

"Conspiracy" of Lin Piao Revisited

Ranganayakamma

Lin Piao was a top level leader in the Communist Party of China (hereafter briefly CPC or Chinese Party). Everyone thought he was a leader almost equal to Mao. He had been in the party for a long time, much before the 'Long March' days. In 1940, he was the commander of the Fourth Field Army. He was the Chairman of Army Administration of South Central Area during 1950-54. He was a Deputy Prime Minister in 1954. In 1955 he was a member of the Polit Bureau. In 1958 he was the Vice-chairman of the Party. (Initially he was one of the several Vice-Chairmen. But in the subsequent period, other Vice-Chairmen were removed and Lin Piao was made the sole Vice-Chairman. He attained such a top position.) He was the Defence Minister from 1959 onwards. During this period, he attained the position of 'Closest Comrade in Arms' of Mao from 1966 onwards. In 1969 he got another strange position which you will see later. On the whole we should bear in mind that Lin Piao was connected with the army, that he was the Defence Minister and sole Vice-chairman of the Party.

Lin Piao's name began to be heard prominently through the Cult of Mao.

CULT OF LIN PIAO

To understand the dominant position which Lin Piao occupied in the party and the extent to which the party degenerated, it is enough to examine one particular issue. The Ninth Party Congress, held in April 1969 [This was the conference which was held 13 years after the Eight Congress], declared that Lin Piao was the closest comrade in arms of Mao and his heir apparent (Snow, 1972: 251). This 'Communist Heirship' was the last position which Lin Piao got. This declaration of heirship brought Lin Piao to the notice of the Chinese people as well as the whole world as an important personality and the future chairman of the party after Mao.

Along with Mao's cult, the cult of Lin Piao, the cult of his son Lin Likua [Maybe there was no grandson] began. [If Mao had a son, the people of China were obliged to undertake his cult too.] Lin Likua was a director in the Air Force. There were eulogies that he became a big director at a very young age. [Would he not become a director when his father was the defence minister? If not he, would the son of a farmer or a worker become a director?] On many occasions the newspapers praised Lin Likua as 'Genius' and 'hero'. (It seems that the dynasties of Geniuses were very widespread. It is more appropriate if we call CPC a Party of Geniuses rather than Communist Party!)

Adding Lin Piao's name to that of Mao, new slogans were given. 'Rally around the party with Mao as the Chairman and Lin Piao as the Vice-Chairman'; 'Long Live Chairman Mao and his closest comrade in arms Lin Piao!' [Good! If there is a use with one cult there will be two uses with two cults and three uses with three cults.]

A slogan to glorify Lin Piao: 'While our great leader Chairman Mao is the founder-leader of People's Liberation Army, Vice-Chairman Lin Piao is directly leading it. In response to this slogan, it is said, Mao sarcastically commented: 'Perhaps, the founder of the army is unable to lead it!'. [How could Mao say, 'do not undertake your cult. Undertake my cult alone!' Even if he had told, nothing would have happened.]

Just as 'Little Red Book' containing Mao's quotations was circulated, 'The Second Little Red Book' containing Lin Piao's quotations was also done so (Han Suyun, 1976: 341). [We should feel happy for Mr. Lin Likua's 'The Third Little Red Book' had not appeared. Or did it appear? Well, we do not get information about anything in China!]

POLITICS OF LIN vs MAO

Though political outlook of Lin Piao and Mao outwardly appear to be identical, it is evident from certain issues that the two were very different. In his Report to the Ninth Party Congress in 1969, Lin Piao observed that Cultural Revolution had achieved its goals. Now the main task was to carry the economy forward. This meant, abandoning class struggle and putting forward the thesis of 'productive forces'. Mao opposed this. He argued that the Cultural Revolution must continue. [There are no details as to why Mao argued in favour of continuing Cultural Revolution.] Lin Piao rewrote the Report in accordance with Mao's views (Lotta 1976: 3).

While Lin argued in favour of a major role for army in the matters of administration, Mao argued that party must be reconstituted and the army be kept under the leadership of the party (Lotta 1976: 3).

While Mao opined that the primary task of Fourth Five Year Plan was to develop the agricultural sector, Lin Piao and other army officials felt that army must be modernized first. This was popularly referred to as 'Tractor-Tank controversy' (Jain 1976: 68)

At the beginning of 1969, when Sino-Soviet border dispute created an atmosphere of possible war, Lin Piao argued that China must manufacture heavy military equipment. On the other hand, Mao argued that priority must be given to political consciousness and mobilize people to participate in the problem. Otherwise, large part of the production would have to be spent on war and conditions of inequality would arise in the country (Van Ginnekan 1976: 189).

Lin Piao opposed the proposal that party cadres must participate in production. He described it as 'forcible labour reform'. He also opposed the proposal of sending youth to villages. He described it as 'unemployment in disguise'. In the sense that the government was pursuing this policy due to its inability to give jobs (Lotta 1976: 4).

[Is this the same man who argued that those who oppose Mao must be expelled from the party and every one must follow Mao's views even if they didn't understand those views? What would be his answer if people asked Lin Piao, 'you have insisted that we must follow Mao, haven't you?']

It appeared that Lin Piao's group opposed a firm view of the party that China must establish relations with America. In July 1971, Kissinger visited China and discussed about Nixon's forthcoming visit to China. On August 1, Hu Wang, the Army Chief and a close associate of Lin Piao issued a statement that America must withdraw its army not

only from Indo-China and Taiwan but also from Japan, south Korea and Philippines (Rice 1974: 506).

There were differences in the party on the question of China's entry into the United Nations Organization. In the past, China laid down two conditions for joining UNO: that some of the articles of the UNO must be changed and UNO must withdraw its old resolution condemning China's aid to Korea. Now, Lin Piao opposed China's readiness to join the UNO ignoring those past conditions (Roy 1982: 6).

In 1971, the Pakistan Army resorted to genocide in Bangladesh. Similarly, the Sri Lankan government cruelly suppressed the leftist revolt. Chou En-lai lent support to both the events. Whereas Lin Piao opposed them.

Thus it appears that Lin Piao was right in certain matters and wrong in certain other matters. How far these incidents are true? What sort of person was he on the whole? To know these aspects, brief and passing observations found in some books are not enough.

We need detailed information about his views on each and every issue. Such information is not available in the relevant books on China. Based on available evidence, it is fair on our part to comment that Lin Piao was correct in certain issues and incorrect in certain other issues.

Though Lin Piao also spoke of the theory of Productive Forces like the rightists, there appears some difference between him and rightists. It seems that he was a headache to some extent for them. Some observers feel that the only difference is the use of Ultra-leftist jargon.

The Ultra-leftist trend was dominant during the Cultural Revolution. Some cadres were removed from the party on the ground that they resorted to Ultra-leftism. However, none characterized Lin Piao as an Ultra-leftist during that period.

ATTACKS ON LIN'S GROUP

There seem to be three kinds of groups in the party when Lin Piao was very popular : Mao's group, Lin's group and the rightists' group whose principal representative was Chou En-lai. At one time, reducing the dominance of Lin Piao was the main problem of other groups. Mao's group, joining hands with the rightists' group began to contain Lin Piao's group. [Why should Mao's group join hands with rightists? Mao's group could have reduced the dominance of rightists by joining hands with Lin Piao's group, couldn't they? –We do not get answers to such questions as these. All this is like, to use a Telugu saying, keeping the buffalo in the tank and bargaining for its horns'. Who joined hands with whom and why? Every thing is a speculation. We can raise questions and seek answers only when we know the actual truth.]

Whatever be the truth, it is indisputable that attempts were made to contain Lin Piao's group.

Attack on the Lin's group started with the criticism of Chen Po-ta, who was considered to be Lin's man, as a traitor of the revolution. The charge leveled against Chen Po-ta was related to the office of the 'President' of People's Republic of China. Till

December 1958, Mao remained both as Chairman of the party and the head of the state (President). At the time of Eight Party Congress held in 1956, Liu Shao-chi's group came into dominance. To reduce the importance of Mao, the Eighth Congress resolved that the same person could not hold two positions simultaneously: both as Chairman of the Party and as President. Yet, Mao did not vacate the post of the President. We do not know why he left that post in December 1958. Thereafter Liu Shao-chi assumed that office and continued up to 1968. Liu Shao-chi was removed from that post during the upsurge of Cultural Revolution. Thereafter no one assumed that office. The Party's Central Committee (CC) accepted Mao's proposal that there should not be the post of a president. Chen Po-ta was aware of this. Yet, in the CC meeting held in August 1970, he proposed that the office of the President might be reintroduced and Mao might assume that office. But Mao did not accept the proposal. Subsequently, Chen Po-ta was criticized for this past proposal. The motive attributed to Chen was that Lin Biao would become the Vice-President if Mao became the President and Lin could succeed Mao as President later. However, no one criticized Chen at the time of the proposal but he was criticized later along with many other charges. Condemnation of Chen ended with describing him as a traitor of revolution (Van Ginnekan 1976: 214-16).

