

# John – college essay



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condemned themselves. Temples, restaurants, and all signs of old values were ransacked by the Red Guard youths. The Cultural revolution put middle school and high school students in charge of the nation and like a version of Lord of the Flies the nation fell into anarchy and paralysis

The Cultural Revolution also led to changes within the structure of the communist party. Before the Cultural Revolution Liu Shaoqi was Mao Zedong's designated successor, but during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping and many others who Mao deemed as being rightists were removed from the party. In their place Mao installed those who had been most loyal to him in the past; one of those men was Lin Biao (Dutt and Dutt, 1970: 80).

Mao rightly saw that the best way to provide both direction for the Red Guards and to make himself immune from their attacks upon party officials would be to foster a personality cult. Thus under the guidance of Lin Biao who after Liu Shaoqi was removed; became the successor to Mao Lin Biao helped foster a personality cult for Mao. Lin Biao used the same types of techniques that he used in the army to help foster this cult of Mao. Lin Biao used the same organization to disseminate propaganda that he had devised for the Army. Lin Biao continued to head the army till his death in 1971 but his role was expanded as he became the high priest of the cult of Mao (Yan and Gao, 1996: 334). The reading of the Red Book was encouraged by both Mao, party directives written by Lin Biao, Chen Boda, and Kang Sheng who during the Cultural Revolution became Mao's closest advisors. All three of these advisors worked tirelessly to promote the cult of Mao because they saw it as their way to curry favor with Mao Zedong and their efforts met with

whole hearted approval. Mao in an interview near the end of the Cultural Revolution commented that Krushchev could have avoided losing his power if he had created an appropriate Cult for himself (Yan and Gao, 1996: 313).

Mao relied on the power of propaganda to enlarge his Cult during the Cultural Revolution. The Red Book became his most powerful weapon. Quotations from the Red Book replaced the usual front page section entitled today's important news in the People's Daily. Various other newspapers and journals increased their coverage of Mao Zedong printing his speeches, pictures, and quotes. Some even retold stories of his days fighting the Japanese and the KMT (Yan and Gao, 1996: 215). The major newspapers in June of 1966 started writing editorials and stories encouraging the public to study the thought of Chairman Mao by reading . On June 6 both the Liberation Army Daily and the People's Daily simultaneously published a front page article calling on the Chinese people to study Mao Zedong Thought and reading Selected Works of Mao Zedong. The headline read, " Raise high the Great Red Flag of Mao Zedong, Carry to the end the great proletariat revolution." (Yan and Gao, 1996: 215) It was no coincidence that the Liberation Army Daily and the People's Daily both carried the same story about increasing Mao Zedong thought study. It symbolized the rise in power of Lin Biao who with the start of the Cultural Revolution and the expulsion of Liu Shaoqi had increased his power within the communist party. Lin Biao's ideas of education and indoctrination into Maoist thought had with the publishing of the story in the People's Daily in June of 1966 moved from the army to all of China. From this point on until he lost favor with Mao in 1970 Lin Biao became the cheerleader of the Cult of Mao directing the national

frenzy that enveloped China with its adoration of Mao Zedong (Dutt and Dutt, 1970: 80).

Under the leadership of Lin Biao the leading newspapers in China printed stories urging readers to read the works of Mao. As of yet the only books available to the public was the four volume long Selected Works of Mao Zedong; the Red Book had not yet become available to the public. In the fall of 1966 the People's Daily published such headlines as, ' Mao Zedong thought is the red sun within our bosom,' and stories in newspapers were filled with such lines as, " Chairman Mao's books are not gold, but are more precious than gold; not steel, but stronger than steel." (Yan and Gao, 1996: 183) Pictures from this time depicted happy Chinese citizens reading pamphlets by Mao such as the, " Man Who Moved The Mountain." But as of yet the number of pictures in 1966 that pictured Red Books was limited and only included members of the armed forces. But the stories in the newspapers and other propaganda put out by the government such as radio broadcasts stirred up a great fever in support of Mao and the study of Mao Zedong Thought. On August 12 following the Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth party congress copies of The Selected Works of Mao Zedong were distributed at major universities before they were shut down to prepare for the Cultural Revolution. During the rest of 1966 newspapers reported daily on the sale of The Selected Works of Mao Zedong. The government lowered the price of the set of books to two yuan so that every person could possess a copy of the Selected Works. Sales were brisk then starting in January of 1967 Lin Biao made Quotations From Chairman Mao available to the public. Everyone immediately wanted to buy it. Group study sessions of the book became

