

Candidate Number: 003257-0047

Key Question: To what extent was the Fall of Hua Guofeng the Result of his Unpopular Economic Policies?

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Section A

This investigation will answer: to what extent was the fall of Hua Guofeng the result of his unpopular economic policies? The scope of the investigation will focus thematically on: economic developments, rejected social policies, political developments and military alliances as historiography suggests they are major causes in the period 1976-81. The primary and secondary sources that will be relied upon are translated or in English. Specifically, I will evaluate the secondary academic book *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* by Ezra Vogel, an American professor, and an extract of a primary source about a November 1980 Politburo meeting from *Cheng Ming*, a political magazine published in Hong Kong in February 1981. These sources are significant for this topic because they offer the modern academic perspective and the official CCP stance.

Section B

Economic Developments

- Hua took over following Mao's death and adopted "two Whatevers" ideology following what "Mao had said and ensuring the continuation of what he had decided."¹
- Hua announced a "new leap forward" focused on foreign imports which grew by 85% in 1977-78. Exports could not match imports with China recording its largest deficit since the First Five-Year Plan.²
- Hua announced a Ten-Year Plan in February 1978 aiming to increase "industrial production by 10% each year and agriculture by 4%"³. Both targets failed.
- Economic developments include Deng advocated practice over Maoism during his trip to the Northeast in September 1978.⁴
- Hua advocated the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) policy in China up to its ratification in April 1979.⁵

¹ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W Norton and Co Inc, 1990), 676

² Harry Harding, *China's Second Revolution: Reform after Mao* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1987), 56

³ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 655

⁴ Ezra Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 227

⁵ Warren Sun and Frederick C. Teiwes, *China's New Economic Policy Under Hua Guofeng: Party Consensus and Party Myths* (*The China Journal* No.66, 2011), 22

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- Hua was criticized at a Politburo meeting in November 1980 for "implementation of a 'leftist' economic policy" and resigned as Party Chairman and CCP Military Affairs Commission Chairman.⁶

Addressing Social Issues

- Hua tried to increase the standard of living through "an emphasis on light industry and consumer goods, and raising salaries and agricultural subsidies"⁷
- One of Hua's initiatives was that "family planning should be built into China's long-term development strategy"⁸ during his speech to the National People's Congress in September 1980.

Political Developments

- Mao said to Hua before his death "with you in charge, I am at ease"⁹ and Hua was appointed Mao's successor by the Central Committee in February 1976.¹⁰
- "The Politburo was divided into 3 factions: Hua's, Deng Xiaoping's and Marshal Ye's. Ye was often the decisive faction in Deng's favour." Hua and Maoism were further weakened after the Gang of Four arrest in 1981.¹¹
- Hua created his own "cult of personality" by copying Mao for political support.¹²
- The Central Party Work Conference in November-December 1978 saw a shift from "economics to politics"¹³
- Hua delayed Deng's return to CCP mainstream politics. Hua said Deng should return when nature permitted it but it shouldn't be rushed.¹⁴
- Deng moved his supporters "from the provinces to the center and placed directly in state appointments"¹⁵
- The Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in December 1978 saw dominance of "party democratic discussion over the 'two whatevers'".¹⁶

⁶ Shu-shin Wang, *Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party*, 812

⁷ Dorothy Grouse Fontana, *Background to the Fall of Hua Guofeng* (*Asian Survey* Vol. 22 No.3, 1982), 247

⁸ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 685

⁹ G.P.D, *Where Deng is Taking China* (*Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 16 No.1/2, 1981), 9

¹⁰ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 646

¹¹ Yvonne Berliner and Rakesh Pathak, *Access to History for the IB Diploma: Communism in Crisis 1976-89* (London: Hodder Education, 2012), 32

¹² Wang, *Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party*, 812

¹³ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 230

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 195

¹⁵ Fontana, *Background to the Fall of Hua Guofeng*, 245

¹⁶ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 246

- By 1978, Hua "released and rehabilitated nearly 100,000 prisoners"¹⁷.

