been so strongly identified.

As for the question, first, of whether Mao will continue to dominate the Chinese party, we think that, as of March 1962, he does still dominate it. However, the most recent evidence of his deterioration--even if no specific disorder can be identified with confidence--seems to us to leave the question open for the future. Whereas, as we have said before, Mao in good health would certainly not consent to be a dummy for other leaders, one whose prestige was used to endorse policies which were not his own, Mao in decline, and unable to produce any respectable work, would probably become increasingly dependent on other leaders to formulate his vaguely-conceived policies, to explain and re-examine and adapt those policies, and to conceal his true condition from the party masses and populace. This might well come to entail a degree of dependence in which Mao would be only the nominal leader of the party.

Secondly, in the light of all evidence, we are also less confident than we were a few months ago that Mao will continue even as the nominal leader of the party. That is, if he feels that his health will not remain good enough for the next several years so that he will be able to do his job--or jobs, as chairman of the central committee and (therefore) of the politburo, and senior member of the politburo standing committee (super-politburo)--his devotion to the party and its cause might well be such that he would prefer to resign. A resignation on the genuine grounds of age and infirmity--a resignation well publicized in advance, as the resignation from the government chairmanship was not--would cut much of the ground from under unwelcome speculation that he had been pushed out for his failures. As for his possible desire to retain the instruments of power in order to ensure that his wishes were carried out, this consideration would no longer operate if his decline had already made or would soon make him so dependent on others that he had no such assurance in any case. In such circumstances, he might well wish to use his remaining power and prestige to try to effect a smooth transition for Liu--in the belief that Liu and his party-machine associates would be the most likely to carry on his policies. Thus we return to the view which we held in the years 1956-58, before the "time of troubles"

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for Mao's policies came upon him: that there is a strong possibility--almost an even chance--that Mao will step aside, and become honorary chairman of the party, at the Ninth Congress, presumably to be held this year. There is also the possibility that Mao will resign from his party posts by stages: that is, that he will give up his post on the standing committee while remaining chairman of the central committee and politburo; or that he will have the party constitution changed again so that he can give up the politburo chairmanship while remaining chairman of the central committee; or, perhaps the most sensible course, that he will retain the standing committee post while giving up the central committee and politburo chairmanship to Liu, thus arranging the succession.

Thirdly, as for the question of whether Mao will be pushed out of the party chairmanship if he does not choose to resign, his condition might be relevant to this too. If his degree of dependence on other leaders is or becomes such that he is only the nominal leader of the party, then of course he could be pushed out. However, he could probably have been pushed out at any time in the past several years if the party-machine figures around Liu Shao-chi had defected from him, so the key question here is whether his deterioration may become such that this group will have reason to defect. We continue to believe that this group probably will not turn against Mao simply for the failures they have shared with him; and the case is not impressive for the kind of illness that would give them a new incentive to turn against him--i.e., an illness which might make him refuse to rely on those leaders and withdraw his favor from them. Thus the matter remains much as it seemed a few months ago--that the threats to Mao from various combinations of other leaders add up only to a fair possibility of his involuntary removal--a weaker possibility (we think now) than the possibility that he will voluntarily step aside.

Fourthly, as for the question of Mao's successor and his policies, Liu would still be expected to succeed, if Mao were to step aside or to die in the near future--and even if Mao were to be pushed out, unless Liu were to stand with Mao in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the latter action. However, along with the abiding consideration that one cannot assume Liu's complete devotion to Mao's policies in any case, the question of the degree and character of Mao's decline may be relevant to Liu's intentions toward Mao's policies: Mao's

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illness could serve either as a reason or a pretext for modifying those policies. (Cf. the cooperation of Stalin's lieutenants in his policies before his death, despite their suspicion at the time--asserted later--that some of these policies derived from mental illness, and then the early alteration of these policies by some of his lieutenants, notably Khrushchev.) Inheriting the world's largest mess, no longer obliged to please Mao, and obliged instead to consider the wishes of others much more than has Mao (at least to 1956), Liu might find in Mao's illness a face-saving means of modifying some of Mao's positions substantially--in the interest of conciliating the pro-Soviet forces and the Soviet party too. While we continue to believe that the Sino-Soviet dispute will not be resolved under either Mao or Liu, we would not be surprised to see some improvement under Liu. Moreover, as we have often said before, if Liu and his party-machine comrades were to be beaten out or overthrown by an alliance of administrator-economist figures and military leaders around Chou En-lai or some other Chinese leader whom we regard as comparatively pro-Soviet, a marked improvement in the Sino-Soviet relationship would seem to us probable.