The CPC informed other fraternal Communist Parties about its condemnation of Chen Po-ta. Referring to this, Enver Hoxha, the First Secretary of the Albanian Labour Party wrote as follows in his diary on 17-2-1971: "The comrades of the Central Committee of the CPC have informed us officially that Chen Po-ta has been declared a traitor. On this matter they enumerated a series of facts...." Based on what Hoxha wrote, we may briefly summarize the crimes of Chen as follows.

Chen Po-ta had been committing mistakes since 1925. [He must have gorged mud when he was a child!] He was a member of the Kuomin-tang; at that time he wrote articles against the CPC. When he accompanied Mao to Moscow in 1950, for three days, he did not inform Mao about what he was doing; he opposed the thesis which Mao defended, that 'power grows out of the barrel of the gun'. He intensified Cult of Mao (Hoxha 1979 : I : 523-543).

Drawing our attention to the charges which the 'Chinese comrades' made against Chen Po-ta, Hoxha commented critically. While Chen Po-ta was carrying on Mao's cult, 'what were the others doing? Sleeping?....' thus questioned Hoxha, forgetting how he defended Stalin's cult! [Are you not curious to listen to Hoxha's answer to a possible question, 'While Khrushchev was intensifying Stalin's cult, what was Stalin doing, sleeping?']

Should we assume that Mao was not aware of the list of charges put up against Chen Po-ta to conclude that he was a traitor? Should we think that a CC member was declared as a traitor without the knowledge of the party chairman? Did Mao consider those charges reasonable?

Some more actions were taken against Lin Biao's group.

In January 1971, Peking Military Area was reconstituted (suspecting that Lin's group was dominant); a commander, a political commissar and a minister were transferred (Rice 1974: 504?)

In April 1971, when the Working Meeting of the CC was held, some of its members (who were also in Polit Bureau) made self-criticism saying that they were repenting for supporting Lin in the past. Chou En-lie announced this later (Rice 1974: 505?)

In 1970, Edgar Snow in his news report to a French news paper informed that he learnt that extraordinary developments were going to take place in China in the following year (Van Ginnekan 1976: 231)

Between August and September 1971, Mao left Peking and toured other provinces for about ten days. This tour was undertaken for a special purpose. In the course of his tour, Mao told some leaders that a party individual was very zealous to become head of the state, to split the party and usurp power (Schram 1974: 293).

THE ACTUAL STORY

Thus, after some background work had been done by the opponents of Lin Piao to fell him, the actual story began with a sudden incident. (The following information is taken mainly from Van Ginnekan's book.)

On September 12, a meeting of party leaders was held suddenly in Peking. Why this meeting was held so suddenly, what was discussed in this meeting, whether Lin was present in the meeting or not—No one knew except God, if there was one!

On September 13, all the flights in China were cancelled. Orders were issued summoning all the military personnel who were on leave to report back to duty. Some higher officials in the Air-force, Chief of the Army and the Head of the Logistics department were arrested. All the precautions that are usually taken before a war were taken. No one in the country except the top leaders knew why all this was happening.

Some of the world news agencies released a news item that all the flights in China were cancelled; that Lin Piao, the head of the army was said to have fled the country.

The news that Lin fled the country spread to other countries but Chinese people were not aware of it. The Chinese newspapers did not give that news. It was clear that Lin, his wife and son were not in the country. What about their whereabouts? Where did they go? Taiwan? Soviet Union? Did they leave on their own? Did something else happen?

On September 20, the Government declared that Republic Day celebrations to be held in Peking on October 1 were cancelled. It also declared that the celebrations would not be held grandly and must be celebrated in a modest manner. But it did not give reasons why the celebrations would not be held as usual.

This situation continued till the end of September.

On September 30, a Mongolian newspaper reported that a Chinese aircraft made in Britain crashed in the borders of Mongolia at 01.50 hours in the night of 13 September and this happened 17 days back. [News after 17 days!]

The Russian news papers also carried a news item: The cause for this plane crash was not known. There were nine half-burnt bodies, weapons and documents. It looked like an air-craft of Chinese air force.

On September 30, the Mongolian government asked the Chinese ambassador to Magnolia as to why the Chinese air-craft entered into their territory.

The Chinese ambassador passed on this information to China. Thus on September 30, the Chinese leaders came to know that Lin's plane crashed in Mongolia 17 days earlier.

On October 3, China gave a reply to Magnolia that it was not a military air craft. It was a civilian plane. It simply missed its path and went that side. That's all.

Mongolia did not accept that reply. It argued that the plane did not take off from the civilian airport. 'Your civilian airport is at a long distance from us. Your military airport is close to us. Your aircraft fell down near our rocket base. Why can't we conclude that your plane came for the purpose of spying? We expel your ambassador until we get a satisfactory explanation'.

The Chinese ambassador passed on the views of Mongolian government to China. The ambassador and the Chinese minister talked about this over phone. Discussions between the two governments continued for two months. Finally, we do not know as to what explanation satisfied Mongolian government, it permitted the Chinese ambassador to take a look at the wreckage of the aircraft.

Did the ambassador see the aircraft? Did he find the dead bodies? Or did they remove them before he visited the spot? Did Mongolian government examine the whole issue? Is it true that there were documents in the plane?—We do not find information on these issues.

Now, about the situation in China.

The newspapers in China did not report the news of disappearance of Lin Piao since September 15. They did not report the matter even on 30th when they came to know about Lin's death in the plane crash. Initially for few days the news circulated among top officials. Later, they circulated the news among middle-level cadres.

From November onwards the newspapers began to publish some comments in a subtle manner on Lin Piao without mentioning his name 'some emperors, army commanders, princes, prophets, sages tried to turn the wheel of history backwards' wrote People's Daily of November 7. On the same day, the Chekiang provincial Radio attacked Lin Piao in such a subtle manner that ordinary people could not understand whom it was referring to: 'A cheat like Liu Shao-chi'.

At the end of the same year, an article in Red Flag chanted thus, 'double tongued counter-revolutionaries—however much they hide themselves, however much they try

to conceal their real faces—can never escape from the piercing examination of Chairman’s vision and from comprehensive and collective action of revolution masses who are armed with Chairman Mao’s thought.’ (Van Ginnekan 1976 : 279).

Han Suyin (1976 : 336) tells us that many articles had appeared in Chinese press since the Ninth Congress. All of them were aimed at Lin Piao without mentioning his name. It was difficult even for Sinologists to identify the targets in those articles.

However subtle the campaign might be, every one understood the real issue. But not in a proper manner but by way of whispers. There might have been some provinces where people did not know all this.

Was it not a matter of humiliation to the people if they came to know about happenings of their country through the news media of other countries instead of their own media? If foreign tourists in China ask the Chinese thus, ‘why did your defence minister flee? Has any news come out about his fleeing?’ and if the Chinese people put a blank face thus, ‘Did our defence minister flee? When?’—if this happened was it not very awkward? Suppose, the Chinese would say with knack, ‘Nothing has come out about it’. It would also be hypocrisy, wouldn’t it?’ Why should the people of a country be placed in such a situation? If the foreign tourists, after returning to their country, thought thus, ‘The Chinese people were like sheep. They were not aware of what was happening in their country. Perhaps this is the true colour of Communism!’— who is to be blamed for such a conclusion? Marx’s theory?

As it gradually began to unfold that the entire subtle propaganda was against Lin Piao, people were unable to understand why so much opposition to Lin. There have been eulogies of Lin since five years— through the newspapers, radios, meetings etc. Two years ago, he was described as the ‘heir apparent’ of Mao. Why this propaganda against such a person? What did he do? People would put all these questions to the local party cadres. What would they answer? In fact, it was not convincing to them. Lower level cadres were not at all inclined to conduct campaign against Lin Piao. In February 1972, some attempts were made to explain this issue to cadres in the capital of Yunan province under the guidance of a military commander. Some cadres were afraid of the very idea of condemning Lin Piao. Some cadres did not like even tell people about Lin. Some cadres thought that such propaganda against Lin would cause damage in other ways. Some cadres did not even consider this as a point for discussion.

A party worker in Kwangtung asked, ‘we have been waging class struggle by means of Cultural Revolution and have been meeting with success. How did revisionism arise so suddenly? All this is very confusing’.

In Szechwan province, some cadres asked, ‘If Lin was such a revisionist why did we not throw him off?’ (Van Ginnekan 1976 : 284-5)

The Chinese government initially passed on some news about Lin Piao to other countries where fraternal communist parties were ruling. Albanian Party secretary Hoxha recorded this in his diary on 10-11-1971 as follows : “A radiogram from Peking informs us that a Chinese told a comrade of ours : ‘In ten days’ time you will hear something very sensational’. Ten days went by, and the same person said: ‘A

major split has taken place in the main leadership of China, and measures have been taken against those who said one thing in the Cultural Revolution, and acted differently. Lin Piao is at the head of them' (Hoxha 1979: 612).

