ELITE CONFLICT IN THE POST-MAO CHINA
(Revised edition)

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Parris H. Chang*

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ELITE CONFLICT IN THE POST-MAO CHINA**

I. Introduction

Meeting in the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee (CC) during June 27–29, 1981, leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) approved the long-awaited resignation of Hua Guofeng as Party Chairman and demoted him to a junior vice-chairman.1 Meanwhile, the CC Plenum elected Hu Yaobang, 66, a close confidante of China’s most powerful man, Deng Xiaoping, the new Party Chairman. Handpicked by Chairman Mao Zedong in his final months of life, Hua had officially led China since Mao’s death in 1976. Thus, Hua’s replacement by a protege of Deng who twice fell victim to Mao and his radical associates during the 1966–76 period symbolizes the passing of Mao’s era. As a matter of fact, the Party gathering also approved a 35,000-word document, entitled “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party,” which critically evaluated Mao’s career and sharply criticized his performance over the last two decades of his life, thereby further demythologizing the late Chairman.2

In addition, the Plenum also made other leadership changes which bolstered Deng’s hand. Zhao Ziyang, 62, a pragmatist who replaced Hua as Premier in September 1980, was promoted to party vice-chairman. Deng himself became Chairman of the Party’s Military Affairs Commission (MAC), China’s highest military decision-making body.

These changes are part of a master plan that Deng has been painstakingly implementing ever since his political comeback in the summer of 1977. Deng’s central goal (or vision) is to modernize China by the year 2000. To put it succinctly, Deng’s master plan has three major components. The first is to institute political reforms and fashion bold, more practical, and less ideological measures designed to speed up China’s economic growth. The second is to eliminate or

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** This is an updated and substantially expanded version of an earlier article, “Chinese Politics: Deng’s Turbulent Quest” in Problems of Communism, Jan.-Feb. 1981, pp. 1–21. Portions of this study was also presented in a paper, with the same title, to the Tenth Sino-American Conference on Mainland China, June 16–18, 1981, sponsored by Institute of International Studies and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California (Berkeley). In my research and writing of this and earlier studies, I have benefited much from the writings, comments and insights of H. Lyman Miller, Ting Wang, A. Doak Barnett and Harry Harding, and I wish to thank them.
neutralize officials opposed to his policies, and replace those he considers to be inept or too old. The third is to install a team of possible successors who are talented, pragmatic and in their "prime of life" to guide China's destiny after Deng, now 77 years old, is gone.

To date, Deng has scored impressive gains on all of these three fronts, notwithstanding the fact that these gains have fallen short of his expectation. It should be also noted that all along Deng has been encountering strong resistance in the Party and that the opposition has at times compelled Deng to go slow or even to retreat. For instance, many major political and economic reforms championed by the Dengists have not been enacted or implemented.

This essay intends to study the struggle over power and policy in China's post-Mao leadership. Specifically, it will analyze key issues of contention in the leadership, identify individuals and groups with diverse views and look at their conflict. It will also examine the changing make-up of the leadership at the center, in the provinces and within military ranks since 1977, and analyze the background and outlook of the reconstituted leadership.

II. Deng's Political Resurrection

When Premier Zhou Enlai passed away in early 1976 after a lengthy illness, Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping, who had served as de-facto Premier throughout 1975, was widely regarded as Zhou's likely successor. Instead, he became the target and victim of an anti-rightist campaign launched by the late Chairman and his radical followers. Deng was vehemently attacked for negating the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), a radical crusade launched by Mao since 1966, implementing a "revisionist" line that sought to restore capitalism in China. On April 7, 1976, the CCP Politburo, at Mao's urging, ousted Deng from his leading party, government and military positions, ostensibly for instigating a massive riot in Beijing's Tienamen Square two days earlier. The Politburo also named Vice-Premier Hua Guofeng, a political figure then relatively unknown outside China, to succeed Zhou as Premier and appointed him First CCP Vice-Chairman — a position which enabled him to contend for Mao's mantle a few months later.

3. For analysis of the 1975–76 anti-Deng campaign, which has had considerable bearing on political conflict and personal antagonisms in the leadership in recent years, see Parris H. Chang, "Mao's Last Stand?", Problems of Communism (Washington, D.C.), July-August 1976, pp. 1–17.
After April 1976, according to sources inside China, Deng slipped out of Beijing and fled to Canton where he was sheltered by Xu Shiyou, commander of Canton Military Region. In south China Deng met secretly with CCP Vice-Chairman and Defense Minister Ye Jianying and provincial party and military leaders from Guangdong, Fujian and Sichuan to discuss contingency measures to counter the radicals. Immediately after Mao's death on September 9, 1976, Deng is said to have returned to Beijing to seek more support from other provincial leaders attending Mao's memorial service. Although Deng did not have a direct role in the coup staged by Hua and Ye on October 6 that resulted in the overthrow of the radical leaders, he may have mobilized considerable support for that move beforehand. Those who carried out the coup apparently acted with the knowledge that there was support from many party and military leaders throughout China for such a step.

