

**Prospering from a Purge: The Role of “Counterrevolutionary Splittists” in Mao’s
Power Strategy During the Cultural Revolution**

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Note: This is a part of a larger work in progress on authoritarian coalition formation, which also explores other strategies dictators use to maintain power. As this is a preliminary draft, please do not cite or circulate without permission. All suggestions are welcomed: vshih@northwestern.edu

A major thread in the contemporary scholarship on authoritarian regime focuses on the interaction between the dictator and the coalition whose support maintains the dictator in power (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). To stay in power, dictators can buy the support of the elite, remove threatening figures from elite decision-making bodies, and pack the upper echelon with loyal followers (Slater 2003; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Debs 2009; Tullock 1987). This especially pertains to more institutionalized dictatorships such as communist regimes, where rules govern the size of and conditions for entry into elite governing bodies. Top-down cadre selection institutions in many dictatorships allows autocrats to manipulate the composition of the selectorate to enhance their chance of survival.

Yet, even this bundle of strategy may be insufficient to maintain a dictator's power in an authoritarian regime, where information about the identity of one's enemy and about the relative distribution of power among the top elite is scarce. If an unexpected shock redistributes power, a rival coalition may form to usurp the incumbent with little warning (Acemoglu et al. 2006). Even a loyal protégé who suddenly obtains substantial power may gain the urge to become number one. In the absence of credible constitutional provisions governing power transition, a coup or a purge may suddenly unseat the incumbent. Throughout the manuscript, I have argued that placing known weak figures in elite decision making bodies constitutes an effective strategy for the dictator to stay in power, especially in institutionalized authoritarian regimes. Although institutionalization means many things (Huntington 1968), institutions that limit the number of actors who can participate in national-level decision-making and who can

replace the incumbent are crucial for fostering political stability. A crucial aspect of Leninist institutions is precisely the entrusting of enormous power in the hands of the “vanguards” rather than those of ordinary party members or of the masses. Thus, even without credible constitutional provisions for power transition, power struggle within Leninist regimes may be more predictable (Geddes 1999). Even with Leninist institutions, however, the dictator’s agency matters. By populating decision-making bodies with weak figures, the chance of a rival coalition emerging is lessened, and the dictator obtains more information about the relative distribution of power among the elite.

Within this rubric, this chapter illustrates the usefulness of tainted individuals in a dictator’s power strategy. Tainted individuals are defined as actors whose rehabilitation within a given set of institutions requires the payment of an audience cost. They are valuable to the dictator precisely because they need to pay an audience cost in addition to the usual costs of rebellion if they decide to rise up against the incumbent.¹ The audience cost arises from the fact that within the social construction embedded in a set of institutions, these individuals are considered to be highly undesirable due to the dominant discourse in that set of institutions (Berger and Luckmann 1990). Thus, to remove that taint, either a new discourse must be developed, or some element of the existing social construction is used to re-legitimate the tainted figures. Neither action is costless.

¹ According to Lohmann (Lohmann 2003), “an institutional commitment has bite only if it is made vis-a-vis an audience that can and will punish institutional defections.” Thus, when an individual is tainted due to violation of rules set forth by an existing set of institutions, the removal of that taint within that set of institutions will lead to costs imposed by an audience.

Examining the faction of “counterrevolutionary splittists” led by Zhang Guotao, this tainted faction became a central pillar in Mao’s manipulation of the elite during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). At the height of the Cultural Revolution, when a large share of veterans revolutionaries were removed from power and banished to work farms, Mao systematically protected veterans of the Fourth Front Army, which had been led by Zhang, from the Red Guards. Many Fourth Front Army veterans were further entrusted to take over much of the civilian and military apparatus. Mao felt at ease in placing members of this tainted faction in positions of great power because short of overthrowing CCP institutions entirely, the entire party would have rallied around Mao if the tainted faction had plotted against Mao. Moreover, even if a rival coalition had emerged, it would not have wanted to ally itself with the tainted faction due to the additional audience cost of such an alliance, thus making these tainted individuals more reliable to Mao during times of political struggle. Meanwhile, by continuing to emphasize the second-class status of these individuals, Mao was able to promote them into senior positions without violating the discourse on which their taint was based. Finally, Zhang Guotao’s faction obtained the label of “counterrevolutionary spittists” because of a failed challenge against Mao himself. Having created the discourse against Zhang in the first place, Mao could not have rehabilitated the tainted faction without discrediting himself and paying a large audience cost. Zhang’s remnant faction thus knew that they had little chance of rehabilitation while Mao was still alive and that their political survival hinged solely on Mao’s good will. Ultimately, the dependence of these tainted individuals on Mao’s good graces made them more trustworthy and reliable than even Mao’s long-time friends and comrades.

The story of Zhang Guotao's Fourth Front Army also highlights the profound importance of an obscure but traumatic political struggle toward the end of the Long March in 1935. This event, now often glossed over in official party history and history textbooks, produced hundreds of military officers and civilian cadres who were politically scarred for life. As followers of the "Zhang Guotao counterrevolutionary splittist line," half of them were sent on a death march from which only a handful returned, while the other half underwent intense political struggle and torture for years. When these officers and cadres emerged from years of rectification, however, most of them were never purged again in subsequent decades.

The rise of Zhang Guotao's remnant faction in the entire post-liberation period is puzzling because Zhang Guotao split from the Central Committee by setting up a "Provisional" Central Committee at the end of the Long March. Furthermore, Zhang was the most senior member of the CCP to have survived defection.² Thus, if the Cultural Revolution aimed at struggling against class enemies and traitors within the party, followers of Zhang Guotao, who actually were enemies of Chairman Mao in the 1930s, should have been purged immediately. After all, Mao spent months trying to prove that Liu Shaoqi was at the head of a ring of traitors dating back to the 1930s (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006). For Zhang Guotao followers, no investigations would have been necessary because numerous party documents were issued in the 1930s to condemn them as counterrevolutionaries. Instead purging them, Mao went out of his way to save them from Red Guard rampage. Even after the Wuhan Incident, which saw conservative Red Guards supported by former Zhang followers kidnapping Mao's personal representatives,

² The other senior defectors, including Gu Shunzhang, Xiang Zhongfa, and Lin Biao, were killed either before or soon after their defections.

Mao actively intervened to prevent an army-wide purge of this remnant faction. Statistical and historical evidence below shows that Zhan followers were systematically saved from the rampage of the Red Guards.

The protection of Zhang Guotao followers also did not make sense from an interest group perspective. These individuals were marked by grave political errors and scattered in various civilian and army units. They certainly did not represent any coherent interest that Mao needed to appease. Finally, even from a factional perspective, Mao's protection of Zhang Guotao followers in the midst of the Cultural Revolution made little sense. A factional patron is expected to protect one's loyal followers rather than the followers of former enemies (Pye 1995; Shih 2008). While the Cultural Revolution ultimately saw the removal of scores of Mao's most trusted and oldest followers, the followers of the "splittist" faction were systematically saved and promoted. This outcome only makes sense in light of Mao's deliberate placement of tainted individuals in important civilian and military positions. They were useful precisely because everyone knew they were the black sheep.

