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The Secrets of Zhongnanhai. Who Wiretapped Mao Zedong, and How?

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Abstract. The author describes little-known facts of the 1950s-1960s in the history of the PRC and CPC – “unlawful” tapping and recording conversations and instructions of Mao Zedong and his reaction to such tapping. Yang Shangkun, the head of the CC CPC General Office, was announced the main culprit of these actions. This article contains his version of the events.

Keywords: *tapping and recording, Mao Zedong, Yang Shangkun, Wang Dongxing, disclosure of party secrets.*

In November 1965, that is, after the publication of an article by Yao Wenyuan, which had specially been prepared by Mao’s wife Jiang Qing, jointly with Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao, and served as a “herald” for the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the director of the CC CPC General Office and alternate member of the CC CPC Secretariat Yang Shangkun was removed from his post.¹ It was taken by Wang Dongxing, a former bodyguard of Mao Zedong. Wu Lengxi believes that this was not a chance coincidence. Yang Shangkun was demoted and sent to Guangdong Province. His daughter, a pupil of one of Beijing’s schools, was given a home by Deng Xiaoping’s family.

The official decision on firing Yang Shangkun was adopted only in May 1966. At meetings of the enlarged conference of the CC CPC Politburo on May 5-7, 1966, four leaders of the party, government and the army: CC CPC secretary and first secretary of the Beijing city party committee Peng Zhen; deputy defense minister of the PRC, Chief of the General Staff of the People’s Liberation Army of China and secretary of the CC CPC Luo Ruiqing; secretary of the CC CPC, head of the Propaganda Department of the CC CPC Lu Dingyi; and alternate member of the CC CPC Secretariat and director of the General Office Yang Shangkun, were accused of forming an “antiparty group.”

Kang Sheng who spoke at the conference read out the content of his two conversations with Mao Zedong in March 1966 in Hangzhou, which, in his view,

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could be reduced to two main subjects: 1. Criticism of the 1st secretary of the Beijing party committee Peng Zhen, the Propaganda Department, “protection of the right-wing elements and suppression of the left-wing elements, unpreparedness for revolution”; 2. “the need to support the left-wing elements, form new units of workers in science and culture, and carry out the great Cultural Revolution.” He singled out the central question put by Mao Zedong, on whether revisionism emerged in China, from top to bottom, and if it did, what to do with it. Kang Sheng said unequivocally that “revisionism” did emerge and he named its representatives – Luo Ruiqing, Peng Zhen, Yang Xianzhen, philosopher and the former rector of the Central Party School, Yang Shangkun, and several other figures. Mentioning the document under preparation, which was called “Report of the CC CPC of May 16, 1966,” he emphasized that it touched not only questions of the Cultural Revolution, but also the “problems of fighting people who, like Khrushchev, were side by side with us and tried to seize power.” Adoption of this document, the speaker emphasized, was the beginning of the movement, but not an end to the struggle.²

At these meetings, on Mao Zedong’s insistence, Peng Zhen, Lu Dingyi, Luo Ruiqing and Yang Shengkun were officially removed from their posts.

The decision adopted at the enlarged meeting of the CC CPC Politburo on May 23, 1966, said the following:

- “1. To suspend the performance of their duties at the CC CPC Secretariat by comrades Peng Zhen, Lu Dingyi and Luo Ruiqing, suspend the performance of his duties as alternate member of the CC CPC Secretariat of Yang Shangkun, and further to ask the plenary meeting to adopt a decision post factum.³
2. To relieve Comrade Peng Zhen from duties of the first secretary of the Beijing City Party Committee of the CPC and the mayor of the city; to relieve Comrade Lu Dingyi from duties as head of the Propaganda Department of the CC.
3. To install in office Comrade Tao Zhu at the CC Secretariat as a permanent secretary and appoint him to hold the post ex officio of the head of the CC Propaganda Department; to install Comrade Ye Jianying in office of the CC Secretariat as secretary, holding the post ex officio of the head of the secretariat of the CC Military Commission. To ask the plenary session of the CC CPC to endorse their appointment post factum as secretaries of the CC Secretariat.
4. To appoint Comrade Li Xuefeng first secretary of the Beijing City Party Committee.
5. To inform the local party committees of higher than a district level and army party committees higher than a regimental level about the above decisions.”