In February 1972, a top Chinese official informed about Lin Piao to the delegation of the French parliamentarians (Daubier 1974: 268).

The Chinese embassy in Algiers released a news report on July 2, 1972 stating that Lin Piao has been committing mistakes for a long time. Mao told him [it was Mao, not the party!] to rectify the mistakes. Moreover, Lin Piao conspired to kill Mao. Having failed in his conspiracy, while fleeing towards Soviet Union, his plane crashed on September 12, 1971 (Milton 1974:380).

News about Lin Piao was known so clearly in foreign countries. But they did not announce it in China. After some time, having conducted campaigns in various forms inside and outside the country, they decided to reveal the 'fleeing' of Lin Piao. [Thus, the Telugu saying that 'dogs barked six months after the robbery' would no longer be relevant. It became outdated. It would have to be changed as 'dogs barked sixteen months after the robbery'.)

According to some writers, on September 22, 1972 People's Daily openly published the episode of Lin Piao's disappearance. However, the writers did not give the details about the contents of the report. Yet we can easily imagine the details of that news report. It must have said, 'Lin Piao has been hatching conspiracies right from the beginning. He did not stop committing mistakes in spite of Mao's warnings. He hatched a conspiracy to kill Mao. As the conspiracy was exposed, he was fleeing to Russia out of fear and died in the plane crash.

All this indicates that, though the defence minister and the top most leader in the party disappeared on September 13, 1971 the Chinese officially revealed this fact for the first time on September 22, 1972. That is after one year!

Why did they delay to inform their own people? Would any reason, however sound it might be, justify this delay? 'Assuming that Lin Piao fled to foreign countries and would wage war on China with the help of other countries, who would have to participate in that war? As soon as they learnt that Lin Piao fled the country, the Government found it a primary necessity to cancel the leave of the military men, to arrest some persons and make preparation for war; but did not find it necessary to inform the people and make them defend the revolution. Let alone primary necessity, they did not find it a necessity at all.

"Our defence minister has fled the country. He may wage war against us. Or, he may instigate a revisionist coup in some parts of the country. We have to face this challenge." – Unless the party thus tells the people, the people cannot be ready to defend the country and revolution, can they? Unless the people of the world know about Lin Piao's threat to Chinese revolution, people of the other countries cannot resist his attempts, can they? Only then they would be able to put pressure on their government not to help Lin Piao. Without any connection with the people of their own country and other countries, can a handful of party leaders defend the revolution? What was the reason for Chinese Party for not announcing publicly about Lin Piao?

It was necessary for all the groups in the party to oppose Lin Piao, wasn't it? What objections even hardcore rightists would have? The party did not care as to what the people would think of the party on this issue. The party simply dumped the jargon, "Believe the People! Rely on the People!" but not relied on people in this respect without informing the people about an extraordinary event. The party leaders chanted mantras, "Millions of People armed with the thought of Chairman Mao...." Those millions of people were so armed to face the forthcoming challenge that they were not aware who their enemies were!

When war-like situation emerges in reality, then they will start giving calls: "Come on! Come on! Wake up? March! Resolve yourself! Defend the country!" When these stupid people genuinely jump forward, sacrifice selflessly and accomplish gigantic task, our gentlemen will come again to the forefront, push the people to the back and say, "Sleep until another war begins. Until then we do not need you. What do you know of all that politics? We will take care of all those things! Saying thus, the leaders will be engrossed in long discussions on what should be the designations for the new positions and who should occupy them. Since it held a careless attitude toward people, the Chinese party dealt with the people in that manner on the issue of Lin Piao. If this was not the reason can any one offer any other explanation for its behaviour?"

Criticism against Lin Piao began directly since October 1972. The criticism was that Lin Piao was responsible for Ultra-left mistakes and many crimes committed during Cultural Revolution. It is true that Lin Piao followed Ultra-left trend. But, never did they criticize so in the past. Now they were criticizing.

To the question, 'why did Lin Piao flee so suddenly?' the answer they offered was, 'Because his conspiracy has been exposed!'

As a reply to the question, 'what was that conspiracy?', there began different stories. The stories that we are going to listen were not narrated by the CPC at one place. We could collect one piece here and another piece there. The following is a mixture of several pieces which some writers (e.g. Burkhart, Van Ginnekan, Hoxha) mentioned in their writings.

'GREAT DETECTIVE STORIES'

Lin Piao was holding the post of Vice-Chairman of the party. If he killed Mao, Lin Piao thought, he would become Chairman soon since he was already the Vice-chairman. [Clever idea! We can't deny. What about the histories of emperors who followed conventions of inheritance? If the old king did not leave the throne forever, how long would the prince pass his time in hunting birds and riding horses? He too would reach forty-five or fifty years of age. Desire to sit on the throne and rule would keep on increasing. Thus he would have his own problems. When Lin Piao possessed heirdom — the heirdom using which, sons kill their fathers and younger brothers kill older brothers — what was wrong if he used it? When we convert Communist Party into a Law of inheritance of feudal emperors, we have to enjoy the fruits of such consequences, shouldn't we?

Lin Piao, out of zeal to become the Chairman, called two military officers and said, "Look officers! Today our great leader Chairman Mao will go in this train in this route. Both of you have to plant bombs on the rail track: one at one place, another at another place. Understand! Go!"

Of the two officers, one gentleman had a tender heart. Like butter. We do not know about the heart of the second gentleman. The first gentleman immersed in a deep sorrow, 'should I kill Chairman?' He went home, lied down on a cot and fully covered himself with a blanket. His wife started pestering him, "Sir, are you suffering from fever? Are you suffering from..." The gentleman paused for a while and called his wife, "Hey, come here! I have something to say!" He narrated everything to her and asked her, "Tell me a way out". She was a doctor. She thought for a while [Without scolding her husband thus, 'why did you accept to do such a thing as this?'] and told him, "Don't worry. I will give you an idea." She, then, gave him an injection that made him ill. He became temporarily blind. If he could not see, he could not plant a bomb on the railway tract. Therefore, he felt happy and lied down. Then that doctor-cum-loyal wife made a phone call to somebody and told him all the details. "A rail accident that would have killed Chairman Mao was averted due to the butter-like heart of my husband. But there is threat to Mao's life at another place. The place is..." Then the official removed Mao from that train immediately. Thus, Lin Piao's conspiracy was exposed.

While this was going on, another story unfolded. Lin Piao's second wife's daughter made a phone call to Chou En-lai and said, "My father and others are fleeing today to some place." Chou En-lai made a phone call to Lin Piao's house which was in a rural coastal area, some hundreds of miles away from Peking. Lin's wife Achun received the phone and told that Lin was not at home and he went to a dance programme. As soon as Chou En-lai put down the phone, she called her husband. We don't know what they talked. In five minutes all of them started in a car toward Paithaho airport. The car driver suspected that something was wrong. He refused to drive. Lin Likua shot the driver immediately and necked him out of the car. He himself drove the car fast to the airport. When they reached the airport they came to know that Chou En-lai ordered the cancellation of all the flights. But Lin Piao somehow managed the personnel in the control tower. The plane was ready. While filling the fuel, Lin Likua was hurriedly looking at his watch. Then an officer in the airport got suspicion. He got a big oil tanker kept as a hurdle on the runway to prevent the plane from taking off. As it was not possible to run, the plane flew vertically upwards. Lin Piao boarded the plane in such a hurry that he jumped into the plane through the window without even climbing the steps. He even left his cap. He did not check whether there was sufficient fuel in the plane or not.

Here there is another small story. After Lin Piao's plane flew into the sky, another helicopter with Lin's followers also flew out. Then its pilot suspected that something wrong was going to happen. He refused to fly. Immediately an officer shot the pilot with a pistol. The helicopter fell down. Two officers shot themselves.

Only one survived and he narrated the whole story. This was how Lin Piao's conspiracy was exposed.

Hoxha called this tale 'a great detective story'. But will a single copy of a book be sold if detective stories are so lifeless? Such stupid stories will be of no use except to get defame that communists are incapable of writing even detective stories. It was not stupid rural folks who fabricated these stories. It was the party cadres in Peking who had woven them. The writers of some books mentioned that the party cadres circulated these stories.

The party was well aware that so many cock and bull stories were in circulation in the country. Yet the party did not reveal the actual truth, did not condemn these false stories and tried to give a proper understanding to the people. The party did not issue even a single report giving details with regard to when, in which plane and from which airport Lin Piao fled.

