CHAPTER V

FALL OF GANG OF FOUR

Speaking at a conference in late December 1976, Chinese leader Hua Guofeng called 1976 "a most extraordinary year in the history of our party and of the dictatorship of the proletariat in China". That description may have been an understatement. The death of Zhou Enlai in January, the appointment of Hua Guofeng as Acting Premier in February, the Tienanmen riots in April, the subsequent dismissal of Deng Xiaoping from all his official positions, the death of Zhu De in early July, the enormously destructive earthquakes in North China later in the month, the persistent signs of political disorder and social malaise throughout the country during the summer - all these served only as prelude for the death of Mao Zedong on 9 September. And then, less than a month later, China experienced its first political convulsion of the post-Mao era. On 6 October, Hua Guofeng ordered the arrest of the GOF - four leaders closely associated with the Cultural Revolution and with the egalitarian programmes it produced. The following day, the politburo appointed Hua, a man whose principles and qualifications were unknown to most Chinese, to serve as Chairman of both the Central

Committee and the Military Affairs Commission of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In a little more than nine months, China had lost its two greatest revolutionary leaders, suffered one of the worst natural disasters of modern times, and seen the death or dismissal of seven members of its party Politburo. It was, indeed, a 'most extraordinary year' for the People's Republic of China (PRC).

This chapter seeks to answer four sets of questions about these dramatic developments in China. First of all, what sequence of events led to the purge of the "gang of four" in early October? What in particular, happened in China in the month after Mao's death? Second, why could Hua Guofeng move so quickly and decisively against the "gang of four"? What political resources were available to the participants in this final political struggle?

After the fall of Gang of Four for several months, the Chinese press was full of detailed and fascinating accounts of the attempts of the "gang of four" to "usurp party and state power" since the 10th CCP Congress in August 1973. While these press materials must be analysed cautiously, even skeptically, they tend to confirm what most observers suspected; that Chinese politics has been characterized by intense conflict, much of it in anticipation of the death of Zhou and Mao. They also confirm that the "revolutionary great debates" of the last three years - the campaigns to
criticize Lin Biao and Confucius, to study the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to restrict bourgeois rights, to criticize the novel Water Margin, to oppose the "rightist attempt to reverse verdicts" - were not simply efforts to promote "socialist education" among the Chinese people, as some have suggested but in fact provided some of the principal arenas in which the political struggle was waged.

The struggle between moderates and radicals - a struggle for power, a debate over the Cultural Revolution, and a dispute over priorities - occurred in a series of rounds between 1973 and the purge of the "Gang of Four" in October 1976: the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius, from late 1973 through mid-1974; the preparations for the Fourth National People's Congress, convened in January 1975; the campaign to study the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the spring of 1975; the drafting of the Fifth Five-Year Plan, throughout 1975, the campaign to criticize the novel Water Margin, in the summer of 1975; and the campaign against the "rightist reversal of verdicts" from the end of 1975 until Mao's death in September 1976.\(^2\) As a

\(^2\) Excellent summaries of the events of this period can be found in Chang, Parris H., "Mao's Last Stand?", Problems of Communism (Washington, D.C.), July-August 1976, pp.1-17; and Starr, J.B., "From the 10th Party Congress to the Premiership of Hua Guofeng - The Significance of the Color of the Cat", QG, no.3, 1976, pp.457-88.
general rule, the radicals sought to wage their struggle against the moderates in the "campaign arena" of Chinese politics, trying to use their influence in the media to mobilize popular indignation against the alleged attempts of the moderates to "negate the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution".\footnote{3} In contrast, the moderates sought to wage their struggle against the radicals in the "bureaucratic arena", attempting to secure the support of party and state officials for greater attention to economic development and threatening to use a party rectification campaign to enforce compliance with their programmes. All the same time, the moderates tried to undermine the radicals' campaigns by stressing party leadership over mass activities, calling for unity and discipline, and forbidding the formation of autonomous, Red Guard-style "fighting groups".\footnote{4} The radicals, in turn, attempted to disrupt the bureaucratic decision-making process by denying publicity to economic planning conferences, blocking the publication of reports and documents, with which they disagreed, and obstructing the implementation of national programmes.