Military Alliances

- The Southern Regional Commanders and rehabilitated cadres held "strong support" for Deng.¹⁸
- Hua had support from the Northern Military Leaders however it was based on "premises"¹⁹.

Section C

Source 1: Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*

The origins are that the author is a respected American historian at Harvard University holding solid academic foundations focused on East Asian history being a previous head of the John King Fairbank Center for Asian Studies. The source was published in 2011. Vogel has expertise in modern Chinese history derived from various books published and he has a balanced perspective due to his reliance on both Chinese and Western sources to reach conclusions. However a limitation is that the primary sources that Vogel relies on mainly pertain to Deng, so their relevance to a historian studying Hua's fall can be questioned as they may exaggerate Deng's role in Hua's fall from power as Deng became paramount leader.

The purpose of the source is to provide a secondary academic perspective specifically analyzing Deng and his transformation of China which has values for historians as the source uses modern statistics released and gives a perspective that relies on both primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions benefitting from hindsight and objectivity. However the title of the book reveals the limitations of its scope for analysis as the purpose of the book is to explain Deng's rule and is too subjective in neglecting Hua's role.

Source 2- *Cheng Ming* Article Extract

The extract is taken from a political magazine monthly review of a November 1980 Politburo meeting where Hua was criticized and resigned from 2 key positions. The origins are that it was published by a political magazine based in Hong Kong (*Cheng Ming*). The source's value lies in its reflection of the official account of events and gives

¹⁷ Berliner and Pathak, *Communism in Crisis 1976-89*, 30

¹⁸ Fontana, *Background to the Fall of Hua Guofeng*, 246

¹⁹Ibid., 247

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historians insight into the official government line at the time. However the source is limited by state censorship so the report on the meeting may not paint an accurate picture for a historian studying the causes of Hua's fall from power.

The purpose of the source is to inform the Hong Kong people of the workings of the state and provide deeper analysis on the political situation in China. A value of the purpose is that it gives a deeper understanding to why that account of the meeting was allowed to be published. However a limitation of the purpose is in its scope as it only reveals a short review of the meeting and what the state wanted the public to know.

Section D

Many sources like the primary source from a Cheng Ming article extract of a Politburo meeting in November 1980 blame the "leftist economic policies"²⁰ based on Hua's Two Whatevers as the major cause of his political fall. However there is a split in historiography with historians like Jonathan Spence and Ezra Vogel perceiving Hua's economic policies such as the 10-Year Plan as "ambitious"²¹ that fell short of targets as well as his failed "new leap forward" which caused record Chinese trade deficits since the 1950s²². Conversely, Frederick Teiwes viewed Hua a "key advocate"²³ of the pragmatic Special Economic Zone (SEZ) policy. Despite the value of Teiwes' view, the perspectives of Spence and Vogel hold more credibility because view is supported from primary sources like the Cheng Ming extract (which gives the official CCP stance) and extensive academic research. Ultimately economic factors played a role however Hua's unpopular economic policies were only a contributing factor that Deng used politically to portray the image of "Maoist" Hua.²⁴

One also must consider the role of military and social factors because they link heavily to key political and economic developments. Despite Hua's efforts to put an "emphasis on consumer goods, and a raising of salaries"²⁵, ultimately Spence argues that Hua was too powerfully linked to Maoism and people wanted change from the brutality of the Maoist Cultural Revolution. Furthermore his efforts in "family planning" and a "marriage

²⁰ Wang, *Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party*, 812

²¹ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 655

²² Harding, *China's Second Revolution*, 56

²³ Sun and Teiwes, *China's New Economic Policy Under Hua Guofeng*, 22

²⁴ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 676

²⁵ Fontana, *Background to the fall of Hua Guofeng*, 247

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law" through speeches in 1980 redundant in efforts to stem the political tide against him which had already become too strong through turning points in 1977-78 according to Vogel and Spence. Also the military alliances ultimately played into Deng's hands politically over Hua because of energetic allies in the South who were key in supporting Deng in the key 1976-78 time "undercut Hua"²⁶, which Fontana believes were more significant than Hua's support from Northern Military Leaders that relied on "premises"²⁷. Ultimately there is credibility in the academic views of Fontana, Spence and Vogel that see the military alliance as a key supporting factor as a link to political developments as they have access to key political documents.