If we see the diary of the First (?) Secretary (Hoxha) of the party of labour of Albania, we will know that CPC gave some details about Lin Piao to the fraternal communist parties abroad. [Note that the CPC did not reveal Lin Piao's affair to its own people by the time it gave information to fraternal communist parties. Moreover, while giving this information to others, they tell how they fought the Ultra-left heroically and why they did not tell that openly so far!]

"At last, after nearly eleven months, the Chinese comrades, through our ambassador in Tirana, have given us some official information about the 'Ultra-leftists' or the 'Lin Piao plot'.

The Chinese comrades tell us approximately this: Now we (the Chinese) say that the ultra-leftists have been completely unmasked and the main one, the root of them, was Lin Piao. He raised the banner of Chairman Mao against Chairman Mao. During the Cultural Revolution he created a line left in form but right in essence, wanted to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat and restore capitalism in China. Liu, also, had the same aim, but he, as it seems, had the party in his grip and was restoring capitalism (the Chinese comrades describe this manner of action as rightist!) while Lin Piao wanted to take power and establish capitalism through the Cultural Revolution (the Chinese comrades describe this manner of action as ultra-leftist).

Lin Piao, said the Chinese comrades, was a typical two-faced element. Earlier, in the time of Wang Ming, Lin supported him, but at that time he was young. This was considered a mistake due to immaturity. Later he united with Mao, took part in the Long March, indeed did some good things, but also made mistakes during his work, which he corrected.. Lin Piao was against the Korean War and the sending of the Chinese volunteers there. He appeared to have admitted his mistakes, but on the other hand, he had undermined everything, which was in the interest of the party. When Chairman Mao launched the Cultural Revolution, he took up the banner of Chairman Mao, but in fact he was working for himself.

They also told us: Chairman Mao was not in agreement with the assessments and glorification Lin made of Mao's ideas and work. All that glorification, which built up Mao to the skies, was anti-Marxist, because it put him above Marxism-Leninism, because the Chinese soldiers and officers hung portraits of Mao round their necks, because they bowed before the portrait of Mao every morning and made self-criticism before this same portrait (as before icons of Christ).

The assessment that 'Mao Tse-tung thought is the highest peak of Marxism-Leninism' or that 'Mao is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our days' etc., which Lin Piao made (and the others swallowed) was idealist. The Chinese said that Mao had allegedly criticized Lin Piao for this long ago, and he had allegedly accepted the criticism, but in fact had continued his work in order to present himself as Mao's loyalist supporter.

In fact, he conspired to kill Mao on three occasions, say the Chinese, but they told us only of one occasion, the one in which Lin Piao's son, Deputy-Commander of the Air Force, had formed a group of hundred people, with which he was to kill Mao and Chou En-lai, to capture the premises of the Central Committee, and overthrow the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Lin Piao is accused of inciting enemy elements to carry out sabotage against the party and to spark off clashes within the army during the Cultural Revolution. He had created a group of loyal followers around himself, whose members tried to build him up through flattery.

The Chinese comrades said that Mao saw through Lin's words right at the start, but did not see his schemes. These conspiratorial activities came to light gradually, especially after the 9th congress of the Communist Party of China. As is known, the decision that Lin Piao was to be the successor to Chairman Mao was approved at this congress. (This thing, too, just as all the other things, we Albanians condemned long ago.) Lin Piao, seeing that Mao Tse-tung was in good health, was afraid that the torch would never be handed on to him and that was why he hatched up 'the plot in order to seize power as rapidly as possible'.

Lin Piao, the Chinese told us, felt that Mao would understand these things, therefore at the 2nd Plenum of the CC in 1970, he assembled his group to carry out a coup d'etat. [This means one can think of coup during the meetings of the CC. Perhaps it is the right place to hatch plots!] At the time, the Soviets committed the provocation on the Ussuri and brought 300,000 soldiers into Mongolia, on the border with China. That is, these were co-coordinated actions. Chen Po-ta was also part of this group, but Mao uncovered (the Chinese comrades themselves have told us this). No measures were taken against Lin Piao. They say that Mao worked to save Lin. However, from the facts it turns out that he was not detected, but was criticized for a number of mistakes, while continuing to gather his men to stage an armed uprising.

When the plot was discovered, on the morning of the 13th of September 1971, he fled by aircraft in the direction of the Soviet Union, but the plane crashed and burned in Mongolia. Five hours before the plans took off, Lin Piao's daughter informed Chou En-lai that her father was fleeing. Mao allegedly said: "Let him flee". In order to cover his own tracks, the conspirator Huang Yung-sheng proposed that they should shoot down the aircraft with rockets, but Mao stopped this, because they would be accused of murdering him, and they had no facts with which to accuse him. Aboard the aircraft were Lin Piao his wife, and his son, the pilot, with no navigator or radio operator, and some other persons of no importance, eight or nine people all together.

Hence according to the Chinese comrades, immediately after the plot was discovered, Lin Piao wanted to go to the Soviet Union, and thus unmasked himself. The aircraft crashed and burned on the ground, because it ran out of fuel. "It was proved that the ultra-left trend had been hatched up and encouraged by Lin Piao and that the slogans to overthrow Chou En-lai, Chen Yi, and Yeh Chien-yi had been issued by him."

'This means,' said the Chinese comrades, 'that with the exposure of Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and other conspirators by the Cultural Revolution, the party has been purged, has emerged stronger, and with a higher level of consciousness in the struggle between the two lines and in the class struggle.'

Huang Yung-sheng, Li Huo-geng, Wu Fan-hsien, Tsin Hui-tec, who have been arrested, took part in Lin Piao's group of trusted followers. The Chinese told us: "We have said nothing publicly on this matter; as to other matters, we are waiting to see what the Soviets will say'. ... 'Meanwhile, everybody in our country knows about this and is clear on it', said the Chinese comrades. 'We have not said anything outside. Dangerous situations in the struggles between the two lines have occurred on ten occasions in our Party, but this was the most dangerous and most serious. Now the ultra-left trend has been thoroughly exposed. The Cultural Revolution was protracted, because of the sabotage of Lin Piao,' they continue and then add: 'Nr. 516 Organization was described as counterrevolutionary because on the 16th of May 1966 the Central Committee issued a document drafted by Mao about the Cultural Revolution, which was a call for the overthrow of Liu Shao-chi. Besides aiming the arrows at the overthrow of Liu, Lin Piao also aimed them against the Central Committee in order to overthrow it and then take power.' [So, Lin Piao was a Communist Arjuna who was capable of shooting arrows with two hands simultaneously and effectively!] The Chinese comrades said that during the Cultural Revolution there were things, which even they themselves did not understand. The teachings of Mao were not applied, [Then what was Mao doing? Could he not apply his teachings?] because Nr. 516 Organization was counter revolutionary. The document of 16th May 1966 was discussed within the party, while on the 16th of May 1967 it was published for the masses to study it thoroughly (after a year?!) [We should note this point with special attention. The initial victories of the Cultural Revolution ended by February 1967. In the subsequent period, it went on with ups and

downs. People came to know about the objectives only after May 16, 1967. What was the reason for presenting the document before the people after such a long time? According to the leaders, the party would first 'decide' every thing and then people have to 'study' it! People's participation is unnecessary! Why could not people discuss that problem during the same year in which the party discussed?]

The Chinese comrades said that Lin Piao was exposed little by little, that he worked behind the scenes. [Do people who hatch conspiracy do things behind scenes or publicly? Do they call others and say, 'Come on, we are hatching a conspiracy, come and watch!', just as people invite others and say, 'Come on, we are holding a religious function ('vratam'), come and see'?] 'We have had a great deal of sabotage in our external relations, and in the Foreign Ministry there were groups which were guided by the ideas of Nr. 516 Organization. Both we and Mao Tse-tung,' said the Chinese comrades, 'had understood Lin Piao's aims, but we did not think that he would engage in an open plot. Lin did not say much, but worked in secret.'

'The Report to the 9th Congress was only read by Lin Piao.' (Astonishing! The Vice-Chairman of the party was allegedly a gramophone record!)

This was the whole history of the Lin Piao plot, which the Chinese comrades reluctantly told us of, nearly a year later."

After narrating the Chinese report, Hoxha raised some good questions.

'Chinese comrades say that Mao's directives were not implemented. Who was to implement them? The conspirators? It is evident that they do not implement. They say that such events occurred ten times. However, the Chinese comrades have not drawn the real lessons from all these bad things. Groups in the leadership were quarrelling, attacking each other, being overthrown, one after the other. As soon as one is overthrown, a second one rises, this falls and another rises. All of them fight under the banner of Mao, but that this banner of his is not identified with that of the party.... The Chinese comrades present Lin Piao as 'very cunning' but he did not show himself at all cunning in his plot and his treachery. Would a cunning person get into the flight without checking the fuel? If Lin Piao was committing mistakes, how was it possible that he became the Vice-Chairman of the party and the minister of Defence? These things are hard to swallow!'