\footnote{3}{The concept of "arenas" is drawn from Oksenberg, M., "The Chinese Policy Process and the Public Health Issue: An Arena Approach", \textit{Studies in Comparative Communism} (Los Angeles, CA), Winter 1974, pp.375-408.}

\footnote{4}{For a summary of the political resources available to the radicals and moderates, and the strategies of political struggle they employed, see Lieberthal, K., "Strategies of Conflict in China During 1975-1976", \textit{Contemporary China} (New York, N.Y.), November 1976, pp.7-14.}
Without any doubt, the most intense round in this struggle occurred in the late spring and summer of 1976, following the April riots in Tienanmen, the dismissal of Deng Xiaoping, and the appointment of Hua Guofeng as Premier. Mao's visibly deteriorating health made it clear to all Chinese that the succession was close at hand, and the radicals failure to secure the appointment of Zhang Chunqiao as Premier rendered it imperative that they make one last effort to bolster their political position before the Chairman's death. Thus, still claiming that they were resisting a "rightist reversal of verdicts", the radicals launched the most violent mass campaign since the Cultural Revolution, aimed at displacing a large number of rehabilitated provincial-level cadres throughout the country. Veteran cadres were publicly described as being nothing better than "bourgeois democrats" who were "impeding the progress of history". Privately, the radicals went on to say that 75 per cent of these older officials were bound to become "capitalist roaders", and that a major organizational readjustment would be necessary to prevent the emergence of revisionism in China.

5 On the attempt to have Zhang Chunqiao named Premier, see Ming Pao (Hong Kong), 30 October 1976 and BR, no.47, 1976, p.7. On Zhang Chunqiao's reaction see ibid.

6 HQ (Beijing), no.7, 1976, in BR, 20 August 1976, pp.11-14; also HQ, no.6, 1976.

In this effort to strengthen their political base, the radicals were willing to foment substantial political instability and economic disorder throughout China. Under the slogan "refuse to produce for the wrong political line", radical supporters organized strikes and slowdowns in a large number of cities and along China's railway system. Representatives were dispatched to organize demonstrations against provincial level official and to conduct sit-ins in some party and government offices. The radicals commissioned motion pictures dramatizing mass criticism of high-ranking cadres and established underground "liaison offices" to coordinate their activities within a province. The radicals even sought to sustain the momentum of their campaign after the devastating earthquakes in July, asserting that natural disasters were no reason to "brush aside the criticism of Deng Xiaoping".

The radicals' campaign served to disrupt the Chinese economy, cause a year's postponement in the implementation

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8 In the railway system, the radicals introduced the slogan "Better to have socialist trains run late than revisionist punctuality", BR, no.48, 1976.


10 BR, no.48, 1976, pp.17-19, for a contemporary editorial warning that some leaders might seek to use relief work to promote a "revisionist line", see RMRB, 11 August 1976.
of the Fifth Five-Year Plan, paralyze political leadership in some provinces, and contribute to a general breakdown of social order and discipline. Despite these tactical gains, however, the radicals were unable to dislodge very many moderate leaders from their positions. True, two cabinet ministers were apparently dismissed (the minister of Education and Railways), along with the director of the New China News Agency, and several provincial leaders may have been suspended from office. But, by the end of the summer, the assessment of most observers was that both sides were evenly balanced; the radicals were on the offensive, but the moderates were holding their own.

Then, just after midnight on 9 September, Mao Zedong passed away. With his death, the struggle between the moderates and radicals entered yet another round. While the basic issues remained much the same, the death of the Chairman raised some more immediate questions to central importance. First, what should be done with Mao's body? Second, who would have control of Mao's papers and supervise the compilation and publication of his post-1949 writings? And third, who would succeed Mao as Chairman of the Central Committee and as Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission?

Little is yet known about the resolution of the first two issues. According to a summary of classified briefings
given to Chinese cadres after the purge, Jiang Qing opposed the preservation of Mao's remains, advocating either burial or cremation, while Hua Guofeng decided to preserve Mao's body and place it in some kind of memorial hall. Jiang also attempted to secure Mao's last notes and papers from one of his confidential secretaries, but she was forced to return them after Wang Dongxing; the Director of the General Office of the CCP Central Committee, informed Hua Guofeng what she had done. In each case, Hua's formal position as first Vice-Chairman of the CCP gave him the authority to resolve the issue temporarily, even though he had not yet been officially confirmed as Mao's successor.