Zhang Guotao and the Fourth Front Army

Zhang Guotao was a giant in the early Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and his stature as well as his command over the largest army in the CCP at the end of the Long March compelled him to make a bid for ultimately power against Mao, thus tainting members of his army even today. In addition to being one of the few founders of the CCP still in the party by the 1930s, he was the only CCP leader to have met Lenin, Stalin, and Bukharin (Zhang 1971). This was especially important in the early days of the party

because, until the Long March, the CCP still mainly took orders from the Comintern on important matters. As Stalin's influence grew in the Soviet Union, Pavel Mif's students at the Sun Yat-sun University gained ascendance in the CCP (Zhang 1998a; Gao 2000). Nonetheless, even Stalin had some respect for Zhang and saved him from the anti-Trotsky, anti-Bukharin purge in the late 1920s, when Zhang lived in Moscow (Zhang 1998a: 433).

Although Zhang had been among the top five officials in the CCP throughout the 1920s, he gained real autonomy from the Politburo and even from the Comintern when he was ordered to take command of a guerilla base in the Hubei-Henan-Anhui (*Eyuwan*) Border Area in the 1930s. In that capacity, Zhang became the supreme leader of both the civilian and military organs of that base area and remained the leader of that branch of the communist revolution until Mao launched a purge against his faction in 1937. Contemporary accounts of the Chinese revolution mainly focus on Mao's base area centered around Jiangxi Province, but the *Eyuwan* area was nearly as big and also produced a major fighting force for the CCP. Within a year of arriving in the isolated base area in 1931, Zhang had consolidated his control through a series of military victories, the promotion of a group of trusted followers, and the purge of political enemies (Zhang 1998b).³ Zhang Guotao formed long-lasting bonds with Chen Changhao and Shen Zemin, who also had been central committee cadres sent to the *Eyuwan* area, as well as with a group of military officers who had been in the base area before Zhang's arrival. Senior figures in the latter group included Xu Xiangqian, Li Xiannian, Xu Shiyong, Wang Shusheng, and Xie Fuzhi, all of whom became senior officers in the

³ There are disputes on the scope of Zhang's purge. Zhang himself claims that although over a thousand was arrested, only 30 were executed. His former subordinate Xu Xiangqian claims that many more were killed. See (Xu 1987: 154; Zhang 1998b: 108)

Eyuwan-based Fourth Front Army (Zhang 1998b). The initial success of the base area, however, drew increasingly large scale attacks from Chiang Kai-shek. In the autumn of 1932, Chiang struck with some 500,000 troops attacking from three sides, which was 20 times Zhang's forces (Zhang 1998b).

Faced with overwhelming odds, Zhang led the Fourth Front Army in a westward retreat to northern Sichuan Province. Although the Fourth Front Army suffered significant losses, Zhang still maintained some 16,000 troops out of the original 25,000 upon arriving in northern Sichuan. This compared much more favorably to Mao's First Front Army, which lost some 90% of its original force in the course of the Long March (Braun 1982: 140). To their delight, Zhang's army found a political vacuum in northern Sichuan. Besides opium growing bandits, the area had few other political authorities, and Chiang's main KMT forces had not penetrated this far west yet. Thus, Zhang's forces quickly consolidated control over a large area and began to recruit new soldiers in earnest (Zhang 1998b; Xu 1987). By the time Zhang's forces met up with Mao's skeletal column in mid 1935, Zhang had between 50,000 to 60,000 troops (Xu 1987: 386; Braun 1982: 123).

"Counterrevolutionary Splittists," "Armed Counterrevolutionary Group," "Traitors"

In early 1935, a well rested and well provisioned Fourth Front Army received word that the First Front Army, by then led by Mao Zedong, was slowly making its way north from Guizhou Province. The Fourth Front Army decided to shift slightly west to meet up with Mao's column. At first, Zhang and his officers were eager to unite the Red Army (Zhang 1998b: 221). However, when the two forces finally met in

the remote hamlet of Maogong in June 1935, tension immediately emerged between the two armies. First and foremost, the Fourth Front Army was shocked at the small size and the decrepitude of the First Front Army. Zhang's men had expected a well-armed force of tens of thousands. Instead, they greeted a column of around 15,000 starving, sick, and demoralized skeletons dressed in rags (Xu 1987). Furthermore, because the two sides were in radio communication before the reunion, Mao and the other Central Committee members had known of Zhang's large force and had been mulling over how best to control it (Braun 1982: 121). Their solution, unfortunately, was to launch a political struggle against Zhang and his senior officers almost immediately after the reunion. After a relatively jovial dinner between Zhang and Mao on the night of the reunion, Zhang received a newsletter published by cadres from the First Front Army the next day accusing Zhang of pursuing "anti-Leninist" policies in northern Sichuan (Zhang 1998b: 233).

A much more serious split emerged between Mao and Zhang in the following days over the issue of where the combined Red Army should go. In essence, Mao and the majority of the Central Committee wanted to go north in order to link up with the Soviet Union through Outer Mongolia. Zhang, feeling relatively comfortable in Northern Sichuan, wanted to remain in place and perhaps explore a Western linkage with the Soviet Union through Xinjiang (Zhang 1998b: 235). Meanwhile, the relationship between both men and officers of the two armies deteriorated as each hurled accusations at each other. While Mao's cadres accused Zhang's men of behaving like warlords and

cowards, Zhang accused Mao and his men of defeatism and, more seriously, of pursuing an incorrect political line (Zhang 1998b; Xu 1987).⁴

The confrontation came to a head after the First Front Army had crossed a treacherous grassland in the Sichuan-Gansu border, where thousands more perished. The main contingent of the First Front Army, composed of the First and Third Army Groups and much of the Central Committee, was traveling north on the east side of the grassland (Xu 1987). This column, however, also included contingents of the Fourth Front Army led by two of Zhang's core followers, Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian (Xu 1987). Meanwhile, the main column of the Fourth Front Army, which also included elements of the First Front Army as well as senior officers such as Zhu De and Liu Bocheng, moved north at a much slower pace on the west side of the grassland (New fourth Army research society et al. 2009). After crossing the grassland in early September, the Central Committee sent numerous telegrams to Zhang urging him to quickly move north through the grassland to join the First Front Army. Zhang, in turn, sent several telegrams to Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian asking them to persuade Mao and his colleagues to go south (Wang and Zhu 2004).

According to an account Mao gave in 1937 during a meeting to struggle against Zhang, Zhang sent a secret telegram on September 9th 1935 to Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian asking them to “go south, thoroughly carry out inner party struggle”(Jiang 2004; Wang and Zhu 2004). An even more controversial version of the story contends that the telegram stated “use force to get rid of the Central Committee.” Scholars from the army combed through the Politburo archive in the 1980s and found

⁴ While Zhang favored a federation loosely based on patriotism, the Central Committee still wanted to form Soviets in China. This ideological disagreement was resolved later when the Comintern ordered the CCP to form an anti-imperialist united front.

little evidence to support the latter version of the story (Wang and Zhu 2004). In any event, Mao's chief of staff Ye Jianying somehow got a hold of this telegram and showed it to Mao. Quickly responding to a possible coup by the Fourth Front Army contingent, Mao ordered all units of the First Front Army in the column to quickly move north while Zhang's men were sleeping. Whether such a telegram was actually sent remains a subject of great controversies among historians and also among veterans of the two front armies. According to both Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian, they never received such a telegram and were shocked to find that Mao's troops had suddenly departed (Xu 1987 451; Liu 2008). Zhang Guotao himself also claimed that he never sent such a telegram (Zhang 1998b: 267).

