China's Coup of October 1976

KEITH FORSTER
University of New England, Australia

On the evening of October 6, 1976, less than one month after the death of the Chinese supreme leader Chairman Mao Zedong, the so-called Gang of Four – Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen – all members of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), were arrested on the orders of the First Vice-Chairman of the CCP Central Committee (CC), Hua Guofeng, in the heart of communist power, Zhongnanhai.

Although it was Hua who, in the name of the CC, read out the decision to detain them for their alleged crimes in plotting to usurp power, it was Ye Jianying, Vice-Chairman of both the CCP CC and its Military Affairs Commission (MAC), who had planned and executed the operation, which, against some odds, proceeded without incident.

On October 20, two weeks after the arrest of the four central leaders, the Politburo established a special case group of Politburo members to investigate the alleged crimes of the Gang (Wang Hongmo, 1989: 22).[1] The first set of inner-Party documents compiled by the special case group was released on December 10, 1976 (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: sec. 5), the second set (a collection of materials concerning the backgrounds and careers of the Four) was compiled in 1977, and the third set of documents appeared on September 23, 1977 (*Issues & Studies*, 1978-1979). In July 1977, at the 3rd plenum of the 11th CC, the Gang was expelled from the Party, and over three years

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later, between December 1980 and January 1981, at the show-trials of the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing groups in Beijing, Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao were sentenced to two-year suspended death sentences, Wang Hongwen to life imprisonment, and Yao Wenyuan to a twenty-year period of detention. Thus was one of the most spectacular examples of factionalism and leadership division in the history of the PRC brought to a conclusion.

THE LITERATURE

The Central Committee documents of 1976 and 1977 and the indictment presented at the 1980-1981 trial (Lishide shenpan bianjizu, 1981) detailed the charges against the Gang for its alleged conspiracy to seize power and to incite the Shanghai militia to foment an armed uprising. Internal documents circulating in China in late 1976 were obtained and put to effective use in the only previous English-language account of the coup (Onate, 1978). In his article, Onate investigated the charges brought against the four by the victors in the political struggle and analyzed the evidence purportedly demonstrating how the Gang was to seize power. The article did not, and, for lack of data, could not, discuss the role of the Gang's opponents in the whole affair. Thus for the past decade or so, references to the coup in Western academic literature have been unable to rely on any additional primary source material than that released by the Chinese authorities in the immediate aftermath of the Gang's arrest and later at the trial.

However, recent accounts of the coup published in China have detailed the steps taken by the Gang's opponents, especially the meticulous planning undertaken by the ringleader, Ye Jianying, to gather support among veteran cadres and plot and execute the Gang's arrest (Fan Shuo, 1986, 1989, 1990; Ding Qi, 1989; Ji Xichen, 1988-1989; Chen Shijin, 1987).[2] These latest publications have provided very little further information on the alleged conspiratorial activities of the radicals than has been available for over a decade, suggesting that the evidence on this score remains as flimsy today as it ever was. Most of the recent Chinese publications come under the category of factual literature (*jishi wenxue*), a style of writing that has become very

fashionable in China since the 1980s. Books and articles of this genre attempt with varying degrees of success to combine solid academic research and objectivity with journalistic-style exposure that has some pretension to literary merit. The more interesting examples tell a good story in an attractive and readable manner. They present detailed description of events combined with some analysis and, most controversially where the borderline between fact and imagination is blurred, relate private discussions between key individuals and make psychological assessments of the motivation and state of mind of major participants.

Some publications are clearly officially endorsed and can be read as reflecting to a large degree the official Party position on the subject.[3] According to their institutional affiliation and reliability in the eyes of the authorities, some writers obtained direct access to Party files and were able to interview key participants. For example, the Party historian Jin Chunming clearly saw Ye Jianying's March 1977 report to the Central Committee on the arrest of the Gang (Jin Chunming, 1987: 298; see also Onate, 1978: 564). And on November 24, 1982, Ye Jianying spoke about the incident to a select group of writers (Ji Xichen, February 5, 1989).

Other observers, such as the prolific Shanghai writer Ye Yonglie, pursued a more independent line of research, relying on more informal channels to gather material (Ye Yonglie, 1988: 109-323; 1989a: chap. 1, 12-14; 1989b: chap. 12).[4] In all cases, however, the accounts were tailored and constrained by the political environment in which they were published. The protagonists are painted in stark black and white, and the contest between the participants is viewed as one of good against evil. Occasionally, Fan Shuo's prose plumbs the depths of sentimentality and bathos when enumerating the seemingly unlimited virtues of his subject, Ye Jianying. Ye Yonglie often dips his skillful pen deep into the well of sarcasm as he shreds the reputation and dignity of his biographical subjects.

The writings also suffer greatly from distortion and bias. Nowhere is this more evident than in the blatant attempt by the PLA military academy writers to downplay the role of Hua Guofeng and to glorify the contributions of Ye Jianying and his associates.[5] Ji Xichen's serialized version of the affair has gone some way to rectify the

situation and may be the reason why his manuscript was never published in book form.[6] Also, Ye Yonglie's writings provide something of an antidote to the zeal with which Fan Shuo and Ding Qi set out to canonize Ye Jianying. Unremarkably perhaps, in their very detail and effort to convince the reader of the irrefutability of the evidence against the Gang, these recent accounts often unwittingly disclose information from which very different inferences and conclusions can be drawn than those suggested. This is where the reader benefits from the sheer volume of literature now available on the subject. Naturally, nowhere does one find the case for the defense of the four radicals. Many of their actions and statements are undoubtedly taken out of context and distorted for political ends. But judicious and discriminate use of this recent spate of publications throws new light on one of the most controversial purges in the upper echelons of the CCP in its long history of factional struggles.

THE GANG OF FOUR

The term "Gang of Four" (*sirenbang*) was coined by Mao in 1974 to criticize the four central radicals for their factional activities and exclusionist behavior (*Issues & Studies*, February 1979: 95-96; "Political Report," 1977: 26-28). It is true that the post-Mao leadership has used the derogatory epithet for its own political ends. Undoubtedly also, Mao's remarks have been taken out of context, and the fact that they were related mainly to the Gang's tendency to indulge in cliquish behavior is conveniently overlooked. Nevertheless, it is clear that the four shared a common political position on the important issues of the day and had built up strong personal and political relations over the decade 1966-1976. In this respect, then, the term serves as a useful appellation.

The formation of the Gang can be traced to the years 1972-1973 when Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, and Yao Wenyuan, the rump of the Cultural Revolution small group, were joined in the central leadership by the 1960s worker rebel leader from Shanghai, Wang Hongwen. The links between various members of the group, however, can be traced back to Shanghai in the 1950s. Zhang Chunqiao, then a

senior official in the municipal propaganda department, spotted and cultivated a promising writer named Yao Wenyuan and commissioned him to turn out articles for the Shanghai press. Then, in 1963, Zhang came into contact with Jiang Qing as she set about revolutionizing the arts in China, using Shanghai as her base. In late 1965, Yao's article attacking Wu Han's play on Hai Rui was drafted in close collaboration with and under the supervision of Zhang and Jiang Qing. When the Cultural Revolution small group was formed in May 1966, Jiang, Zhang, and Yao became colleagues on the body, which, during the nearly three years of its existence, wielded enormous influence over the course of the Cultural Revolution. At the Party's 9th Congress in 1969, all three were promoted to the Politburo (Ye Yonglie, 1988: 109-112, 122-124, 130-134, 143-144, 152-154, 157, 274-276; Jin Chunming, 1985: 190-191).

During the 1966 rebellion in Shanghai, and in particular during the January storm of 1967, Zhang Chunqiao manipulated and backed the worker rebel group led by Wang Hongwen so as to establish his populist credentials in the municipality. By the end of 1968, Zhang, Yao, and Wang ruled Shanghai for the Maoist cause, and in the early 1970s, the three men were appointed first, second, and third secretaries, respectively, of the reformed Party committee. In September 1972, Mao summoned Wang to Beijing to train him for the post-Lin Biao central leadership, which was installed at the 10th Congress in August 1973. At the Congress, Wang was catapulted into the national leadership as third in seniority behind Mao and Zhou Enlai. Zhang, Jiang, and Yao were reappointed to the Politburo, and Zhang joined Wang as members of the nine-man standing committee of the Politburo, the Party's highest decision-making body.

It is clear that in their sudden and rapid rise to power, the four central radicals relied almost entirely on the backing of Chairman Mao. Ji Chunming, for one, attributed the spectacular emergence of the Gang first to their attachment to and propagation of Mao's leftist ideology of the Cultural Revolution and, second, to the cult of personality built up to extreme heights at that time. In his view, they played the role of courtiers and relied on their special status to relay the Chairman's "supreme directives" and expound his ideas in the press they controlled. Jiang Qing played heavily on her status as the first lady until

the Chairman remarked in 1974 that Jiang did not represent him, only herself. What Jin failed to point out is that Mao's power was such that all of his senior subordinates were forced to tailor their political and policy preferences within the parameters of what would please an increasingly irascible, arbitrary, and discontented Chairman. Once Mao had departed the scene, however, the hollowness and fragility of the Gang's political power became all too evident.