On May 24, 1966, the CC CPC published “Explanations concerning the errors committed by comrades Lu Dingyi and Yang Shangkun.” The document said that “the conference decided that the CC should appoint a special committee to investigate the antiparty activity of four comrades: Peng, Lu, Luo and Yang... Materials concerning Peng and Luo’s errors are already available... As to the case of Comrade Yang Shangkun, we should explain that he unlawfully installed bugging devices behind the back of the CC, divulged important party secrets..., and participated in the antiparty activity.”⁴

Such announcements about the “crimes” committed by Yang Shangkun have been made for quite some time, but more detailed information was concealed. The latter was made public for the first time by the personal physician of Mao Zedong, who fled to the West and published his notes there in 1994.

In summer Mao Zedong decided to make an “inspection trip” to the cities of Tianjin, Jinan, Nanking, Shanghai and Hangzhou. He invited the minister of public security Luo Ruiqing and the director of the CC CPC General Office Yang Shangkun to accompany him, saying that they would be his “trainees whom he would teach.” Mao did that, as his personal physician believed, to show them how Chinese people loved their leader.

“Luo Ruiqing and Yang Shangkun were greatly impressed by what they saw. They looked at Mao with great admiration and became virtually intoxicated bathing in the rays of his glory,” Li Zhisui wrote. “Yang Shangkun regretted about one thing. During their trip Mao often shared his views with his fellow travelers on how to build partnership relations between industry and agriculture, how to organize work and life of “people’s communes,” how to achieve reasonable distribution of incomes and just payment for work. But all these observations of the leader were not written down or recorded by anybody, although they contained the leading principles for the party and the entire people. One evening, when talking with Luo Ruiqing and the secretaries of the leader, Yang Shangkun said that he would like to find a way to record the valuable ideas of the leader, all the more so since the CC Secretariat did not do anything to turn these ideas into documents, and the authorities in the provinces did not think about it either. If they had recordings of Mao’s ideas and recommendations on many problems, they would have been able to pass them over to the higher leadership – Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. But without official papers nobody from among provincial party bosses would dare take responsibility on himself.

“We should think about how to organize recordings of the Chairman’s speeches and then send all protocols to the CC Secretariat for examination and endorsement,” Yang Shangkun said.

He suggested that a stenographer be called from Zhongnanhai, who would accompany Mao on this and all other trips across the country and record all his notes and suggestions. As a result, the Central Committee would always know about new ideas and proposals of Chairman Mao. However, when Mao was told

about this suggestion, he said he would not need stenographers. The “Great Helmsman” knew full well the magic force of his words. He had just officially named “people’s communes” one of the greatest achievements of the Chinese people, and they began to spring up all over the country like mushrooms after the rain. Now he wanted to be more cautious and did not want his chance words to become political slogans. The situation in the country was very grave, and Mao understood that his responsibility was too great.

Several days later a group of technical experts from the Ministry of Public Security arrived. Their instruction was to install tapping devices in the sleeping compartment of the leader and in the salon where he held conferences and discussions. Miniature microphones were hidden in lamp-shades, wall lamps and flower vases so cleverly that Mao would be unable to notice them. All these devices were plugged in to the recorder placed in one of the adjacent compartments. These contraptions were serviced by a young man named Liu who began to accompany Mao in all his travels. However, Mao was not informed of what his duties were. Similar devices were installed in the apartments prepared for the leader during his visits in all provinces. The service staff was warned not to disclose this. They were told that this was done on the decision of the higher bodies, but Mao was not informed of this. Therefore if the Chairman knew of all this, the consequences might be simply terrible.