common. At many Red Guard rallies during the next several years Red Guard troops set whole pages of the book to song (Yan and Gao, 1996: 248). Lin Biao ordered the presses of China to print millions of copies of the Red Book and distribute them to the public. The Chinese media encouraged the reading of the Red Book by printing stories extolling the virtues of those who committed the book to memory. (Yan and Gao, 1996: 249)

Granny Liu spent days and nights studying the works of Chairman Mao. When she forgot, she called other to teach her. Granddaughter Yuhzen slept with her and would thus be awakened ten times a night. Even though the granddaughter could not sleep well, Granny Liu would say endearingly to her, " Yuhzen, one more word you can teach granny is one more measure of loyalty to Chairman Mao and one more bullet for Liu Shaoqi.".... Granny Liu also eagerly disseminated Mao Zedong Thought. For more than sixty years she, had not known how to sing. Now, learning from her daughter and granddaughter, she sang every where.... Proudly Granny Liu said, " This old women can't really handle a tune. But what I sing is my feeling for Chairman Mao. When I disseminate Mao Zedong Thought, the more I sing the younger I get."

Thus from January of 1967 to Lin Biao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution everyone in China it seemed wanted to be a Granny Liu; a person who worked for the greater glory of Mao Zedong and China. The Red Book provided the Chinese people both with a basic although cryptic introduction to Maoist thought and it also provided them with a connection to their leader. Lin Biao was able to successfully indoctrinate the entire nation not just in an idolization of Mao but also in a frenzied studying of his quotes.

The period from 1966 to 1971 is marked by Chinese publications filled with pictures of Chinese citizens studying the Red Books on communes, in fields, in classrooms, at rallies, and at ad-hoc study groups that met from along the Pearl River in the south of China to the plains of Tibet. The number of pictures in China Reconstructs of people holding Mao books increased from just a trickle prior to 1967 to almost fifty percent of all at the Height of the Cultural Revolution. Along with this upward trend in the number of Mao books was an increasing number of flattering articles about Lin Biao. One article in 1968 called him both a valiant fighter for the revolution and a loyal follower of Mao. The irony of this quote was probably missed by most readers at the time but looking back it was Lin Biao who created the Cult of Mao to further his own goals within the communist party and not Lin Biao's goals of helping Mao. The percentage of pictures of the Red Book and articles about Lin Biao during this time reflected not just the frenzy over the Cult of Mao in China but also the power of Lin Biao it was through his work that the Red Book became a talisman for the Chinese people.

Chinese citizens read the Red Book because of the appeal and aura that surrounded it. The Red Book connected individual Chinese citizens with their leader. It enabled the average citizen who would never meet Mao in their lifetime to possess a piece of him and his words. During the Cultural Revolution Mao became a god in the eyes of the Chinese people no criticism of him could be tolerated, nor the slightest deviation from his instruction permitted. Every word he uttered was taken as truth he became in effect a living Buddha, and like Buddha his writings became like sutra's. His quotes like passages from the sutra's were memorized, chanted, set to song, and

reproduced on billboards and on the beams of houses. (Rodzinski, 1988: 121) The Red Book became during the Cultural Revolution a holy sutra carried by every citizen everywhere and studied endlessly. Some would say that the Red Book became the bible of the Cultural Revolution but this theory has several flaws. First, if this is true then the Mao would be the Jesus Christ of his time, but Mao unlike Jesus reached unquestioned power during his lifetime and unlike Jesus had no one above him; Mao was god not the son of god in China. Second, the Red Book is not parallel to the bible in its symbolism. The bible is not committed to memory by most Christians unlike the sutras which Buddhists learn long passages from. Mao followed in the footsteps of the Buddhist framework of religious organization. Under the Cultural Revolution Buddhism and Confucianism were wiped out, Red Guards destroyed Buddhist temples and tortured monks; but in this religious vacuum Mao placed himself as Buddha and his writings as Sutra's.