It was in the theoretical and ideological realm that Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, in particular, were attuned to the utopian thinking and millenarian yearnings of the aging Chairman. As Jin pointed out, such ideas as the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the theory of the revisionist line in the arts, the theory of smashing the state machinery as exemplified by the Shanghai January 1967 revolution, the theory of the criticism of the productive forces expounded by Kang Sheng, the theory of exercising all-round dictatorship as presented by Zhang Chunqiao, and the theory of democrats becoming capitalist-roaders were all either produced or extensively propagated during the reign of radical thought (Jin Chunming, 1985: 187-217). Jin's account does not mention, however, that most of these ideas were initiated and fully endorsed by Mao and that the Chairman shared the ideological position put forward by Zhang and Yao. After the publication of a piece by Zhang in *Honggi* in 1975, the Chairman apologized to him at the Politburo meeting on May 3, admitting that he had relaxed the struggle against empiricism (Jin Chunming, 1987: 277). Again, in 1976, it was the Chairman himself who suggested that many senior and veteran cadres were unprepared mentally to continue the revolution and could thus be classified as bourgeois democrats.

It is in relation to their theoretical knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and their ideological standing in the Party that it is necessary to differentiate between the roles and prestige of the four radicals. It was in this respect that Jiang Qing and Wang Hongwen proved sore disappointments to Mao. Before Mao brought Wang to Beijing, he first inquired of Zhang Chunqiao about the young rebel's writing abilities (Ye Yonglie, 1989a: 384). Wang Hongwen's vacuity was even remarked on by Yao Wenyuan and Jiang Qing, who openly derided his pretensions to seriousness (Suo Guoxin, 1986: 14-15). By contrast,

Zhang and Yao possessed credentials in the theoretical and propaganda fields dating back to the 1950s. Thus, when informed of the Gang's alleged crimes immediately after the coup, Shanghai Party secretary and veteran cadre Ma Tianshui was prepared to concede that Jiang Qing had committed mistakes, but he remained unconvinced of the gravity of the errors attributed to Zhang and Yao (Chen Shijin, 1987: 175). By their very presence in the upper echelons of the Party, then, the four radicals represented an organizational link with the Cultural Revolution and a reminder of its ongoing relevance and symbolic significance. That is why they were entrusted with the implementation of every political campaign launched by Mao after 1973.

THE END OF THE MAOIST ERA

In the aftermath of the Party's 10th Congress, bitter contention and factional struggles erupted between the civilian Cultural Revolution radicals and the veteran cadres led by Zhou Enlai and the rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping. A routine medical checkup revealed that Zhou Enlai had contracted cancer, and with Mao also in poor health, the stakes in what was in effect a fight for the succession rose accordingly. In 1972, the Chairman placed Zhou in charge of Party affairs and the economy, and the Premier set about cautiously implementing restorationist policies under the banner of consolidating the victories of the Cultural Revolution. At the end of 1972, alarmed by the dilution of Cultural Revolution radicalism and constantly reminded by his theoretical advisers Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan of the need to continue the revolution, Mao swung the Party back onto a more radical line. The principal beneficiaries of this tilt were the Cultural Revolution radicals and their constituents. In 1973 and 1974, they used the opportunity provided by the restoration of pre-Cultural Revolution mass organizations, such as the Communist Youth League, Trade Union Council, and Women's Federation, and the establishment of urban militia command headquarters in major cities, to build up their organizational power in officially sanctioned bodies.

With the launching of the campaign against Lin Biao and Confucius at the beginning of 1974, and with ringing calls to "go against the tide"

reverberating across the country, it appeared that a second Cultural Revolution was in the making. When the political campaign was brought to a sudden halt in the middle of 1974 due to outbursts of factionalism in state enterprises that seriously affected industrial production and the movement of goods on the railways, Deng Xiaoping, with the Chairman's backing, regained the ascendancy and commenced, through a series of conferences held in the first half of 1975, a thorough overhaul of Cultural Revolution policies. But by the second half of the year, Deng's zeal and impetuosity had aroused the suspicion of the infirm and cranky Mao, who once again used his unchallenged authority to swing the political pendulum back toward the radicals.

At the end of 1975, a political campaign to oppose the "rightist wind to reverse correct verdicts" was blowing a gale. It was tempered by a brief period of mourning for the death of Premier Zhou in January 1976 and then strengthened to cyclonic force in the aftermath of the Tiananmen incident of April 1976. But even before the dramatic events of April, the factional balance in the leadership had tipped in favor of the radicals. Deng, who had been subject to a thinly disguised barrage of political innuendo since late 1975, disappeared from the political scene after delivering the memorial address for Zhou Enlai. On February 2, 1976, the CC announced that due to ill health, Ye Jianying would no longer be in charge of the CC MAC. In reality, there was nothing wrong with Ye's health. On February 16, 1976, the CC announced that the speeches by Ye and Deng to the July 1975 enlarged plenum of the CC MAC contained mistakes and therefore should no longer be studied or implemented. This revealed the real reason for Ye being shunted aside (Junshi kexueyuan "Ye Jianying zhuan" bianjizu, 1987: 285-286; Ji Xichen, February 5, 1989).

Nevertheless, Mao, who had approved these important changes in the senior leadership, was not prepared to hand over all power to the radicals. With Deng Xiaoping in disgrace, Zhang Chunqiao was the next senior Vice-Premier and thus the logical choice to succeed Zhou Enlai as Premier. Yet on the very day after the revelation that Ye Jianying would be standing aside, the CC announced that the little known Politburo member and Minister of Public Security, Hua Guofeng, had been appointed to the posts of Party Vice-Chairman and acting Premier. Hua was thus placed in charge of the daily affairs of

both the Party CC and the State Council. When it had come to the crunch, the Chairman had once again displayed his lack of confidence in the administrative abilities of the radical leaders. Undoubtedly, Mao's decision was also influenced by the desire to appoint a senior cadre who was not totally committed to either the radical camp or that of the veteran cadres around Deng Xiaoping—that is, someone who could work with both factions, who could heal the wounds in the Party and work to unite it after his departure from the political stage.

Jurgen Domes has argued that from late 1975 what he described as the United Left (comprising the Cultural Revolutionary Left, the mass organization Left—represented by such figures as the legendary Dazhai peasant leader, Chen Yonggui, and the trade union leader in Beijing, Ni Zhifu—and the secret police Left, which included Hua and Ji Dengkui) joined forces to protect the political orientation and policy initiatives of the Cultural Revolution from Deng Xiaoping's counter-attack. The Left could mobilize eleven votes in the twenty-three member Politburo, and in the aftermath of the April 1976 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, it was able to push through the dismissal of Deng Xiaoping from all his posts (Domes, 1977: 3-8).

In his account, Domes tended to understate the influence of the ailing Chairman, who, despite his poor health, was clearly responsible for the decision to dismiss Deng and anoint Hua Guofeng as his successor. For the first time since 1949, a Party vice-chairman was formally distinguished from his co-vice-chairmen with the title "First." This was a characteristically unpredictable and defiant gesture by the Chairman. Hua may not have had the high public profile of other members of the Party leadership, but he was well known to Mao, who had long respected him for his honesty, diligence, and loyalty (Fan Shuo, 1990: 201; Ye Yonglie, 1988: 299-302). However, Hua not only had to direct the political campaign against Deng in the face of the reservations of many provincial leaders and against the will of a sullen populace tired of continually being called on to express its allegiance in leadership factional battles, but he was soon confronted with the task of organizing relief for one of the largest natural disasters ever to occur in China. The Tangshan earthquake in late July appeared to herald the end of the dynasty, and with the Chairman confined to

bed and near death, the political struggle for succession entered its final and crucial phase.

Between June and September 1976, the radicals used the propaganda organs under their control to push for the campaign against the disgraced Deng to be extended nationwide against his followers and sympathizers in positions of power. In June and July 1976, Wang Hongwen drafted a letter to the ailing Mao containing his assessment of the campaign against Deng. According to Wang's secretary, the draft pointed out that the campaign faced many problems among leading groups, including within the military, and in Wang's opinion, the way to solve the problem was to change the leaders, as some departments had already done (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-24). These words would have had a foreboding ring for the Gang's opponents. In the meantime, Ye Jianying was preparing the groundwork to take resolute measures to deal with the radicals. The only thing holding him back was the lingering and debilitated figure of Mao; once the Chairman departed the world on September 9, the gloves came off for the final showdown (Forster, 1990: chaps. 6-10).

MAO ZEDONG'S TESTAMENT

The sensitive question of whether the Chairman had left an oral or written testament was uppermost in the minds of central leaders after his death. Both sides were anxious to know what arrangements, if any, the old tyrant had made for the future. The same question had cropped up after the death of Zhou Enlai, with Ye Jianying having been disappointed to discover that despite his instructions to medical staff to be ready twenty-four hours a day to record any final words from the dying Premier, the paper had been returned to him in its original blank state (Fan Shuo, 1990: 22-23). Ye was fully aware that if Zhou committed his views of the Gang to paper, these would carry great weight in the upper echelons of the leadership. But even on his deathbed, the crafty Premier would do nothing to offend his emperor. Yet after the Tiananmen Square incident in April 1976, the security forces had expended much energy in tracking down the supposed disseminators of the late Premier's so-called last political statement.

Shortly after Mao's death, the Taiwan news agency broadcast excerpts from what it alleged to be Mao's talk with senior leaders on June 3, 1976.[7] On that day, Mao called in his top lieutenants, Hua Guofeng, Wang Hongwen, Ye Jianying, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Li Xiannian, and Chen Yonggui, and told them that the Politburo should form a three-in-one leadership of the old, middle-aged, and young. The Chairman declared that the Politburo should decide whether to include Jiang Qing. Then, Mao is quoted as saying,

> Don't settle old accounts. Even if past purges were directed against wrong targets, there should be no redress. Trying to change what has been done . . . will result in thousands and tens of thousands of heads rolling. From now on you should help Jiang Qing carry the Red Banner. Don't let [it] fall. You should alert her against committing the errors she has committed [BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/The Far East, 1976: sec. BII/1-2].