Regardless of the telegram, units of the Fourth Front Army that had been attached to the Central Committee decided to go south and reunite with their brethrens. According to Xu Xiangqian, then the commander of the Fourth Front Army, he wanted the Fourth Front Army to reunite and headed south after Mao's departure, "...thus committing an error which would shame me for life" (Xu 1987: 454). When the Fourth Front Army reunited, Zhang Guotao held a meeting in Jiaomuzu, which harshly criticized the incorrect political line of the Central Committee. Citing incompetence and errors of the existing Central Committee, Zhang called for the formation of a "Provisional" Central Committee headed by himself, as well as for the expulsion of Mao, Zhou Enlai, Zhang Wentian, and Bo Gu from the CCP (Xu 1987: 460). In a telegram to the Central Committee that was later used as evidence for Zhang's plot, Zhang states "we demand that you stop using the false title of the Party Center and change it to the CCP Northern Bureau"(Zhang 1996). In the mean time, Mao engaged in his own war of words against

Zhang for committing “the criminal act of splitting the Red Army” (Politburo 1979). For a while, Zhang seemed to have the upper hand because contingents of the First Front Army which had traveled with Zhang became supporters of Zhang due to their dissatisfaction with Mao’s harsh treatment (Zhang 1998b: 272). In particular, Dong Zhentang, a former KMT officer who had defected to the CCP, was disgruntled about always fighting as the rear guard during the Long March, which caused him to lose nearly all of his troops (Zhang 1998b: 278). Even long-time Mao collaborators Zhu De and Liu Bocheng, who had been traveling with Zhang, did not actively undermine Zhang’s leadership (Xu 1987: 458).

The war of words between the two sides continued well into 1936 with no clear resolution. Finally, two important external events redistributed power away from Zhang and to Mao, thus sealing the political fate of Zhang’s “splittist” faction. First, Zhang’s gambit to expand his power into central Sichuan ended in total failure because Chiang Kai-shek had shifted substantial troops into Sichuan to augment the local warlords. In a series of failed attacks in the spring of 1936, Zhang’s forces lost over 10,000 men and were forced to retreat north (Xu 1987: 472). Meanwhile, although only some 8,000 troops from the First Front Army arrived in northern Shaanxi Province, they were pleasantly surprised by the presence of a sizable Communist force there led by Liu Zhidan (Braun 1982: 140). A few months later, the beleaguered First Front Army managed to persuade the local warlord Zhang Xueliang to join the CCP in an anti-Japan United Front. This alliance serendipitously coincided with the Comintern decision to change its line in favor of an anti-fascist united front in China, which aimed at delaying a Japanese attack of the Soviet Far East (Zhang 1998b: 292). Mao thus found a powerful

warlord with whom to cooperate, while Zhang could not get long-time foe Liu Xiang in northern Sichuan to even consider collaboration.

Into 1936, Zhang's position collapsed both politically and militarily. Militarily, a large KMT force closed in on Zhang's Sichuan base area from three sides. Politically, Mao's success in uniting with a powerful warlord in accordance to Moscow's wishes dashed Zhang's plan to replace Mao as the new Chairman. Both factors compelled Zhang to abandon the "Provisional Central Committee," accept Mao's leadership, and move north with his forces in the spring of 1936 (Xu 1987 487).

In June of 1936, Zhang still did not give up his struggle against Mao. Instead of sending all of his troops to northern Shaanxi to join Mao, he ordered Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian to take the bulk of the Fourth Front Army, as well as a few small units of the First Front Army, across the Yellow River into Gansu. Reviving a plan that had been discussed when the two armies first united, Zhang wanted the Fourth Front Army to reach Xinjiang, where the Soviet Union could supply and train the Fourth into a powerful fighting force. Thus equipped, Zhang's force could return to Gansu and start a new base area apart from Mao's Shaanxi base (Zhang 1998b: 355). Zhang himself, however, went to Shaanxi to submit to the authority of the Central Committee. Sensing that the Fourth Front Army's westward march was a final gambit, Zhang told Xu Xiangqian before his departure that "I am in trouble. If I go to northern Shaanxi, I must be prepared to go to jail and be expelled from the party" (Xu 1987: 497).

Stalin, wanting to consolidate Communist control over northwestern China, approved Zhang's plan to send the bulk of the Fourth Front Army west and even

ordered weapons to be shipped to Xinjiang (Gao 2000: 102; Zhang 1998b: 296).⁵ Even though Mao had earlier wanted Zhang's troops to go north, he did not raise any objection to Zhang's plan and even sent Peng Dehuai's units to the Yellow River to cover the Fourth Front Army's crossing (Xu 1987: 306). Thus, the 9th, 30th, and 5th Army of the Fourth Front Army, totaling some 20,000 men and women, crossed the Yellow River in October 1936, while 4th Army and 31st Army blocked KMT forces from the south (Xu 1987: 310). Meanwhile, when Zhang arrived in northern Shaanxi, Mao made him hand over control of the Fourth Front Army and submit to rounds of political struggle (Zhang 1998b: 320). Zhang's remaining hope was the victorious return of the Fourth Front Army from Xinjiang.

Instead of a triumphant return, the Western Legion (*Xilujun*), the name of the Fourth Front Army units that had crossed the Yellow River, was completely annihilated by forces commanded by the Muslim warlord Ma Bufang in the Gansu Corridor. The Gansu Corridor, a narrow strip of flat, barely arable land connecting Shaanxi with Xinjiang, was hemmed in from both the north and the south sides by a desert and a mountain range. Thus, the Western Legion, commanded by Zhang followers Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian, had little room to maneuver, and the flat, open topography of the Gansu Corridor was advantageous to Ma's cavalry. Still, writing decades later, Xu was convinced that if the Western Legion had moved quickly, it could have survived relatively unscathed through the Gansu Corridor because the Muslim warlords were in no mood to fight a passing army (Xu 1987: 557). However, in

⁵ Zhang Guotao claims that Lin Yuying, who had just returned from Moscow in late 1935, conveyed to him Stalin's wishes for Zhang to head toward Xinjiang. Xu Xiangqian does not mention this, but Xu quotes a Central Committee telegram approving the Fourth Front Army's move west.

November 1936, the Central Military Commission, then dominated by Mao, ordered the Western Legion to stop at the narrowest point of the Gansu Corridor to start a base area.