But the radicals sought to generate the impression that they, and not Hua, had been selected by a dying Mao to succeed him. To do so, it is now alleged, they fabricated two statements which they said Mao had made shortly before his death. The first statement, transmitted through internal party channels, was said to be Mao's request that the Politburo

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11 The summary was carried in Ming Bao from October 1976 through November 1, 1976, and was translated in FBIS-PRC, 28 October through 3 November. Enough of the report corresponds with information appearing in the Chinese press to suggest that it is genuine whether those findings gave a totally accurate account of events, however, remains to be determined.
"help Jiang Qing carry the red banner and ... not let it fall". 12 The second, which the radicals first published in Renmin Ribao on 16 September, was said to be Mao's final behest: "Act according to the principles laid down". 13 The implication of these two statements was that Mao had decided to entrust China's future to Jiang Qing and had codified some final set of principles to help guide her way. With these statements as justification, the radicals began to mobilize support behind the idea that Jiang Qing should succeed Mao as CCP Chairman. 14 Students of Beijing and Qinghua Universities were asked to write "oaths of fealty" to Jiang Qing and some of the "gang of four" had their official photographic portraits taken in preparation for the promotions they anticipated. 15

12 Ming Pao, 29 October 1976. Rumours of this statement had reached Hong Kong somewhat earlier, where they had been discounted. See The Washington Post, 6 October 1976, p.A18.

13 On the history of this "final behest", see RMRB, 17 December 1976.

14 It is not known how the radicals planned to allocate other leading party and state offices, some accounts say Jiang Qing was also to become Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, while others indicate that position was to be given to Wang Hongwen. For further details see, for example, Ming Pao, 29 October 1976, and RMRB, no.51, 1976.

15 Ibid.
Convinced that the radicals planned more violence and disorder, Hua Guofeng joined with moderate civilian and military leaders to resist them.16 Hua signalled his decision by disputing the authority of Mao's supposed request to "act according to the principles laid down". Hua's speech at the memorial meeting for Mao on 18 September contained no mention of this "final behest" but instead included another quotation from the Chairman, "Unite and Don't Split",17 as a criticism of the radicals' factional activities. Two weeks later, on 2 October, Hua ordered the deletion of a reference to the "principles laid down" from the text of a speech which Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua was scheduled to deliver to the United Nations on 5 October, denouncing the quotation as an invention.18 In response, Guangming Ribao published a vitriolic article by the radical writing group Liang Xiao which predicted the most dire consequences for anyone who attempted to "tamper with the principles laid down by Chairman Mao". In effect, the radicals had thrown down the gauntlet and challenged Hua's claim to leadership.

16 For a discussion of Hua's alliance with the moderates, see Lieberthal, K., n. 4.


18 RMRB, 17 December 1976, says that Hua ordered the phrase deleted "from a document". That the document was the draft of Qiao Guanhua's United Nations speech is revealed in Ming Pao, 26 October 1976.
At this point, Hua decided that he would have to act preemptively. On 6 October Hua ordered that Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan all be placed under arrest. A meeting of the Politburo on 7 and 8 October endorsed Hua's action and adopted a set of resolutions on the other questions at stake: Mao's body would be placed in a crystal sarcophagus in a memorial hall in Beijing, the publication of Mao's works would be "under the direct leadership of the Political Bureau...headed by Comrade Hua Guofeng", and Hua would become Chairman of the CCP Central Committee and of its Military Affairs Commission.19

In attempting to understand the purge of the Gang of Four one is confronted with a paradox. Throughout 1975 and 1976, right up to Mao's death, the radicals appeared to be on the offensive in China. They had secured the dismissal of Deng Xiaoping and had launched a major assault against veteran cadres throughout China. The moderates, on the other hand, appeared to be on the defensive, seeking to blunt the scope and effectiveness of the radicals' attack. As late as the National Day celebrations on 1 October, the two sides appeared

19 The texts of the first two decisions are in in BR, no.38, 1976, pp.3-4. The text of the decision naming Hua Guofeng as Chairman has never been made public, but it apparently was transmitted through internal party channels.
to be 'evenly balanced.' The war of quotations - with the radicals fighting under the slogan of the "principles laid down" and the moderates countering with the phrase "unite and don't split" - seemed to have reached a draw. But five days later, Hua Guofeng was able to place the Gang of Four under arrest in a quick, decisive stroke. How could that have been?