The Red Book during the Cultural Revolution provided a semblance of structure and unity in the chaos of the time. Even though rival Red Guard factions frequently clashed and the nation was thrown into turmoil the Red Book acted as a bond between the Chinese; they were all followers of Mao even as their nation dissolved into anarchy. The Red Book provided a framework in which for people to criticize others and also a bond between citizens, the party, Red Guards, and Mao. The study of the Red Book also provided a de-facto type of education while the schools were shut down. People learned to read in study groups while learning the Red Book's quotes. In these ways the Red Book was valuable in that it created a type of order out of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution.

One of the fascinating things about the Red Book was that nearly every Chinese citizen possessed one but only a few of them could read it. This was one of the things that made the Red Book so popular was that it created with the idea that the Chinese populace was educated while many remained illiterate. This was one of the reasons study groups were formed; so that a reader could read the Red Book to a group of illiterate peasants who would then memorize long passages so that they could feign literacy. In many places all other books but those by Chairman Mao were banned. Reading in Chinese society was held in high esteem even under communism and the idea of each citizen being a scholar was an appealing idea to both the peasants and served the purposes of Lin Biao who saw that the more widely the Cult of Mao and Mao Zedong Thought was spread the more his power would increase.

But by 1970 the end of the Cultural Revolution had begun. Many within the party believed the Cultural Revolution had gone too far, destroyed too much, and were scared that they would become the next party member to be openly criticized by Red Guards. Lin Biao's success in promoting the teachings of Mao made him the successor to Mao starting in August of 1966 but his role was formalized in at the Ninth Party Congress convened in April of 1969 (Ming-Le, 1983: 49). After this Lin Biao tightened the grip of the military on Chinese Society. Lin Biao maneuvered to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet Border clashes in the spring of 1969 to declare martial law. Lin Biao quickly encountered opposition to his growing power. Mao himself became concerned about what he saw as a successor too eager to assume



power, and starting in the fall of 1970 Mao maneuvered to limit the power of Lin Biao (Ming-Le, 1983: 47-52).

In August of 1970 a national conference was held called the Second Plenum which was a conference of people chosen at the 1969 national conference to decide national policy. The Second Plenum was held in Lushan and chaired by Mao Zedong. At this conference Lin Biao maneuvered to make himself president of the republic. His clique of followers which included Chen Boda circulated such statements as, " Lin Biao is an uncommon genius he is one of the great teachers like Marx, and Lenin and Mao" (Ming-Le, 1983: 50) Lin Biao saw that holding the office of the presidency which became vacant after the death Liu Shaoqi in 1969 was a tool by which he could assume control over China and fulfill his lifetime ambition. On August 25, 1970 Mao convened the conference and upon hearing of Lin Biao's plan destroyed it in a matter of two days. Mao did this in three ways. First, he sentenced Chen Boda to self-examination, this was a clear warning to Lin Biao to stop his grab for power. Second, Mao threatened the members of the conference by saying that he would leave if they brought up the issue of the presidency. Third, Mao wrote in a public letter called, " Some Views of Mine," a criticism of those who claim but do not really understand Marxism. This letter was clearly speaking about Lin Biao although it did not say so directly. The conference at Lushan was a turning point for Lin Biao is symbolized his fall from the graces of Mao because of what Mao perceived as his impatience to become president. Mao was able to effectively eliminate Lin Biao as a threat by joining forces with Zhou Enlai and by isolating Lin Biao's assistant Chen Boda. (Yan and Gao, 1996: 309) By January of 1971 Lin Biao was no longer in

