

WASHINGTON POST 31 AUGUST 1980 (2 SEPTEMBER) Pg. D-1

# Deng: Cleaning Up Mao's Mistakes

**By Oriana Fallaci**

**O**RIANA FALLACI: Mr. Deng, you recently wrote that China is at a turning point which can be compared with a second revolution. In fact, the traveler arriving in Peking today has an almost physical feeling of the change. No uniforms, no written slogans, and the portraits of Mao Tse-tung are so rare that I only saw three of them, included the one which stays at the entrance of the Forbidden City. Will those rare portraits of Mao remain or not?

## The Chinese leader discusses the coming shakeup in China's leadership in an interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci.

**DENG XIAOPING:** Yes, they will certainly be kept forever. You see, in the past too many portraits of Chairman Mao were shown in public, and to such an excess that they looked almost disrespectful, so we took them off, but . . . Listen, Chairman Mao committed mistakes: It is true. But he also was one of the main founders of the Chinese Communist Party and of the People's Republic of China. In evaluating his mistakes as well as his merits, we think that his mistakes only rate a secondary place. This means that the contribution he gave to the Chinese revolution cannot be obliterated and the Chinese people will always cherish his memory.

**Q:** Yes, it is known that today all the faults are being blamed on the Gang of Four. That is, Mao's widow Chiang Ching and the other three who led the Cultural Revolution. But does this correspond to the historical truth? I have been told that, when we speak of the Gang of Four, many Chinese raise their hand with the five fingers opened and they angrily answer: "Yes, yes, four!"

**A:** (He smiles.) Then it's imperative for me to make a clear distinction between the nature of Chairman Mao's mistakes and the crimes committed by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. I must remind you that Chairman Mao devoted most of his life to China and saved the party and the revolution in the most critical moments. In other words, he gave such a contribution that, without him, in the least the Chinese would have spent much more time in groping their way in the darkness. Then let's not forget that it was Chairman Mao who combined the principles of Marxism and Leninism with the realities of China, it was Chairman Mao who creatively applied those principles not only to politics but also to philosophy, art, literature, military affairs. Yes, until the Sixties, or to be exact before the later part of the Fifties, some ideas of Chairman Mao were very correct, and many of the principles through which we achieved victory. Then, unfortunately, in the last part of his life, he committed mistakes. Particularly the Cultural Revolution mistake. And as a result many misfortunes were

*This is the first of a two-part interview conducted by Oriana Fallaci, the noted Italian journalist, with Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping.*

brought upon the party, the country, the people.

**Q:** Let me clear a point, Mr. Deng. When you say the ideas of Chairman Mao do you mean what is known as "Mao Tse-tung Thought"?

**A:** Yes. You know, during the revolutionary war, when the party was still in Yenan, we put all the ideas and the principles advocated by Mao Tse-tung together, we defined them as "Mao Tse-tung Thought," and we considered it as the thinking which would guide the party from then on. But of course Mao Tse-tung Thought was not created by Mao Tse-tung alone. Though the most of the ideas were his, other veteran revolutionaries contributed to the formation and development of the thought. To mention a few names only, Chou En-lai and Liu Shaoqi and Chu Teh.

**Q:** Don't you mention yourself?

**A:** I don't count, yet it's obvious that I made my part too. I wouldn't be a veteran, an old revolutionary, otherwise. (He laughs.) But going back to what I said, in the last part of his life Chairman Mao contradicted himself and the good principles he had formulated. Unhealthy thinking emerged, both by his actions and his style of work. The unhealthiest thinking of all, his ultra-leftist ideas. Well, maybe victory had made him less prudent, or maybe he had lost contact with reality. You see, because of his great contribution to the revolution, he enjoyed a tremendous prestige among the Chinese people and so he received many praises. Too many. He thus failed to institutionalize the very good principles he had set up for years, such as democratic centralism and the mass line, and this was one his shortcomings, though other revolutionaries had their part of responsibility in it. I myself included. A patriarchal behavior began to develop in him. And the life of the party, the life of the country, ceased to be normal.