Hoxha mentions another version. That Lin Piao did not agree with other groups in the party on the question of foreign policy and hence other groups wanted to eliminate him. 'He was summoned urgently to Peking, boarded an aircraft and, when he saw that he was not landing in Peking, asked: 'Where are we going?' When later they saw they were in Mongolia, he and his people brought out their revolvers and killed themselves. What went on inside? The aircraft came down and was burned out. Nothing was learned. A Canadian newspaper reported that "Kissinger had told the Canadian Prime Minister that

expertise had proved that bullet marks were found in the wreckage of the air craft” (Hoxha 1979: 738-44).

Hoxha concludes that day’s diary as follows: “All these versions are suppositions dictated by the unclarity of the facts which the Chinese themselves provide. Officially we accept all that the Chinese say, but time will explain everything” (p. 744).

Hoxha compromises with his questions and leaves the responsibility of exposing positive and negative aspects of human history to the goddess of time. Thus because of his concluding comments the entire discussion of Hoxha, to borrow a Telugu saying, ‘turned into a scent poured into ashes.’

If critics, who initially made deep, extensive, serious and wonderful critical comments, compromise with the wrong doings of others, the wrong-doers are not at all affected. They look at the critic with a smile and say, ‘Make any number of critical comments. As much as your stamina permits. Any way, you are going to compromise with us.’

What is the use of such criticism? When you cannot stand on your criticism for whose sake you are making that criticism? When you have so many doubts on this issue why should you accept the version of the Chinese? What is ‘official’ and what is unofficial for a communist? Who are you to decide, ‘let us accept this official report’.

Prepare a report, circulate it among your people and tell them, ‘this is what Chinese are saying’. Your people will discuss it in as many ways as possible: in the meetings, newspapers and the like. Collect all their views through your party committees. Based on that, prepare a reply, send it to the Chinese and tell them, “This is what our people and the party think about your report on Lin Piao.” Publish it in your newspapers. Convey it to world news agencies. The world will judge whether the Chinese report is correct or Albanian reply is correct. When so much has to be done, is it proper if His Excellency the First Secretary takes a pen and paper and scribble, “Officially we accept” ? Will it be party’s view or country’s views?

ONCE AGAIN ON

THE CHINESE VERSION

Let us leave Hoxha aside and examine once again what the Chinese party told about Lin Piao’s episode.

What conspiracy did Lin Piao hatch, according to the CPC? That he attempted to organize an armed revolt? Are there details in that report regarding the day on which he attempted, the kind of attempts he made and how the Chinese came to know about those attempts? ‘He hatched a conspiracy’; ‘he had a scheme’; ‘he wanted to establish

capitalism' — these were the accusations. On the one hand they say they exposed his scheme and on the other hand they say they don't have the facts to frame charges!

"When the plot was discovered...." Say the Chinese. What did they discover? If they had discovered on September 12 & 13, 1971 why did they start negative campaign against him since 1970? If they knew about his fleeing five hours before the plane took off, why did they let that 'traitor' leave? Was five-hour time not enough to cancel all the flights? Did they not feel the need of keeping watch on the airports that were available to Lin? Did they want the fun of imposing war on people?

"...the party has been purged, has emerged stronger, and with a higher level of consciousness in the struggle between the two lines and in the class struggle," said the Chinese. Who waged this class struggle? Who raised the level of consciousness of the party? This means, two gangs butt each other, one gang knocks down another gang and the gang that gains upper hand starts campaigning that it won the class struggle!

Chinese comrades, it cannot be class struggle. It is merely gang war. The world witnessed this gang war for a thousand generations. The only difference is that you are waging that war in the name of Communism. But the world looked at you with wonder that you were waging class struggle. How long would it watch unless it finds something. All it found were this sort of 'wonderful things'.

Your report gave a wonderful clue for discouraging Mao's cult from 1970. Since you started anti-Lin Piao campaign since 1970, you needed a list of blunders, which Lin Piao committed. You wanted to put the blame of cult entirely on Lin's group. If you want to say, 'Lin Piao did all this, Mao didn't like it at all', first you need to start saying, 'cult is not necessary'. No doubt Lin was also responsible for Mao's cult and he must be criticized for that. But why didn't they criticize him at that time? Why are they criticizing him only now? What is the secret behind this? This is an important question for us.

They started to sing a new song: that all the praises showered on Mao were anti-Marxist, that all those actions connected with cult were idealism and Mao criticized Lin Piao in the past itself.

Is there any document that proves the claim that Mao criticized Lin in the past? If they say that Mao scolded Lin Piao at the personal level [My dear Lin, don't commit mistakes!], this issue is not something akin to, to borrow a Telugu expression, 'scolding wife's brother'.

Why didn't we hear in the past comments like 'cult is idealism and anti-Marxism'? If Mao did not like his cult, what would this report say about Mao's interview with Edgar Snow? Is it enough if you put the entire blame on Lin and criticize him singularly? Did Mao make a self-criticism thus, 'I too committed mistake in this issue'. The first mistake was Mao's. Did Mao ever write an article criticizing those who carried his pictures around their necks, worshipped those pictures and who resorted to many more wrong practices? Did he ever teach his countrymen or the outside world through news papers or Radio thus, 'to exhibit your love for me in this manner is a terrible insult to me. This

means you are treating me as some body who yields to superstitious forms. Oppose every one who encourages cult of individual. We do not want Personality Cult. What we want is collective spirit and action. Socialist practice.”

Mao felt happy and kept quiet while his personality cult has been undertaken on such a large scale for so many years. But the CPC puts the entire blame of Personality cult on Lin Piao since Mao had ‘some’ problems with Lin Piao. True, that there are millions of people who blindly believe what the party says but it is stupidity to think that those millions of people will remain so blind forever.

After giving a haphazard report on Lin to the Communist Parties of other countries (not to all countries), the Chinese government published a news report for the consumption of its people on September 22, 1972, didn't it? Apart from that news report, as the party was obliged to publish some document, the Chinese released a document at the end of 1972 enumerating 10 major charges leveled against Lin as follows. (Van Ginnekan 1976: 287)

1. Lin Piao attempted to usurp the party leadership. He placed individuals above the party and insisted that his name must be mentioned as the heir apparent of Mao in the party constitution (in April 1969).
2. From 1966 to 1971, he implemented his opportunistic line opposing the correct line of Chairman Mao.
3. Between 1969 and 1970, he undermined Democratic Centralism and argued that army should lead the party.
4. Right from the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, Lin made several attempts to kill Mao especially between 1966 and 1971.
5. When the party criticized anti-party clique of Peng and Huang, he took advantage of it and tried to usurp the military leadership before and after Lushan conference in 1958-59.
6. He disregarded party discipline. Formed cliques. He relied only on his followers and recruited traitors into the military.
7. To oppose the red flag, he raised the red flag of ‘study of Mao’s writings’ to a disproportionate height. He has been resorting to political tricks since 1969 for his selfish ends.
8. During the period of Cultural Revolution especially between 1967 and 68, he organized indiscriminate attacks on the party cadres and dismissed many leading cadres and other comrades who should not be removed. He organized ill-motivated attacks on our cadres.
9. Between 1970-71, he opposed the correct foreign policy of Chairman Mao.

10. He maintained illicit relations with foreign countries in 1971.

These accusations indicate that Lin Piao has been following conspiratorial methods since 1958. Why did they ignore such a person until 1971? If he had apologized in the past, why do they raise them again today?

No one has any right to consider it a crime if a person argued that army must lead the party. A person would argue like that in accordance with his understanding. Or he would argue as per his class nature. An argument of a single member can not be the decision of the entire party. If that argument was wrong, others should make efforts to enable the members grasp the correct argument and defeat the wrong one. But, you have no right to accuse him for that argument. If you do so, it will close the doors for discussions.

Inclusion of his name in the party constitution as the heir apparent of Mao is a clear proof to say that Lin Piao made a mistake. Based on this, we can conclude Lin Piao lacked communist outlook. But lack of communist outlook itself does not amount to a crime if it does not harm others. But declaration of heirship did harm. Though the party is meant to defend the collective interests of the people, Lin Piao misused it for his selfish-end. Thus, he committed an act that harmed millions of people. But, party members other than Lin Piao had also given their consent for the heirship [It happened since the majority accepted it]. Therefore, members other than Lin Piao were also responsible for that mistake. We cannot say, "Majority was at fault, minority was not at fault because they opposed it."

We have to respect majority-minority principle as long as the party does not distract from the fundamental objectives. The majority-minority principle becomes meaningless if the fundamental objectives are subverted. If a party member proposes thus, 'Let us re-establish bourgeois society. Let us give back the property to the private individuals who owned it in the past. Or let us bring back royal dynasty and start the rule of emperors.' – Will the party conduct voting and follow the majority-minority principle? Will the principle of voting be relevant? Principle of voting is irrelevant to such issues which have already been concluded as reactionary. Heirship of state power is a phenomenon related to the period of emperors. [This is not inheritance of property. Inheritance of official position. This is not even bourgeois in nature. It relates to the remote past.]