Not wanting to further offend the Central Committee, Chen Changhao, the political commissar of the Western Legion, ordered his troops to stop and establish a base over the opposition of Xu Xiangqian (Xu 1987: 552). In subsequent months, the Western Legion was worn down by waves of fanatical attacks by the Muslim warlords until it was completely annihilated. Examining historical evidence, it seems likely that Mao intentionally ordered the Western Legion to stay put in order to eradicate the main forces of his political foe, Zhang Guotao. First, the Western Legion was in regular radio contact with the Central Committee and reported regularly on its mounting casualties and dwindling supplies (Xu 1987: 546). Zhang Guotao himself also repeatedly implored the other Politburo members to help the Western Legion, but Mao and others were evasive and avoided the subject (Zhang 1998b: 329). Instead of giving any help, Mao sent a telegram to Zhang's beleaguered troops stating that "the central committee feels that the Western Legion's mistake is the same rightist, retreatist opportunism that the Fourth Front Army committed when a second central committee was set up"(Zhu 2008).

On March 11, 1937, the totally depleted remnants of the Western Legion broke out of the fortified hamlet of Nijiayingzi and were quickly cut down by Muslim troops. After two days of massacre in a network of dry river beds, only around 1200 escaped into the mountains (Xu 1987: 549; Qin 2007: 73). In the end, of the over 20,000 troops in the Western Legion, only 700 or so finally made it to Xinjiang, while several dozens stragglers, including Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian, made their way back to Mao's base in Shaanxi (Xu 1987). Waiting for the stragglers in Xinjiang, however, was

Mao's chief of secret police Deng Fa, who launched an anti-Trotskyite purge among the survivors of the Western Legion (Liu 1999). Scores of officers, including senior commanders such as Li Te and Huang Chao, were executed.

After Mao had consolidated his control in northern Shaanxi and after forming an anti-Japanese united front with Chiang Kai-shek in 1937, Mao lost no time launching an fierce political campaign against Zhang Guotao and his followers in the Fourth Front Army (Politburo 1996). Considering the other demands on the party at the time, considerable resources were invested in the tainting of the Zhang Guotao faction. Mao loyalist Kai Feng was tasked with writing a comprehensive denunciation of Zhang Guotao, blaming him for a series of past set-backs going back to the 1920s, as well as for more recent transgressions, including "counterrevolutionary splittism," "warlordism," "right opportunist flightism," and neglecting mass work with minorities (Kai 1979). Mao even blamed the annihilation of the Western Legion on the "Zhang Guotao line of retreatism" (Mao 1991).

Surviving officers of the Fourth Front Army were put in special classes at the newly formed Anti-Japan University and faced daily struggle sessions, carried out by officers from the untainted First and Second Front Armies (Zhang 1998b: 358; Zhu 2008; Li 2009b). This struggle caused sharp resentment among the officers of the Fourth Front Army, and a few of them committed suicide, while others ran away (Li 2009b). As Hong Xuezhi, a Fourth Front Army officer, recalls "we did not understand why we were targeted, so we made a ruckus. The ruckus got louder, more fierce" (Li 2009b). With a rising tide of indignation, a group of 30 Fourth Front Army officers led by Xu Shiyong attempted to escape from Shaanxi to start a new guerilla base back in Hubei, a region

native to many of them. The “armed counterrevolutionary group”(武装反革命集团) was foiled when one of the would-be escapees betrayed Xu, which almost led to his execution (Jiang 2004). After the revolutionary court labeled the plotters as an “armed counterrevolutionary group” and death sentences were handed down to its leaders, Mao went to see Xu Shiyu twice to see if he would change his attitude. At the second meeting, Xu broke down and begged Mao for his forgiveness, which led to a stay of execution and eventually the release of Xu Shiyu and his fellow plotters (Mu 2006). 34 years later, Mao entrusted Xu Shiyu, the leader of the “armed counterrevolutionary group,” to arrest Lin Biao’s followers after Lin had fled to Mongolia.

Just as the campaign against Zhang was reaching a feverish pitch, however, Moscow sent a telegram ordering Mao to refrain from expelling Zhang and his followers from the party (Zhang 1998b: 367). Stalin probably wanted to keep Zhang to balance against Mao’s rising influence. After Moscow’s telegram, Zhang’s political fortune recovered slightly, and Mao put him in charge of the relatively powerless Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia People’s Government (Zhang 1998b: 397). Zhang even tried to revive his political fortune by reaching out to staunch Stalinist Wang Ming, who had just returned from Moscow. Perhaps mistakenly, Wang rejected Zhang’s offer of friendship because Zhang was linked with too many Trotskyites (Zhang 1998b: 425).⁶ Zhang also found out from Wang that Deng Fa had executed some survivors of the Western Legion in Xinjiang for being Trotskyites. The executions made up his mind to leave the CCP, and Zhang became the most senior CCP leader to defect to the KMT. In Zhang’s own

⁶ Zhang was accused of harboring Trotskyites in the late 1920s when he served as a CCP representative to the Comintern in Moscow. He was friendly to a few students at the Sun Yat-sen University, who turned out to be Trotskyites. Although Mif wanted to launch a struggle against Zhang, Stalin put a stop to it. See (Zhang 1998a)

words, he “did not want to wait until Mao killed him like Bukharin” (Zhang 1998b: 431).⁷

After Zhang’s shocking defection to the KMT in April 1938, the position of Fourth Front Army veterans became even more precarious. They were all “counterrevolutionary splittists” already, and a number of them were part of the “armed counterrevolutionary group” led by Xu Shiyou. Now, they were also associated with a bona fide traitor. More ominous, Stalin no longer had any incentive to protect Zhang’s associates from Mao’s wrath, as a defected Zhang was politically useless to Stalin. Indeed, Mao launched a large scale propaganda campaign discrediting Zhang both within the party and to the country (Wang and Zhu 2004). As former Red Fourth Front Army units were then engaged in fierce fighting against Japanese forces, Mao had to make do with a few brief struggle sessions on the front-lines (Xu 1987).

Even without another round of intense struggle, however, the dark stain of Zhang’s “splittism” and the defection permanently marked Fourth Front Army veterans. Numerous Politburo and Central Committee documents exposed Zhang’s crimes against the Central Committee (Politburo 1979, 1996; Central Committee 1979; Kai 1979). In a key Central Committee document which summarized CCP history up to 1945, Zhang’s actions were labeled “counterrevolutionary” (Central Committee 1990). Although veterans in Zhang’s Fourth Front Army were not expelled from the party in most cases, they were demoted and sent to raise guerilla forces behind Japanese lines with little funds and weapons. Qin Jiwei, who later became the Minister of Defense under Deng Xiaoping, was sent to Shanxi Province to start a guerilla band in Taigu County (Qin 2007 : 76).

⁷ Nikolai Bukharin had been a long-time friend of Stalin and his ally during Stalin’s struggle against Trotsky. Ultimately, however, Stalin tried and executed him during the Great Terror in 1938. See (Montefiore 2003)

The largest contingent of the Fourth Front Army was incorporated into the 129th Division of the 8th Route Army, which was led by Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping. Xu Xiangqian, the former commander of the Fourth Front Army, was given a largely honorary title of vice commander of the 129th division (Xiang 2006). The bulk of the 129th division was tasked with organizing guerilla bands behind Japanese lines (Chen 2007; Xiang 2006; Zhao 1997). During the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949), the 129th Division became the 2nd Field Army, which fought a war of attrition against KMT troops in north central China (Whitson and Huang 1973; Qin 2007). This stands in sharp contrast with Lin Biao's Fourth Field Army, which was given the best equipment and fought fierce battles with KMT crack troops (Zhang 2002). Despite the initial demotion, 15 years of constant warfare after the Long March gave Fourth Front Army veterans steady promotions, even to the army group level in many cases.