It is clear that despite Mao's biting criticism of Jiang Qing and his bitter disappointment with her attitude and behavior, he still envisaged that his wife would be part of the succession. Thus his views of the shortcomings of the Gang, which was more concerned with its style of work its than its political and ideological positions, were not meant to signify the Gang's exclusion from any future leadership.

More recent publications from China indicate that Mao was well aware of the impact that his passing would have on the Party that he had led for so long, particularly with respect to the legacy of bitterness and controversy left behind by the Cultural Revolution (Wang Nianyi, 1988: 600-601). In June 1976, perhaps after this meeting, the CC officially notified Party, government, and army leaders at various levels of the dangerous state of the Chairman's health (Jin Chunming, 1987: 298). On June 15, it was publicly announced that Mao would no longer meet foreign visitors (Domes, 1977: 2). The actual state of the Chairman's health became a topic for heated debate in the Politburo, with a circular containing the phrase that Mao's health had turned for the better and that he could soon resume work, provoking opposition from Ye Jianying and other members. At the time, Hua did not express an opinion, but after calling the meeting to a close, he deleted the phrase, much to Ye's satisfaction (Fan Shuo, 1990: 202-203). The

central notice jolted both sides into action, and the plotting for ascendancy in the post-Mao era commenced in earnest.

THE BATTLE FOR THE SUCCESSION[8]

It was Wang Zhen, who in 1986-1987 played a major role in the dismissal of Hu Yaobang, who appears to have initiated talks among the veteran leading cadres on the question of how to deal with the radical central leaders. In a series of talks with Ye Jianying, which commenced in June 1976, presumably as news of Mao's deteriorating health became known, both men concluded that the radicals could only be dealt with after the Chairman's death. In a speech to the Central Committee in March 1977, Ye used the phrase "spare the rat to save the porcelain" to indicate that he and other veteran leaders were afraid that if they moved against the Gang, especially Jiang Qing, while Mao was alive it would affect his health. Thus, even on his deathbed, the Chairman's charismatic and mesmerizing presence continued to influence the actions and considerations of his senior colleagues. Presumably, Ye and his conspirators were also waiting to see how the radicals would react to the Chairman's passing, while in the meantime preparing for every contingency.

In one of their talks, Ye asked Wang Zhen to resume contacts with his former subordinate from the Yan'an days, Wang Dongxing, who held the sensitive positions of Director of the CC General Office and political commissar of Mao's bodyguard. Between June and the October coup, Wang Zhen also acted as liaison advisor (*lianluo canmou*) for Ye in his dealings with such prestigious but temporarily sidelined leaders as Chen Yun and Deng Xiaoping. Ye also communicated regularly with his fellow marshal Nie Rongzhen, and, to facilitate their exchanges, the latter moved to Xishan (West Hill, about forty kilometers outside Beijing) where Ye was staying. Between July and August 1976, Ye also kept in constant contact with Yang Chengwu, acting Chief of the PLA General Staff, and directed him to ensure that the PLA remained free from possible interference by the Gang (Yang Chengwu, 1986). Over the following months, Yang became the go-between between Ye and Nie.

By July 1976, Ye was working on a plan to deal with the radicals, but he did not want to act until he was sure that he had obtained Hua Guofeng's support. Ye was banking on Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao, in particular, quickly making their contempt for the heir-apparent all too obvious. In February, Zhang had noted in his diary his discontent and disappointment at the news of Hua's appointment as acting Premier. After his promotion, Hua had come under not very subtle attack through the propaganda outlets controlled by Yao Wenyuan. An article in *Renmin ribao* (February 24) attacked Confucius when he became acting prime minister while currently holding the post of minister in charge of crime. The similarity between the positions of Confucius and Hua would have been patent to the paper's readers, as Hua was Minister for Public Security at the time he became acting Premier. Another article suggested that Hua was prepared to tolerate the continued existence of bourgeois rights, the Marxist term for real inequalities under socialism and an issue which had been at the center of a theoretical study campaign in 1975 (Forster, 1990: 180-182). After the disastrous Tangshan earthquake on July 28, 1976, press reports declared that relief work, which Hua was overseeing, should not be allowed to divert attention from the political campaign against Deng (Issues & Studies, September 1978: 84-88).

The crudeness and inhumanity of continuing a political campaign in the midst of the enormous suffering and devastation brought about by the Tangshan earthquake certainly alienated many Chinese citizens. It also isolated the radicals in the Party and was perhaps a major factor in the decision by key leaders to side with the veteran cadres as they prepared for the confrontation ahead. Thus, according to Domes, between late July and late September, the Left coalition split, with the mass organization and secret police Left groupings deserting the Gang of Four and joining forces with the regional military leaders, central military machine, and veteran civilian cadres (Domes, 1977: 10-11).

For his part, Ye Jianying was anxious to provide counsel and support for the newly appointed Hua, not to cause trouble for him or undermine his position. As Mao's designated successor, Hua would provide some desperately needed legitimacy to any undertaking to purge Mao's widow. Thus in February or March 1976, Ye paid a courtesy call on the newly promoted Hua and obtained a favorable

impression of him. It appears that in the atmosphere of crisis that surrounded the departure of the man who had led and dominated the Party for almost forty years, Ye saw himself as playing the role of a guardian (*tuogu*) for Hua on behalf of the deceased leader. On the eve of Mao's death, when the members of the Politburo were ushered in to see the Chairman for what turned out to be the last time, Ye was called back into the Chairman's bedroom. Mao reportedly tried to speak but failed. Ye later speculated on the significance of this event and wondered whether the Chairman had been trying to signal that he was entrusting Hua to his care.

It was reportedly on the day following Mao's passing that Ye embarked on the job of persuading Hua that something had to be done about the radical leaders. The crucial question to which Ye Jianying wanted to find an answer revolved around Hua's own political inclinations, now that his benefactor Mao had departed the scene. Hua was reportedly only too well aware of his modest talents and limited experience, and he made his feelings on this score plain to his older colleague. Without the guiding hand and counsel of the Chairman, however, it was debatable which side Hua would favor in the factional battle. On one hand, Hua's career had benefited from the Cultural Revolution, and Mao had lifted him from relative obscurity in Hunan province in 1972 at the same time as Wang Hongwen had joined the central leadership. Hua was fiercely loyal to the Chairman and, like the Gang of Four, suffered from the lack of both institutional and informal networks in the wider arena of central politics. However, in his four years in Beijing, Hua had gained administrative experience running a central department and being involved in the day-to-day detail of top-level affairs. During his lengthy service in Hunan province, he had gained a reputation as an expert on agricultural affairs, and it was Hua who gave the key address to the first national Dazhai conference on agriculture in October 1975. Also in that year, he was involved in the series of meetings convened by Deng Xiaoping, which ranged over the whole gamut of government business. Thus while he was a radical Maoist by inclination and conviction, Hua's actions were also guided by the constraints imposed by administrative practicalities.

It is not known what approaches were made by members of the Gang to Hua in the period leading up to and immediately following

Mao's death. However, it is clear that the radicals showed very poor political judgment in alienating a potentially very important ally. They made plain their contempt for Hua's relative inexperience and his lack of theoretical expertise. Jiang Qing, in particular, seemed to think that she could order Hua about as if he were her apprentice. During the April Tiananmen crisis, Hua, undoubtedly acting under Mao's instructions, had sided with the radicals in declaring the movement a "counter-revolutionary incident" (Wang Nianyi, 1988: 580; Forster, 1986: 32). Perhaps the central radicals thought that he would prove as pliant and cooperative in the post-Mao period.

Shortly after Mao's death, in an action which, however innocent in intent, invited charges of exceeding authority and stepping outside the area of his responsibility, Wang Hongwen ordered a series of telephone calls made to provincial Party committees in the name of the CC General Office. The message conveyed was that if during the mourning period up to September 18, the day of the mass memorial meeting in Tiananmen Square, any problems or issues cropped up that local Party branches believed that they could not solve by themselves, they were to contact Wang Hongwen's office for instructions (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-27). Later writings have distorted this incident, first by bringing forward the time of the telephone calls from September 11 to 12 to the early hours of September 9, implying that the Gang could hardly wait until Mao's body was cold to spring into action. Second, although the original evidence stated clearly that Wang's instructions were to remain in effect for about a week, later reports on the incident have implied that they were either of longer term or of indefinite duration. Whatever the motivation and timing of Wang's directive, given the sensitivity of the situation, his action was certain to arouse Hua Guofeng's suspicion once it was brought to his attention. Wang Hongwen's initiative was also sure to raise the ire of Wang Dongxing, whose office the former had used to contact the localities.