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**APPENDIX: NOTES ON MAO'S HEALTH, 1945-1962**

At least as early as 1945, there were rumors of Mao Tse-tung's ill health. Rumors of this kind receded in the spring of 1945, when he gave a long, well-organized, and crafty report to the CCP's 7th congress--"On Coalition Government"--which was soon published, and in August-September 1945, when he appeared in Chungking for six weeks of negotiations with the Nationalists. He was later credited with having written two important articles, not published at the time, before and after the negotiations, and he published some brief statements in that period. Soon after returning to Yen-an, however, in autumn 1945, he was rumored to be suffering from a "nervous breakdown"--rumors which may conceivably have reflected his concern for his eldest daughter, who was seriously ill.

There were again rumors (some attributed to Communist sources) of Mao's ill health in 1946, but he appeared to be active. Apart from unpublished directives on party affairs and military operations and an unpublished assessment of the international situation later attributed to him, he published one article in spring 1946 and gave at least three interviews to Western observers, who reported him to seem in good shape.

Mao was generally out of the news in 1947 (the Communists were not yet in power), but he was apparently all right. Apart from unpublished directives on military operations later attributed to him, in December 1947 he gave another major report to a party meeting, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks," which was soon published.

In 1948, apart from a number of party and military directives and miscellaneous articles and commentaries later attributed to him, Mao gave a speech to party cadres on party work, and he wrote an article for the Cominform journal, both published at the time.

In 1949 there were rumors that Mao had cancer, but he was very active. Apart from a series of commentaries throughout the year later attributed to him, in January he gave a speech (published) on the current situation; in March he attended a

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party plenum; in April he made a statement (published) on the Atlantic Pact; in July he published a major article, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship" (a fairly frank account of Communist intentions, once in power), and in the same month he spoke to a front group. Mao was rumored in summer 1949 to have had a stroke, and indeed a photograph of him at the time gave him more of the appearance of a man who had suffered a stroke than has any photograph released by the regime since that time; however, Mao soon appeared, to speak again to a front group, and the rumors receded. He went to Moscow in December, and he made several speeches there, all published.

Mao returned to China in February 1950 after the talks with Stalin and others which produced the Sino-Soviet treaty (14 February 1950). During 1950 he made at least three speeches (one in February, two in June) and wrote an article; all of these were published. Other production in 1950 has not yet been attributed to him.

In 1951 Mao was out of the news for the first four months (apart from single appearances in Peiping in January and February), rumored to be ill with tuberculosis or heart or kidney disease (and reported by some sources to be dead), and it was allegedly confirmed by Peiping's Foreign Ministry that he was ill. However, the explanation may be that he was mourning the death of his elder son in the Korean war in late 1950; even several years later he was reported to be suffering from this loss. Mao reappeared on May Day 1951, strong enough to stand for five hours in the sun, and he gave an interview at that time. He spoke on the 'liberation' of Tibet in May (published), and he spoke twice to a front group in October (also published). He wrote an article for the campaign against waste and corruption in December.

Mao was out of the news much of the time in 1952, and again was rumored to be ill; but again some Western observers had interviews with him and reported him to be looking good. No production was attributed to him for 1952 at the time, although as further volumes of his works appear it may be said that he wrote some things in 1952.

In 1953, Mao spoke to a front group in February (published) and wrote a brief eulogy following Stalin's death in March. In the same month, he spoke to a CCP conference, and, for the

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first time in years, a speech by Mao identified at the time was not published at the time; there seemed no particular reason for this, as the Kao-Jao challenge to the party leaders (not so much to Mao as to Liu Shao-chi and Chou En-lai), which could have explained a secret speech, apparently did not develop until later in the year. (There is no clue as to whether this unpublished speech was a major speech.) As a note on Mao's fitness, he was said to have climbed some 35 mountains in the course of 1953.

Mao was out of the news from December 1953 to mid-March 1954, said to be "on holiday" during the party plenum in February which surfaced the Kao-Jao case--an embarrassment to Mao, who had been the principal sponsor of Kao Kang--and expelled this pair of his lieutenants from the party.\* Reappearing briefly in March, reportedly much thinner, he was again out of the news for most of April. There were two more unexplained absences from early May to mid-June and from early July to early August, and there were again rumors (some from Communist sources) that he was seriously ill. He reappeared in August for conversations with some high-level British visitors, who were divided as to whether he looked good or bad but agreed that he was not very forthcoming in the conversations. He received the Khrushchev-Bulganin delegation in September and October and then was again out of the news, without explanation, all of November. As in 1952, Mao was not credited with any production in 1954, and this, together with his many unexplained absences, gave some credibility to reports that he had been ill.