Clues to the Radicals' Downfall:

The answer lies in the different strategies of political conflict selected by the two sides. The radicals, in essence, were prepared to wage another "revolutionary great debate" after Mao's death, hoping to use their influence in the media and the mass organizations to mobilize a large number of ordinary Chinese workers and students against moderate leadership and programmes. But, Hua Guofeng refused to meet the radicals on their own terms, plotting instead what amounted to a political coup against them. When the final showdown came, Hua had gained enough support to launch his coup, while the resources available to the radicals were neither strong enough nor loyal enough to stop him. What were these resources, and how did they influence the leadership crisis?

20 At the National Day Forum, and in the National Day editorial, roughly equal emphasis was given to both moderate and radical positions. On the forum, see BR, no.37, 1976, pp.5-11. The editorial is in RMRB, October 1976, in BR, no.37, 1976, pp.12-13.
The Media

One of the principal political resources available to the radicals was their influence over the central new media, exercised through Yao Wenyuan's leadership of party propaganda work. But the efficacy of this resource was limited in two ways.

For one thing, the radicals' control over the media was not absolute. While they were able to block the publication of some articles and documents of which they disapproved, and even to prevent much coverage of the death of Zhou Enlai, they could not completely deny the moderates the access to the media. Thus, in virtually every "revolutionary Great debate" from the 10th Party Congress onward, the moderates were able to secure publication of articles and editorials calling for unity, order and discipline, and thus to vitiate somewhat the impact of the campaigns. Even more important, the usefulness of the media to the radicals depended very much on the area in which the political struggle was to be waged. The media might have helped the radicals to launch mass campaigns against the moderates, but it could do little to protect them against a quick coup. The moderates were able to establish their own control over the media after October 6 and thus limit the radicals' ability to mobilize resistance.

In retrospect, the radicals' influence over the media provided a useful mechanism for guiding the "revolutionary great debates" in China - and helped generate the false
impression that the two contending political alliances were evenly balanced. However, when the final showdown came, the media did not provide the radicals with a secure base of power.

The Militia:

As indicated earlier, the radicals had been attempting, ever since the 10th Party Congress, to keep mass organizations relatively independent from party control, so that they could serve as an instrument for criticizing the party leaders and programmes considered to be revisionist. The radicals placed particular emphasis on the development of the urban militia, not simply as a reserve force in the case of war but more importantly as an instrument of "class struggle", at home, and hoped to secure its autonomy from control by the party and the military chain-of-command. The aim, as recent accounts have put it, was to turn the militia into a "second armed force" which could resist the army in case of violent political conflict. 21

In Shanghai, the radicals were relatively successful in creating an independent militia and giving it responsibility for much of the city's public security work.

Unfortunately, for the radicals, few other provinces adopted the Shanghai model but instead kept the urban militia under joint party and army control. When the "Gang of Four" was arrested by Hua Guofeng in October, the remaining radical leaders were unable to rally the urban militia effectively in their defence. In Shanghai, supporters of the "gang of four" allegedly did give weapons to some 30,000 members of the militia on 9 October, but, as we will see below, they decided against any open resistance to Hua once they realized that the nation-wide situation was hopeless.22

The Military

The radicals' attempt to create an independent urban militia illustrates their understanding that the military - the People's Liberation Army (PLA) - still played a crucial role in Chinese politics, even though its participation in civilian affairs had declined substantially since the purge of Lin Biao in 1971. For one thing, military officers still occupied nearly 45 per cent of the provincial party secretaryships.23 For another, three regional military commanders - Chen Xilien, Xu shiyou and Li Desheng - were full members of the party Politburo, along with Defence Minister Ye Jianying. And most important, it was obvious that the PLA would become even more deeply involved in civilian affairs if the struggle for power in China became too violent or chaotic.