The fact — that a person, who was the Vice-Chairman of a communist party, wanted a right relevant to the age of emperors and got it — indicates that it was beyond imagination that the communist party was full of feudal stink. When a leader asked for a right relevant to the age of emperors, the party members can not justify themselves by saying, 'we fought against it. But we were in minority. What can we do?' Thus the argument that minority was not at fault is also not tenable.

It was the fault of the majority which was in favour of heirship. Also it was the fault of the minority who obeyed the majority. Thus the entire party was at fault. The whole party resorted to an awfully anti-people action.

Yet, there is a difference between Lin Piao and other party members in this issue. Lin Piao did it for his personal, selfish end. Other party members did not do it for selfish ends. They surrendered to the external conditions. Individually they were not in a position to resist the proposal of heirship. It was in the hands of Lin Piao in the sense that

such a declaration would not have been made if Lin Piao opposed it. Thus, in view of the specific nature of this issue, we cannot treat both Lin Piao and others in the same manner. But the question is whether those other members of the party showed any sign of opposition or tried to resist the proposal. The answer to this question is readily available: 'They yielded because of the strength and weakness of classes involved'. There were some accounts which say that Mao – in view of the consolidation of revisionist forces in the party – wanted once again to go back underground, mobilize people to fight against the revisionists. But he thought it would be better if remained in the party and made some efforts instead of leaving the party in the hands of the revisionists. With this view, he yielded to Lin Piao temporarily. If this was true, there should not have been any problem to reveal the whole episode after the disappearance of Lin Piao. Did the party do so after Lin Piao left the scene? Did the party bring out any document to the notice of the people giving all the details thus, 'amidst the strength and weaknesses of the classes, the party took a step backwards and accepted the heirship. It had to do so under unavoidable circumstances.' If the party had yielded to the unavoidable pressures, should it not reveal the truth as soon as it got an opportunity, if it was really anxious to reveal the truth to the world? The party criticized Lin Piao for the inclusion of heirship but did not make a single self-critical examination except vague, subtle and stray words. Once Chou En-lai, while talking to some foreign ambassadors in China, told that Lin Piao and his military clique put pressure on reluctant Mao to propose Lin Piao as his heir. With this incident, differences between Mao and Lin Piao had begun (O'Leary 1974: 155). In these words of Chou En-lai, there is no trace of the existence of something called party. They put pressure on 'reluctant Mao'! As a consequence, differences between the two began! All this appears to be a transaction between individual and no party organization comes into the picture. Did they wind up the party altogether? No. Declaration of heirship was made in the party congress.

Should we assume that decisions were made among individuals and declarations are made in the party?

On another occasion, Chou En-lai told that the fraternal communist parties ridiculed us because of Lin Piao's heirship. The constitution of the CPC has feudal colour. Writing about the heirship in the party constitution means giving lot of scope for anti-communists, they said (Van Ginnekan 1976: 255).

In Chou En-lai's statements, we do not find the self-critical attitude. They simply tell us that others found fault with the party. Nowhere do we find Mao's views on this heirship. Except stray comments of this sort, there is no explanation by the party. If they had included the declaration of heirship unwillingly, would they keep quite without revealing the truth when they got an opportunity? Based on this, what should be our understanding of the role of the party in this mistake? If other members had waged struggle on this issue, there would be difference between Lin Piao and other members. Otherwise, all were alike. There was no struggle on the issue of heirship. Then, other party members were culprits as much as Lin Piao. If it was so, how could others accuse Lin Piao? Since all of them were tolerant of the heirship, they incorporated it in the party constitution.

The fact that the party constitution mentions that a particular person is the closest comrade in arms to the chairman indicates the character of the CPC. It is not merely the word 'heir' that must be objectionable to the Revolutionaries.

What does the statement 'Lin Piao is the closest comrade in arms' mean? Who else will occupy the position of the chairman other than the closest comrade in arms? Was there only one person in the entire party who was closest a comrade of Chairman? [If that person and Mao had individual friendship, it ought to be at individual level. Mao could write in his personal letters that 'I like such and such person more than others!'] What right does the chairman have to state in the party document that 'such and such a person is my closest comrade in arms'? Mentioning the name of a person as the closest comrade in the party constitution implies violation of collective rules and assigning privileged positions to that person as well as the Chairman. In the past, they referred to Liu Shao-chi as the closest comrade in arms to Mao (Rice 1974: 167). As wrong practice of assigning privileged position to a single individual has been there in the Chinese party, it led to the announcement of heir apparent.

There is an argument that the Chinese term for heir is 'chih penjen' which means one 'who carries out responsibilities'; and the party constitution used the term 'heir' in this sense. Even if some one says that, 'this person will discharge my duties after me,' what does it mean? Is it not wrong to assign privileged position to one individual in the party documents? Those who argue that it was not wrong to mention so will be in a fix when they recall the fact that Lin Piao got his name mentioned in the party constitution as a heir of Mao.

If there was no objection to refer to a person as 'the closest comrade in arms' of the chairman, there should be no objection to refer to a person as a heir apparent. Both are same. The party which was revolutionary in certain aspects was very backward in its consciousness. Can we say that the CPC did not do revolutionary acts? When it removed Teng for the second time (in April 1976), it was a revolutionary political act. It meant defeating revisionist forces once again. Could such a party not prevent the declaration of heirship? It did not have that outlook. As it was at such a level of assimilating feudal aspects, such a declaration was possible. Hence, it did not find the question of heirship (in 1969) objectionable. The question of heirship served as a pretext because of subsequent problems with Lin Piao. From this point of view, we need not justify the accusation of heirship against Lin Piao. Thus, 8 out of ten charges leveled against Lin Piao will not stand. Now, the last two will remain. Perhaps these charges must have created the whole confusion.

It is clear that Lin Piao and others in the party had differences (were they differences of opinion or class struggles?), with reference to Chinese foreign policy. This was the 9th charges leveled against Lin Piao. In the report which Hoxha narrated, the Chinese lamented that a great betrayal was done to our foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution. But they did not explain what that betrayal was. Who can console those who lament without telling reasons? Do we say, 'Yes, Lin Piao was wrong', just because he had passed away and he would not question us and just because the CPC is lamenting?

We have already noted that Lin Piao's group was opposed to other groups on the question of Sino-American relations. Nixon visited China in February 1972 soon after the

death of Lin Piao. Mao, who in his speech of May 20, 1970, said, 'Defeat American aggressors', cordially invited Nixon at the beginning of 1972 (Van Ginnekan 1976: 243). Earlier to that, Chou En-lai held talks with Kissinger and personally welcomed the American Tennis players. After this, Nixon's arrival! All this happened while American aggression on Kampuchea, Vietnam and Laos was continuing. Van Ginnekan observed that vagueness in the Chinese stand towards America began to appear since the beginning of 1977. Before that China had intense opposition to America (p. 244).

The Chinese did not explicitly say that Lin Piao opposed Chinese relations with America. They simply told that Lin Piao opposed correct foreign policy. No one need not attach any value to the Chinese accusation since they accused Lin Piao without naming the country with which he opposed relations.

The tenth charge was also exactly the same as the ninth one. That Lin Piao had illicit relations with foreign countries in 1971. which countries were they? What do illicit relations mean? What did Lin do? Even if they were illicit acts, should we accept just because the accusation was made by CPC, whose chairman was Mao? If we accept it, will it not amount to Mao's cult? [The intention of the Chinese leaders was to tell that Lin Piao had clandestine relations with Soviet Union.]

Is there a single charge that we can admit out of ten charges leveled against Lin Piao? On the one hand, they said, 'Lin Piao was able to include his heirship because he had huge majority in the Ninth Congress' and on the other hand they said, 'Lin Piao had no role to play in the Ninth Congress. He simply and reluctantly read the political report drafted by Mao.' [One can have any number of tongues! To borrow a Telugu expression, 'Are they tongues or pieces of Palmyra tree?']

During 1974 and 75, the CPC, under the auspices of Chou En-lai and Teng hsiao-ping brought out two volumes containing 20 articles criticizing Lin Piao (Roy 1982: 69).

The charges leveled against Lin Piao in these articles were very vulgar. One charge was that Lin Piao wanted to sit on the throne under the Soviet umbrella. [Anyway, there was a throne in China. Lin Piao had the key of the door through which he reaches that throne. Perhaps, he wanted to sit on the throne hurriedly! We could reprimand Lin saying, 'You, crazy fellow! Why so much hurry? Any way the throne will be yours?' We can't say more than this.]