As soon as the radicals were gone from the top leadership, Deng's rehabilitation became an issue of controversy within high party circles. In the wake of the radicals' downfall, he wrote a letter to the CCP Central Committee, headed by the new Chairman, Hua Guofeng, asking for a reversal of his case. But quite a few Politburo members who had voted for his dismissal earlier and feared that he would take his revenge against them tried to block his reinstatement. One of them, Wu De, mayor of Beijing, publicly called for a continuation of the campaign against Deng in accordance with Chairman Mao's previous behest. Wang Dongxing, Mao's former chief bodyguard, contended that the reversal of Mao's decision on Deng would tarnish the late Chairman's memory. In these and other ways, Wu Wang, and their fellow Maoists — subsequently labeled the "whatever" faction because, seizing and building upon some remarks

4. See a speech by Zhang Pinghua (Director of the CCP Central Committee Propaganda Department) to a national conference of officials in charge of propaganda and cultural affairs on July 23, 1978, published in Chungkuo Ta-lu (Taipei), No. 135, Nov. 15, 1978, pp. 55. (The text has not appeared in the mainland media).

5. Wu De made public speeches on October 24 and November 30, 1976, calling for a continuation of the anti-Deng campaign. See Peking Review, Oct. 29, 1976, p. 13, and Dec. 10, 1976, p. 11. It was also Wu who, on Apr. 5, 1976, had addressed the crowds at Tienamen Square and had characterized the demonstration as a "counterrevolutionary" event.

6. Hu Jiwei (editor of Renmin Ribao), "The Struggle at the Higher Circles of the Party," Chengming (Hong Kong), No. 34, August 1980, p. 51. This is a portion of a classified speech that Hu made to the Central Party School on Sept. 13, 1979. None of the speech has been published in the media inside China. See also Lo Ping, "The Political Eclipse of the 'Whatever Faction'," ibid., No. 16, 1979, pp. 5–8.
of Hua, they coined the statement that "whatever policy Chairman Mao has decided upon, we shall resolutely defend; whatever instructions the Chairman has issued, and propagated it in the media, we shall steadfastly obey" — attempted to invoke Mao's sacred authority to prevent the rehabilitation of Deng and other GPCR victims. Confronted by this division within the Politburo, Hua wavered and dragged his feet on Deng's demand.

Nevertheless, Deng's allies and supporters in the party fought hard on his behalf. Xu Shiyou and Wei Guoqing (two powerful regional leaders in the Politburo) and many provincial officials who had been associated with Deng or had been brought back to power by him in 1975 exerted immense political pressure on Hua to speed up Deng's rehabilitation.

Eventually, a compromise was arranged by Ye Jianying at a Central Committee work conference in March 1977. Deng was formally reinstated to his three leadership positions in a Central Committee plenum in July 1977, but in return he had to make a major concession. He wrote a letter to the Central Committee in which he pledged his support to Chairman Hua and conceded that he had committed political errors in 1975.

III. Removing Ideological Constraints

Once back in the leadership, Deng, with the help of like-minded colleagues, kept up the pressure for a revamping of policy and lost no time in consolidating his position and expanding his base of support. In this connection, it is important to bear in mind that since the autumn of 1976, two broad trends have characterized Chinese politics. On one hand, there has been a consensus within the leadership to depart from Mao's revolutionary radicalism and to promote the program of "four modernizations" — i.e., the modernization of industry, agriculture, science and technology, and the military. On the other hand, the elites have been divided about a wide range of crucial political and economic issues which involve not only ideology but also power. The resulting conflict has been largely,

7. The statement appeared first in a joint editorial entitled "Study Well the Documents and Grasp the Key Link" in Renmin Ribao, Hongqi, and Jiefangjun Bao (all Beijing), Feb. 7, 1977.

8. See the Communique of the July 1977 Central Committee Plenum, Peking Review, July 29, 1977, p. 5. Although the communique did not disclose the contents of Deng's two letters or Ye's mediating role, such information had been widely disseminated among cadres through inner party channels.
but not exclusively, a rivalry between groups led by Hua and those led by Deng.

The coalition under Hua consisted of two diverse elements. One was the leftist “whatever” faction, whose members rose to political prominence during the GPCR and have had numerous followers among the rank and file of the party. Another was the “petroleum” faction, a group of economists and technocrats who ran the Chinese economy under the late Premier Zhou’s stewardship during 1966–76, who were credited with the remarkable development of China’s petroleum industry, and have been strongly represented in the economic ministries of the State Council. According to a Hong Kong Communist publication, CCP Vice-Chairman Li Xiannian is its behind-the-scenes leader. In addition, the Hua coalition has also drawn support from such elder statesmen as Marshal Ye Jianying and from a few leaders of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).

This coalition was in the ascendancy during 1976–77 and largely controlled policy councils until the spring of 1978. Indeed, the political line of the 11th Party Congress in August 1977 and the 10-year National Development Plan sanctioned by the Fifth National People’s Congress (NPC) in March 1978 bore the mark of the coalition’s influence.

The coalition behind Deng, on the other hand, has consisted of several groups of veteran officials, great numbers of whom were victims of the GPCR. Many of them are long-time associates of Deng (e.g., Hu Yaobang and Wan Li), some are Deng’s peers and political allies (e.g., Chen Yun and Peng Zhen), and some are cooptees into Deng’s group (e.g., Zhao Ziyang, Yang Dezhi, and Keng Biao). While these groups share intense antagonism toward Mao’s legacy, they differ on the ways and means of reform and the program of “four modernizations.”