The Rising Fortune of Fourth Front Army Veterans

Despite taking part in the most serious mutiny in the party's history as well as being associated with the highest profile defection, survivors of the Fourth Front Army fared remarkably well in the People's Republic of China, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Statistical evidence suggests that Mao systematically protected Fourth Front Army veterans and promoted them into senior civilian and military positions during the Cultural Revolution. Although Mao entrusted ever greater authority in Lin Biao, who had followed Mao since the Jinggangshan period in 1927, Mao nonetheless increasingly saw Fourth Front Army veterans as an insurance policy against Lin's growing power.

Eventually, they were used to purge the military of Lin Biao's influence. Throughout the entire Cultural Revolution, Mao did not allow Fourth Front Army veterans to forget their tainted past and periodically lashed out at them. Knowing their weak positions, Fourth Front Army veterans also played their part as Mao's loyal executioners.

With the founding of the People's Republic, senior figures from the Fourth Front Army were integrated into high level positions in the new regime. Xu Xiangqian, the commander of the doomed Western Legion, became the Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) (Editorial Staff of *One Spark Lighting the Plains* 2006). Furthermore, Xu was elected into the Central Committee at the 1945 Seventh Party Congress and remained in that organ until the 1982 Twelfth Party Congress and even served in the Politburo in the Eleventh and the Twelfth Central Committees. Other Fourth Front Army veterans also prospered under Mao's patronage. Li Xiannian, who had led Western Legion stragglers to Xinjiang and had narrowly missed being labeled a Trotskyite, became the longest serving vice premier of China between 1954 and 1984. Mao personally approved his promotion from the party secretary position of his native Hubei Province to Beijing (New fourth Army research society et al. 2009: 115). Xie Fuzhi, who had been the political officer overseeing fellow Fourth Front Army veterans at the Anti-Japan University, perhaps benefited the most from Mao's patronage (Li 2009b). He was promoted to Beijing to serve as the minister of public security in 1959 and became a vice premier of China in 1965 (Xia 2005).

Despite Mao's patronage of a few of the most senior Fourth Front Army officers, Fourth Front Army veterans as a whole still did not fare as well as their counterparts from the First Front Army, which had been led by Mao and Lin Biao and had stood on the

right side of the Mao-Zhang struggle in 1936. Despite having more men than the First Front Army even after the Western Legion death march, Fourth Front Army veterans only took one of the 17 seats in the Politburo elected in the 1956 Eighth Party Congress. Only five of the 97 full Central Committee members elected in 1956 came from the Fourth Front Army (Li 2007: 180). Likewise, Fourth Front Army veterans were also under-represented in senior military positions until the Cultural Revolution. Of the 886 Long March veterans promoted to the rank of brigadier general or above in 1955, Fourth Front Army veterans only received 287 of those commissions.⁸ Xu Xiangqian became the only Fourth Front Army veteran to receive the rank of marshal, which was bestowed on nine distinguished commanders in the People's Liberation Army in 1955 (Editorial Staff of One Spark Lighting the Plains 2006).

Although the split of the central committee occurred in 1936, Mao often reminded his colleagues of this event in the 1950s and 1960s, showing that the taint associated with the Fourth Front Army did not diminish with time. For example, at the second plenum of the 8th Central Committee in 1958, Mao reminded his audience that “during the 25,000 li Long March, the party split.....after Zhang Guotao defected, the party regained unity” (Mao 1967a). In a 1959 speech discussing the fate of Peng Dehuai, who had just been removed from power during the Lushan Conference, Mao distinguished Peng from Zhang Guotao: “[Peng Dehuai and Huang Kecheng] are different from traitors like Chen Duxiu, Luo Zhanglong, Zhang Guotao, and Gao Gang; the first is contradiction within the people, while the second is contradiction between the people and the enemy” (Mao 1967b). In numerous other speeches, Mao casually

⁸ The other 172 generals joined the Red Army after the Long March.

sprinkled references of Zhang Guotao's rebellion, strongly suggesting that Zhang's crime was still common knowledge within the elite circle of the CCP.

The most remarkable ascent of Fourth Front Army veterans took place during the Cultural Revolution, which saw the purge of almost the entire party establishment. In contrast to the majority of their colleagues, many Fourth Front Army veterans were either protected from the purge or were promoted into positions left empty by their purged colleagues. In the first stage of the Cultural Revolution, Xie Fuzhi, who had been a senior political officer in the Fourth Front Army, sided with the radicals and used his authorities as the minister of public security to persecute many veteran cadres (He and Song 2004). He led the special case group gathering evidence of the alleged crimes of the wife of Mao's arch-rival, Liu Shaoqi, and this case group soon turned its attention on Liu himself (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 282). His willingness to side with the radicals, however, was insufficient to protect him from the purge, because other top leaders who had cooperated with the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG) soon fell from power, including Wang Renzhong, Liu Zhijian, and Tao Zhu (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 183). In contrast to them, Xie was promoted into the Politburo and the Central Military Commission at the Ninth Party Congress (He and Song 2004).

Xu Xiangqian earned a promotion to the vice-chairmanship of the Central Military Commission at the start of the Cultural Revolution, the core organ controlling the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Mao further put Xu in charge of the Army Cultural Revolution Group in 1966, which coordinated revolutionary activities within the army (Xu 1987: 835). This was a strange appointment considering that Lin Biao had been

designated Mao's successor by that time. Clearly, Mao wanted a balance against Lin's power. When Lin Biao tried to stop Xu from becoming a central committee member at the 1969 Ninth Party Congress, Mao personally countermanded Lin Biao and ordered Xu's selection into the Central Committee (Xu 1987: 844; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006). Although Li Xiannian suffered through a few struggle sessions during the Cultural Revolution, Mao directly intervened on Li's behalf so that Red Guards could not remove him from office (Li 2009a).⁹ When Zhou Enlai's health began to fail him in the early 1970s, Li Xiannian even stood in as acting premier when Zhou took sick leaves (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 359). The political fortune of Xu Shiyou was even more unfathomable. Xu, who was tried and convicted of counterrevolutionary crimes, was appointed vice minister of defense and commander of the Nanjing Military Region in 1959. When Red Guards rampaged through the barracks of the Nanjing Military Region in 1967, Mao had Zhou Enlai send a special escort to protect Xu. Mao then quartered Xu next to him in the Zhongnanhai leadership compound, which was the only place in China beyond Red Guard reach at the time (Wen and Li 1998). At the Ninth Party Congress, Xu further was catapulted into the Politburo.

Despite Mao's protection of Fourth Front Army veterans, Mao had no intention of erasing the taint in their past, especially during the Cultural Revolution. In fact, Lin Biao, who had been designated Mao's successor in the first part of the Cultural Revolution, came close to uprooting Fourth Front Army veterans after the Wuhan Incident in 1967, but Mao's political instinct led him to stop a wholesale purge of Fourth

⁹ When Red Guards in the Ministry of Finance began to put up large character posters against Li, Zhou Enlai reported the situation to Mao. Mao said that Li was "a general who did not step off his horse," implying that Li was only a fighter and did not meddle in politics during the revolution. That comment likely saved Li from the Red Guards. See (Li 2009a).