At the time no one thought of what catastrophic events this risky step of the CC CPC could lead to.⁵

In February 1961 Mao went to Guangzhou by a special train, then to Wuhan. Along the way a stop was made for his meeting with the 1st secretary of Hunan Province Zhang Pinghua. During a stroll the young sound technician Liu told Chairman Mao’s flame of the time who accompanied him that he overheard her conversation with him when she got dressed for Mao’s meeting with Zhang Pinghua. She immediately told Mao of her conversation with Liu. “Mao’s face became white as death,” his personal physician remembered. “He had never suspected that his quarters were tapped. Mao called his chief bodyguard Wang Dongxing to his compartment and stayed with him for over an hour. Wang said that he knew nothing about tapping devices. When he returned from Mao’s compartment, he ordered that the train go to Wuhan immediately.”⁶ All tapping equipment was dismantled there and exhibited at the hotel’s conference hall. Mao ordered that all devices, wires and tapes be photographed as “proof of intrusion by the forces unknown into his life.” After investigation carried out by Wang Dongxin, it was reported to Mao that tapping had been organized to collect material for the preparation of the history of the party. This made Mao furious. “So they collect material for tarnishing my image, just as what Khrushchev was doing with Stalin!” Mao roared.⁷ He ordered to burn all tapes without exception immediately. “I don’t want to supply material for any black reports,” Mao said. As a result of this incident several men lost their jobs. The sound technician Liu was exiled to Shanxi Province for labor reeducation. “Mao knew that the order

to tap his conversations could have been given only by the very high authorities,” his physician admitted. “The Ministry of Public Security was definitely involved. Mao believed that spying on him was only part of the conspiracy. His conviction that a plot against him was being hatched in the highest spheres of the party was growing.”⁸ This incident greatly unsettled him. Always suspicious, he could not have supposed that secret devices recorded every word of his and the recordings of all his conversations were sent back to Beijing. Now he maintained that most people of his entourage who had served him for many long years and whom he trusted became part of the conspiracy.

This incident served as an accusation against Yang Shangkun at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution of “disclosing important party secrets” and installing various tapping devices.

It was only at the beginning of the 21st century that some details of this incident began to be divulged. In 2001 reminiscences of Yang Shangkun emerged,⁹ and in 2010 the Xichuan publishing house printed the book by Su Weimin entitled “Yang Shangkun Tells about Certain Questions of History of New China,” in which this incident was described in greater detail.

According to Yang Shangkun, work on the recorded material began at the 4th Plenary Session of the 7th CC CPC in 1954 (we should recall that the 4th Plenary Session held from February 6 through 10, 1954, discussed the high-profile case of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi). Mao did not attend the session. The main aim of tape recordings was to check short-hand records in order to guarantee the correctness of verbatim records of material of party meetings. Some time later an archives of tape recordings was organized as part of the CC CPC archives. Mao Zedong did not like others to record his speeches and statements. This became more evident in 1956, after the 20th CPSU Congress and Khrushchev’s secret report about Stalin. However, as Yang Shangkun asserted, Mao Zedong was the leader of the party and it would be wrong not to have verbatim records of his speeches and statements. As the head of the Secretariat of the CC CPC in the 1950s he again addressed Chairman Mao with a proposal on the need to record materials of various meetings and conferences. Then Chairman Mao suggested that Yang and his own secretary Hu Qiaomu to record briefly certain decisions and orders of these meetings and conferences. Some time later, at a closed meeting Mao took from Yang’s hands a notebook with verbatim records and after looking through them said that he should not do it any longer. In 1956 Mao delivered a report “On the Ten Major Relationships.” That report was not tape-recorded or taken shorthand. Then the draft copy of the report was reproduced on the basis of hand-written records made by certain comrades. On reading it Mao was greatly dissatisfied. Having taken this into account, later, when meetings and conferences were being prepared and Mao Zedong was getting ready to speak at them, Yang asked him whether his speech should be widely distributed, and if so, it was recorded and prepared for distribution. In February 1957 Mao Zedong was preparing a speech at a meeting of the Supreme State Conference “On Correct

Handling of Contradictions among the People” and he himself entrusted his secretary Ye Zilung with making a record of his speech.