It seems appropriate here to note parenthetically that these and other leadership groupings or factions are based neither on institutions (e.g., the army or secret police) nor on historical associations (e.g., field army ties). Perhaps with the exception of the “petroleum faction” which is composed primarily of economic planners and “technocrats,” other groupings draw their members across the major institutional lines and field army affiliations. Whereas allegiance to Mao’s legacy seems a crucial ingredient that holds together the “whatever” faction and sets it apart from other factions, as a rule

Chinese factionalism is not ideologically-oriented. Nor are China's factions mainly policy-oriented, although they do entertain certain policy preferences and such preferences could increase or damage support for competing factions or affect factional alignments in Chinese politics. Instead, the personal relationship of cadres, as an insightful study by Lucian Pye has pointed out, is the primary basis for factions in China since the advent of the GPCR. In addition to dimensions of Chinese personality and attitudes about authority, trust, dependency and other sentiments which Pye attributes to lingering influence of Chinese culture which impels the Chinese to form close personal networks, Chinese Communist cadres have also learned from the abrupt and unpredictable policy and political changes in the past decade and half that personal ties and mutual help, and not correct ideological stance or institutional loyalty, best protect their careers and enhance political power.

Having close ties with many powerholders in the Party and the PLA, and highly experienced in domestic and external affairs, Deng clearly possesses personal and political assets unmatched by Hua or other Chinese leaders. Besides, his modernization program seems to better represent the national mood and enables him to win political support. Thus, in the course of leadership infighting, the balance of power has gradually but steadily shifted in the favor of Deng's coalition. At the 11th CCP Congress, for example, Deng was successful in bringing about the return of many veteran officials sidelined by the GPCR to the Central Committee and the Politburo. Hu Yaobang, Deng's closest brain-truster, was appointed director of the powerful Central Committee Organization Department. Through this key office, Hu was able to do two important things which not only boosted enormously Deng's cause but also contributed much to Hu's own rapid political ascendancy in subsequent years: (1) rehabilitation of numerous cadres victimized by the GPCR; and (2) dispensation of patronage and placement of supporters in major positions.


11. Of the Eleventh Central Committee's 201 members and 132 alternate members, 73 and 75 respectively are "new" — in the sense that they were not members of the Ninth or Tenth Central Committees, elected in 1969 or 1973 — but had been ranking officials before the GPCR. Indeed, quite a few were even members of the Eight Central Committee, elected in 1956 and 1958. Two thirds of these veterans are Deng's associates and allies. In the Politburo, 10 of the 23 members are new, and 6 of them are Deng's supporters and allies.
leadership posts. Likewise, Luo Ruiqing, another Deng cohort, was named secretary-general of the CCP Military Affairs Commission to control over the regime's military matters. Similarly, at the Fifth NPC, Deng placed many allies and associates in key positions in the State Council — including Zhao Cangbi as Minister of Public Security.

One of the most important and far-reaching tasks which Deng and his supporters have sought to accomplish is destruction of the cult of Mao and dilution of Mao's ideological authority. In pursuing this goal, they had two larger purposes: (1) to remove ideological constraints on pragmatic modernization programs, resulting from invocation of Mao by the opposition to stonewall against change; (2) to undercut the major source of power possessed by Hua, whose claim to rule rested on Mao's personal imprimatur.

With such an objective clearly in mind, the Deng camp, masterminded by Hu Yaobang, since the spring of 1978 has been promoting a new ideological tenet: “practice is the sole criterion of truth.” In plain language, the precept means that any policy, including any favored by Mao, should not be venerated as truth if it does not work or if it fails to produce positive results. Rather, it should be abolished or changed. Deng's clarion call is to "seek truth from facts." In a system in which party and state constitutions have sanctified Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as the guiding ideology, the idea that Deng has been trying to foster is truly iconoclastic and revolutionary.

As one might expect, Deng's promotion of the new precept touched off quite a controversy in the Party. Such top leaders as Hua and Ye refused to endorse Deng's formula. The "whatever" faction and other defenders of the Maoist legacy attacked Deng for, among other things, opposition to the late Chairman and trying to "cut down the banner" of Mao Zedong Thought. At the same time, acceptance of the need to base policy on actual conditions and to free the Chinese people from the dominating influence of Mao's legacy was widespread. During the summer and fall of 1978, for instance, many leaders, especially party and PLA leaders in the provinces, contributed articles to the media to register their support for Deng's new ideological line. The issue was roundly debated in a Central

12. This new ideological concept first surfaced in an article in Guangming Ribao (Beijing), May 11, 1978. Deng personally promoted it in a major speech to the Political Work Conference of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in early June, See Renmin Ribao, June 6, 1978.
Committee work conference in November 1978. Deng subsequently scored a major victory when a Central Committee plenum held during the following month "highly evaluated the discussion of whether practice is the sole criterion for testing truth."\textsuperscript{13}

Deng, however, has not hesitated to invoke Mao to constrain Hua and dilute his influence as CCP Chairman. Thus, on July 1, 1978, \textit{Renmin Ribao} published a speech that Mao had delivered to a party meeting in January 1962, in which he acknowledged that he had made many wrong decisions on the Great Leap and was mainly responsible for China's economic disaster during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the same speech, Mao had called for earnest implementation of the principle of democratic centralism — namely, collegial decision-making in the party committees — to prevent abuse of power by individuals. Obviously, Deng publicized the speech to show that Mao had not been infallible, and to justify modification of policies which Mao had put forth. But by drawing attention to Mao's emphasis on the principle of democratic centralism, Deng also sought to curtail the power of Hua, who may well have derived special prerogatives from his post as CCP Chairman.