Another charge leveled against Lin was that he did not use to read books or documents! [Did the party people think that a person who does not read books and documents would shine as the vice-chairman of the party? Or did he become ineligible for that post after he began to read?]

Daubier (1974: 227), a French scholar who worked in China as a teacher and a translator in 'Peking Review' commented that the Chinese leaders did not give details while leveling charges against Lin Piao.

What details did they give to their own countrymen, let alone foreigners? The leaders felt that their people knew everything about Lin. They had clarity and they need not be told explicitly. But the Chinese people were far away from the quarrels of their leaders. For them, the question, 'who is on the throne', is immaterial. Had Lin Piao's group succeeded and sat on the throne, they would look at the throne once, and say, 'Oh, I see'

and then immerse in their routine. To what extent the people have now reacted when Teng's group had grown stronger and pushed Mao's group aside?

In case, a tide of a mass movement rises, the people gather around it enthusiastically for a while, just as kids gather near the circus tent. With half-baked political knowledge, they try to make some noise. Based on their empirical knowledge, they try to rearrange things. Meanwhile, leaders chase the people away just as the circus manager comes out of the tent and chases away the kids thus, 'Why are you making noise. Get out from here.' Some enthusiastic people initially rebel, raise few slogans, get tired and return homes. Later, they would not bother as to who sat on the throne or who got down from the throne. This continues until they get political anger again. As there is no scope for people to participate constantly in political practices, they remain, to borrow a Telugu simile, 'lie down like snakes which ate mud'.

Bettelheim emphasized this point in his essay. He observed that some mass movements in China were organized in such a way that people did not understand what was at stake and the leaders simply appealed people to lend support for them. If it were — what the leaders organized was — class struggle, it was a class struggle sans classes! A class struggle in which classes did not participate!

A VAGUE LETTER BY MAO

Those who examine the question of Lin Piao must examine a letter which Mao wrote to his wife. Let us see Mao's letter (dated July 8, 1966) to his wife Chiang Ching.

"After I left Hangchow, I lived ten days in a cave and now I am in Changsha (a place of white clouds and the yellow stork!). After these ten days without information, your letter was very interesting and full of new things...the leading organ of the Central Committee hastened to send me the recent materials for approval and I shall approve them. My friend has delivered a report about the coup d'etat and has made an analysis of this problem which no one else has made up to date. Some of his ideas made me think deeply and worried me. It had never occurred to me that my books would have such a miracle-working power, therefore spontaneously I am reminded of the sayings, 'what is greatly stretched is easily broken', 'The higher you rise the heavier you fall', 'the more a man's glory increases the more difficult it is for him to be worthy of it'.

The circumstances compelled me to fulfil the request of certain people...This is the first time that I have agreed with others against my own desire, to act against my will. Now I have the features of both the tiger and the monkey, but mostly those of the tiger. This is the main and most important thing. I instruct you not to become conceited from this fame, to be cautious, and listen to the advice of comrades...and Chen. Now I am the monkey who became king, because there is no tiger in the mountain. In our time when there are no heroes, I, an unimportant person, have been raised so high. I am a hero because there were no others. You must not tell anybody all these things because they coincide with the evil sayings of the rightists. To the leftists they will be like a cold shower poured on their heads, while they will assist the rightists. The main thing now is the struggle to partly overthrow the rightists. The things I say do not suit the taste of the leftists and the masses. After we purge the rightists we shall have to do another purge,

indeed several of them. Once in seven or eight years there is a shake-up in the world, and during these shake-ups the evil comes to the top. Perhaps, after my death these sayings of mine will become known and the rightists will use them for their own ends, but the leftists, too, will use other sayings of mine, organize themselves and defeat the rightists, etc. The rightists will be defeated like Chiang Kai-shek.” (as cited in Hoxha 1979:II:46-7)

This letter was in Mao’s handwriting. The CPC circulated this letter from the end of 1972. Subsequently it distributed to foreign communist parties as well. Why? With the intention that the atrocities of Lin Piao would be revealed through this letter. On March 8, 1973, Chou En-lai, speaking to foreign specialists (including an Albanian) working in China, gave the copies of that letter. The letter was translated into seven languages. Chou En-lai said, “I shall read you some party documents in connection with the exposure of Lin Piao.” (p. 46)

Chou En-lai gave this letter as ‘a party document’. The first question is, ‘could this letter be a party document’. [He has not given them other documents.]

We need to consider expressions – like ‘the monkey became king because there is no tiger’, ‘I am a hero because there were no others’ — as humorous expressions. Incoherent expressions like, ‘I have the features...mostly those of the tiger’ and ‘monkey became king’, ‘I am unimportant person, have been raised so high’— all these are part of humor. We do not find coherence between words while talking for fun or humour. There is no need for coherence. No one would have objection to treat those expressions as humor. But it is strange to note Mao saying, ‘You must not tell anybody all these things because they...will be like a cold shower poured on their heads, while they will assist the rightists.’ These words sound very odd because he wrote them as if they were politically significant. Why should Mao write such words, ‘which coincide with the evil sayings of the rightists?’ So, the rightists will use some of the sayings of Mao ‘for their own ends’ and leftists, too, will use other sayings of Mao! Perhaps, Mao intentionally speaks things which are useful to both rightists and leftists! Will the rightists use words like ‘tiger’ and ‘monkey’? The main part of the letter is very confusing! [It seems that the hermiticism of the revolutionary leaders have crept into the letters which they wrote to their wives as well!]

Well what did the CPC want to achieve with this letter? What is there in this letter to expose? There are different interpretations of couple of points in this letter.

Some argue that Mao referred to Lin Piao when he wrote, ‘This is the first time that I have agreed with others against my own desire, to act against my will.’ What was the issue that compelled him? Shall we assume that it was the issue of heirship? But this letter was written in 1966. So, that is not the issue. The Chinese leaders do not give details about the issue that compelled Mao. But they expect that all of us must feel that Lin Piao compelled Mao.

Another point in this letter: ‘My friend has delivered a report about the coup d’etat’. Here Mao was talking about Lin Piao. Lin Piao spoke on some issue in the polit Bureau meeting on May 18, 1966. He talked about coups in general. He talked certain things,

keeping in view Liu Shao-chi's revisionist line. The main points of Lin Piao's speech were the following.

The main issue in sustaining revolution is to sustain political power. We should be cautious and prevent counterrevolutionary coups. In the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, there occurred 61 coups from 1960 and political powers reversed. The capitalist class has entered our party and occupied all walks of life including the ideological sphere (news media etc.). Chairman Mao said that we could not occupy ideological sphere during the past 16 years. Coup depends on guns and newspapers. A coup is accomplished easily if the two (guns and newspapers) are confiscated. Coups are possible during the natural calamities, wars and when the main leader dies. Unless we understand all these aspects carefully, it is impossible to retain political power. (Van Ginnekan 1976: 56-7)

Seeing the papers connected with that Polit Bureau meeting, Mao, in his letter, wrote that his friend made a good analysis of coup and the analysis made him think. Now, the Chinese leaders were using the letter against Lin Piao. Showing this letter, they were commenting that Lin Piao had an intention to organize a coup right from the beginning. The main purpose of circulating this letter was to accuse Lin Piao. But, Lin Piao talked about coup openly in the Polit Bureau meeting. Everybody knew this at that time.

Another point. In the sentence, 'Listen to the advise of comrades...and Chen', Mao originally wrote, 'Listen to the advice of Comrades Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta'. As it would not be of any use if those names were retained, the leaders deleted one name and reduced another name to half. [Based on what they did, it is easy to understand that those names included Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta. There was no need for the leaders to delete names of people other than Lin and Chen.]

When the leaders showed these letters to foreigners, the foreigners asked our Chinese comrades, 'who is this Chen? What is the name that is deleted?' The reply of Chinese comrades was, 'We do not know.' As if telling kids! How did they circulate that letter without knowing the details? Would others not ask them, 'why is this gap in this sentence? Did Mao himself leave this gap? Why did he do so?' Why did the party comrades not try to find out the name that was not mentioned? Foreigners were interested in knowing that name whereas the Chinese comrades were not interested in getting information about their own party document! It became a 'party document' without knowing the information! Even if other leaders did not know, what about Chou En-lai? Did he also not know? Chiang Ching knew the comrades about whom Mao was telling her. Why did the Chinese comrades find out those names from her? Did she also not know? Then why did not you ask the actual person (Mao)? Why didn't you fill that gap after asking the person who left that gap? [In fact, where was the question of filling the gap when they themselves put the gap? Those who put gap must be ready with answers for the possible questions, mustn't they? Perhaps they were confident that they could say, 'we do not know.']

When you were revealing some information against a person, what value that information would have if it does not clarify doubts? Moreover, it would be proved to be

a false information. Having told that he would give a document exposing Lin Piao, if Chou En-lai gave that headless and tailless piece of paper, should people wonder, 'what a conspiracy did Lin Piao hatch?'