In July 1958 Mao Zedong prepared for a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador to the PRC P. Yudin in order to discuss a delicate question of a “joint navy” (the PRC government asked the Soviet side for help in creating a modern navy; Moscow considered the affair too costly and thought it more expedient to build a modern navy by combined efforts of the two countries – the PRC and the U.S.S.R.). Mao asked to prepare for tape recording the meeting. A super-miniature tape-recorder was found and placed on the body of the interpreter, its microphone looking like a wrist-watch. However, the talk with the Ambassador was rather long, whereas the tape could last for only one hour. The tape-recorder warmed up during the hour of work, and the spot on the interpreter’s body reddened, but he had to endure. Mao Zedong was displeased that the long talk with P. Yudin was not fully recorded.

Yang Shangkun admitted that from November 1958 all important speeches of Mao and his talks with foreign visitors and guests, as well as conversations with local responsible officials were tape-recorded.

It should be said that Deng Xiaoping and Peng Zhen agreed that Mao’s speeches and conversations should be tape-recorded, that is, it was not a personal initiative of Yang Shangkun alone.¹⁰

In 1959 Mao Zedong held a working meeting of the CC CPC in Hangzhou (Yang Shangkun did not take part in it). At the meeting, when Mao Zedong began to speak of the international situation, he demanded that no one write down anything. Hu Qiaomu said that, perhaps, it would be better to record something. Mao became angry and asked: “Who ordered to write something down? We shall expel from the party those who will again record what is said!”

In April 1960 Yang Shangkun accompanied Mao Zedong on his journey around the country. In the last decade of June a working meeting was held in Shanghai at which Mao Zedong gave a speech “On the Results of the Decade.” After that they returned to Beijing. During that journey Mao Zedong met with foreigners many times, among them guests from Asia, Africa, Latin America, East and West Europe, public figures, country leaders and leaders of communist and democratic parties. These meetings took place along the way, sometimes in the train carriage. All these conversations were tape-recorded, naturally, with Mao’s permission, as Yang Shangkun emphasized.

In April 1961, when Yang Shangkun was in Hebei a cable was received from Gong Zirong, saying that Mao Zedong investigated the problem concerning tape recordings. Yang Shangkun returned to Beijing immediately and learnt that when Mao was meeting foreign guests in Changsha he found out that he was being recorded on tape and became very angry. When he was told about this, Yang Shangkun began to explain the situation to Deng Xiaoping and Peng Zhen. On the one hand, he made a written report to Mao Zedong in which took all responsibility for recording and asked for punishment, and on the other, used the occa-

sion to demand that comrades from the General Office do organizational work better, select the most important documents from the tapes, turn them into ordinary hieroglyphic documents, and after that destroy all recorded tapes. The CC CPC Secretariat held a special meeting under Deng Xiaoping's chairmanship and discussed the problem of tape recordings. A corresponding decision was adopted "On the Problem of Tape Recording and Ordinary Records," which said that recording the most important official meetings of the CC CPC could be made only after a resolution of the CC Secretariat. Recording at all other meetings: party congresses, plenary sessions of the CC CPC, working meetings of the CC CPC, Politburo, and the CC Secretariat should be banned. Recording of statements of leading figures from the CC CPC and party members, conversations of the CC CPC leaders with foreign guests should also be forbidden. To avoid erroneous situations, as it was when Mao Zedong spoke "On the Ten Major Relationships," it was decided to select several young men and train them as first-class stenographers. After that several such persons were chosen and taught stenography. Yang Shangkun admitted that up to the winter of 1965, while he headed the General Office of the CC CPC, the proceedings of all important meetings and conferences were taken down in shorthand by these people. Finally, Yang Shangkun asserted that he firmly believed that the tape recordings he had initiated were not only his fault, but, on the contrary, his merit. These tape recordings were valuable archival documents for the history of the party, in Yang's view, and it was to be regretted that so many tapes were destroyed in 1961 and very few documents remained about that hard time, while a multitude of precious historic documents turned into ashes.¹¹

After the Cultural Revolution by a decision of the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th CC CPC, the rehabilitation began of the people who had suffered without guilt during that campaign. They returned to their work places. Yang Shangkun also came back and took the post of the second secretary of the party committee of Guangdong Province. However, on November 25, 1978, at a working meeting of the CC CPC Yang Shangkun's question was put forward again. Some people remembered the history of "secret tape recordings" and demanded that his actions should again be checked and rechecked, because "he had disobeyed Mao Zedong's instructions" and committed many errors. Finally, on October 23, 1980, the CC CPC Secretariat fully rehabilitated Yang Shangkun by admitting that the case of "secret tape recordings did not hold water." Eighteen years later Yang Shangkun died on September 12, 1998.