**Q:** Yes, but since you call them mistakes, Mr. Deng, shouldn't you admit that the mistakes began almost at once, that, for instance, the Great Leap Forward was a mistake?

**A:** Of course. When I indicated the late Fifties as the beginning of all the mistakes, I referred to the Great Leap Forward. However, here, too, it wouldn't be fair to blame Chairman Mao only. Here, too, we veterans had a good deal of fault. For instance, the fault of acting against the laws of reality and pretending to speed up the economy with methods which ignored the economical rules. In fact, it's true that Chairman Mao was the main person responsible, but it is also true that he was the first one to understand the mistake, to suggest corrections. And when the corrections were not carried out because of negative factors, he made his self-criticism. It was 1962. But again we failed to draw lessons, and so he started to launch the Cultural Revolution.

**Q:** What did he really want with the Cultural Revolution?

**A:** To avoid the restoration of capitalism in China. Yes, this was the intention. Chairman Mao's intention, I mean, not of those who would become the Gang of Four. The point is that, in spite of the good purposes, the intention derived from a wrong judgment of the Chinese reality. And again Chairman Mao was mistaken. He was also mistaken in choosing the target to hit. He said that the target should be the capitalist roaders in the party, and by this he had a large number of the veteran revolutionaries attacked. At all levels. People who not only had excellently fought for the revolution but who also had rich experience in administration. And among them

(See DENG. Pg. 10-F)

**DENG -- CONTINUED**

there was Liu Shaoqi, soon arrested and expelled from the party. As a result, all the revolutionary cadres were decimated. Chairman Mao himself acknowledged it one year or two before dying. It was when he said that the Cultural Revolution had been wrong for two things: because it had decimated the revolutionary cadres and because it had waged an all-round civil war.

**Q:** So it really was a civil war.

**A:** What else? People were divided in two factions that massacred each other. And since the old revolutionaries had been knocked down, only those who claimed to be "rebels" ran rampant. Such as Lin Piao and the members of the Gang of Four. Oh, so many people died in that war!

**Q:** How many?

**A:** It is hard to estimate because they died of all kinds of causes. Besides, China is such a vast country. But listen: So many died that, even if other tragedies had not taken place during it, the number of the dead would be enough to say that the Cultural Revolution was the wrong thing to do. Now, to return to the question you raised in the beginning and the distinction I made, I will conclude with saying that Chairman Mao's errors were political errors. This does not diminish them, true, even less does it justify them, but it is one thing to speak about political errors and another thing to speak about crimes like the crimes of Lin Piao or the Gang's. Yes, of course it was Chairman Mao who permitted Lin Piao and the Gang of Four to exploit his political errors to usurp the power, but . . .

**Q:** Here is the point, Mr. Deng. In fact, I understand very well that you leaders of the new China are living a terrible drama: reshuffling and possibly cancelling Mao's myth without destroying it, throwing away all while throwing away the least you can. In other words, the dilemma of defining the past to accept and the past to negate. But unless you rewrite history, burning the libraries, how will you do it? Wasn't Mao's wife the one who led the Gang? Wasn't it Mao himself who chose Lin Piao as his successor and invested him as an emperor invests the heir to the throne? Moreover, would you call it another "mistake"?

**A:** I call it a mistake and I put it among the other mistakes. Well, of course it was not correct. Of course choosing his own successor is a feudal practice for a leader. But you must also consider that democratic centralism did not exist anymore, that we totally missed a system to avoid such things.

**Q:** In conclusion, the next congress of the Chinese Communist Party will not end as the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party, where Khrushchev denounced Stalin. Am I wrong?

**A:** You are not. We shall certainly evaluate Chairman Mao's merits and mistakes which characterized his life. We shall certainly affirm his merits and say that they are of primary importance, acknowledge his errors and assess that they are secondary, and while making them public we will adopt a realistic attitude. But, also, we shall certainly continue to uphold Mao Tse-tung Thought, which was the correct part of his life. No, it isn't only his portrait which remains in Tienanmen Square: It is the memory of a man who guided us to victory and built a country. Which is far from being little. And for this the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people will always cherish him as a very valuable treasure. Do write this: We shall not do to Mao Tse-tung what Khrushchev did to Stalin at the 20th Soviet Communist Party Congress.