Front Army veterans. More so than other episodes, the Wuhan Incident and the subsequent campaign against “a small handful in the army” showed the vulnerability of Fourth Front Army veterans in the absence of Mao’s protection.

The Wuhan Incident began when an element of the Wuhan Military Region sided with conservative Red Guards against radical Red Guards and their allies in Beijing (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006). Wanting to resolve the escalating conflict between conservative and radical Red Guards, Mao sent an emissary, which included Fourth Front Army veteran Xie Fuzhi and radical Wang Li. Meanwhile, Mao himself also secretly arrived in Wuhan, bringing with him an entourage of senior officials (Wang 1995). Instead of calming the factional conflict, the emissary sided with the radicals and enraged the conservative Red Guards and two divisions of the Wuhan Military Region, the independent division and the 29th division (Wang 1995). On July 20th, 1967, angry conservative Red Guards attacked Wang Li and Xie Fuzhi. While Xie was unharmed, Wang was beaten up and arrested.¹⁰ Only a direct order from Chairman Mao secured Wang’s release later in the day.

Missing from the conventional analysis of this event was the fact that the Wuhan Military Region was dominated by Fourth Front Army veterans because Zhang Guotao’s *Eyuwan* guerilla base centered around Hubei Province, whose provincial capital was Wuhan. Thus, many Hubei natives in the Fourth Front Army became senior officers in the Wuhan Military Region. Chen Zaidao, the commander of the military region, had been a senior officer of the Fourth Front Army. Other senior military region officers like Ye Ming and Kong Qingde were also Fourth Front Army veterans. Fourth Front Army

¹⁰ It remains unclear why Xie Fuzhi was unharmed. The only plausible explanation is that conservative Red Guards recognized Xie as a senior member of the Fourth Front Army faction, who shared many historical ties with leaders in independent division and the 29th division.

veterans also served as senior officers of the renegade independent and 29th divisions (Chen 1988).

Mao was shocked by the brazenness of the conservative Red Guards in Wuhan, but Lin Biao, then minister of defense and Mao's designated successor, saw a chance to eradicate the "counterrevolutionary" veterans of the Fourth Front Army once and for all. With Mao's approval, the main "culprits" of the Wuhan Incidents, composed mainly of Fourth Front Army veterans, were brought to Beijing to face criticism. Lin Biao began to send words to Red Guards at Tsinghua University that the Wuhan Incident was related to Fourth Front Army veterans' dissatisfaction with Lin Biao's role as the designated successor. Lin Biao, through Wang Li, also told Red Guards that the Wuhan Incident would allow Red Guards to go after Xu Xiangqian, as well as the "disobedient" Nanjing and Fuzhou Military Regions, which were also dominated by Fourth Front Army veterans (Chen 1988). On July 30th, Kuai Dafu, the Red Guard leader at Tsinghua University, told other Red Guard officers that "central leader" instructed them to launch a new stage of revolutionary struggle, which involved "dragging out a small handful in the army" (揪军内一小撮)(Chen 1988). Without an understanding of the historical cleavage between the legitimate First Front Army and the "counterrevolutionary" Fourth Front Army, Lin Biao's instruction to the Red Guards to attack the army, which he nominally commanded as minister of defense, made little sense. However, given the continual presence of Fourth Front Army veterans in the military due to Mao's protection, it was in Lin Biao's interest to portray them in a negative light so as to facilitate their removal. Wang Li, who was the main victim of the Wuhan Incident, recalls Lin Biao saying "now we can make a big story out of Chen Zaidao" (Wang 2001).

In an expanded Politburo meeting on July 26 attended by Politburo members, members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, and senior officers in the PLA departments and the military regions, historical animosity was added to accusations of a “counterrevolutionary coup” to guarantee severe punishment for senior officers of the Wuhan Military Region. Xie Fuzhi, who had shown a willingness to betray his comrades in the Fourth Front Army even back in the 1930s, gave the first remarks and directly accused Chen Zaidao of a “counterrevolutionary rebellion aimed at Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin, and the Central Cultural Revolution Group”(Chen 1988). In the rest of his remarks, however, he did not dwell on past counterrevolutionary crimes which he shared with Chen and others. Instead, he spent the bulk of his speech accusing Chen of being a poor military leader, a much more innocuous topic than discussion of past counterrevolutionary activities (Wang 2001). Kang Sheng, who had been Mao’s rectification specialist since his return from NKVD training in Moscow in the 1930s, laid bare the historical vulnerability of Fourth Front Army veterans (Chen 1988):

You Chen Zaidao don't act like you have credentials; don't think that just because Chairman Mao calls you a comrade that you are not a counter-revolutionary. 30 years ago Zhang Guotao betrayed the central committee in Wuhan. Now you are launching a counterrevolutionary rebellion in Wuhan. This is a repeat of the Zhang Guotao incident.

Likewise, Wu Faxian, a follower of Lin Biao, also accused Chen of being a “modern day Zhang Guotao”(Chen 1988) . Xu Xiangqian was forced to attend the struggle session against Chen and was accused of being the “backstage controller” of this “counterrevolutionary coup d’état” (Xu 1987 : 837). On the night of July 29th, with the encouragement of Lin Biao’s wife Ye Qun, Kuai Dafu’s Red Guards ransacked Xu Xiangqian’s home, looking for “criminal evidence” of this alleged counterrevolutionary crime (Xu 1987 : 837). For the following two weeks, the fate of Chen Zaidao and other

Fourth Front Army veterans hung in balance as a national campaign orchestrated by Jiang Qing and Lin Biao to “drag out a small handful in the army” proceeded with great ferocity in the national press (Wang 2001). Although this campaign had been in the works since early 1967, Wang Li and Lin Biao wanted the Red Guards to “grasp the Wuhan Incident to resolve the problem of ‘a small handful in the military’” (Chen 1988). In the following days, dozens of editorials and articles appeared in the major party and army newspapers linking the Wuhan Incident with “a small handful in the military.” Lin Biao also had the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG) organize major rallies in support of the movement and personally attended one such rally in Beijing (Wang 2001: 809). Lin Biao also disbanded the renegade independent division of the Wuhan Military Region and sent thousands of officers in Wuhan to labor camps and work farms (Chen 1988 : 524). On August 2nd, CCRC members summoned radical Red Guards from Wuhan and instructed them to spread their experience in purging “a small handful in the military” to other parts of the country so as to purge “other characters like Chen Zaidao”(Chen 1988 : 523). Lin Biao was launching a wholesale purge of Fourth Front Army veterans, who got a good taste of life without Mao’s protection.

Yet, Mao never meant for a thorough purge of Fourth Front Army veterans to occur. Just two days before the Wuhan Incident, Mao personally met Chen Zaidao in Wuhan, and he assured Chen that “they want to overthrow you, but I will make them not overthrow you!”(Chen 1988) However, the anger of the conservative Red Guards against Mao’s emissary exceeded Mao’s expectation, thus forcing him to censure Chen Zaidao and the other “culprits” of the Wuhan Incident (Wang 1995). However, Mao made sure that the purge did not extend to other senior members of the Fourth Front

Army. When Red Guards sought to arrest Xu Shiyu in the Nanjing Military Region, Mao flew him to Beijing to live in his compound (Wen and Li 1998). Upon hearing about the ransacking of Xu Xiangqian's house, Zhou Enlai, acting under Mao's instruction, ordered Red Guards to withdraw immediately and to return all seized documentations to Xu (Xu 1987 : 837).