Such was the story about "wiretapping" of the Chairman of the CC CPC Mao Zedong.

NOTES:

1. Yang Shangkun was born on August 3, 1907, in Tongnan District, Xichuan Province. The architect of Chinese reforms Deng Xiaoping, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Chen Yi, Acade-

mician Guo Moruo, the oldest marshal and commander-in-chief Zhu De were also born in that province.

When the boy was six he began to study at home. Just as many kids of his age in China he had to learn by rote *Sanzijing* [The Three-Character Classic] and *Baijixing* [Hundred Family Surnames]. Then the boy was sent to a private school in Chengdu where he got acquainted with *Shijing* and other classical Chinese books. In 1915, when he was eight, his family moved to Chongqing where he entered a private elementary school. In 1920 Yang Shangkun entered the Pedagogical School, where he began to read progressive journals *Xin Qingnian* and *Zhongguo Qingnian*, acquainted himself with such books as *The History of Socialist Theories of Europe* and a number of others, and made friends with progressively-minded young people. In 1925, upon graduation the 18-year-old young man returned to Chongqing and joined the Socialist Youth League of China. Since 1925 he carried on work in the student and workers' movement in Chengdu, Chongqing and Shanghai. In the spring of 1926 he entered the ranks of the CPC. That very year he enrolled in Shanghai University. In November he left Shanghai and returned to Chongqing and, by a decision of the local party organization, he was sent to Moscow to study at Sun Yatsen University. He was a student of Group No. 453 under the pseudonym "Saltykov." He was the deputy head of the propaganda section of the party bureau of the university. While studying there Yang Shangkun familiarized himself with Marxism. In 1929 the 22-year-old Yang Shangkun married Li Bozhao. At the time there were about 800 Chinese studying at the university.

In 1930 most students of the university who arrived at the end of 1927-beginning of 1928 finished the two-year study course. Their average age was 26-27.

On the whole, the university produced a big group of leading party workers who received systematic knowledge of the theory and practice of revolutionary struggle.

Quite a lot of Chinese students of the university were distinguished by their general background and academic achievements. Twenty persons had received a higher or incomplete higher education at various educational institutions of China or elsewhere, and knew one or two foreign languages prior to their arrival in Moscow. Some of them, including Yang Shangkun, Zhang Wentian and Qin Bangxian (Bo Gu) displayed abilities for research work. In 1928 they actively cooperated with the Scientific Research Institute on China's Problems, and translated materials of the university, and works by the founders of Marxism-Leninism. Studies and training at the university were accompanied by an active ideological and political struggle. Almost all phenomena and trends current in the CPC on the eve of its 6th Congress were reflected to some degree by the Chinese students of the university (the Congress took place near Moscow from June 18 to July 11, 1928). It was marked by division into local groupings and factions, influence of the leftist elements, "avantgardism" of certain members, pessimistic moods, influence of the "Trotskyite opposition" platform on separate groups of students.

Yang Shangkun enrolled in the postgraduate courses of the Scientific Research Institute on China's Problems. In February 1931 he returned to Shanghai and became the head of the Propaganda Department of the All-China Trade Union Federation, secretary of its party faction, organized a strike of Shanghai workers and participated in it.

Right after the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1932 a general anti-Japanese strike was called in the city and an united strike committee was formed. The Popular Anti-Japanese Society, previously banned by the authorities on insistence of Japan, emerged from the underground and began to form workers' units some of which were headed by communists. Yang Shangkun took an active part in all these actions fighting for the liberation of his Motherland. These units participated in battles along with the 19th Chinese Army. Bled white in fierce battles, the Chinese authorities in Shanghai were forced eventually to retreat.