\textbf{IV. Purging the Adversaries}

Deng and his brain-trust also plainly realize that their pragmatic programs aimed at speeding up China's economic growth must have the support of substantial numbers of powerholders in the leadership. Thus, in conjunction with his efforts to legislate a new ideological line, Deng has been striving to establish control over the regime's decision-making councils and policy-implementation processes by pressing a purge of Maoists and of officials antagonistic to his policies.

A concerted campaign that began in January 1978 against the "wind faction," "slippery faction," or "faction of quakers" was part of such a design. A series of articles which first appeared in \textit{Jiefangqun Bao} and was reprinted in \textit{Renmin Ribao} mounted stinging attacks on those cadres who were political opportunists, who shirked off responsibility for past political errors and allegiances, and who hid behind the positions of power awaiting an opportunity to create political disturbance.\textsuperscript{14} To put it simply, the targets of the campaign


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Renmin Ribao}, Jan. 6, 10, and 15, 1978.
were those officials who had once supported and collaborated with the gang of four and had then lined up behind Chairman Hua after October 1976, or had otherwise dragged their feet on Deng's policies. As subsequent developments would show, the campaign was directed against at least half a dozen Politburo members, ten provincial first party secretaries, and hundreds of other officials of somewhat lower rank.

Chairman Hua, however, resisted Deng's efforts to purge the leadership bodies. Aside from the fact that those under attack were not only fellow beneficiaries of the GPCR but also his supporters, Hua may have reasoned that an expanded purge would divide the party ranks, destabilize the political order, and hamper efforts to carry out the "four modernizations." Hence, he favored a winding down of the campaign. His report to the NPC session in February 1978, for example, stated that the movement to expose and criticize the gang of four had been "sound and vigorous" and that the investigation into the individuals and incidents associated with their conspiracy to usurp power "had in the main been completed in most of the localities and departments." He called for the nation to be conciliatory to comrades who "had made mistakes, including serious mistakes," so as to "win over all those that can be won over."

In the same vein, Ye Jianying, elected Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee in March 1978, subsequently urged his fellow committee members at a meeting in September 1978 to strive for national stability and unity and admonished each and every one to refrain from doing or saying "what isn't good for unity." On several occasions, moreover, Hua visited, and appeared in public with, officials under the gun (e.g., Zeng Shaoshan and Xie Xuegong, party first secretaries of Liaoning and Tianjin, respectively, on May 10 and 11, 1978), in an apparent effort to lend his support and save them from ouster. But these undertakings were of no avail.

Notwithstanding the opposition of Hua and Ye, Deng was able to purge those who had collaborated with the gang of four or were otherwise antagonistic to his policies, and to consolidate his network of support in the provinces. During 1978 alone, eight such province-level first secretaries and numerous secretaries were dismissed and replaced by Deng backers. To be sure, Deng did not fire all of them at a stroke. That could have harmed China's image of stability. What he

did, to the contrary, was to undertake carefully controlled surgery. He eliminated one or several at a time at intervals of several months. Thus, Liu Zihou, Ren Rong and Wang Qian, first secretaries of Hobei, Tibet and Shanxi respectively, survived until 1980. Similarly, even when Seypidin and Wu De were relieved of their leadership positions in Xinjiang and Beijing in January and October 1978 respectively, they were allowed to retain their Politburo seats — at least for the time being.

In retrospect, it was at the Central Committee work conference of November 11-December 15, 1978, and the followup Central Committee plenum a few days later that the political forces led by Deng made the big breakthrough in their drive to alter the party’s ideological and organizational features. This was the consequence of a well-timed political struggle orchestrated by Deng. During the summer and fall of 1978, most of the leaders in the provincial party and military hierarchy published articles to endorse Deng’s ideological formula “practice is the sole criterion of truth.” 17 As the work conference went into session, the Beijing CCP Committee passed a resolution to affirm that the Tienanmen Square demonstration of April 5, 1976, in honor of the late Premier Zhou, had been a “revolutionary” event — thereby making heroes of the people who either had taken part in it or were otherwise victimized by it (e.g., Deng), and casting a political shadow on Hua and others who took actions to suppress it. 18 In the meantime, a spate of Deng-inspired big-character posters went up in Beijing’s Xidan “Democracy” Wall which, among other things, denounced those leaders who were responsible for arresting and persecuting the demonstrators, criticized Mao’s leadership, and challenged the legitimacy of Hua’s appointment in the wake of the riots. 19

In such a political atmosphere, which obviously exerted heavy political pressure on the Maoists and was favorable to the Deng camp, many important personnel and political changes were effected at the conference and the plenum. Four veteran officials — Chen Yun, Deng Yingchao (the widow of Zhou Enlai), Hu Yaobang and

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Wang Zhen, all of whom are certain to back Deng on most issues — were elected to the Politburo. The plenum also added nine veteran cadres to the Central Committee; like Deng, all of them had been victims of the GPRC.20

Other personnel changes and appointments were even more revealing. Chen Yun was named a CCP Vice-Chairman, a position that he had held during 1956–66, and was placed in charge of a 100-member Central Commission for Inspecting Discipline, which was to enforce discipline among party members. Furthermore, he was appointed head of an ad hoc Financial and Economic Group, a body assigned overall responsibility for China's economic and financial policy. This was a highly significant appointment in light of Chen's reputation as a seasoned economist, an outspoken critic of Mao's radical Great Leap program, and the main architect of China's recovery after the Great Leap. 21 One of the specific tasks assigned to the group was to map out a three-year readjustment program, for the Chinese leaders now concluded that the 10-year National Development Plan, which had been formulated chiefly by Hua, Li Xiannian and Yu Qiuli and announced at the NPC nine months earlier, was unrealistic in its targets and unsound in its emphasis and allocation of resources.