The radicals' interest in the urban militia was only one way of responding to the potential political power of the PLA. There are plausible, but as yet unverified, reports that Jiang Qing hoped to gain the support of the Chinese navy in her struggle against the moderates. She may have sponsored the navy's successful assault against the Paracel Islands occupied by South Vietnam in early 1974 and then may have proposed a political alliance with Su Zhenhua, the navy's political commissar and an alternate member of the Politburo. As one account of Jiang Qing's political strategy put it:

Although it did not have many vessels, the PLA navy did have many crack troops (probably marines), formed mainly from the second field army. Without the presence of other factions (i.e. officers from other field armies), the navy enjoyed unified command. At the same time, it was stationed in one place (i.e. in relatively few naval bases like Shanghai, rather than dispersed over the country like the army and air forces). The "gang of four" would have had a powerful force if it had obtained the support of the navy.

In addition, the radicals hoped that Zhang Chunqiao's position as head of the PLA General Political Department could provide a way of weakening the authority of unfriendly military commanders. On 1 March 1975, Zhang convened a forum of


military officers to discuss the campaign, then underway, to study the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The principal problem in the PLA, Zhang allegedly declared, was "empiricism" - the tendency to value experience and practical knowledge more highly than ideological sophistication. Apparently, the radicals hoped to develop a campaign against empiricism into a "house-cleaning in the army", in which they could dislodge "a large number of highly experienced war-tested veteran cadres...and replace them with their own people". The PLA's commanders were a bunch of "old fellows", the radicals declared; it was necessary to promote some younger officers even those in their 30s, to command positions.26

Once again, however, the radicals were not able to accomplish all that they had hoped. While they may have gained supporters within some military units, the bulk of the PLA remained loyal to the central command of Defence Minister Ye.27 Su Zhenhua not only was unresponsive to

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27 Some reports state the 15,000 regular PLA troops in Baoding sided with the radicals, at least temporarily, Newsweek (New York, N.Y.), 17 January 1977, pp.33-34.
Jiang Qing's overtures but promptly reported them to Hua Guofeng. 28 Thus, when the showdown came, the PLA sided with Hua. The elite Beijing guard unit (unit 8341) under Wang Dongxing most likely arrested the four, and the Beijing garrison forces, under Chen Xilien, turned out en masse to support Hua Guofeng in the demonstrations in Beijing between 21 and 23 October. In short, instead of supporting the radicals, the PLA played the decisive role in bringing Hua Guofeng to power.

The Provinces:

As already noted, one important goal of the radicals between 1973 and 1976 was to halt the rehabilitation of veteran cadres to serve as party secretaries in the provinces; to secure the promotion of younger, more radical officials; and thus to gain important bases of support outside Beijing. During the campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius in 1973-74, radicals subjected provincial and municipal leaders in Beijing, Heilongjiang, Hunan, Shanxi, and Yunan to intense criticism, during the campaign against "rightist reversal of verdicts" in 1975-76, their principal targets appear to have been Zhejiang, Fujian, Henan, Hubei, Shanxi and Sichuan. In addition, incidents involving violence...

28 Ming Pao, 29 October 1976, That Su Zhenhua remained loyal to Hua is illustrated by his appointment as second secretary in Shanghai shortly after the purge of the "gang of four".
or disruption of normal political and economic activities have been reported in ten other provinces.\footnote{For a map of these disturbances, see \textit{Newsweek}, 17 January 1977, pp.33-34.}

For all this effort, however, the radicals' accomplishments were not impressive. Shanghai was their principal base with Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen holding the three top positions in the city's party committee. In addition, the radicals had significant support in Liaoning, where Mao's nephew Mao Yuanxin served as a party secretary.\footnote{In an informal meeting of provincial party leaders on 7 October, Hua Guofeng is said to have singled out Liaoning and Shanghai for attention, remarking that "the question of Liaoning province is not serious" but that "Shanghai municipality is in a Quagmire and must be handled without delay". \textit{Ming Pao}, 1 November 1976.} Elsewhere, they appear to have had enough support to be disruptive but not enough to enable them to prevent the moderates from seizing power at the center.

The reaction by Shanghai leaders to Hua Guofeng's coup illustrates the weakness of the radicals. According to a fascinating account by Ross Munro, based largely on wall posters displayed in Shanghai after the purge, Shanghai leaders considered calling a general strike, declaring that Shanghai was in revolt against a "revisionist" takeover in Beijing, and mobilizing the militia to defend the city, but decided not to act after they realized that resistance was futile.\footnote{The New York Times, 9 November 1976, pp.1, 9.}
Popular Support:

Above all, the radicals hoped that their principal base of support could be found among the masses of ordinary Chinese workers and peasants, who, they believed had benefited from the programmes of the Cultural Revolution and could be relied upon to support them. In this vein, Zhang Chunqiao wrote optimistically in February 1976 that the appointment of Hua Guofeng as Acting Premier would ultimately fail because it did not "represent the interest of the people" and because "the people are the decisive factor". The "revolutionary great debates" of the 1970s represented the radicals' effort to mobilize mass support for their programmes and demonstrate that support to their rivals.