Soon the CC CPC sent Yang Shangkun to the party committee of Jiangsu Province as head of its propaganda department for stepping up the anti-Japanese mass movement. In autumn he was transferred for work at the Propaganda Department of the CC CPC where he was in charge of connections with the progressive-minded Chinese organizations (League of Left-wing Writers, National Salvation Association of China, League of Social Science Workers, Chinese Human Rights Defenders and others). He worked as secretary of the party faction at the Shanghai Association of Trade Unions.

In January 1933 Yang Shangkun arrived in the Central Soviet District in Ruijing (Jiangxi) where he worked in the propaganda department and was the editor of such party publications as *Hongse Zhonghua* ["Red China"] and *Douzheng* ["Struggle"].

In March 1933 the Marxist-Communist University was organized in Ruijing (previously it was a party school), and Yang Shangkun became its deputy rector.

From June 1933 until 1937 he was the deputy head of the Political Department of the 1st Front of the Red Army, the political commissar of a regiment of the 3rd Army Group (corps) of the Red Army, and the deputy head of the General Political Department of the Red Army.

After the beginning of the 5th punitive campaign of Chiang Kai-shek against the communists, the 3rd Army Group commanded by the hero of the Chinese revolution, future marshal of the PRC and minister of defense Peng Dehuai (Yang Shangkun was a political commissar there), was fighting at the border of the provinces of Jiangxi and Fujian. The army scored several victories (in Tuancun depression battles were waged in December 1933 in the vicinity of the district town of Lichuan, where Peng Dehuai's troops numbering 12,000 men defeated the enemy forces of over 40,000).

In January 1934 the 5th Plenary Session of the 6th CC CPC was convened in Ruijing. It elected Peng Dehuai member of the CC CPC and Yang Shangkun alternate member of the CC CPC. At the Second All-China Congress of Soviets he was elected member of the Central Executive Committee of the Chinese Soviet Republic.

Yang Shangkun took part in the Long March of the Red Army, was the head of the political department of the Shaanxi-Gansu unit, and the head of the field department of the Red Army.

He took part in the enlarged meeting of the CC CPC Politburo in January 1935 in Zunyi with a consultative vote. As Chinese historians noted, Wang Shangkun criticized Bo Gu and the Comintern representative Otto Braun (Li De) and supported Mao Zedong.

On August 29, 1935 at the CC CPC Politburo meeting in Baxi not far from Gansu border it was decided to set up a propaganda committee of three persons which included Yang Shangkun and Li Weihai, and print anew such publication as *Ganbu Bidu* ["Essential Readings for County and Village Cadres"] and the newspaper of the CC *Douzheng*.

In 1937 Wang becomes the deputy secretary of the Northern Bureau of the CC CPC, and in November 1938 its secretary.

During the Zhengfeng period in Yan'an Yang Shangkun, along with Bo Gu, Luo Fu, Wang Jiaxiang, and others, was criticized as a representative of "Wang Ming line" and the Comintern. He came out with a "self-critical appraisal" of his behavior.

In 1945 Yang Shangkun was appointed head of the Secretariat of the CC CPC Military Commission, and deputy secretary of the rear committee of the forces directly subordinated to the CC CPC. After 1948 he held the posts of the director of the CC CPC General Office, secretary of the party committee of the bodies directly subordinated to the CC, and deputy head of the CC CPC Secretariat.

After the proclamation of the PRC in 1949, Yang Shangkun was the governor of Guangdong Province and mayor of the city of Guangzhou. In 1952 Mao Zedong began to talk of his

wish “to take backseat” and give the reigns of power in the party and government to younger people. He himself would engage in theoretical problems and strategic problems of further policy. However, judging by available documents, these words did not at all mean his readiness to share power. On the contrary, precisely at that time Mao Zedong took control over adoption of the most important decisions into his hands. For example, in May 1953 he became outraged on learning that Yang Shangkun, head of the General Department of the CC CPC, and Liu Shaoqi, member of the CC CPC Politburo and CC Secretary, began to issue instructions and directives of the CC CPC and the Military Commission without his approval in the periods of his illness or absence, when he was on prolonged inspection trips across the country. It was taken into account and since then not a single document was issued without Mao’s endorsement.