In addition, Deng's closest aide and most important brain-truster, Hu Yaobang, was named Secretary-General of the CCP Central Committee and concurrently Director of the Central Committee Propaganda Department. In the latter case, he replaced Zhang Pinghau, a Hua supporter. Hu yielded his position as Director of the Central Committee Organization Department to Song Renqiong, another close associate of Deng. As CCP Secretary-General, Hu became responsible for daily work at headquarters and supervision of

20. The nine new Central Committee members were Huang Kezheng, Song Renqiong, Hu Qiaomu, Xi Zhongxun, Wang Renzhong, Huang Huoqing, Chen Zaidao, Han Guang, and Zhou Hui. According to the 1977 CCP Constitution, Central Committee members are elected by the Party Congress, but "in view of the changed situation in party life" since the Party Congress and "current urgent needs in party work," the Plenum decided, "in a provisional measure," to add these members to the Central Committee, "subject to future confirmation" by the 12th Party Congress. See Peking Review, Dec. 29, 1978, p. 7.

party organizations at all levels, and was thus better able to push and implement the programs favored by the Deng forces.

According to reports of the Communist press in Hong Kong, several Politburo members of the "whatever" faction came under strong attack at the meetings for their ties to the radicals and lost much of their political influence.\(^2\) CCP Vice-Chairman Wang Dongxing, who had previously been Director of the Central Committee General Office (which oversees vital party files) and had consequently been able to block the political rehabilitation of such ranking leaders as Peng Zhen (former mayor of Beijing and Politburo member), yielded the job to Yao Yilin, a close friend of Chen Yun and Peng Zhen. Wang was also relieved of command of the 8341 army unit, a formidable political weapon. Under Wang, this unit had evolved into a special security force — a sort of praetorian guard — which was in charge of leadership security but operated outside the regime's established security apparatus and even ran its own espionage network.\(^23\) The unit is believed to have been disbanded in 1979. Others besides Wang who encountered much criticism and a loss of influence include Wu De, Ji Dengkui, Chen Xilian, Ni Zhifu and Chen Yonggui, all of whom had benefited from the GPCR.

Although Hua Guofeng retained his post as CCP Chairman then, a number of developments at the Central Committee work conference and plenum severely weakened his power and influence. First, those leaders who had been his supporters or in alliance with him had lost much of their power, and the party machinery came under the control of Deng's men. Second, he lost many of the prerogatives of Chairman. The plenum placed a new emphasis on collective leadership, and it prohibited him from issuing "an instruction" without a collegial decision.\(^24\) Third, he had to make a self-criticism at the Central Committee work conference, in which he admitted a number of political errors, including failure to act on Deng's rehabilitation in good time.\(^25\) Fourth, without saying so, the CCP discarded the ideological and political line that Hua had put forth at the 11th Party Congress in 1977 and at the NPC in 1978. Not only did the plenum fail to endorse his "strategic decision to grasp the key link of class struggle and bring about great order across the land" (Hua's political

\(^{22}\) Chi Hsin, "The CCP Made a Drastic Turn," *The Seventies* (Hong Kong), No. 109, February 1979, p. 8 and *Chengming*, No. 15, January 1979, p. 18.


\(^{24}\) See the communique of the Third Plenum, *loc. cit.*, p. 16.

line after 1977) and the 10-year National Development Plan, but the plenum communique was even conspicuously silent on the campaigns to learn from Taching and from Tazhai, both of which Hua had actively promoted as late as February 1978, when he exhorted the nation to work hard to ensure that "by 1980 one third of our enterprises become Taching-type enterprises and one third of our counties Tachai-type counties." 26

At the same time, the plenum endorsed Deng's ideological precept of seeking truth from facts and voted to declare the April 1976 Tienanmen demonstration a revolutionary event and to revoke the documents that the Central Committee had issued supporting the anti-Deng campaign and condemning the Tienanmen demonstration. It also overturned past verdicts on the late Marshal Peng Dehuai and many other leaders purged by Mao and the Maoists, although it put off decisions on the rehabilitation of two of the most prominent Maoist victims, Peng Zhen and the late head of state, Liu Shaoqi. It even made a limited, implicit, but unprecedented public criticism of Mao, stating that "it would not be Marxist to demand that a revolutionary leader be free of all shortcomings and errors," nor would it "conform to comrade Mao Zedong's consistent evaluation of himself." Nevertheless, it decided to postpone assessment of the "shortcomings and mistakes" of the GPCR and called on the party to shift its energies to the task of modernization. 27

It is of interest that in the last stage of the Central Committee work conference, Peking and Washington reached an agreement on diplomatic normalization, largely on the terms upon which the Chinese government had insisted. This diplomatic breakthrough could have strengthened the position of Deng, who had charge of the negotiations, within leadership circles at a crucial juncture. It seems likely that the Carter administration was aware of the struggle taking place inside Chinese policy councils and went ahead with normalization and issued the invitation to Deng to visit the United States with an eye towards influencing China's leadership conflict and towards helping the cause of a pragmatic leader.

V. Consolidation of Power

After the Third Central Committee Plenum in December 1978, Vice-Chairman Deng emerged as the most powerful man in China

27. See note 24, supra.
and the main architect of China's modernization programs. Moreover, his triumphant tour of the United States in January-February 1979 boosted his prestige enormously. Nevertheless, a series of developments afforded Deng's opponents an opportunity to mount a strong attack on his leadership and policies.