Mao was out of the news again, without explanation, in January 1955. He was back in Peiping in February, when he gave a brief speech and appeared to be suffering from a congestion in the throat. In March, he gave a speech to a party conference on the collectivization of agriculture; this was not published. Mao apparently missed the party plenum in April, and a Middle Eastern official who had an interview with

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\*By 1954, Mao was apparently taking at least two vacations each year--one in the summer, one in the winter--a practice which he has continued.

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Mao in May reported (a) that Mao did not have the use of his left hand (which suggests the possibility of a stroke before that time), and (b) that Chinese Communist officials had said to him that Mao was partially paralyzed. In May, the Chinese press for the first time reported that Mao was swimming--in his home town in Hunan, a place he might reasonably choose to recuperate in. He was back in Peiping in late May, receiving visitors, and he received Ho Chi Minh there in late June. There was no record of Mao in July until 31 July, when he gave a major speech in which he reversed the line of the entire party leadership on the question of the speed of collectivization of agriculture; this speech, directing a great speed-up of the process, was not published until October, although this might be explained by Mao's wish to wait until he could be sure the program would succeed. Mao was again absent, without explanation, from 1 August to late September. He was back in October for National Day and for a party plenum; at which he made the opening and summary speeches, unpublished, attacking conservatism in economic planning. He made another speech in the same month, unpublished but summarized, on the socialist transformation of industry and commerce. He was absent again, without explanation, in November, but he returned in December, apparently making another unpublished speech in which he introduced the line of "greater, faster, better, and more economical" production (which was to become the basis of the "general line" of 1958-1960), and also writing an introduction (published) to a book on the upsurge of socialism (the speedup) in the countryside.

Mao was active throughout 1956. He spoke to a government body in January, on the socialist transformation of agriculture and industry; the speech was summarized. He was in the news in February, but out again, without explanation, in March. He was back in the news in April, and in that month the CCP published the first of its two long articles criticizing de-Stalinization and dispensing counsel to the Soviet party and the entire Communist movement; this article was probably written in part by Mao, and the main lines of it clearly reflected his positions. In the same month he made an unpublished speech on "ten relationships" (mainly economic), and he incited the wildly unrealistic goal of an increase of 150 percent in agricultural production in 12 years.

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Mao appeared on May Day 1956, and remained standing for a four-hour review of the parade. In that month, he introduced the "hundred flowers" program, his ill-fated experiment with liberalization in China (encouraging criticism from outside the party). In May and June, he reportedly swam the Yangtze three times (a fat man, he floats easily, and swimming is only mild exercise for him). At that time he was said to look all right, but he told one source that he was tired--the first of many such assertions. He was back in Peiping in June, and then spent July and August at a vacation resort (Chinwangtao), returning to Peiping in August for the party plenum which prepared for the party's 8th Congress in September. He made a brief opening speech (published) at the congress, sketching the lines of the major reports by others which followed; and the congress underlined the earlier evidence of Mao's periodic illness and apparently chronic weariness by providing for an "honorary chairman" of the party--clearly a provision for Mao when he might choose or be forced to retire.

He remained in Peiping in October, spoke briefly (published) in that month, wrote a brief article in November, and made the summary speech, itself summarized, to a party plenum the same month. He reportedly said in November that he was an old man and expected to die soon; and in films of Mao taken that month he indeed looked old, slow, and vague, although his voice was said to be "firm and controlled." He was absent again in December, without explanation, but in late December the CCP published its second long article on the problems arising from deStalinization, this one directed mainly to intrabloc relations; again the article clearly reflected Mao's positions.

