**The Political Struggle 1969 to 1980**

The Gang of Four were the ideological successors of Mao Zedong: a small quartet of political and economic radicals who emerged as powerbrokers in the wake of the Cultural Revolution. The most notable member of the gang was Jiang Qing or ‘Madame Mao'; others were career communists Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen. There were other party members not in the four but involved on the periphery, such as Chen Boda, Mao Zedong’s leading speech writer and editor. As Mao’s health waned the Gang of Four began working to accumulate influence in and control of the party post-Mao, though to what extent they were protecting Mao’s ideological vision or simply making a selfish grab for power is speculative.

This rise of the Gang of Four stemmed from a confluence of events in the early 1970s. After the flight of Lin Biao and his fiery death in a plane crash, the Cultural Revolution began to lose its purpose and energy; the People’s Liberation Army re-established control and therefore lessened the singular control of the CCP. Within the party itself, Mao’s worsening health took him away from the helm more; and in 1973 Zhou Enlai engineered the rehabilitation and return of Deng Xiaoping. The Gang of Four, recognising that Mao’s death was imminent and that a moderate bloc of Zhou and Deng might seize power, decided to manoeuvre in order to be best-placed to seize the party leadership when the time came. It seems they had Mao’s blessing: at the tenth CCP Congress in 1973 he ensured that the Gang of Four occupied key positions in the Politburo.

The most active of the Gang was Jiang Qing, who continually worked to undermine political rivals (she launched the ‘Criticise Lin Biao’ propaganda campaign in late 1973, attempting to link the now-dead and discredited Lin Biao with the highly popular Zhou Enlai). In January 1976 Zhou’s long battle with cancer ended and the Gang of Four made its fatal mistake, forbidding public acts of mourning and tribute for Zhou, and preventing the state-run media from reporting on the people’s grief. The masses were outraged by this and in April ignored the prohibition on public assembly, gathering in enormous numbers in Tiananmen Square with flowers, poems and anti-Gang of Four placards. The Gang’s response was to send in the Beijing police: many were beaten, driven away or shot, while those carrying placards were whisked away to be summarily executed. Deng Xiaoping was linked with the Tiananmen ‘counter-revolutionaries’ and for a second time temporarily removed from office and purged from the CCP. The so-called ‘Tiananmen Incident’ was the Gang of Four’s desperate response to public unrest, however it would soon backfire. When Mao himself died five months after (September 1976) the Gang of Four – with the people, the PLA and others in the Politburo against them – were soon deposed, arrested and charged with crimes against the people. It was at their subsequent show trials that they were dubbed the ‘Gang of Four’ (the term hadn’t been used previously) and all were given hefty prison sentences.

“Unquestionably, the Gang of Four was at least tacitly supported by Mao in its various activities. Jiang’s most important qualification in exercising power was that she was Mao’s wife. To an extent the gang served as an instrument for Mao to realise his radical vision of ‘permanent revolution’ as a form of national development, yet in the process the gang also used Mao to enhance its own position and influence. Together this ‘gang of five’ created a decade of destruction and terror in China.”
**Wang Ke-wen, historian**

Explain the role of each of the below figures in the political struggle between 1969 to 1980?

Mao Zedong:

Lin Biao:

Gang of Four:

Zhang Chunquiao:

Yao Wenyuan:

Wang Hongwen:

Jiang Qing:

Deng Xiaoping:

Zhou Enlai:

Hua Guofeng*:*

Politburo:

Create a timeline showing the Key Features of the Political struggle between 1969 to 1980

Describe the ‘Project 571’?

Identify three factors that made the beliefs and standing of the ‘Left’ different from the ‘Right’

Name and describe the policy that Zhou Enlai put forward in 1975?

Explain how the ‘Right’ eventually won over the ‘Left’?