**Q:** But in addition to the congress there will be the trial of Lin Piao and the Gang of Four, so . . . Because the trial will take place, right?

**A:** For sure. We are preparing it, and it should take place at the end of the year.

**Q:** I asked because it is more than three years since you announced the trial and you haven't yet held it.

**A:** We'll hold it. I promise you that we'll hold it. All

this time has been necessary to prepare it: Their crimes are so numerous. And now we act in the socialist legality.

**Q:** And the Four are alive, right? Chiang Ching is alive, right?

**A:** She eats, very much. She sleeps, in jail of course. And this shows that she is alive. They are all alive.

**Q:** Good. And since they are alive, she is alive, she will talk. They will talk. And they will mention Mao, they will say many things about Mao. What if their trial ends with a moral condemnation of Mao, I mean a verdict very different from the discharge you have already decided for the congress?

**A:** I promise you that the trial of the Gang of Four will not soil Chairman Mao's memory at all. Of course it will help to demonstrate some of his responsibilities, for instance that he used the Gang of Four, but nothing more. The crimes committed by them are so many and so evident that we do not need to implicate Chairman Mao to prove them.

**Q:** I'm really surprised, Mr. Deng. Because on one side you accuse him, on the other side you defend him. You defend him even when you accuse him, yet twice you were deposed with Mao's approval.

**A:** Not twice, three times. And not with Chairman Mao's approval. (He laughs.) Yes, I had three deaths and three resurrections. Do you know the name of Wang Min, the one who led the Chinese Communist Party and its ultra-leftist faction in 1932? Well, my first fall took place in 1932, thanks to Wang Min. He accused me of raising against him the group of Mao Tse-tung and knocked me down. I had to wait three years before being resurrected on 1935, during the Long March, at the Zuen Yi congress of the party. In fact, at Zuen Yi the ultra-leftist opportunists of Wang Min were defeated, and I was reinstated at the post of secretary general of the party. The second fall, it's known, took place at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution when I still was secretary general and a member of the standing committee of the central committee as well as vice premier. Well, this time, too, Chairman Mao tried to protect me. Without success, though, because Lin Piao and the Gang of Four hated me too much. Not as much as they hated Liu Shaoqi, yet enough to send me to Jang Xi Province to do manual work. And when, in 1973, Chairman Mao called me back to Peking . . .

**Q:** Mao or Chou En-lai?

**A:** Chairman Mao. Some believe that I was called back by Premier Chou En-lai, I know, but it wasn't Chou En-lai: It was Chairman Mao. Chou En-lai was seriously ill at that time, and as the government depended almost exclusively on him, Chairman Mao called me back and put me back in government as vice premier. He said that my mistakes were only 30 percent, my merits 70 percent, and he resurrected me with 30/70. Yet he, too, was already very ill and unable to meet anybody of the political bureau. He only saw the people around him. That is, the people belonging to the Gang of Four. As for the third fall, it took place in April 1976 — three months after the death of Chou En-lai and five months before the death of Chairman Mao. Then, in October, the Gang of Four was arrested, and one shouldn't marvel at my third resurrection.

**Q:** I marvel, instead: Three times! Deng, what's the secret to dying and being resurrected three times?

**A:** (He laughs, very happily.) No secret. At a certain moment they thought that I could be useful again and they took me off the grave. That's all.

**Q:** But during those purges weren't you afraid to be killed?

**A:** Of course. All through the Cultural Revolution, Lin Piao and the Gang of Four wanted to murder me. They didn't do it because Chairman Mao protected me even when I was sent to Jang Xi Province to do manual work. Chairman Mao had someone watching over my security. Foreign friends often ask me how it was possible for me

(See DENG, Pg. 11-F)

## DENG -- CONTINUED

to survive all those trials and tribulations, and I usually answer: "Because I am the sort of person who doesn't get discouraged easily, because I am an optimist and I know what politics is." But this answer is not the real answer, the complete answer. I could survive because deep in my heart I always hoped in Chairman Mao. And I hoped in him because I knew that he knew me.