Mao may have had a stroke (possibly a second stroke) sometime in the first six months of 1957. He was out of the news again, without explanation, in early January. In February he gave a long speech, "On Correctly Handling Contradictions Among the People," which reaffirmed his experiment with liberalization, and in the course of which he reportedly described himself as an old man and said that he would be glad when he could lay down his burden. A Western correspondent quoted several persons who had heard this February speech as saying that it was a "disorganized" performance, with many mistakes in fact, and given in a very rambling manner; reports of the text confirmed the rambling manner, and also that the

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argument was rather incoherent. . . This speech was not published until June, when a much-revised version appeared. Mao spoke again on "contradictions" to a conference of propagandists in March or April; this was also unpublished, but it was reportedly more tightly-organized than the February speech. He spoke at some ceremonial occasions in April; and in mid-May (a month when he was said to be swimming again), he made an unpublished speech to a youth congress in which he denounced "deviations" from socialism (his experiment with liberalization was then collapsing, and undisciplined forces among Communist parties in Eastern Europe were taking more comfort from Mao's pronouncements on intrabloc relations than he wished).

Mao was out of the news, without explanation, from mid-May to late June 1957. He received people in Shanghai in early July, and in late July went to a seaside town (Tsingtao), for vacation or recuperation. During July (according to official sources later), he presided over a party conference and set out the main lines of the nation-wide "rectification" movement (rectification of the unsatisfactory state of mind which had become apparent in the experiment with liberalization) which followed; his speech was not published. He received more visitors in August in Tsingtao and in early September was reportedly swimming again. Of two official accounts of his movements at that time, one suggested that he tired easily when walking, and another observed that he walked with "firm steps"; both should probably be taken as evidence that he had recently suffered an illness which affected his locomotion, as there would be no reason for the first official source to say that Mao was having trouble if he was not, and no reason for the second to call attention to his "firm" gait if it were not in question.

Back in Peiping by mid-September, Mao in September and October 1957 held many audiences. He spoke to another party plenum at that time, apparently charting the bold new course of socialist construction in China which was to lead to the "leap forward" and commune programs. This speech also was unpublished--again possibly owing to the sensitivity of the subject. In the same period Mao was reported, after four months of slight activity, to be looking thin and jaded; photographs and films confirmed this.

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Good evidence that Mao had indeed been ill came in late 1957 as a result of Mao's appearances in Moscow in November. In Moscow, he made two brief public speeches and one of moderate length, all published or summarized, but two of which seemed to have been written some weeks before delivery; these were Mao's last published speeches of any kind. He also made a long speech, not available at the time, to a closed session of the Soviet party central committee. Despite his ability to make a long speech, Chinese Communist open sources at the time confirmed that he had trouble walking and that he needed frequent and prolonged rests. Various sources reported him to be looking ill and exhausted. And films of the visit showed him thin, haggard, almost unrecognizable. There was a [ ] [ ] that Mao in Moscow had remarked that he had his own five-year plan but did not expect to live through it.

Additional evidence that Mao as of late 1957 had just come through, or was still suffering from, a serious illness, soon came to hand. He was credibly reported to have made his two-hour speech to the Soviet party meeting in a seated position throughout. Moreover, credible accounts of this speech indicated that Mao himself had referred to a recent illness (unspecified); and that the speech (a preliminary version of Mao's challenge to Khrushchev's world strategy), in addition to illustrating Mao's characteristic hubris, was disorganized and rambling in the same way the February 1957 speech had been reported to be--giving some substance, on both counts, to Khrushchev's subsequent descriptions of Mao as a man who had lost touch with reality. As for the particular disorder, it was not until 1961 that it was reported [ ] that Mao himself in November 1957 had stated that his doctors had told him he had "brain anemia," which is a layman's term for cerebral ischemia.

Throughout 1958, there was an unprecedented emphasis, in an unprecedented number of articles on Mao's activities, on Mao's glowing health. Peiping was clearly protesting too much.

After making trips to Chekiang and Shantung for party meetings in December 1957 (he made at least 13 trips in 1957, an all-time high), Mao was in Hangchow (a vacation resort) and Nanning in January 1958, and was allegedly swimming again,

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despite the cold; he allegedly "walked swiftly" (again there was no need to comment on this, if he was having no trouble in walking); he was photographed holding a plow, and he was said to have plowed one furrow; a film of the time showed his left arm held a bit stiffly, but he appeared able to use it when he chose to. At that time, he gave a speech (unpublished) to a party conference on "60 methods of work," urging daring in thought and action, advancing the concept of "uninterrupted revolution" in economic development, and (probably) formulating the general line of the next three years ("aim high, go all-out," etc.).

Mao was in the Northeast in February and in the Southwest (Szechuan) in March, where he presided over the party conference which conceived the commune program and adopted the mass line for industrial development (the 'backyard steel' program and similar ventures); we do not know whether he spoke at that conference. He was at Wuhan in April, when he wrote a one-page article, 'Introducing a Cooperative,' published in the first Red Flag in June.