On April 27, 1954, a decision was adopted at an enlarged meeting of the CC CPC Politburo on appointing Deng Xiaoping head of the CC CPC Secretariat, and Yang Shangkun his deputy. From that time on the latter worked directly under Deng.

At the 1st meeting of the All-China Committee of the 2nd Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in 1954 Yang Shangkun was elected member of the Central Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (he held this post until 1965).

In January 1955 an official decision was adopted by the CC CPC on the creation of the CC CPC Secretariat and Yang Shangkun became the deputy head of the Secretariat, and as a second job he was given the post of the head of the first General Office of the CC Secretariat. At the 8th CPC Congress in 1956 he was elected member of the CC CPC, and at the 1st Plenary Session of the 8th CC – alternate member of the CC Secretariat.

In the spring of 1958 Yang Shangkun was criticized by Mao Zedong because during the campaign of “the struggle against the right-wing elements” the CC Secretariat adhered to the “rightist” position.

After the formation of the PRC Yang Shangkun visited the Soviet Union in 1957, 1960 and 1963, apparently, this was largely due to his knowledge of Russian.

In connection with the closure of a whole number of enterprises after the Great Leap Forward and measures to “regulate” production the center was faced with the urgent problem of curtailing the managerial apparatus, which had been inflated too much in previous years. This problem was tackled by Xi Zhongxun, Vice Premier of the State Council and its general secretary. In view of serious difficulties with food supplies in towns and cities, whose population had greatly increased in the period of the Great Leap Forward and in order to improve the situation it was decided to reduce the urban population by twenty million people and curtail the managerial personnel. On January 6, 1962, a group was formed for the purpose headed by Yang Shangkun. On February 22, 1962, by a decision of the CC CPC Secretariat, another, smaller, group was set up also headed by Yang Shangkun. Xi Zhongxun was also a member of this group. On February 6 to 9, 1963, a conference was held attended by the first secretaries of the regional bureaus of the CC CPC at which Yang Shangkun made a report on the work done for the reduction of the urban population and the administrative staff. It was stated that from February 1961 during the two-year period more than 18,870,000 workers and office employees were made redundant all over the country. At the 1st session of the 3rd National People’s Congress of China in 1965 Yang Shangkun was elected member of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of China. That same year he was also appointed secretary of the CPC committee of Guangdong Province.

On the initiative of Mao Zedong a new political campaign, the Socialist Education Movement, began in China in 1963-1964, which was later transformed into the “four purges” campaign.

On January 16, 1965, Yang Shangkun aged 58 went to join a large production team for

participating in the movement of “four purges” (organizational, ideological, political and economic). (Mao Zedong regarded this campaign as a prelude to the Cultural Revolution). In the latter part of May 1965 purges in the team ended, and Yang Shangkun went to Xian and then to Beijing.

The “four purges” did not satisfy Mao Zedong, for he expected better results. That was why a new campaign was started, which he called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

2. *Wenge danan* [Archives of the Cultural Revolution]. In two volumes, Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe, 2004, p. 179.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 181; Wang Nianyi, *Da dongluande niandai* [Years of the Great Troubled Time], Henan renmin chubanshe, 1989, p. 19.

4. V. Usov, *Kitaiskii Beria Kan Shen* [Kang Sheng, the Chinese Beria], Moscow, Olma-press, 2004, pp. 332-333.

5. Li Zhisui, *Mao Tsedun. Zapiski lichnogo vracha* [Mao Zedong. Notes by Personal Physician]. In two books, Minsk, InterDigest, 1996, Book 1, pp. 355-356.

6. *Ibid.*, Book 2, p. 76.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

9. *Yang Shangkun huiyi lu* [Yang Shangkun. Reminiscences], Beijing, 2001.

10. Su Weimin, “Huainian Yang Shangkun [Remembering Yang Shangkun with Great Warmth],” *Bainian chao*, Beijing, 2009, No. 7, p. 45.

11. “Bense lishi zhenxiang zhi ‘Mimi luyin’ [True historical picture of ‘secret tape recordings’],” *Wenhua yishu bao*, Shukan cankao, Shaanxi, 2010, June 18, p. 8.