This single incident in itself perhaps proved little. However, an accumulation of events, however trivial in themselves, could be shown to reflect a general pattern, especially in the increasingly conspiratorial atmosphere building up in the capital. On the day of Mao's death, Chi Qun, a close follower of the radicals at Qinghua University, is alleged

to have made a speech alerting his supporters to the struggles that lay ahead and calling on the militia to raise its vigilance (Ji Xichen, November 15, 1988). On September 9 and 10, Zhang Tiesheng, the worker-peasant-soldier-student who in 1973 had become famous for handing in a blank examination paper, made speeches in Liaoning questioning Hua's credentials to become Party leader. The transcripts were later sent to Mao Yuanxin (the late Chairman's nephew and confidant) in Beijing. On September 12, Yao Wenyuan instructed Chi Qun and Xie Jingyi (daughter of the late Minister of Public Security, Xie Fuzhi, and another close supporter of the radicals) at Beijing and Qinghua universities to organize petitions to the CC requesting that Jiang Qing become Party Chairman. Such blatant and naive behavior was certainly not the approach of cunning plotters.

The next incident in the heightening confrontation concerned the fight to gain control over Mao's papers and the wording of his last testament. Earlier in the year, at a meeting of the Politburo, Hua Guofeng had produced two excerpts from a handwritten note given to him by Mao. The first and most important instruction, and the one that was to cause the most controversy after the Chairman's death, was phrased "act according to past principles" (*zhao guoqu fangzhen ban*). The second encouraged the newly appointed Hua not to panic in the face of difficulty. A third directive — and the most well known — which Hua revealed only after Mao's death, endorsed Hua's actions with the words "with you in charge, I'm at ease" (*ni ban shi, wo fang xin*). The Chairman's directives were in response to Hua's report to him on the progress of the campaign against Deng Xiaoping and, despite the use to which they were subsequently put, probably carried no greater or long-term significance (Onate, 1978: 548-551).

At the first post-Mao Politburo meeting held on the morning of September 9, Jiang Qing had presented what she described as the so-called last testament of the dead Chairman. The authenticity of such a written will was immediately challenged. At a time when most Politburo members were still in a state of shock at Mao's death, the tactless Jiang Qing also pushed for Deng Xiaoping's expulsion from the Party (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-30; Xinghuo liaoyuan bianjibu, 1988: 226). Then, on September 16, a week after Mao's

death, a joint editorial of *Renmin ribao*, *Jiefangjun bao*, and *Honggi* contained the phrase "act according to the principles laid down" (*an jiding fangzhen ban*). This instruction was presented as the Chairman's last testament. In fact, the first three characters of Mao's April 30 instruction to Hua had been changed, purportedly for the political convenience of the radical leaders. From September 17 on, a series of articles published across the country included the phrase, with Yao Wenyuan repeatedly emphasizing the importance of the wording to his subordinates in the propaganda organs (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-31). Significantly, however, the phrase was not included in Hua's memorial speech delivered on September 18 (Onate, 1978: 546-547). The subsequent debate over the difference in meaning, if any, between the two phrases and the significance of the directive occupied communist polemicists for a considerable time during the campaign against the Gang. It continues to do so.[9]

The disposition and supervision of Mao's archives was another contentious issue. On the afternoon of September 19, 1976, Jiang Qing reportedly requested that the Politburo hold an emergency meeting of its standing committee (members of which were Hua Guofeng, Wang Hongwen, Ye Jianying, and Zhang Chunqiao) to discuss "important questions" and suggested that she, Yao Wenyuan, and Mao Yuanxin—who were not members—attend but that Ye not be invited. Jiang Qing demanded that Mao's papers be handed over to her and Mao Yuanxin. After some heated debate, it was decided that Mao's papers be sealed in the CC General Office under the stewardship of Wang Dongxing.

According to Ye Jianying, who came to his conclusion after hearing reports of the meeting, there were two reasons why Jiang Qing wanted access to the papers. First, she was afraid they might contain incriminating evidence about her own past as well as that of her fellow radicals, and second, she wanted to find out if they contained any information that she could use as a stick to beat other leaders. It is clear that Ye was as just as anxious as Jiang Qing to use the deceased emperor's archives for his own political ends, and he had been in contact with Wang Dongxing to ensure that they did not fall into unreliable hands. As both sides were well aware, possession of the Chairman's papers at a time when their scriptural infallibility was

taken for granted would enable their owners to record the history of the previous dynasty and set the guidelines for the new era.

On September 21, Hua instructed that Mao's papers be sealed and placed in Wang Dongxing's charge. It was then discovered that two documents were missing. According to a deposition written after the coup by Mao's secretary-nurse, Zhang Yufeng, on September 18, Jiang Qing had obtained the record of two talks that Mao had held in 1974 with the Commander and the First Political Commissar of the Wuhan Military Region (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-28). The second document was a record of Jiang Qing's talk with a foreign correspondent. When the transcripts were returned, it was discovered that they had been tampered with. However, the details and significance of the changes to the documents have not been revealed.

PLOTTING THE COUP

The disputes over Mao's archives, his testament, and other issues further exacerbated the growing rift between Hua and the radicals (Onate, 1978: 542). Hua was proving to be anything but the pliant and humble pushover many of his senior colleagues had either feared or hoped he would be. Nevertheless, Hua was finding it extremely difficult to make decisions and to handle the myriad tasks demanding his attention while under constant harassment from Jiang Qing. On September 10, Ye Jianying had made his first approach to Hua to discuss the issue of the post-Mao leadership. Over the following days, three more such conversations took place, with Ye pressing his younger colleague to think seriously about the future of the Party. He related to Hua what had happened to Stalin's chosen successor, Malenkov, and how Khrushchev had very quickly turned his leadership ambitions to dust after Stalin's death. When, at the two men's fourth meeting, Ye raised the issue of how to deal with the Gang and suggested that Hua make contact with veteran Party leaders and solicit their opinions, the younger man revealed the diffidence with which he viewed his status within leading Party circles. Ye bolstered his resolve by promising to clear the way for him, and Hua replied that with the support of the veterans and the army he would be prepared to make a stand.

Taking seriously Ye's advice about calling on other Party elders, Hua went to see Li Xiannian on September 21 to discuss the heightening tension within the leadership. Hua had previously been in contact with Zhou Enlai's widow Deng Yingchao, Wang Dongxing, and Politburo members Su Zhenhua, Political Commissar of the Navy, Chen Xilian, and Li himself. During the mourning period for the late Chairman, unnamed leading comrades had quietly (*xiaoxiao*) visited Hua and Wang Dongxing to report on the situation and put forward their suggestions. Now, Hua had apparently made up his mind to take a stand. In their chat, the Party First Vice-Chairman asked Li to pass on his views to Ye and request that the marshal think of a way to solve the problem. Thus the first main hurdle in establishing the prerequisites for implementing the coup had been overcome.

The radicals were also taking steps to secure their position. On the afternoon of September 21, a meeting between Xu Jingxian, secretary of the Shanghai Party committee, and his mentor and superior, Zhang Chunqiao, took place in Beijing. All accounts refer to the fact that Zhang met Xu alone, as if such private contacts between high-ranking cadres were unusual and sufficient to make Zhang and Xu's meeting suspicious. Only one account mentions the fact that Xu was in Beijing for a meeting convened by the Ministry of Health and had not come especially to see Zhang (Ye Yonglie, 1989a: 489). Other accounts imply that it was a nefarious mission that had brought Xu to the capital (Ding Qi, 1989: 432).

The background to this meeting is worth relating. All accounts suggest that the purpose of the get-together between Xu and Zhang was to discuss a conference which had allegedly taken place in Shanghai on August 10, 1976 between Ding Sheng, commander of the Nanjing Military Region, and the three senior leaders of the Shanghai Party committee (in the absence of Zhang, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen in Beijing), Ma Tianshui, Xu Jingxian, and Wang Xiuzhen. At this meeting, Ding is supposed to have reported to the Shanghai officials that he was not in control of the 60th Army (Unit 6453) stationed in southern Jiangsu province and that the army posed a threat to the radicals' control over the giant metropolis. The more likely version of events is that the above conversation had occurred on August 13, when Ding was in Shanghai to address a company of the

Shanghai garrison, and that he had not made a special trip to discuss the loyalty of the 60th Army (Issues & Studies, August 1978: 103; February 1979: 99). Whichever date we accept, it is most unlikely that it was only after the passing of over a month that the Shanghai officials reported such a crucial meeting to their superiors in Beijing. Clearly, such a time lapse is most unlikely. Much more probable is the version of events disclosing the fact that the gist of the August meeting was conveyed to Beijing almost immediately after it had taken place (Ye Yonglie, 1989a: 468-469).

Whatever the real reason for Ding's visit to Shanghai, it is alleged that from August 15 to 25, 74,000 rifles, 300 machine guns, and 10 million rounds of ammunition were issued to the Shanghai militia (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-33). On September 10, the day after Mao's death, it is alleged that the Shanghai leadership authorized a further release of 6 million rounds of bullets and 15,000 artillery shells to the militia (Hao Mengbi and Duan Haoran, 1984: 655). Taken together, these pieces of evidence supposedly prove the existence of a conspiracy among the Shanghai leadership and its patrons in Beijing to equip and mobilize the militia in defense of the radical cause. As this article has shown, the radicals had every reason to take steps to secure their position, and as far as their military options were concerned, their strategy was essentially a defensive one. Thus the significance of the September 21 meeting between Zhang and Xu in terms of how and to what extent it demonstrated that the four radicals were plotting an armed rebellion in Shanghai remains obscure.