First, the poster campaign that the veteran officials had inspired and exploited in the fall of 1978 had acquired a momentum of its own, going far beyond what they had apparently intended. In the winter months of 1978–79, there was not only an increased outpouring of posters but also a burgeoning of many underground dissident publications in Beijing and throughout China. Aside from demanding democracy and human rights, quite a few posters and articles expressed doubts about socialism, attacked repressive Communist rule, and even went so far as to challenge the legitimacy of the leading role of the CCP. Accompanying the rise of the dissident movement were demonstrations by petitioners and sit-ins by discontented students, unemployed youths, and others in Beijing and various other Chinese cities, as many social elements besieged the authorities with their grievances.

Second, China's punitive action against the Hanoi government in the Sino-Vietnamese war of February-March 1979 did not proceed as smoothly as the CCP leadership had anticipated. The heavy losses sustained by Chinese troops generated a great deal of second-guessing and controversy within leadership circles. Third, the devaluation of Mao, the reversal of verdicts with respect to victims of the GPCR, the new emphasis on material incentives and the role of experts and intellectuals, and the regime's overall liberalization created turmoil within party ranks. Not only did it generate considerable confusion and cynicism, but it also severely antagonized those whose interests were at stake.

Taking advantage of such circumstances, the Maoists in the leadership sought to reassert themselves and launched an offensive against Deng and his policies, especially those adopted at the Third Central Committee Plenum. According to the Communist press in Hong Kong, a number of provincial party secretaries and State Council ministers who apparently felt their vested interests threatened by Deng's new policies joined the attack. This coalition


29. Lu Chung-chien, "The Victory of the Pragmatic Faction as seen from the June 1979 NPC Session," Chengming, No. 21, July 1979, pp. 5–6.
Confronted with this challenge, Deng felt compelled to take a step backward. In a speech to an enlarged Politburo session on March 30, 1979, he expressed strong support of the need to "uphold the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought (the so-called "four upholds" or "four basic principles.")."

Consequently, the Chinese authorities carried out a crackdown on democracy and on human rights activities and tightened political and social control. Several of the more outspoken underground journals were closed down, and some dissidents — including Wei Jingsheng and Fu Yuehua, who have received much attention in the Western media — were placed under arrest. In quick succession in March and April, many provinces, in the name of maintaining stability and unity, issued notices banning demonstrations and posters critical of the Party.

However, the left "adverse current" failed to reverse Deng's major policies and did not deter him from continuing his efforts to consolidate his position within the leadership. The opposition did not succeed in accomplishing its end because it no longer carried sufficient political weight in policy councils. Moreover, Deng clearly enjoyed political backing of an extensive nature throughout the system and was able to mobilize the necessary support to prevail. For example, a large number of provincial party and PLA leaders spoke up in support of his policies and attacked his critics in May and June 1979.

30. The viewpoints of Deng's critics are alluded to and refuted by many articles. See, for instance, "Use the Spirit of the Third Plenum to Unify Our Thinking," an editorial commentary in Wenhui Bao (Shanghai), Apr. 13, 1979; and "Distinguish the Two Ideological Lines; Uphold the Four Basic Principles," by a "guest commentator" in Guangming Ribao, May 11, 1979.

31. Studies on Chinese Communism (Taipei), May 15, 1979, p. 22.


33. The Deng-controlled media had prominently reported the remarks and speeches of the officials. For example, see Renmin Ribao, May 23 (Zhao Ziyang), May 28 (Liao Hansheng, First Political Commissar of Nanjing Military Region), May 29 (Li Desheng, Commander of Mukden Military Region), June 2 (Wan Li, First Secretary,
By then, it appears that Deng had solidified his position sufficiently to forge ahead again. Thus, Peng Zhen's long-awaited rehabilitation was carried out, and at the Second Session of the Fifth NPC in June, Peng was named a NPC vice-chairman and director of the NPC's Legal Commission, with responsibility for restructuring China's legal system. At the same session, three veteran economists — Chen Yun, Yao Yilin and Bo Yibo — were elected vice premiers. Three months later, the Fourth Central Committee Plenum, held on September 25-28, elevated Peng Zhen to the Politburo; promoted Zhao Ziyang, an alternate member of the Politburo, to full membership; and elected 12 more victims of the GPCR purge to the Central Committee. In addition, the plenum discussed and approved a major policy document which reviewed the three decades of Communist rule and addressed controversial issues which the Third Plenum had sidestepped, such as Mao's leadership errors and defects of the CPC. The document is said to have been drafted by CCP Secretary-General Hu Yaobang in June, circulated widely among the party cadres for comments, and revised by Deng and Ye before it was finally approved. Ye's speech on September 29 at a Beijing rally in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic was based on the document.

The ascendancy of Deng and his supporters was manifested once again when the Fifth Plenum met behind closed doors February 23-29, 1980, to deliberate on major policy and personnel matters. This plenum approved the posthumous rehabilitation of Liu Shaoqi (Mao's chief antagonist during the GPCR), which had been an issue of intense controversy within the leadership for some time. It also

Anhui CCP Committee), and June 9 (Song Ping, First Secretary, Gansu CCP Committee), 1979. On May 22, the paper reproduced a Jiefangjun Bao commentator's article of the previous day which attacked Deng's critics and called for PLA cadres to resolutely support and implement policies adopted at the Third Plenum.