However, many historians argue that "political winds blowing against Hua"²⁸ stimulated by Deng was the primary cause as it was fundamental to Hua's loss of political support which triggered his resignation. Hua lost favour politically according to Teiwes due to his low "historical standing within the CCP"²⁹ so he couldn't successfully build a successful personality cult³⁰. This view is contrasted by the perspective of Vogel that saw Deng's role as the most significant political factor as Hua initially delayed Deng's return to CCP politics³¹, however once Deng returned he was successful in putting his supporters in "state appointments"³². This combined with the success of key turning points; the Central Party Work Conference in late 1978 which saw a shift from "economics to politics"³³ and the Third Plenum in December 1978. Vogel and Teiwes agree on the significance of political factors which makes their views useful when supported by Spence who characterized Hua's fall as a "political demise"³⁴ where releasing 100,000 political prisoners³⁵ only helped strengthen his opposition. One must finally consider that Spence saw Hua's fall as the end of "a political era of Chinese leftism"³⁶ which links to

²⁶ Ibid., 242

²⁷ Ibid., 247

²⁸ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 230

²⁹ Sun and Teiwes, *China's New Economic Policy Under Hua Guofeng*, 23

³⁰ Wang, *Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party*, 812

³¹ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 195

³² Fontana, *Background to the Fall of Hua Guofeng*, 245

³³ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 230

³⁴ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 681

³⁵ Berliner and Pathak, *Communism in Crisis 1976-89*, 30

³⁶ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 681

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how Hua was initially in power under Mao's recommendation³⁷ but weakened by key political developments in 1977-8.

Section E

Some historians view Hua Guofeng's unpopular economic policies as the most significant cause of his fall from power. However the majority of sources, both primary and secondary, blame political developments as the crucial factor. In conclusion, long-term political developments from 1977-8 played a pivotal role in Hua's fall from power and triggered criticism of his "leftist economic policy"³⁸, the disregarding of his social plans and lack of military loyalty combined with deep support for Deng from Southern Military Commanders³⁹. Without widespread political support, Hua was inevitably going to fall from power due to his lack of historical standing and key alliances within the CCP.

³⁷ G.P.D, *Where Deng is Taking China*, 9

³⁸ Wang, *Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party*, 812

³⁹ Fontana, *Background to the Fall of Hua Guofeng*, 246

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Section F- List of Sources

Books:

- Berliner, Yvonne and Pathak, Rakesh. *Access to History for the IB Diploma: Communism in Crisis 1976-89*. London: Hodder Education, 2012
- Harding, Harry. *China's Second Revolution: Reform after Mao*. Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1987
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- Fontana, Dorothy Grouse. *Background to the Fall of Hua Guofeng*. *Asian Survey* Vol. 22, No.3 (1982): 237-260
- *Hua Guofeng on the Promotion of Family Planning*. *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 6, No.4 (1980): 685-688
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Appendix I- Magazine Article Extract from *Cheng Ming* 40. Hong Kong: Cheng Ming, February 1981: 8 (qtd. in Wang, *Hu Yaobang: New Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party*, 811-12)

At an enlarged Politburo meeting in mid-November 1980, Hua was severely criticized for his incorrect commitments, including:

1. long-term persistence in the 'two whateverisms'
2. implementation of a 'leftist' economic policy
3. resistance to Deng's political line that 'practice' was 'the sole criterion of truth'
4. adoption of an ambiguous attitude toward the correction of false charges, wrong sentences, and frame-ups
5. opposition to the reversal of events of The Tiananmen Incident
6. prevention of Deng and Chen Yun's rehabilitation; and

creation of his own cult of personality.

On the basis of these defects, the meeting declared that Hua's contribution to the overthrow of the Gang of Four should be affirmed, but he was no longer fit to be party chairman and chairman of the CCP Military Affairs Commission. Hua offered his resignation to the meeting and it was quickly accepted.