**Q:** Well, I always heard that he could not stand you, that he always complained about you. "He is deaf but he sits far from me, as far as he can." "He treats me as if I were dead, he never asks my advice." "He doesn't care to know what I think, he acts his own way."

**A:** It's true, though he didn't say those things for me only. He always complained with everybody because, he protested, they didn't listen to him or they did not consult him, they did not inform him. Well, it was not true for the others, it was true for me. And I did that because I did not like his patriarchal behavior. He acted as a patriarch. He never wanted to know the ideas of the others, no matter how right they could be, he never wanted to hear opinions different from his. He really behaved in an unhealthy, feudal way. If you don't understand this, you cannot understand why there was the Cultural Revolution.

**Q:** The things I don't understand are many, Mr. Deng. To begin with, the case of Chou En-lai. How do you explain that he was the only one they did not knock down during the Cultural Revolution? How do you explain that, well, being the noble person we know, he never tried to stop the infamies which happened under his eyes, for instance the shameful arrest of Liu Shaoqi?

**A:** Let's begin with saying what kind of man Chou En-lai was. A man who worked very hard and never complained. Listen, there were days when he worked even 12 or 16 hours out of 24. I can tell you because I knew him since France where we were together and I regarded him as my elder brother. We joined the revolution almost at the same time. Chou En-lai was much respected by all, friends and enemies, people and comrades, and this partially explains why he wasn't wiped out by the Cultural Revolution, why he always remained at his post of premier: something which was a great fortune for many. It also explains why he could exercise his influence as moderator and act as a pillow cushion which softens the blows. Many losses could be avoided thanks to Chou En-lai, many people could be spared thanks to his role. But, in those years, he found himself in the most difficult position. And he often said things that he would have wished to have not said, he often did things that he would have wished to have not done. This in spite of the fact that people forgave him all. For instance, when Liu Shaoqi was expelled from the party and jailed, it was Premier Chou En-lai who read the report of Liu's so-called crimes.

**Q:** Chou En-lai did that?!

**A:** Yes. Of course the report had been written by others. But it was Chou En-lai who read it. He had to. He could not avoid it.

**Q:** Awful. Sad, awful. It shows, once again, that revolutions do not change men and that, after a revolution, the same horrors take place as before. As a proverb says in my country: "Everything changes and remains as before."

**A:** Well . . . I can only answer that we may prevent or try to prevent such things by establishing an effective new system. You see, a while ago I mentioned the word "feudal." Well, some systems of our recent past have just the stigmas of feudalism: the worship of the individual, the patriarchal way of running things, the life-long tenure for the official. China is a country with a history of a thousand years of feudalism, see, and because of this our revolution has been suffering a lack of socialist democracy, of socialist legality. Now we are trying to correct all that, to finally establish a real socialist democracy, a real socialist legality and . . . Listen, there is no other way to avoid in the future what happened to Liu Shaoqi.

**D**ENG XIAOPING RECEIVED ME on Thursday, Aug. 21, and on Saturday, Aug. 23, at the People's Palace in Peking. There was not a question, even the most uncomfortable and insolent one, to which he wouldn't answer with frankness and candor, often smiling and sometimes laughing. All through the sternness of the meeting, moments of fun relieved us.

The first one was when I expressed my good wishes for his birthday which would be the day after, Aug. 22.

"My birthday? Is my birthday tomorrow?"

"Yes, Mr. Deng, I read it in your biography."

"Well, if you say so. I never know when my birthday is. If tomorrow is my birthday, though, you shouldn't congratulate: it means I am 76, and 76 is a decadent age."

"Mr. Deng, my father is 76, and if I say to my father that 76 is a decadent age, he slaps me."

"And he does well! You wouldn't tell your father such a thing, would you?"

The second one was when I saw him again. On Thursday we had had a little fight over Stalin because of the remark I had made about the gigantic portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin standing in Tienanmen Square, and on Saturday morning, passing there before going to complete my interview, I had discovered that the portraits had been taken down.

"Mr. Deng! Stalin isn't there anymore! Nor Marx, nor Engels, nor Lenin! Mr. Deng, it isn't my fault, is it? You didn't take them out because of me, did you?"