34. With these additions, virtually every member or alternate member of the Eight Central Committee who is still alive has returned to the Central Committee. The few exceptions collaborated with the Lin Biao and the gang of four groups.

35. Lo Ping, "Developments in the Party After the Fourth CC Plenum," Chengming, No. 25, November 1979, pp. 5–6. Reportedly, divergent views persisted among the elites on the assessment of post-1957 Communist rule. Consequently, the antagonists had to compromise on or avoid some of the most controversial issues. For Ye's speech, see Beijing Review, Oct. 5, 1979, pp. 7–32.

36. Several major political obstacles are said to have blocked the rehabilitation of China's "Khrushchev," the label pinned on Liu during the GPCR, prior to the Fifth Plenum. One was that the investigation report of the 1968 Central Committee resolution which had condemned Liu as a "traitor, renegade, and scab" had been based
made sweeping leadership changes. These included the ouster of four leaders of the “whatever” faction — Wang Dongxing, Wu De, Chen Xilian, and Ji Dengkui — from the Politburo; the elevation of two close associates of Deng, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, to the Politburo’s Standing Committee; and the reestablishment of the CCP Central Committee Secretariat and the appointment of Hu Yaobang to be General Secretary and ten other veteran officials, most of them Deng’s associates and allies, to be secretaries to manage the daily affairs of the Party.

The four diehard Maoists had been targeted for removal by Deng since 1976, and, as previously noted, they had come under strong attack at the Third Central Committee Plenum. Deng had temporized, possibly because he lacked sufficient power or because he wanted to avoid a divisive leadership fight that could endanger resolution of more pressing issues. However, efforts to preserve an appearance of leadership unity and resurgence of the Left in the following spring had produced a curious sense of political uncertainty in party ranks and had emboldened many cadres to oppose or drag their feet on the programs that the Deng group wanted to pursue. Hence, Deng had decided to strike against them immediately rather than to wait until the next party congress.

VI. Grooming China’s Future Leaders

It is no secret that because of Deng’s advanced age, many cadres had adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward his pragmatic programs. They feared that just as the post-Mao leadership had done away with

on a report compiled by an ad hoc investigative group headed by the late Zhou Enlai. Zhou, during 1977–78, had acquired the status of a new Communist saint in China, and his name may have been invoked to block the restoration of Liu’s honor. Another major obstacle was opposition by Ye Jianying. Ye had to be confronted with new evidence assembled by Liu’s defenders showing that Kang Sheng had actually controlled the investigative group, had extorted false charges from Liu’s associates by coercion and torture, and had framed Liu. (Kang, a party vice-chairman who died in 1975, has been expelled from the Party posthumously). Apparently, Ye agreed to Liu’s rehabilitation grudgingly, and when Deng held a memorial service for Liu on May 17, 1980, an event attended by virtually every top official, Ye chose to boycott it. Another notable absentee was Xu Shiyou.

Information on the controversy described above is based partly on a quite revealing editorial, “Restore the True Feature of Mao Zedong Thought — on Liu Shaoqi’s Rehabilitation,” Renmin Ribao, May 16, 1980, and partly on stories circulating inside China which, in the opinion of the author, seem highly reliable.

37. See the Communique of the CCP’s Fifth Central Committee Plenum, Beijing Review, Mar. 10, 1980, pp. 7–10.
Mao's programs, Deng's successors might scrap his "revisionist" line and punish those who implemented it. To remove such reservations once and for all and to prevent his adversaries from taking over the leadership in the future, Deng has sought to structure his succession in advance and to put into positions of power a group of possible successors committed to his line and likely to continue his policies after he is gone.

With this objective in mind, Deng installed his closest aide, Hu Yaobang, as head of the Central Committee Secretariat and staffed the Secretariat mostly with his supporters, whom he expects to hold aloft his banner after he is out of the political picture. As a day-to-day decision-making body, the Secretariat would run the Party and preempt many of Hua's functions as CCP Chairman. Deng's evident design then was to dilute Hua's control over policy and the party organization, and eventually to ease him out of the chairmanship and replace him with his own man, Hu Yaobang. Like Deng, Hu is pragmatic, talented and imaginative, and he is also blessed with extensive ties with the powerholders in the system.

As with the party councils, Deng has steadily packed the State Council with his own backers and ousted his opponents. The NPC Standing Committee in April 1980 appointed two of Deng's supporters, Zhao Ziyang and Wan Li, to be vice-premiers and relieved Chen Xilian and Ji Dengkui of their posts as vice-premiers. Deng's next goal was to force Premier Hua Guofeng out of the State Council and to replace him with Zhao Ziyang. At 62, Zhao is a highly pragmatic and experienced former provincial official, with a very successful record as the leader of Sichuan, China's most populous province (population over 100 million). Although he was not too closely associated with Deng before the GPCR (as were Hu Yaobang, Wan Li, and others), his pragmatism, his good record in Sichuan, and especially his strong backing of Deng's programs apparently impressed Deng a great deal; hence, he has been coopted into the Deng camp. To no one's surprise, the NPC in September 1980 approved Hua's resignation as premier and appointed Zhao as his replacement.