That the radicals were taking steps to secure their political base in Shanghai is not surprising in light of the ongoing tensions within the central leadership. On September 21, 1976, the same day that Zhang Chunqiao met Xu Jingxian in Beijing, Wang Hongwen visited Shanghai to discuss the embalming of Mao's body and to check on the arrangements for militia defense work. He returned to Beijing on September 23 and, on the same day, was sufficiently alarmed by developments in his brief absence to make a phone call to his subordinate and fellow Cultural Revolution rebel, Wang Xiuzhen, instructing her to alert the Shanghai branch to be on its guard. Also on September 23, Zhang Chunqiao sent a letter to Shanghai warning the municipal Party committee of the possibility of the emergence of

revisionism. Not content with the impact of his first missive, Zhang Chunqiao issued a three-point directive to Shanghai on September 27, and the next day, September 28, sent Wang Hongwen's secretary to deliver an oral message to Shanghai regarding the possibility of an attack on the city. Clearly, Zhang was becoming alarmed at the likelihood of a military coup. His message was later described as a signal for an armed seizure of power and a mobilization order for a counterrevolutionary armed rebellion (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-32). Overall, however, the spate of communications from the radical leaders in Beijing to Shanghai appeared to indicate their concern over developments in the capital and their fear of what their opponents were plotting. These fears proved to be well founded.

Simultaneously, the radicals moved to test the extent of their influence in the PLA and to get an idea of its views on the political situation. Between September 26 and 28, Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, and Wang Hongwen visited military units stationed in the vicinity of Beijing. It has also been claimed that at the end of September, the radicals were planning to exchange the chiefs of staff of two armored divisions in the suburbs of Beijing so that tank regiments loyal to them could be ordered to enter Beijing in a pincer movement from the southeast and the northwest. Zhang Chunqiao's brother, who was deputy director of the propaganda office in the PLA General Political Department, was reportedly involved, but the rumor regarding the transfer of personnel was later found not to be true as was the question of the loyalty of the two units to their superior command (Ji Xichen, February 5, 1989).

September 21 was a key date for both sides in the evolving political struggle because also on that day Nie Rongzhen dispatched Yang Chengwu to call on Ye Jianying and ask him to solve the problem of the Gang expeditiously. Nie argued that normal interparty disciplinary measures to handle the case would prove ineffective because of Jiang Qing's special status. Nie urged Ye to act first and take decisive measures to deal with the four radicals. Ye told Yang that he agreed with Nie's views on the subject and that he had the situation under control. Yang conveyed Ye's reassurance to Nie and then reported regularly to Ye until the day of the arrest.

On September 24, three days after this flurry of activity on both sides, Li Xiannian visited Ye at Xishan. Satisfied from Li's report that Hua had committed himself to the antiradical camp, the veteran marshal then conferred with his loyal subordinates, Generals Su Yu and Song Shilun, Political Commissar and President, respectively, of the PLA Military Science Academy. In a secret meeting, Ye requested that Su and Song keep a close eye on trends in the PLA and strengthen military preparedness. Ye reckoned that Su and Song's proximity to his residence, together with the fact that the academy was responsible for the security of the building where he was staying, would be crucial in the lead-up to the coup.

What form the "solution" to the problem of the radicals would take had not yet been decided. Hua allegedly favored convening an enlarged plenum of the Central Committee to discuss the issue, but Ye argued that the radicals' power and their capacity for disruption and trouble making would wreck the exercise and could even prove counterproductive. At the other extreme, Wang Zhen proposed using the military to arrest the Gang. However, Chen Yun warned that the legality of such an action would be called into question, as it obscured the authority of the Party's leading organs and that of Hua Guofeng in particular. As it turned out, neither the Party Central Committee nor the Politburo authorized the arrest of the four leaders on the night of October 6. The pretense of legality was confined to the fiction that the coup was being conducted to fulfill the behests of the departed leader and to ensure that his choice of successor was not prevented from assuming the leadership.

Shortly after Li's discussion with Ye, the latter held further talks with Hua, and the decision was made to move against the Gang. Ye then spoke to Wang Dongxing and instructed him to prepare detailed arrangements for the operation.

The political tension intensified on September 29, 1976. At a Politburo meeting that evening, the controversial issue of the wording of Mao's so-called testament was discussed heatedly once again (Onate, 1978: 551). Jiang Qing raised the question of the post-Mao collective Party leadership, and Zhang Chunqiao, as if on cue, declared that the Politburo should decide what work should be assigned to the Chairman's widow. In late 1974, Jiang had complained in a letter to

Mao that she was idle. The Chairman had retorted that her task was to study the domestic and international situations (Zhao Zhichao, 1989: 17). What reply was Hua and the rest of the Politburo to give now to this most sensitive of all political questions?

The other pressing item in need of resolution was whether Mao Yuanxin should return to Liaoning province, where he held leading Party and military posts in the local administration. Mao had been transferred to Beijing in late 1975 to work as liaison officer for the Chairman in his daily communications with the Politburo. With this task having come to an end, Mao's continued presence in the capital had become a source of considerable controversy within the leadership. The Gang argued that Mao was needed to prepare the report for the forthcoming 3rd plenum of the Central Committee, and for this task he would require access to the Chairman's files. On the other hand, Ye Jianying and Li Xiannian contended that Mao should return in accordance with his original intention. They also stressed that all documents should be sealed in the CC General Office. The acrimonious debate dragged on until the majority decided that Mao Yuanxin should return to Liaoning, that the political report for the 3rd plenum be discussed and prepared by the Politburo, and that arrangements regarding the leadership should also be discussed and determined by the Politburo. Wang Dongxing supported Hua in coming to this position, and the latter then closed the meeting, demonstrating once again that he was prepared to stand up to Jiang Qing and her clique.

To inject some meaning into National Day, the Gang was apparently intent on reviving the flagging momentum of the political campaign against Deng Xiaoping. On September 30, Ye Jianying and other veteran cadres were requested to visit factories in the capital to meet the workers and criticize Deng. Ye allegedly said in response to his invitation, "What's the meaning of this? My health is no good; that's well-known. I can't go anywhere" (Fan Shuo, 1989: 54).[10] That same evening, at the National Day soiree, Hua delivered a brief one-minute speech in which neither the ideological and political questions of central concern to the Gang nor the campaign against Deng was mentioned. Hua was probably being cautious and extremely politic in making the speech short enough to offend no one, but it was an

indication either of his own thinking or, more likely, the product of compromise in the deeply divided Politburo.

The issue of Mao's testament continued to fester and poison the already bad relations between the members of the Politburo. On October 2, while going over a speech drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for delivery to the United Nations, Hua noticed that the phrase "act according to the principles laid down," which had been quoted in the September 16 editorial, was not worded in line with the Chairman's note of April 30, and he amended it accordingly. Zhang Chunqiao then issued an instruction that Hua's correction not be transmitted to subordinate levels (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-32. Onate, 1978: 552-553). Then, on October 4, in a gesture that can only be characterized as openly challenging Hua's integrity, *Guangming ribao* published an article entitled "Forever Act According to the Principles Laid Down by Chairman Mao" (Zhang Weixuan, Liu Wuyi, and Xiao Xing, 1989: 675-681; see also Onate, 1978: 553-554). The article appeared at a critical time in the struggle for succession and was sure to enrage Hua and call into doubt his credentials as the Chairman's successor. Such fighting phrases as "distorting the principles laid down by Chairman Mao betrays Marxism, socialism and the great theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat" (p. 676), "in distorting the principles laid down, all chiefs of the revisionist road inevitably betray Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, emasculate its revolutionary spirit and blunt its revolutionary cutting edge" (p. 678), and "all revisionist chiefs who dare to distort the principles laid down by Chairman Mao will come to no good end" (p. 680) were a direct affront to Hua and obviously could not go unchallenged.

If Hua chose to ignore the threat implied in the article, he risked further humiliation at the hands of the radicals. Whether the article was indeed a mobilization call to usurp power, as was later claimed, is debatable. Nevertheless, it had an immediate effect in a way that its authors certainly did not intend. It caused Ye Jianying to bring forward by several days—to October 6—the date for the arrest of the central radicals.

Other pieces of evidence have also been produced to suggest that in the early days of October, the Gang's plans to seize power were

reaching a climax (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: sec. 5). On October 1, Jiang Qing went to Qinghua University and made a provocative speech in which she declared that she was fully prepared for the challenges and political storms ahead. In early October, Zhang Chunqiao drafted what was claimed to be a synopsis for seizing power. However, the notes look rather more like the outline of a speech that he had prepared for delivery to a meeting, perhaps of the Politburo.[11] On October 2, Wang Hongwen posed for an official portrait and allegedly prepared a speech for taking office; on the same day, Mao Yuanxin allegedly instructed a tank unit under the Shenyang Military Region to move toward the capital. When this order was reported to Ye, he immediately countermanded it. On October 3, Wang Hongwen went to Pinggu county on Beijing's outskirts and asked rhetorically in the style of the late Chairman: "If revisionism appears in the Central Committee, what will you do? Overthrow it!" *Liangxiao*, the radicals' writing group based at Beijing and Qinghua universities, was ordered to speed up the preparation of material defaming Party, government, and army leaders and to draft more articles along the lines of the *Guangming ribao* piece of October 4 (Hu Hua, 1985: 335). On October 4, Chi Qun again ordered departments at Qinghua University to mobilize staff and students to write letters of fealty to Jiang Qing (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: sec. 5).

THE FINAL ACT

One version of the penultimate days preceding the coup of October 6 relates that after the conclusion of the National Day soiree, Hua wrote a short note to Ye Jianying that allegedly contained Hua's consent to the plan tentatively discussed between the two men as to the method of dealing with the Gang (Ji Xichen, February 5, 1989). However, Fan Shuo claimed that a thorough search of the archives failed to reveal the existence of such a note. Fan also made some rather uncomplimentary remarks about the reliability of factual literature (Fan Shuo, 1990: 249-250).[12] This type of criticism is ironic in the extreme considering that Fan's book is a representative example of the genre, differing only in the official privileges and access extended to

its author, and that it was published under the imprimatur of the Party central school publishers.