On August 11 1967, Mao suddenly changed course and ordered a stop to the campaign against "a small handful in the army" because it was "tactically inappropriate" (Wang 2001 : 810; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 232). Mao was in particular annoyed by two editorials in the *Red Flag*, the central committee's main publication, calling for the country to "drag out a small handful in the military" (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006 : 232). In the middle of August, he wrote a note saying that these editorials were "great poisonous weeds," a term he had applied to the writings of members in the doomed Liu Shaoqi faction (Chen 1988 :524). Also, when Lin Biao tried to get Mao to approve a document calling for the entire army to engage in a "drag out a small handful" campaign, Mao crossed out all mentions of the campaign and wrote on the margin "no need" (Chen 1988 : 524). This caused a panic among the CCRG and Lin Biao; all mentions of "dragging out a small handful" were removed from the media, and Red Guards were told not to pursue this movement further (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006 : 232). Jiang Qing and Chen Boda, who enthusiastically supported the campaign due to Lin Biao's encouragement, immediately laid the blame on their underlings, including the hero of the Wuhan Incident Wang Li. Wang soon found himself under house arrest and accused of a long list of crimes, including being a KGB spy because he had had one conversation with Yuri Andropov, the head of the KGB

(MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006 : 232). In the end, Wang Li and Guan Feng were purged, never to be rehabilitated. Although Lin Biao himself did not get into trouble for launching the campaign against Fourth Front Army veterans, Mao now knew that he needed these tainted officers even more to counterbalance against Lin Biao, who clearly sought to dominate the military completely. Thus, the protection and promotion of Fourth Front Army veterans became even more imperative.

Statistical Analysis of Purge Patterns During the Cultural Revolution

In the statistical analysis below, I examine whether Mao intervened systematically to protect and promote veterans of the Fourth Front Army. This analysis begins with the 1058 generals appointed in 1955, the first and largest batch of generals appointed in the People's Republic. Almost all of the generals had joined the Red Army before the end of the Long March in 1935 and thus were members of the various front armies (Editorial Staff of One Spark Lighting the Plains 2006). Due to the dearth of information about the political fate of brigadier generals during the Cultural Revolution, I restrict my analysis to major generals or above, which total 253 generals.

The dependent variables are dichotomous variables which record three important political outcomes during the Cultural Revolution, when many civilian and military leaders were removed from power by the Red Guards (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006). The first variable (CCPURGED) records whether a general who had been elected to the Central Committee at the 1956 Eighth Party Congress (PC) was removed from the Central Committee at the Ninth Party Congress. This variable mainly pertains to higher level officers who had been elected into the Central Committee in the first place. The

second variable (CRPURGED) more broadly records whether a general was removed from his military post or was placed under extended custody during the Cultural Revolution. Because nearly every political figure underwent mass struggle during the Cultural Revolution, I did not use records of mass struggle as gauges of losing power. Instead, this variable records more permanent loss of power due to the Cultural Revolution. Table 1 reveals that a little over 1/3 of all major generals or above appointed in 1955 were purged during the Cultural Revolution. Finally, a variable also captures whether these generals earned promotions or new appointments either in the civilian or the military apparatus during the Cultural Revolution (CRPROMOTE).

The main independent variable is also a dummy variable which simply records whether the general had served in the Fourth Front Army of the Red Army before the First and the Fourth Front Army had joined together in 1935 (RED4TH).¹¹ If saving and promoting the tainted members of the Fourth Front Army had indeed been a part of Mao's strategy, they should have faced a significantly lower probability of being purged during the Cultural Revolution and a significantly higher probability of being promoted during the Cultural Revolution. As a point of comparison, I also generate a dummy variable recording veterans of He Long's Second Front Army (RED2ND). If Mao somehow had systematically discriminated against his own followers in the First Front Army, He Long's men also should have benefited from a lower probability of being purge during the Cultural Revolution. Most of the remaining officers were members of Mao's First Front Army, who make up the null cases. Among the control variables, the most significant one is rank (RANK), which is an ordinal scale recording whether an

¹¹ This strict definition is used because the Fourth Front Army after June of 1935 also contained some units originally in the First Front Army.

officer was a major general (*zhongjiang*), lieutenant general (*shangjiang*), general (*dajiang*) or a marshal (*yuanshuai*). This is an important control variable because Cultural Revolution purges might have only applied to senior officers. I also control for the generals' birth year (BIRTH), year of joining the CCP (PTIME), and the level of education (EDU). Furthermore, at a time of great international threat from both the US and the Soviet Union, Mao might have wanted to preserve generals who had fighting experience with a major modern army during the Korean War. Thus, I also created a dummy variable for command experience during the Korean war (KOREA).

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
CCPURGED	253	0.114	0.319	0	1
CRPURGED	244	0.340	0.474	0	1
CRPROMOTE	244	0.254	0.43	0	1
RED4TH	253	0.245	0.431	0	1
RED2ND	253	0.138	0.346	0	1
RANK	253	1.422	0.749	1	4
BIRTH	252	1908.6	5.12	1886	1917
EDU	250	0.67	0.870	0	2
PTIME	247	1929.75	4.82	1921	1982
korea	253	.217	.413	0	1

Since the dependent variables are all dichotomous variables, I use logistic regressions to carry out the analysis. For robustness sake, I include both simple regressions with just the main dependent and independent variables and only RANK as control, as well as regressions with all of the other control variables.

Table 2: The Effect of Fourth Front Army Veteran on the Likelihood of Being Purged During the Cultural Revolution

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	ccpurged	ccpurged	crpurged	crpurged
red4th	-1.717 (1.114)	-2.132 (1.185)*	-0.620 (0.334)*	-0.670 (0.354)*
rank	-0.382 (0.328)	0.245 (0.480)	0.065 (0.177)	0.048 (0.365)
birth		0.057 (0.075)		0.064 (0.036)*
edu		-0.302 (0.407)		0.152 (0.173)
korea		1.137 (0.841)		-0.300 (0.356)
ptime		0.155 (0.128)		-0.018 (0.037)
red2nd		-0.168 (0.858)		-0.076 (0.402)
eightcc				0.127 (0.328)
Constant	0.747 (0.840)	-407.813 (252.473)	-0.611 (0.302)*	-87.416 (90.660)
Observations	54	54	244	238

In Table 2, it seems clear that having served in the Fourth Front Army significantly reduced one's risk of being purged during the Cultural Revolution. This especially pertained to Fourth Front Army veterans who had been elected to the Central Committee at the Eighth Party Congress. They were much more likely to be re-elected into the Central Committee in the 1969 Ninth PC than their counterparts in the other front armies. This pattern is even more striking when one considers that several non-Fourth

Front Army veterans also committed “splittism” in 1935-36 by going south with Zhang Guotao. In particular, Zhu De and Liu Bocheng both supported Zhang’s decision to go south, and both were re-elected into the Ninth Central Committee in 1969 (Li 2007: 223). Compared with all other red army veterans, Table 3 also shows that Fourth Front Army officers were also more likely to obtain a promotion during the Cultural Revolution. When He Long’s Second Front Army is controlled, however, Zhang Guotao’s men did not have a significant promotion advantage during the Cultural Revolution relative to veterans of Mao’s First Front Army.