It is not clear what role public opinion played in the final outcome. It could be that Hua Guofeng was willing to move in the face of popular opposition, calculating that the support of the military would enable him to gain quick control over the media and that without access to the media the radicals could not effectively mobilize popular resistance. It could be that Hua counted on the military to conduct quick raids against radical strongholds, such as Beijing and Qinghua Universities, arresting radical leaders and thus thwarting

32 This is a passage from a short essay entitled "Thoughts on February 3, 1976". The text is in Min Pao, 30 October 1976. The existence of the essay is confirmed in BR, no. 2, 1977, p. 29.
any movement to oppose him. It is possible, in short, that Hua Guofeng was able to act successfully in defiance of popular opinion. It is not likely that Hua had to do so, however while it is extremely difficult to gauge the mood of the Chinese people, the available evidence suggests that the "gang of four" at least as individuals, did not enjoy substantial popular support. A sense of relaxation, even exhilaration, was evident to foreign visitors in both Beijing and Shanghai in the days following the purge. As compared to the demonstrations against Deng Xiaoping in April, the demonstrations against "the four" in Beijing in October were larger, more enthusiastic and apparently more spontaneous. While Jiang Qing and others doubtless had their supporters, a large number of Chinese - in all probability the majority - had come to consider them to be unworthy and incapable as leaders, hypocritical as revolutionaries, and petty and scheming in their quest for power.

Mao

In the final analysis, however, the key to the fate of the radicals was Mao Zedong. Alive, Mao had been willing to create a balance between moderates and radicals; dead, Mao could no longer intervene to protect the radicals from their opponents. Mao's role in the struggle between moderates and

radicals in the last years of his life may never be completely clear. But the most plausible account is that Mao was not firmly linked to either of the two political alliances. Despite the version of history now being presented by China's current leaders, Mao did much to support the radicals. He was the sponsor, if not the initiator, of all the political campaigns between 1973 and 1976. His intervention ensured the dismissal of Deng Xiaoping. And his widely cited comments in early 1976 that "the capitalist readers are still on the capitalist road", that "the bourgeoisie is right in the Communist Party", and that "a number of party members have moved backward and opposed the revolution "helped justify the radicals' attempt to extend the criticism of Deng into an assault against all veteran cadres.

At the same time, there is little reason to doubt that Mao was also warning Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen and Yao Wenyuan not to form a faction, not to pursue "wild ambitions", and not to "function as a gang of four". Moreover, even if Mao did agree to the dismissal of Deng Xiaoping, he clearly did not agree to the radicals' demands that Wang Hongwen receive an important government position at the Fourth National People's Congress (held in January 1975), or that Zhang Chunqiao be named Premier to succeed Zhou Enlai. Instead, Mao named, or at least agreed to name, Hua Guofeng as his "heir
presumptive in April 1976, despite the intense opposition of the radicals. 34

Thus, as in so many things, Mao's role during the political struggles of the 1970s was a complex, even ambivalent one. But the "four", Mao was simultaneously protecting, even supporting, them and that his death was the factor that precipitated their downfall.

One must conclude the story of the "gang of four" by noting some possible strategic errors on their part. Why, for example, did they level such harsh criticism against Zhou Enlai, a man whose opposition they need not have incurred, and whose tolerance would have been most advantageous? Why did they launch such a strong attack against veteran cadres in mid-1976, a move which only consolidated the opposition against them? And why, finally did they attempt to fabricate Mao's final instructions so soon after the Chairman's death? Did they correctly regard these as necessary efforts to forestall a moderate move against them? Or were they underestimating their own ability to survive? The greatest irony of all is that their chances of political survival might have been better had they not struggled so hard.

34 For a chronology highlighting Mao's criticism of the "gang of four", see BR, no.1, January 1977, pp.27-31.