In his version of events, Fan Shuo stated that at dusk on October 4, Ye visited Hua Guofeng and, in light of the *Guangming ribao* article that had appeared that day, decided to bring forward the date of arresting the Gang by four days, from October 10 to October 6. By this time, it was only the timing and not the means of dealing with the Gang that had yet to be finalized. One of Ye's reasons for expediting a resolution of the political crisis was his belief that if the day of reckoning was put off any longer, more senior cadres would side with the radicals. Ye then went to see Wang Dongxing to make the final arrangements for the arrest. Security around central leaders had been strengthened, and reliable members from central guard and army groups had already been carefully selected, formed into special groups, and trained for the occasion.

Even with the final plan in place, Ye was taking no chances. On October 4 and 5, he met with senior officials of the PLA, including Yang Chengwu, Xiao Jingguang, (Commander of the Navy), and Liang Biye (Deputy Director of the PLA General Political Department under Zhang Chunqiao). Ye was kept in touch with the situation in Shanghai by Su Zhenhua. According to Fan Shuo, the details and exact timing of the coup were known only to Ye, Hua, and Wang Dongxing. Fan's account thus denied the accuracy of several others that reported that on the afternoon of October 5, either a meeting involving Hua, Ye, Li, Wang, and Chen Xilian or a meeting of the Politburo minus the four radicals made the final decision to deal with the Gang (Gao Gao and Yan Jiaqi, 1986: 701; Ye Yonglie, 1989a: 13).

Immediately following the arrests, Geng Biao (Director of the CC International Liaison Department and later rewarded for his services by promotion to the Politburo in August 1977) was dispatched to exercise military control over the media. Ye and Hua returned to the former's residence, where they discussed the forthcoming meeting of the Politburo. According to Fan Shuo, Hua reportedly offered to cede the Party leadership to Ye, but the latter refused, arguing that Mao had selected the younger man as his successor. From 10 p.m. on October 6 to 5 a.m. October 7, Ye convened and chaired a meeting of the Politburo. The announcement of the arrest was reportedly greeted with

applause by the eleven Politburo members present.[13] Hua was appointed Chairman of both the CC and the MAC, with the appointment to be ratified by the Central Committee. Once the meeting was concluded, news of the event started to spread. In particular, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun were immediately informed of the day's events.

From October 7 to 19, the Politburo held a succession of notification meetings with Party, government, and army organs, as well as with provincial and military region leaders, to inform them of the affair. After the arrest of the Gang, leading cadres in the Party and army also asked Ye to take charge of work of the CC, but he replied, with seeming modesty, "I am an army cadre, working on the military side of things; I'm not au fait with local issues" (Junshi kexueyuan, 1987: 292). Another version — significantly — quoted the vital final clause as reading, "If we did that, wouldn't it give people an excuse to say it was a 'palace coup'?" (Fan Shuo, 1990: 308).[14] One may ask, was Ye worried about the form or the essence of the dilemma?

DEALING WITH SHANGHAI[15]

From early October onward, the focus of the Gang's plotting activities had reportedly switched to Shanghai. It is alleged that the Gang was preparing to mobilize 100,000 militiamen for a counterrevolutionary armed rebellion in the city. A name list of proposed appointments to key Party and government posts was drawn up, and the word was spread that there would be good news on October 7, 8, and 9. However, although there was apparently a lot of talk and some preparation, evidence that a rebellion was actually in the making before October 6 is thin indeed. The 1980-1981 trial charged the Jiang Qing group with planning an uprising in Shanghai using the urban militia as its armed force (Lishide shenpan bianjizu, 1981: 42-44). Both Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen were convicted of this crime. But with the military and veteran cadres planning their own strike against the Cultural Revolution radicals, this operation could be viewed as an entirely defensive and self-protecting measure to prevent what did in fact eventually occur and to apply pressure on the radicals'

opponents to think twice before acting. Party historian Jin Chunming admitted that there is no evidence comparable to the "May 1971 Outline" — a document that had supposedly confirmed the existence of a plot by the Lin Biao group to assassinate Mao and seize power — to prove these charges but that sufficient evidence does exist nevertheless (Jin Chunming, 1985: 210-211). However, without more substantial corroboration, any objective assessment would conclude that the evidence is sparse and ambiguous.

After the dramatic events of the evening of October 6, the Gang's followers in Shanghai lost contact with Beijing and desperately tried to find out what had happened. But due to Ye's determination to keep all news of the arrests secret, Shanghai found information difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, the victors were still faced with the question of how to deal with the Gang's bastion. The strategy adopted was brilliantly successful in its execution and later permitted the Party to boast that the whole affair had been carried out without the firing of a single shot or the spilling of one drop of blood.

On October 7, the center ordered Ma Tianshui and the commander of the Shanghai Garrison, Zhou Chunlin, the ranking civilian and military leaders of the Shanghai Party committee, to Beijing. That evening, together with officials from other provinces, they attended a briefing by central leaders. Ma's initial reaction was to brand the arrest of his superiors a palace coup and to doubt the substance of the allegations. After the meeting concluded, all those attending were prohibited from making any contact with the outside, thus continuing to keep the Gang's Shanghai supporters in the dark. The next day, October 8, the army, navy, and air force in Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Shanghai's Wusong port were placed on alert to deal with any contingency. That same day, the Shanghai followers of the Gang learned through a coded message that something very serious had happened to their patrons, and that evening they held an emergency meeting at Party headquarters in Kangping Road to plan their response. It was decided to mobilize the local militia in defense of the central radicals.

On October 9, the same day that the Politburo decision regarding Hua's appointments was made public across the country, the Gang's Shanghai followers held a meeting with the leaders of the city's districts and militia divisions and ordered preparations of men, arms,

vehicles, funds, and materiel. They allegedly mobilized 33,500 militia, 27,000 pieces of military equipment, 225 vehicles, stockpiled a large amount of food, materials, and goods, and set up fifteen broadcasting stations at militia headquarters. A plan was drawn up to encircle Shanghai from the outskirts. At 10 a.m. on the same day, Ma Tianshui finally contacted Shanghai and informed his anxious subordinates that nothing untoward had occurred. This subterfuge had been arranged by the center so as to disrupt any plans being hatched in the giant metropolis. In the meantime, Zhou Chunlin met Hua and Li Xiannian, and the latter questioned him about the possibility of a rebellion in Shanghai. Zhou was of the opinion that the chances for major disruption were slim. That evening, Ma again called Shanghai and on behalf of the center summoned Xu Jingxian and Wang Xiuzhen to the capital. This ruse left their followers in the city virtually leaderless. On October 10, Xu and Wang arrived in Beijing. When told of what had transpired four days earlier Xu defiantly described the coup as the military playing tricks (*junren daogui*).

Nevertheless, the center was determined to convince Ma Tianshui at least of the legitimacy of its action. At midday on October 11, Chen Xilian, Su Zhenhua, and Ni Zhifu came to visit Ma at his guest house. From his briefcase Chen drew out a copy of an extract from Zhang Chunqiao's diary, dated February 3, 1976, in which Zhang had vented his spleen after hearing of Hua's appointment as acting Premier. Ma immediately declared that he was dropping his support for Zhang. Back in Shanghai, by October 12 the local rebels were aware that the Gang had been incarcerated. They allegedly tried to organize strikes, block airport runways, break off all communications, seal Wusong port, control strategic departments, and disrupt the railways. They also called for the release of the four leaders and prepared to mobilize the militia again. By this time, the rebels were suspicious even of Ma, Xu, and Wang but decided to wait for their return from Beijing before proceeding further.

On the following morning, October 13, Ma, Zhou Chunlin, Xu, and Wang arrived back in Shanghai. Before their departure, Ye Jianying had promised the three civilian cadres that they continued to enjoy the trust of the central authorities. But on the same day as their return, the center dispatched a work team of experienced cadres to Shanghai to

take control of the situation and exercise martial law. Also on October 13, a meeting of the standing committee of the Shanghai Party was held, at which Ma, Xu, and Wang had the unenviable task of announcing to the assembled enraged and frustrated rebels that their patrons had indeed suffered a complete and ignominious defeat. A fortnight later, on October 27, a further meeting of the Shanghai Party standing committee endorsed the appointments of Su Zhenhua (Commander of the East China Fleet, First Political Commissar of the Navy, and alternate member of the Politburo) as First Secretary of the Shanghai Party committee, Ni Zhifu (alternate member of the Politburo and head of Beijing's trade union council and urban militia) as Second Secretary, and Peng Chong (previously First Secretary of the Jiangsu provincial Party committee) as Third Secretary. Thus, in the first key appointments of the new administration, the Maoist cadre policy of the three-in-one combination of PLA, mass representative, and veteran cadre was implemented for the stronghold of Cultural Revolution radicalism.

On October 14, official news of the arrest of the Gang was broadcast across the nation, and the Shanghai militia had no option but to submit. On October 18, the notice of the CC accusing the Gang of attempting to seize power was issued, and on October 24, a huge rally was staged in Tiananmen Square to celebrate the victory. Huge rallies were also held in Shanghai. Apart from Ma Tianshui, who went temporarily insane before being released from house arrest, eight leading Shanghai followers of the Gang were put on trial from July to August 1982. Thus the curtain was brought down on the drama that had been played out on the stage of China's largest city for over a decade.