Mao was in Kwangtung in early May 1958, and then returned to Peiping in May for the second session of the party's 8th Congress, looking fatter than in the winter but also still looking tired.\* He made a speech, seated, to the congress; this speech, unpublished, may have concerned the commune program; or he may have made another on this subject, and, if so, this one also was not published. He received some people in June and July, and he made an unpublished speech to an enlarged meeting of the party's military committee in July.

In late July and early August 1958, Mao talked with Khrushchev in Peiping (there was a brief communique), and he left immediately thereafter to promote the commune program throughout China. Mao was on tour in most of August and early September, in the critical period of the regime's unsuccessful venture in the Taiwan Strait. He returned in early September to

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\*Recapitulating the evidence at the time, we noted that the evidence suggested, at a minimum, that Mao could not work as hard as he once did.

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speak to a Supreme State Conference: the speech, summarized, evidently defended his positions in the developing dispute with the Soviet party. He then resumed his tour, and in September he was allegedly swimming seven times; official sources reported that he walked for an hour without a rest, on another occasion "walked steadily," and on another with "confident steps." His locomotion apparently had improved a little since late 1957. In or about October 1958, ██████████

██████████ reported him looking in good health and full of energy; two of Mao's poems, apparently written in 1958, were published in October. In November, the regime published a compilation of Mao's earlier works on the theme of the "paper tiger," a compilation aimed in part at explaining away the failure of the Taiwan Strait venture; no recently-produced material was included or even said to exist.

In December 1958 Mao took a step toward his stated goal of relinquishing his burden: a party plenum at which Mao made an "important speech" (unpublished, though later extracted) said that in accord with a desire Mao in recent years had "more than once expressed," Mao would not stand again for the post of chairman of the government--a ceremonial post, of slight importance in itself, which made substantial demands on his time and energy. The statement said that Mao would be enabled "all the better to concentrate his energies on dealing with questions of direction, policy, and the line of the party and state," and also "to set aside more time for Marxist-Leninist theoretical work." Party committees were directed to explain this fully "so that there may be no misunderstanding." Because this party plenum was one which formalized a number of retreats in Mao's radical domestic programs and the claims made for them, many observers surmised (incorrectly, in our view) that Mao was being pushed out of his government post. And the regime showed itself sensitive to this speculation: for example, Chen Yi, privately explaining the decision, reportedly noted that Mao on three occasions in the spring and summer of 1958 (before there was any question of modifying his programs) had told foreign visitors of his wish to retire; this may have been true, although none of them reported it. (Chen reportedly also said that Mao wished to work particularly on problems of underdeveloped areas; and that he had told Khrushchev of his decision and Khrushchev had expressed approval.) In any case, it was credible that a man of Mao's declining energies and

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great pretensions as a theorist might indeed wish, just as Peiping said, to use his remaining energies and time to write the works which would assure him a place beside his three venerated teachers, Marx, Lenin, and Stalin.

This general expectation of some substantial works from Mao was to be disappointed. Not only did he publish nothing, but in 1959 he continued to play the ceremonial role which in December 1958 he had said he wanted to be rid of.

On 1 January 1959, when Mao made an appearance, it was admitted by Peiping that he "walked slowly," and in the early months of 1959 some of his visitors reported him looking unwell, tiring easily and coughing a lot. In February he continued to receive people, and he gave "instructions" to a party meeting at Chengchow which apparently discussed the communes. In March, when he was in Wuhan and received several people, he seemed depressed, and he told a [ ] that he was old and sick.

In those early months of 1959 the regime was still in a period of retreats on the domestic front, and for a time Mao stayed above the battle. In early April, however, Mao presided over a party plenum held in Shanghai and gave an "important speech" (unpublished) on work methods--a speech which apparently encouraged a retreat. He made another speech (unpublished) to a Supreme State Conference in April, and then went on an inspection tour. In May he received some people, and he composed a letter (unpublished) for party committees at all levels in which he encouraged conservatism. He received some visitors in Peiping in the first half of June, and then left Peiping for the summer. He was out of the news in July. In August, a party plenum was held under his "guidance" to make further revisions in his domestic programs and to deal with the challenge to his programs by Defense Minister Peng Te-huai and others; Mao made a speech (unpublished) to this plenum which as reported was at least in part a foolish performance in which he tearfully threatened to go back to the masses and raise another and more loyal army. This plenum admitted the false production claims for 1958, further modified the commune program, and made drastic reductions in the goals for 1959, but it also repelled the "rightists" and prepared for the purge of the party, government, and military establishment (the latter was hardest hit).