"No, no, not quite. We are simply returning to the old practice, as I told you before yesterday. When necessary, we'll put them back."

"Pity! I was so happy. I liked so much the idea of boasting that I had been able to take Stalin off Tienanmen Square!"

"I know it, I know it. I understood it, I understood. But I shall not give you such satisfaction."

Yet I give it to myself.

— Oriana Fallaci

**Q:** Well, it seems to me that also the Chiang Ching story is a feudal story. One reason why nobody dared to oppose Chiang Ching, isn't it that Chiang Ching was the wife of Mao?

**A:** Yes. One of the reasons was that.

**Q:** So, was Mao so blinded by her, so dominated by her?

**A:** Listen, when I say that Chairman Mao made mistakes, I also think of the mistake named Chiang Ching. She is a very, very evil woman. She is so evil that any evil thing you say about her isn't evil enough, and if you ask me to judge her with the grades as we do in China, I answer that this is impossible, there are no grades for Chiang Ching, that Chiang Ching is a thousand times a thousand below zero. Yet Chairman Mao let her usurp power, to form her faction, to use Mao Tse-tung's name as her personal banner for her personal interests, to use the young ignorant people to build her private political base on them . . . Even after, when he was separated from her. Yes, separated. Didn't you know that for years Chairman Mao and Chiang Ching lived apart? Yet, not even after the separation did he intervene to stop her and to prevent her from using his name.

**Q:** And to arrest her, to arrest the other three, it was necessary to await the death of Mao.

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Mr. Deng, who engineered that arrest? I mean, in what sense or until what point were you responsible for that arrest in spite of the fact that you were not in power?

(See DENG, Pg. 12-F)

**DENG -- CONTINUED**

A: The decision was taken collectively and knowing that there would be the mass support. We had seen it very well in April 1976 when the popular indignation against the Gang of Four had taken the form of a mass protest against the cancellation of a ceremony to commemorate the death of Chou En-lai. I couldn't do anything in those days. I was out, I had lost my freedom. However, in 1974 and 1975, when I was back in government, I had had a direct confrontation with the Gang of Four and I had exercised all the influence I could to show the people the true features of the Gang. But I must also say that, shortly before his death, Chairman Mao had expressed himself in a rather hard way against the Gang of Four. In fact, it had been Chairman Mao to use, as first, the words "Gang of Four." He had also chosen his successor in Hua Guofeng, and this to avoid that Chiang Ching and the others would become his successors. And all things had a great part in the decision to arrest the Gang. A decision which wasn't easy because, at that time, the Four were still strong and had already tried to overthrow the new leadership led by Hua Guofeng.

Q: Then I must put to you an embarrassing question, Mr. Deng. So please forgive me. If things were as you said, how come that on Sept. 18, 1976, while pronouncing his speech at the funeral of Mao, Premier Hua Guofeng said these words: "The great Cultural Revolution that Chairman Mao himself had wanted and guided has wiped out the restoration plots engineered by Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, Deng Xiaoping, and permitted us to conquer again the power they had usurped inside the party and in the structure of the state."

A: (He smiles.) You see, in those days they did not have the time to sum up the experiences. I mean, people hadn't the time to think over carefully and examine the problems we had. The most important thing was to hold up Chairman Mao's banner, to cope with the Gang of Four, and . . . And later on, as they saw that the mass of the people weren't happy with that speech — which was not surprising, because it had not been a very well thought-out speech . . . Well, let's say that the speech was the expression of very simplistic ideas and that the words of comrade Hua Guofeng were dictated by the preoccupation of maintaining stability. After all, wasn't Hua Guofeng one of the leaders who a month later would participate in the decision to arrest the Gang of Four? Also true, though, that some of the things done before that time were not consistent with the will of Chairman Mao.

Q: For instance?