Mao's clique of advisors and Mao further distanced himself from Lin Biao and his work at creating a cult of Mao by saying in December of 1970 that he felt the cult created around him had grown to large (Yan and Gao, 1996: 313), what happened between then and Lin Biao's death in September of the year is the object of much speculation. The official Chinese government's story is that Lin Biao died on September 13, 1971, in an airplane crash in Mongolia as he was fleeing to the Soviet Union after having plotted unsuccessfully to overthrow Mao. According to this account during the whole of 1971 Lin Biao was organizing a coup among military officers. This account is very much in doubt and there is much speculation that Lin Biao after falling out of favor with the party leadership was assassinated by communist party (Ming-Le, 1983: 228). This has been reinforced by Mongolian reports in 1990 that say that Lin Biao was not on the plane that crashed in 1971.

The years of 1970 to 1971 were also marked by the winding down of the Cultural Revolution as schools were reopened and Red Guard groups disbanded. It is a historic irony that Lin Biao who gave Mao so much power by building up his cult following was in the end a victim of the power that he created for Mao when he tried to gain control of the presidency in 1970. The death of Lin Biao in 1971 brought to China a silent liberation from the Cult of Mao. The people discovered that the person that they had for so long recognized as the high priest of the Maoist Cult and Mao's most loyal supporter was in fact a Janus faced person who was in fact planning to overthrow Mao. Lin Biao's two-faced appearance awakened in the Chinese public a distrust in politics and a feeling of deception in the Cult of Mao. The death of Lin Biao marked the end of the mass rallies in Tianamen Square and

the end of the Cultural Revolution's crazed delirium (Yan and Gao, 1996: 335).

The fall of Lin Biao is closely connected with the end of the Red Book. After Lin Biao fell from the inner circle of Mao newspapers stopped publishing accounts of Lin Biao's genius and stopped also publishing pictures of the Red Book. A graphical analysis of pictures during this period shows a sharp decline in the number of pictures of the Red Book following December of 1970. This closely correlates with the demise of Lin Biao as a member of Mao's inner circle. By the time Lin Biao died in September of 1971 barely any pictures of Lin Biao's Red Book were published in place of pictures of the Red Book and slogans urging education in Mao Zedong Thought; were tractors, workers in factories, and farmers plowing fields. All around China images of Lin Biao and his calligraphy were destroyed (Kraus, 1991: 111) One of the most telling pictures is that of the Albanian National Basketball team in 1972 being received by Mao in Beijing the accompanying story says that the Albanians received Chinese handicrafts from their hosts. In a nearly identical article published in 1967 the Albanian Basketball team is pictured meeting Chairman Mao and Lin Biao and the accompanying story says they received copies of the Red Book translated into Albanian. These two articles show the tremendous transformation that took place in China during the intervening years between the articles.

The rise and fall of Lin Biao is inextricably connected with the rise and fall of his Red Book. When Lin Biao first became head of the army in 1959 he saw that if he wanted to rise in power he could do this only by currying favor with Mao Zedong; to this end he promoted Mao Zedong Thought within the army

and later throughout China. Lin Biao built up the Cult of Mao Zedong Thought through a combination of playing on the needs of the Chinese people during a time of chaos by publishing the Red Book and by extolling the virtues of memorizing Mao's quotes in newspapers. The story of Lin Biao is the fascinating story of a man who rode the production of propaganda to great heights but his story also provides an insight into propaganda and what it tells us about China. Pictures in China Reconstructs from 1966 to 1974 show that propaganda was not just a tool of the Communist party but also a reflection of internal power struggles within the party during the Cultural Revolution. When Lin Biao gained power so did the number of images of the Red Book and when Lin Biao lost power the number of images of his Red Book dropped to nearly zero. Propaganda during the Cultural Revolution was not just a way for the communist party to control the people but it also was a reflection of individuals power within the party. The history of Lin Biao meteoric rise and demise is told not only in the history books but also in ascent and fall of his most prized piece of propaganda the Red Book.

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