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In September 1959 Mao was back in Peiping and received some visitors. In early October, Mao again talked with Khrushchev in Peiping, and again sent him away unhappy; Mao was reportedly abstracted, if not deaf, at the airport farewell, but this may have been politically motivated. At about that time, two Western observers said that Mao looked good, and two Asian physicians who talked with him did not report anything which showed them to be conscious of a medical problem (although they saw him socially, not professionally). In films taken on National Day (1 October) 1959, Mao clearly had the use of his left arm and hand and looked fairly good, which is presumably the reason that Chinese editors have recently been using photos of Mao from that occasion rather than current photos.

In late October and November 1959, Mao was on tour again. In his absence, his lieutenants furiously defended against unbelievers all of Mao's propositions on domestic development which in fact had been punctured and deflated: "politics in command," "uninterrupted revolution," the "mass line" expressed in mass movements like the "leap" and the communes, the "absolutely correct" general line, the whirlwind pace through 1962, the overtaking of the U.K. in ten years, and so on. Mao was out of the news, without explanation, in late November and December.

In January 1960 Mao was back in the news, receiving visitors in Shanghai, but he then disappeared, without explanation, for almost two months. In that period, a [REDACTED] source said privately that Mao had "grown old and is very tired." When Mao reappeared in Hangchow in March, an Asian group which talked with him reported on one hand that he seemed physically strong and "mentally keen," but on the other hand that he had a slight slump in his left shoulder and that the interview was unproductive; films then and later confirmed the slightly slumped shoulder.

Mao was back in Peiping in March, and received visitors there in April. His characteristic hubris was again evident in spring 1960 in the party's calls for large increases in output over the grossly inflated claims for 1959, and in the incendiary articles on world Communist strategy in the Lenin

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Anniversary articles (April), which, as noted earlier, were a systematic and scornful attack on Soviet positions.\*

Mao made an inspection tour in Shantung in early May (the last such tour reported), and received visitors in Wuhan and Shanghai and Chengchow in May; brief remarks attributed to him in interviews were published. In June, while his lieutenants were clashing head-on with Khrushchev at the Bucharest conference of parties, Mao continued to receive visitors (in Hangchow and Shanghai) and brief remarks were again attributed to him; the one detailed account of an interview at this time suggests that it too was unproductive.

Back in Peiping in July 1960, Mao saw more visitors and made further brief remarks, and the official coverage of his activities resumed the practice of protesting too much about how well he looked; in films, at least, he looked poor. In any case, Moscow gave him reason in late July to feel very bad indeed, as it struck a heavy blow to Chinese economic and military development programs by withdrawing the Soviet technicians. In August and September, Mao received many visitors, allegedly did much swimming, and probably found time to dictate the main lines of the Chinese party letter to the Soviet party in early September in which Peiping stood firm in the dispute and flourished the slogan of self-reliance. Throughout September and October, in Peiping, Mao received streams of visitors. A fourth (Chinese-language) volume of Mao's works (written in 1945-49) appeared at that time--with commentary again defending his positions in the dispute with the Soviet party.

In autumn 1960 a Western journalist (Edgar Snow) who had seen much of Mao in the late 1930s had two interviews with him, amounting (Snow said) to nine or ten hours. The content of these interviews was almost entirely "off the record" for the press, at Mao's request, for a "good reason" which Snow did not specify but which was suggested by the

\*Only one [redacted] source has gone so far as to assert that Mao actually wrote one of these articles; the usual assertion has been simply that these articles embodied Mao's thought.

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content. [redacted] the content of the interviews--which touched on Mao's experiment with liberalization, certain of his long-established positions on imperialism, and building up China to meet the needs of the people--was slight and banal. Snow reported Mao as in "very good health" in consideration of his age (67) and his problems. Snow also noted that Mao was "quite meticulous" in details of, and had "quite a fund of statistics" about, Chinese economic development; however, Snow was not in a position to know whether these details were accurate, and, judging from reports of some of Mao's performances since 1957, it is possible that these details were not accurate but instead represented the "confabulation" (fluent speech without regard for facts) observed in cases of senility. In some other observations not reported at the time, Snow noted that Mao was "tired" of all his problems; noted also that Mao had declined to discuss the subjects which Snow had previously raised with Chou En-lai (questions of current concern, e.g. foreign policy and intra-bloc relations); and, indicating why these nine or ten hours of talk had produced so little of interest, noted further that "much time" had been spent by Mao in rambling anecdotes of his travels and of his experiences of the past 20 years.