CONCLUSIONS

Why were such draconian measures taken against the four Party leaders in October 1976? What does the whole affair say about the Chinese political system at the end of the Maoist era, and what lessons, if any, does the struggle for succession hold for China in the 1990s?

In answer to the first question, despite the alleged shallowness and narrowness of their political base (Dittmer, 1978), the institutional and

informal power of the radicals was substantial and helps explain why they were considered such a grave threat to Party unity (Forster, 1992: 39-45). Jin Chunming, for one, claimed that the Gang was the longest existing and most powerful faction in the history of the CCP (Jin Chunming, 1985: 194). It is clear that the Gang enjoyed substantial support in the Central Committee, which was elected in August 1973. Ye Jianying feared the radicals' influence to the extent that he would not countenance a meeting of this body to test where its sympathies lay. In fact, no formal meeting of the CC, which supposedly determined policy between Party congresses, was held between January 1975 and July 1977.

Apart from the consolidation of their base in Shanghai, the radicals had made substantial inroads during the 1970s into provincial Party committees in many localities (Fan Shuo, 1990: 159-162; Liu, 1983: 613; Harding, 1977: 10; Forster, 1991: 113-126; Forster, 1992: 53-68). They controlled the media and propaganda arms of the Party (Ye Yonglie, 1989b: 303-332) as well as the ministries of Education, Health, Culture, and Sport and had placed supporters in several other ministries (Issues & Studies, August 1978: 98-99; November 1978: 98-110). Although the Tiananmen incident of April 1976 revealed Jiang Qing's unpopularity among urban politically literate Chinese,[16] the people played no part in the coup of October 6. It is highly likely that the veteran cadres feared the Gang's ability to mobilize what remained of its mass base, although the efficacy of mass mobilization had shown clear signs of diminishing returns in the mid-1970s.

The principal organizational weakness of the radicals, and one of which they were well aware and took some steps to rectify, lay in their lack of support in the military, which proved to be the decisive arm of the state in the succession struggle. Although the Gang and its followers led urban militia in cities beside Shanghai (Fan Shuo, 1990: 159-162; Zhu Shan, 1988: 476-480; Forster, 1990: 152-159), this force never possessed enough power to contemplate taking on the military. Within the PLA itself, Zhang Chunqiao held the influential post of Director of the PLA General Political Department and thus was in charge of the political and propaganda side of military affairs (Fan Shuo, 1990: 154, 165; Ye Yonglie, 1988: 319-320; Ye Yonglie, 1989a: 211-213, 216-217; Liu, 1979). Fan Shuo claimed that Zhang's capa-

bilities in the military should not be underestimated (Fan Shuo, 1990: 156). The commander of the Air Force, Ma Ning, and the commander of the Nanjing Military Region, Ding Sheng, were prominent military supporters of the radicals. An indication that military leaders took seriously the potential for the radicals to destabilize the PLA can be seen from the speeches made by Deng Xiaoping and Ye Jianying at the 1975 central military conference. After the closure of the month-long meeting, a six-man group led by Ye oversaw an extensive reshuffle of military leaders within general headquarters staff as well as among central field armies and regional and district commands (Yang Chengwu, 1986; *China News Summary*, 1976).

Overall, however, the radicals were no match for their older and more experienced opponents. The Party elders, through common service in revolutionary battles over many decades, had established a powerful network of personal contacts and relationships that could be activated in a crisis. This network stretched across the central military departments and armies and down through the provinces in both the civilian and military administrations. The factional setup of the radicals possessed neither the clout to match this system nor the capacity to mobilize in a low-key fashion when the political situation demanded stealth and the element of surprise. A prolonged, more open struggle may have suited the radicals' cause, and so the veterans decided to act while the Party was still in a state of shock from the death of its leader.

The key players in the drama that unfolded over this period were Hua Guofeng, Wang Dongxing, and Ye Jianying.[17] Despite the differences in their institutional affiliation, political experience, and temperament and the brevity of their working relationship, all three men shared a common trait: an intense loyalty to Mao both in life and in death. Hua's almost complete reliance on the Chairman for promotion during his career, as well as the teacher-student relationship which the two men seemed to develop in 1976, suggest that he approached the succession battle most concerned to act in the way that he thought Mao would have approved. The Chairman's warning in June 1976 about avoiding recrimination and bloodshed in the succession may have been uppermost in his successor's mind throughout the months of drama and intrigue – hence Hua's indecision about the best means of handling the case, his hesitation in committing himself to Ye's pre-

ferred course of action, and his undoubted reluctance to use violence against Mao's widow.

Ye Jianying's hagiographers have been at pains to point out their subject's devotion to Mao and have admitted that in pursuit of carrying out the Chairman's behests, Ye placed too much confidence in his successor, Hua Guofeng, for which he later made a self-criticism (Fan Shuo, 1990: 203). They cite approvingly Mao's appraisal of Ye Jianying at the 10th plenum of the 8th CC in September 1962 as evidence of the esteem in which the Chairman held Ye. During his speech at the plenum, Mao said, in reference to a report that Ye had presented on military matters, that all his life Zhuge Liang (prime minister and master strategist in the Later Han dynasty) was prudent and Lüduan (minister during the Song dynasty) was clear-headed in dealing with major issues. Naturally, the Chairman's preceding comment that he had previously considered Ye not sharp enough was conveniently ignored (Ding Qi, 1989: 429; Mao Zedong sixiang wansui, 1969: 436, cited in Liu, 1979: 818).

Wang Dongxing's lengthy and devoted service in guaranteeing Mao's personal security is well known. Like Hua, Wang owed his position to the largesse of the Chairman. When Mao was no longer around, Wang was uncertain where to place his allegiance, but Hua and Ye together convinced him that might and right were on their side. Because of Wang's role as the gatekeeper to Party administration and the custodian of Mao's personal archives, Ye was determined to involve him in the planning of the conspiracy and to play on and exacerbate any feelings of rivalry between Wang and Jiang Qing in their proprietorial relationship toward the late Chairman and their determination to carry the banner of Mao's revolutionary cause (Ji Xichen, February 5, 1989).

An important aspect of the political battle that unfolded in the months from June to October 1976 was the close involvement of veteran party officials who were not members of the Politburo. A similar phenomenon occurred during the inner-Party struggles resulting in the dismissals of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang in the late 1980s. Those involved in 1976 included two PLA marshals, Nie Rongzhen and Xu Xiangqian (Zhonggong Liaoning shengwei, 1985: 139)—members of the Party CC and vice-chairmen of the MAC—Su

Yu and Song Shilun of the Military Science Academy where Ye Jianying had once served as president, Zhou Enlai's respected widow Deng Yingchao, the disgraced Deng Xiaoping held under house arrest, the banished and semiretired Chen Yun, Wang Zhen, and Deputy Chief of Staff Yang Chengwu. All these veterans were long-standing leaders of great influence and were skilled in and battle-hardened by years of inner-Party disputes.

The Cultural Revolution had humiliated and relegated to the sidelines many of these senior Party leaders. They looked to Ye Jianying as their savior and viewed the downfall of the radicals as an opportunity to resume their rightful places in the Party hierarchy and to reverse the verdict on the events of the previous decade. They did not trouble themselves too deeply over the means by which this could be secured. Although Chen Yun balked at the notion of calling out troops to arrest the radicals, his concern about the legitimacy of the coup did not appear to be widely held.

If this article has devoted so much space to describing and analyzing personal relations rather than the operation and disposition of functional and institutional networks, it is because the outcome of the October 1976 struggle was decided by the plotting and scheming of political actors whose power resided chiefly in their connections, revolutionary service, and prestige rather than in the formal position they occupied in the Party, government, and military bureaucracies. This is not to deny the symbolic importance of institutional or formal power. Yet it is undoubtedly true that the political system had decayed from the combined effects of charismatic leadership and the relegation of the rules and conventions of inner-Party life to the margins of the political processes.

Highly sensitive to the charge that the arrest of the Gang was a military coup, Fan Shuo and his fellow writers attempted to justify the action by claiming that Ye Jianying was acting on the basis of the support of the majority of the members of the Politburo.[18] Such an assertion requires for its validation an analysis of the political balance on the Politburo between Mao's death and the October coup. Of the twenty members (including alternates) who remained on the Politburo elected in August 1973, four – Li Desheng (Commander of the Shenyang Military Region) Xu Shiyou, Wei Guoqing (Commander and First

Political Commissar, respectively, of the Guangzhou Military Region), and Saifudin (First Secretary of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region Party Committee)—were not present in Beijing for most of the time in which the plot to deal with the Gang was hatched and executed. Of course, they were only a telephone call away. After Mao's death, Li Desheng had discussed the general political situation with Ye Jianying when he was in Beijing. Ye stated that the most pressing problem facing the Party was the organizational question, and he hinted that drastic measures were required to solve it. He obtained a pledge from Li to respond to a call for assistance if required to do so (Fan Shuo, 1990: 217-219). One other member of the Politburo, Marshal Liu Bocheng, was virtually an invalid and played no part in the proceedings. Excluding the four radicals, of the remaining eleven members of the Politburo based in Beijing, only Li Xiannian, Su Zhenhua, and possibly Chen Xilian, apart from Hua, Ye, and Wang Dongxing, had any detailed knowledge of the conspiracy to deal with the Gang, and only the latter three appear to have participated in the final discussions about the manner in which the coup was to be carried out and its place and timing.