A: For instance, the Chairman Mao Memorial Building. This was against the will of Chairman Mao himself. In the Fifties Chairman Mao had said that at their death, all the leading comrades in China should be cremated and only their ashes maintained. No graveyards for the leaders, no mausoleums. The proposal had been caused by the lesson learned after the death of Stalin and had been materialized in the form of a document. Chairman Mao had been the first to put his name on it, and many other high-ranking officials had put their names on it, too. Including myself. In fact, Chou En-lai was cremated. You know, that document still exists.

Q: Does it mean that the mausoleum will be demolished?

A: Regarding the mausoleum I can tell you that I do not agree in changing things. Now it is there and it is not appropriate to take it away. It was not appropriate to build it, it would not be appropriate to take it off. Should we demolish it, many people would be hurt and

there would be a lot of rumors. Yes, many people are speculating on the subject, but we don't have such an idea.

Q: Mr. Deng, of course you understood why, a while ago, I put that embarrassing question to you. Many think that there are differences between you and Hua Guofeng. Do differences exist or not?

A: No, they don't. The present line was decided by the agreement of all. Of course, on certain specific problems we cannot always agree, but now we have reestablished a collective leadership and we discuss together all the important issues. So those speculations on the so-called "power struggle" make no sense. At least for me. I have no interest in power. Soon I will resign from my post of vice premier, and in 1985 I can count on being only an adviser. And listen: I am 76 years old, in 1985 I will be 81, and when a man reaches that age, his brain doesn't work too well anymore. Moreover, when we become old we have the tendency to be more conservative, so it is much better to limit our role to that of advisers.

Q: It seems to me that this is a pungent remark for Mao. I mean, he did not think as you do.

A: (He laughs.) Some of my contemporaries, too. In fact, they don't want me to resign and, in-order to quiet them down, I made a sort of compromise. I said: Well, we'll see what happens when I'll be 81. However, I still believe that it would be useful for me to resign before reaching that age and to become an adviser, as I said. Enough with old men who continue to be in power until the day of their death, enough with lifelong tenure of the leaders. It has not been put on any paper that the old men must rule, that the leaders must lead all their lives, and yet this mistaken habit continues to dominate our system and to be one of our shortcomings. Because it prevents the young from coming up, it prevents the country from renewing its leadership, and China needs a younger leadership. Yes, the moment has come for we old people to be more open-minded, to set an example, to leave our place to the younger.

Q: However, it is difficult to imagine the new China without you. You have been and you are the brain of this change, Mr. Deng. And though you are only a vice premier . . . By the way, how come a man like you has always been at a second place, technically speaking? How come that you have always been the vice-something or somebody?

A: (He laughs even more.) As you see, being at a second place does not prevent me from doing things. But, going back to what I was saying before, I announce to you that I will not be the only one to resign. Many colleagues of my age will resign also from government work. For example, Vice Premiers Chen Yun, Li Xian-nian, Xu Xiangqian and others. And Hua Guofeng will not be anymore premier of the state council and chairman of the party at the same time. For the post of prime minister, the central committee has already adopted the decision of recommending comrade Zhao Ziyang [former governor of Sichuan Province, the province of Deng Xiaoping, now vice premier and age 61].

Q: So the change of leaders will involve Hua Guofeng, too.

A: Yes, though he is not 60 as yet; I believe that he is 59. In fact, even the post of chairman of the party central committee is not a lifelong post. I mean, he cannot be chairman for life, it is not permitted by the present system. He can serve two more terms, three, but that's all. And a decision will have to be taken also on how many terms he will serve.

NEW YORK NEWS 31 AUGUST 1980 (2 SEPTEMBER) Pg. 10

**Gunning for a new weapon**

Washington (AP)—The Pentagon is getting ready to pick a standard handgun after about two years of study and testing. Nine different models of 9 mm semi-automatic weapons are in the running to replace the old standby .45-caliber and .38-caliber pistols. The studies will be evaluated next month.

The weapons are: Smith & Wesson Model 459, Colt

SSP, Beretta 92S-1, Star M-28, Heckler and Koch P9S and VP70, and Fabrique Nationale DA, FA, and HP. Beretta is an Italian firm, Star is Spanish, Heckler and Koch is a German company and Fabrique is Belgian.

The Army said a "procurement plan has not been established" but estimated that about 580,000 handguns are required throughout the armed services.