If people asked Chou thus, 'Why did you put this information before us when you could not clarify our doubts? What conspiracy does the paper reveal?', what would be the answer? Was that single piece of letter necessary to prove conspiracy in politics? If at all the crime was committed, would the party not have means to prove that crime?

More important question than other questions is: How did Mao agree to turn that letter against Lin Piao? If they asked Mao, 'You suggested to Chiang Ching to listen to the advice of two comrades. Who are they?', whose names would Mao reveal? He was obliged to mention the names of Lin and Chen Po-ta, wasn't he? How could Mao agree to use that letter – which had positive attitude toward Lin Piao – against Lin Piao? Should we assume that all this happened without his knowledge? If it was so, we would have to raise questions accordingly.

They took out a letter written about seven years ago. No word in that letter is clear. They do not give details to any thing. But they circulated it claiming that it would expose Lin Piao. In fact what would be exposed from that letter was not Lin Piao. Firstly Mao, then Chou En-lai and thereafter the entire party. Why should Chiang Ching and other leaders accept for the circulation of this letter? Since it was a personal letter of Chiang Ching, nobody could circulate it if she did not accept. Even very ordinary, uncivilized and stupid people do not stoop down to this level.

If leaders of Mao level behave without any ideals, it is no wonder that the world looks at communism with contempt. Such incidents as these give more strength to anti-communists. It scares away those people who watch communism from a distance.

See what Chou En-lai, who campaigned orally that Lin Piao hatched conspiracy, told a visiting delegation of American news editors on October 7, 1972. He told that Lin Piao did not really try for a coup or kill Mao. But he had a plot. He fled the country as soon as he realized that his plot was revealed. He could not dare to implant his plot. It was a plot involving a few persons. (Rice ? 1974: 508)

It seems that Chou En-lai's heart got enlarged and the truth came out of his heart as soon as he met Americans. He had no fear that the party has to offer explanation as to why it has been campaigning so negatively against Lin Piao all these days and why he was now saying that Lin Piao did not hatch a conspiracy. He was not bothered about possible criticism. Yes, the Chinese leaders don't care any thing. Hence, they defamed Lin Piao all these days but were now saying, 'He did not hatch a conspiracy but....!' As, in fact, Lin did not hatch a conspiracy, all these days they resorted to indirect and short cut methods to prove some plot.

DO YOU CALL THIS

MATERIALISM?

The Chinese leaders expelled Lin Piao and Chen Po-ta from the party in the Tenth Party Conference held in 1973.

Expelling the dead from the party! Do you call this materialism?

If a person, whom people considered a revolutionary, had really harmed the revolution, it is enough if we exposed him in detail. If all people form the view that the person harmed the revolution, the people would naturally stop considering him a revolutionary. Announcing the expulsion of a dead person from the party is nothing but to take revenge in a primitive heinous form. It has nothing to do with the nobility connected with class struggle.

TENG'S TRAIL OF LIN PIAO

The CPC, under the auspices of Teng Hsiao-ping conducted a trial on Lin Piao group along with the trial on 'Four' leaders and their followers in 1980. Chen Po-ta was still in the prison at that time. According to the trial, Lin Piao attempted to usurp the post of the president in 1970. He appointed his son in the Air force. He formed a group of his own. In February 1971, Lin Piao, his wife and his son hatched a plot. On March 21, 1971, Lin Piao's son finalized detailed plan in a secret meeting. The plan was called 571. It was a code name for armed revolt. They called an officer to the secret meeting on March 31, 1971. In August 1971, Mao went to South China, met local party cadres in Wuhan, Changsha and Nanchang and told them about Lushan conference. [Lushan conference was held a year ago! But Mao told about it now!]

Lin Piao received a secret report from his followers about what Mao talked during that visit. Then, he immediately decided to kill Chairman Mao during his tour. On September 18, 1971, Lin Piao issued an order on a white paper with a red pencil about the armed coup. Lin Piao's son took that paper and went to the commander. Lin's son and his followers hatched a plot in Peking to blow up Mao's train. At that time Mao was in Honjo Province. Mao's train reached Shanghai on September 10. The conspirators thought that Mao would stay at Shanghai for a long time. But Mao left Shanghai the next day and reached Peking on September 12. It was not possible to implement the plot. After the plot failed, Lin Piao wanted to go to South and set another Central Committee. He took this decision in Baidahe. People in the defence units informed about the whole thing to Chou En-lai. Chou En-lai told them to be cautious and alert. Lin Piao realized that Chou En-lai came to know everything and hence he wanted to go to the North. On September 13, at 0.32 hours (that is 32 minutes after the 12th of September night), Lin Piao's plane took off. It was a Trident air craft No. 256 in which there were Lin Piao, his wife, his son and few others. The plane crashed in Wundurkhan area of Mongolia. None survived. (*A Great Trial in Chinese History*, 1981: 189-192)

Mao returned to Peking from his tour on September 12. Lin Piao disappeared the same night! There must be some connection between these two incidents.

A MYSTERY!

Charles Bettelheim (1978: 104) observed: “In 1971 the danger that the PLA leaders, grouped around Lin Piao, presented to the revolutionary trend was so great that Lin Piao, was brusquely eliminated.” Even after reading what Bettelheim wrote on Lin Piao, we were unable to understand the ‘plot’ of Lin Piao. While translating his book ‘China since Mao’ into Telugu, we wrote to Bettelheim seeking clarification on the issue of Lin Piao, as follows: ‘We have not found adequate information to understand the so-called plot of Lin Piao. Tell us what information you have. It appears that there were debates when Liu Sho-chi was removed but no such debates were held with reference to Lin Piao. What, according to you, was the role of Lin Piao during Cultural Revolution?’

In response to our question, Bettelheim replied as follows : “I want to say that Lin Piao and the generals of PLA appeared to me conservative forces trying to block the pursuit of the mass expression which the Cultural Revolution had brought forth. Now, till the fall of Lin Piao, these forces were in great numbers in the Revolutionary Committees. Moreover on the disappearance of Lin Piao, the Cultural Revolution attains a new development particularly in the form of an effort seeking (without succeeding) to deepen the class analysis.

In so far as the coup d’etat which Lin Piao appears to have attempted, I do not know anything more than what is generally said and published and which does not appear very convincing. On the other hand, the information that we have seems to indicate that Lin and his wife fled in an aero plane and this aero plane crashed. There is an article on the subject in the French daily, *Le Monde* (The World) by the former correspondent of this newspaper in Peking, Alain Jacob.

You are right. There is a great contradiction between the progressive elimination of Liu (after long meetings devoted to criticism) and the sudden disappearance of Lin without any explanation. I think that this contradiction arises precisely from the fact that Lin fled. This is also the point of view developed by Alain Jacob in the article to which I referred earlier”. (Bettelheim’s letter to Ranganayakamma, dated August 11, 1983. Translation from French: A.D. BHOGLE, a retired French language Professor from Osmania University, Hyderabad.)

This means debates would have taken place had Lin Piao not fled. But, even if we agree that Lin Piao himself fled, the main question is ‘why did such a situation arise?’ The world must know in the subsequent period the issues on which differences of opinion arose in the party. We need lot of clarity with regard to ‘fleeing’ away of Lin Piao.

The revisionist leaders in China (who usurped power immediately after Mao’s death) and the supporters of the Revolutionary Line (the ‘Four’ leaders and their followers, who were imprisoned by the revisionist rulers) knew the details about Lin Piao’s disappearance.

At the end it is pertinent to mention Daubier’s (1974) observations on the Lin Piao’s affair.

”And it is harder to explain how it (the five people who formed a directorate with Mao: Chou En-lai, Kang Sheng, Lin Piao, and Chen Po-ta, fell apart” (p.269).

“...there is still a sad lack of information on a subject (Ultra-leftist movement) so important and so full of international implications.” (p.269)

“How can any commentator answer this question, about which the Chinese leaders themselves have revealed but little?” (p.225)

“The Lin Piao affairs will continue to remain a mystery until such time as Peking decides to open its archives and reveal the proofs of treason. Until then, the observer can only ponder and speculate”. (p.228)

NOTE: This article was originally published in October 1983 as a long footnote in the Telugu translation of Charles Bettelheim’s ‘CHINA SINCE MAO’. The second edition of the Telugu version came out in March 2003. The quotations from different sources were translated from English to Telugu in 1983. While preparing this English version, we could not find some quotations in one of the books (a book by Rice) cited in the text. It seems that there occurred some mistake in noting down the author’s name while jotting down the quotations. Hence, we wrote those quotations in indirect speech in this English version. To indicate this mistake, we put question mark (?) after the name of the author in the text (Rice?). The translator has benefited from the language corrections made by his colleague Sachidananda Mohanty, Professor of English, University of Hyderabad.

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