Thus the attitude of the remaining five members (First Secretary of the Beijing Party committee Wu De, Chen Yonggui, Ji Dengkui, Ni Zhifu, and Wu Guixian) who, together with the four victims, constituted almost half of the Politburo, remains unclear. Ni quickly accepted political realities because in late October he was dispatched to Shanghai to oversee, with Su Zhenhua and Peng Chong, the purge of the Gang's followers there. However, the fact that these five members were not involved in the discussions and planning suggests that their positions were considered ambivalent. Fan Shuo wrote that when first approached by Wang Zhen, unnamed individuals (presumably waverers within the Politburo) reacted by shaking their heads, behaving in a shifty manner, or were either reluctant to express an opinion or unwilling to participate in the plot (Fan Shuo, 1990: 254-255). On the other hand, according to Fan, the fence sitters could not be considered diehard supporters of the radicals (Fan Shuo, 1990: 225). It is worth noting that on the basis of Domes's factional delineation, at least four of the five Politburo members whose attitude may be classified as equivocal belonged to the mass organization or secret

police Left. All except Wu Guixian were reelected to the Politburo at the Party's 11th Congress in August 1977.

As has been described, the plotting and the execution of the coup was marked by meticulous attention to detail, secrecy, and a large dose of paranoia. These features of the conspiracy are remarkable both in themselves and for their reflection of the state of tension and conflict within the upper echelons of the CCP that marked the final years of the Maoist era. Put simply, factional antagonisms had intensified to the point where even basic civilities were maintained with only the greatest difficulty. Political exchanges had degenerated into a deadly game of secret meetings, and the energies of the Party elite were devoted to contriving the destruction of their political opponents. Fan Shuo's book is replete with examples of how Ye Jianying went to great lengths to ensure that if his conversations with visitors were being recorded, which he assumed they were, then they would be drowned out by playing the radio at a loud volume or turning on house taps. Ye even requested that counterintelligence officials sweep his residence in search of bugs, and he was in constant contact with Su Yu and Song Shilun at the military science academy to ensure his own security and that of other leading officials (Fan Shuo, 1990: 133-135; 167, 217-219; Ding Qi, 1989: 438, 442; Ji Xichen, February 7, 1989). On the eve of Mao's death, Jiang Qing was certain that she was being shadowed (Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1977: 5-27), and her fears were most likely more than the suspicions of a paranoid mind.

Although Lin Biao has been roundly condemned by both the Maoist and post-Mao authorities for his 1966 speech to the Politburo in which he described Chinese history as being marked by a series of coups and military seizures of power, the actions of Ye Jianying and his associates certainly lived up to this characterization. In 1976, both sides studied and scrutinized stories from China's rich dynastic history to determine their relevance to and lessons for the present. Ye's talks with his colleagues were peppered with references to the scheming and maneuvering that had taken place after the death of such emperors as Liu Bang of the Han dynasty (Fan Shuo, 1990: 173-175; Ding Qi, 1989: 440-441; Ji Xichen, November 15, 1988). Communist history, particularly that of the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, was referred to by both sides to draw analogies for the education and edification of

those not familiar with the details of these events (Jin Chunming, 1985: 214; Ding Qi, 1989: 426; Ye Yonglie, 1989a: 468). In sum, what the recent accounts of the plotting and counterplotting reveal is a political system rife with suspicion, factionalism, and fear among those at the apex of the system.

This was the legacy that Mao bequeathed the Party and the political system. Democratic-centralist traditions and norms had largely collapsed in the wake of the 1959 Lushan plenum, after which no one dared to openly question the Chairman's judgment. The Cultural Revolution only intensified these tendencies. Ideological preferences and policy direction shifted arbitrarily and inexplicably at the whim of one man. The post-Mao leadership under Deng Xiaoping attempted to restore some of the rules and norms of Party life that had been almost completely discarded during the final years of the Maoist period. A policy of lawful and lenient treatment of the losers of inner-Party struggles was consciously implemented in the case of Hua Guofeng and Wang Dongxing. Organizational rules and codes of behavior were restored and largely observed. Inner-Party life largely regained the standards that had applied in the 1950s. Then, in 1986, the institutional weaknesses besetting the political system and the Party in particular were revealed when ad hoc meetings of veteran Party leaders led to the dismissal of Hu Yaobang by an enlarged (stacked) session of the Politburo.

The military, whose backstage presence loomed large in 1976, has again returned to center stage after a period in which Deng Xiaoping in particular expended a great deal of energy and political capital to return it to the barracks. Despite the talk about political reform in the post-Mao period, China's political institutions remain unable to cope with the next succession crisis that hangs over the Party. China's political destiny is once again at the crossroads, and the CCP is facing its biggest challenge ever to maintain its political supremacy and retain the semblance of socialism in a world where ruling communist parties are, voluntarily or otherwise, falling from power and the "peaceful evolution" to capitalism appears to be moving inexorably forward. The stridency of recent declarations from Beijing is matched only by the insecurity of the aged leadership increasingly out of touch with its own people and international trends. As in 1976, China's fate again

appears to be at the mercy of the heartbeat of a single individual, a leader who this time holds no formal position in the political system and who, perhaps even more than Mao in 1976, has lost the confidence and respect of the population for the brutality of his response to political opposition.

Many of the same Party elders who were active in the 1976 crisis, such as Wang Zhen and Chen Yun, may again play a role in the struggle for the post-Deng era. But it is possible that next time, in the light of political developments in the country since the late 1970s and especially as a result of the 1989 Beijing massacre, the people will play a much greater, if not decisive, role in resolving the crisis and determining the future of their country. It is hoped that when the history of the next succession crisis is written, scholars will have access to source material that does more than record the motives and actions of the winners.

NOTES

1. Huang Jianqiu et al. (1988: 3) incorrectly gave the date as *December* 20, 1976.

2. Ding Qi's real name appears to be Ding Jiaqi, and he is a member of the Ye Jianying biography writing group. Fan Shuo is also a member of this writing group and works in the Military Information Research Institute of the Military Academy. In 1987, the writing group published a brief biography of Ye (Junshi kexueyuan, 1987).

3. For example, the foreword to Fan Shuo's book (1990: 1-5) was written by Wang Zhen, Party elder and Vice-President of the People's Republic, and the postscript to Junshi kexueyuan "Ye Jianying zhuan" bianjizu (1987: 309-313) was written by Song Shilun. Both were major allies and collaborators with Ye Jianying in the 1976 coup.

4. Ye is one of the few writers in the school to take the trouble to explain his approach and methodology and to indicate his sources (Ye Yonglie, 1989a: 518-523; 1989b: 364-374; 1990: 485-486).

5. On this point, it is interesting to note that a recent report from Hong Kong quotes Party elder Chen Yun as stating, in part, in response to a letter from Hua Guofeng requesting to be assigned duties: "Comrade Hua Guofeng rendered outstanding service for the party and the people in the struggle to smash 'the Gang of Four' " (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1991: 25-26).

6. See the editorial note in *Qianjiang wanbao* (February 5, 1989).

7. This date cannot be correct because Hua was not in Beijing on June 3 (Onate, 1978: 548).

8. Because of the similarity in their detail and content, extending to duplication of phrasing, unless specified otherwise the following three sections are based on the writings of Fan Shuo and Ding Qi.

9. Wang Nianyi (1988: 605, 610) argued that the difference in meaning is insignificant, but Fan Shuo (1990: 281-282) maintained the opposite.

10. In a later account, Fan Shuo related that Ye angrily responded to Zhang Chunqiao's invitation with the words "What does he think he's up to? I'm not going anywhere!" (Fan Shuo, 1990: 263). Fan thus omitted the middle sentence, which was clearly not true.

11. Both Hu Hua (1985: 335) and Fan Shuo (1990: 273) took two isolated phrases out of context to suggest that Zhang was advocating indiscriminate persecution and slaughter of the radicals' opponents.

12. It is true, for example, that Ji Xichen incorrectly gave the date of the National Day evening party as October 1.

13. Li Desheng, Wei Guoqing, Xu Shiyou and Saifudin were not in Beijing, while Liu Bocheng was too ill to attend.

14. It is interesting to note that both accounts of what Ye reportedly said were written by members of the Ye Jianying biography writing group.

15. The following account draws on Zhongguo yanjiu zazhishe (1977: sec. 5, 31-32), Chen Shijin (1987: 138-204), Zhou Chunlin (1988: 275-286), Zhu Shan (1988: 493-496), Lishide shenpan bianjizu (1981: 43-44), Jin Chunming (1985: 211-213, 216-271), Ye Yonglie (1989a: 485-514), Wang Nianyi (1988: 601-611), Fan Shuo (1990: 312-313), and Onate (1978: 555-558).

16. Even after her suicide in mid-1991, Jiang Qing attracted only abuse and vilification in the Chinese press.

17. Thus the wording of the 1981 resolution on Party history (Ding Qi, 1989: 414) giving credit to Hua, Ye, and Li Xiannian is puzzling. Wang played at least as an important role as Li, if not more so.

18. The Central Committee's 1985 letter of respect to Ye Jianying on the latter's retirement specifically stated that Ye had acted according to the view of the majority of the members of the Politburo (Ding Qi, 1989: 414).

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Keith Forster is a senior lecturer in Asian studies at the University of New England in Northern Rivers, Australia. He is the author of Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province: Zhejiang, 1966-1976 *(Sharpe, 1990).*