Mao stayed away from the conference of the 81 Communist parties in Moscow the same month, where his lieutenants clashed again with Khrushchev and forced the Soviet leader to back down on the key issues of authority and discipline in the movement. Mao continued to receive visitors in Peiping, through November and December. Films of him at that time showed him looking old, slow, and tired, uncertain in his movements but apparently without a significant degree of paralysis of any limb; and there was no indication of any particular disorder.

During 1960 the Chinese press reported nothing about any inspection tours (as distinct from vacations) Mao may have made after May, and the chances are that he had stopped making them. Also, as in 1952 and 1954, no production of any kind was claimed for Mao for the year 1960, although it may later be claimed officially that he did indeed write some of the Lenin Anniversary material and other things.

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In early 1961, the Chinese party affirmed a policy of continued defiance of the USSR (without polemics) and of continued retreats from radical domestic programs. Mao "presided over" the party plenum of January 1961, in Peiping, which formalized some of the retreats; no speech by Mao was reported. He received several delegations during January; the only account of one of these interviews suggests that this one too was unproductive. He was in Hangchow in February (possibly on vacation) where he received at least one visitor; in contrast to several reports of unproductive interviews in recent years, Mao appeared to advantage--fairly lively and sharp--in this account. He was out of the news for most of March, but held receptions in several cities in April. (His movements in March and April were not reported as an inspection tour.) He appeared in Shanghai on May Day, saying nothing, and was out of the news for the rest of May. In June, he received several delegations in Peiping. [redacted]

[redacted] reported that Mao's "brain is bad." Although the source had served in China, he did not know Mao personally, and we cannot judge whether this assertion represented rumors he had picked up from the Chinese or the view which Moscow was known to be encouraging.

Further inferential evidence of Mao's decline came on 1 July 1961, which was the 40th anniversary of the CCP. This was a big occasion, and Mao should have made a speech or written an article; not even brief remarks were reported. Liu Shao-chi made the appropriate speech. Mao was in Hangchow again ((possibly on vacation) in July and August, made return calls on some visitors. He received more visitors in Hangchow and Wuhan in September. In films of that time, he still looked tired, but again nothing more.

In September 1961 Mao talked again (in Wuhan) with Marshal Montgomery, whose impressions of Mao may be worth more than his political observations. Montgomery said that Mao had aged considerably just since Montgomery's last meeting with him in spring 1960.\* He said also that Mao was weak on his

\*A number of Chinese Communist publications on National Day (1 October), apparently on orders from the center, published old rather than current pictures of Mao--pictures dating apparently from 1959.

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legs and had a constant male attendant who held his arm when he walked. He said further that Mao had his personal physician around at all times.

Back in Peiping in late September, Mao received some visitors, appeared on National Day, received more visitors in early October, and appeared at the airport in late October to welcome Chou En-lai back from Moscow--a token of Mao's pleasure in Chou's defiance of Khrushchev at the Moscow meeting. In November he received some visitors, and in December (all or almost all of which he spent in Hangchow), he received some delegations. On 26 December, Mao's 68th birthday, Pravda printed an article by Hungary's Kadar which criticized Chinese positions in the Sino-Soviet dispute and then made the explicit charge of a "senile disorder" against those holding such positions; although Mao was not named, both the date and the context made it clear that this was a shot at Mao, the culmination of a Soviet effort since mid-1960 to have Mao regarded (whether correctly or not) as senile. In the same period, stories to the effect that Mao was senile were circulating in some of the Western European Communist parties.

Again in 1961, as since May 1960, the Chinese press reported nothing about any inspection tours Mao may have made. And again in 1961, as in 1960, no production of any kind was claimed for Mao for the entire year. This was the first time in Mao's career that there had been a period of two years with no known (or even claimed) production, although the claim may be made later.

Mao made several appearances in Peiping in January and early February 1962, then was out of the news, presumably on vacation, between 5 February and 22 March, when his name appeared on the presidium of the National People's Congress. On 27 March he made an appearance at the NPC. There has still been no evidence of productivity.

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