In terms of the control variables, none of them is significant at the 0.1 level for those purged from the Central Committee. BIRTH strangely had a positive effect on both the likelihood of being purged and the likelihood of being promoted. This likely reflects a few trivial mechanisms. First, BIRTH is recorded as the year of a general’s birth, so positive coefficients in the purge equations mean that younger officers were more likely to be purged. This may just be a reflection of the age structure of all the generals in question. In terms of younger officers having a greater chance of being promoted, the Cultural Revolution indeed saw the introduction of many younger officials into the Central Committee and other high positions (Shih et al. forthcoming).

Table 3: The Effect of Fourth Front Army Veteran on the Likelihood of Being Promoted During the Cultural Revolution

	(1) crpromote	(2) crpromote	(3) crpromote	(4) crpromote
red4th	1.393 (0.813)*	1.526 (0.899)*	0.552 (0.322)*	0.316 (0.350)
rank	-0.399 (0.392)	-0.012 (0.556)	-0.198 (0.214)	-0.006 (0.430)
birth		0.057 (0.085)		0.125 (0.044)**
edu		-0.196 (0.429)		0.168 (0.194)
korea		-1.665 (1.193)		0.074 (0.368)
ptime		0.093 (0.138)		-0.003 (0.046)
red2nd		0.260 (0.979)		-1.074 (0.580)*
eightcc				0.159 (0.386)
Constant	-0.348 (0.952)	-287.989 (270.088)	-0.952 (0.348)**	-233.854 (107.987)*
Observations	54	54	244	238
Standard errors in parentheses				
* significant at 5% level; ** significant at 1% level				

Table 4: Predicted Probabilities of Being Purged and Promoted during the CR for a Lieutenant General in the First Front Army, Second Front Army, and the Fourth Front Army

	Removed from CC at 9 th PC	Removed from Command during CR	Promoted Beyond CC during CR	Promoted During CR
First Front Army	0.43 [0.23 0.64]	0.38 [0.26 0.51]	0.18 [0.03 0.32]	0.25 [0.13 0.36]
Second Front Army	0.39 [0.02 0.76]	0.37 [0.17 0.56]	0.22 [-0.08 0.53]	0.10 [0 0.21]
Fourth Front Army	0.08 [-0.1 0.26]	0.24 [0.12 0.37]	0.5 [0.07 0.9]	0.31 [0.16 0.46]

Note: 95% confidence intervals in []

In calculating predicted probabilities, the rank is set at the lieutenant general level, while the other control variables are set at their means. For generals from the First Front Army, their likelihood of being removed from the Ninth CC given that they had been elected into the Eighth CC was 43%. A lieutenant general from the Second Front Army had roughly the same risk of being removed at the Ninth CC. However, a lieutenant general from the Fourth Front Army elected into the Eighth CC only had a 8% chance of being removed from the Central Committee at the Ninth CC, a significantly lower risk. This shows that Mao took particular care to protect the senior members of Zhang Guotao's remnant faction, who were members in elite selectorate bodies such as the Politburo and the Central Military Commission.

Similarly, a lieutenant general from the First and Second Front Armies had 38% and 37% chance of being removed from command or of being jailed respectively during the Cultural Revolution. An officer of the same rank from the Fourth

Front Army, however, was purged with only a 24% probability. To be sure, the 95% confidence intervals between Second Front Army officers and Fourth Front Army officers overlap considerably, but Fourth Front Army officers clearly had a higher chance of survival than their counterparts in the First Front Army. Although Fourth Front Army veterans overall still fared better than their counterparts from the other front armies, junior veterans faced higher risks than their senior colleagues who were in the Central Committee. This likely had to do with the uneven impact of patronage by the senior veterans of the Fourth Front Army. Xu Xiangqian, for example, tried to save several more junior Fourth Front veterans, but he was only partly successful (Xu 1987: 845). Meanwhile, Mao, who only focused on saving senior Fourth Front Army veterans, had a 100% success rate in rescuing those he wanted to save.

The generals' promotion probability during the Cultural Revolution presents a similar picture. Among army veterans who had been elected into the 8th Central Committee in 1958, Fourth Front Army veterans had a distinct advantage in obtaining promotion during the CR. While First and Second Front Army veterans in the Central Committee only had 18% and 22% chance of obtaining a promotion during the CR, Fourth Front Army CC veterans enjoyed a 50% chance of obtaining a promotion. The effect for all the generals was weaker. A lieutenant general from the First Front Army was promoted either in the civilian bureaucracy or in the military with a probability of 25%. An officer of the same rank from the Fourth Front Army was promoted with a slightly higher probability at 31%. However, an officer who served with He Long's Second Front Army was only promoted with a 10% probability during the Cultural Revolution. The much lower promotion probability of He Long's protégés is not

surprising given that he was a target of ruthless struggle and ultimately died in custody (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 281).

Conclusion

Dictators typically operate under many fewer constraints than their counterparts in democracies. However, the tradeoff is that their enemies also have fewer constraints when it comes to removing the incumbents from power. Dictators also have much less information about the relative distribution of power. To increase the flow of information, dictators can form legislative bodies and open the policy process to a larger constituency (Gandhi 2008). However, they can also take advantage of the information paucity of their potential challengers to firm up their positions. A tactic that both bolsters the incumbent's power and provides more information about the relative distribution of power may be to replace a strong member of the selectorate, or a member whose power level is unknown, with a weak official, who is permanently tainted in some way. Even more ideal from the perspective of the dictator, this weak member should be tainted in such a way that future exogenous shocks would not enhance his power.

Examining historical evidence, Mao likely promoted and saved tainted members of the Zhang Guotao "splittist" line during the Cultural Revolution in order to preserve his own relative power and enhance his knowledge of the relative distribution of power in the Politburo and in the Central Military Committee. Core protégés of Zhang Guotao, including Xu Xiangqian, Li Xiannian, and even Xu Shiyou, were placed in important positions and even wielded real power throughout Mao's reign and into Deng's rule. They prospered from their dishonored history because Mao could place them in

important positions without jeopardizing his own power. The depth of Zhang Guotao's errors assured even Mao's suspicious mind that these besmirched individuals would never gain the capacity to betray him.

Mao's protection of Fourth Front Army veterans during the first stage of the Cultural Revolution would have a profound influence on the evolution of elite politics in China in the subsequent two decades. As the next chapter shows, the purge of the Lin Biao faction in 1971 led to the dominance of Fourth Front Army veterans, especially in the PLA. The pervasiveness of Fourth Front Army veterans in the military goes a long way toward explaining the rise of Deng Xiaoping in the mid 1970s and his dominance over the CCP regime in the subsequent two decades. Fourth Front Army veterans were still scarred, but now they served a new master: Deng Xiaoping.

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