The same NPC session also confirmed the expected resignations of seven vice-premiers. These individuals included Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Li Xiannian, Xu Xianguan, Wang Zhen, Wang Renzhong, and Chen Yongqui. Thereafter the State Council is in the hands of Premier Zhao and senior Vice-Premier Wan Li. According to the official view, all the resignations except that of Chen Yongqui, who was in political disgrace (and was actually fired) were either designed to separate party and government functions (as in the cases of Hua...
and Wang Renzhong) or due to advanced age (which applies to the rest).\textsuperscript{38} Obviously, this explanation contains more than a grain of truth. There have been consistent efforts in recent years to eliminate over-concentrations of power and to infuse leadership bodies at all levels with younger blood and competent cadres. But such motivations alone do not account for the changes. Deng instigated these changes in part to undercut his adversaries. That Deng has maneuvered Hua into giving up his government post is already quite well established.\textsuperscript{39} What is little understood outside China, however, is that Deng, by offering to step down from his government post on many occasions, had sought to induce (if not compel) Vice-Premier Li Xiannian to follow suit. Li, China's top economic official during 1966–78, had not seen eye to eye with the modernization programs promoted by Deng and Deng's ally Chen Yun, and he had apparently encouraged the "petroleum" faction to stonewall against Deng/Chen attempts to readjust economic plans.\textsuperscript{40} Li's departure from the State Council (although he remains a CCP vice-chairman) is likely to weaken the influence of the "petroleum" faction in the State Council, and correspondingly strengthen the position of Deng's backers.

As a matter of fact, since the summer of 1980 several official identified with the "petroleum" faction have come under heavy fire from the Deng camp for their opposition to the readjustment program. Yu Qiuli, a vice-premier concurrently director of the powerful State Planning Commission, yielded his Planning Commission post to Vice-Premier Yao Yilin and became head of the less important State Energy Commission. Deng's supporters also seized upon the death of 72 workers in the capsizing of an offshore oil rig in 1979 to mount a strong attack on officials of the "petroleum" faction. As a result of this attack, Petroleum Minister Song Zhenming suffered summary dismissal, Vice-Premier Kang Shien received a "demerit of the first grade" (a severe public reprimand), and Yu Qiuli had to make a humiliating self-criticism.\textsuperscript{41} Apparently inspired by the

\textsuperscript{38} Beijing Review, Sept. 15, 1980.

\textsuperscript{39} Beginning in 1979, for example, Deng, through interviews with foreign visitors and inspired press leaks, had expressed his desire to resign from the post of vice-premier and had conducted a campaign to "persuade" Hua to relinquish his premiership.

\textsuperscript{40} See note 9, supra.

\textsuperscript{41} The actions taken against Song and Kang were prominently reported in the Chinese media. \textit{See}, for instance, "A Profound Lesson," \textit{Renmin Ribao}, Aug. 27, 1980. However, the news that Yu made a self-criticism has not been publicly divulged, although it has been known to many inside China.
Deng camp, delegates at the September 1980 NPC session and a spate of newspaper articles criticized the gigantic Baoshan Steel project and other major construction undertakings for waste, faulty investment plans and other deficiencies. It was perhaps no accident that officials responsible for these projects were associated with the "petroleum" faction. Furthermore, the alleged backstage boss of the faction, Li Xiannian, was not spared. He was the target of attack in the big-character posters in Beijing in the fall of 1980; and at the Central Work Conference in December, he was compelled to recant his errors and the text of his lengthy self-criticism was subsequently disseminated. 42

In addition, Deng, who undoubtedly believes Mao's celebrated dictum that political power grows from the barrel of a gun, has made special efforts to establish control over the military. Soon after his reinstatement as PLA Chief of Staff in the summer of 1977, he began to place his supporters in key military posts. For example, Wei Guoqing was appointed Director of the General Political Department; Luo Ruiqing was made Secretary-General of the Military Affairs Commission; and Yang Yong was named Deputy Chief of Staff. (Yang Chengwu, who had served as defacto Chief of Staff prior to Deng's return but has not been close to Deng, was transferred to the post of Fuzhou Military Region commander). At the same time, Deng undertook to purge many PLA officials (e.g., Chen Xilian) who had collaborated with the gang of four or had opposed his policies, and to replace those he considered inept or too old. Indeed, many old PLA cadres have now been relieved of their leadership positions and serve only as advisers to various military bodies. 43

Today, many veteran military men are highly apprehensive because the military modernization program put forth under Deng's aegis threatens their careers with its aim to retire "dead wood" in favor of younger officers. Furthermore, there is widespread discontent within military ranks about de-Maoization and other "revisionist" measures Deng and his associates have promoted since the Third CCP Central Committee Plenum in 1978. Some PLA leaders who

43. By the summer of 1980, more than 10,000 PLA ranking cadres, including such officials as Deputy Chief of Staff Li Da, Deputy Air Force Commanders Xue Shaoqing and Kuang Rennong, and Fuzhou Military Region Political Commissar Li Zhimin, had stepped down from the leadership posts and become "advisers." See Huang Jung-yueh, "Military Cadre Problems," Studies on Chinese Communism (Taipei), Aug. 15, 1980, p. 117.
supported Deng’s rehabilitation — notably Xu Shiyu — apparently retain profound personal loyalty to Chairman Mao. They have expressed strong reservations about sullying the memory of the late Chairman, who was very much like a father to them despite all of his failures and mistakes.44

To cope with these problems, Deng has employed a variety of means. He has pushed a campaign to strengthen political work and “ideological education” among PLA officers and soldiers. Perhaps to persuade the discontented cadres to support his policy of abolishing life-long cadre tenure, Deng himself stepped down as Chief of Staff in early 1980 and appointed Yang Dezhi, commander of Kunming Military Region, as his successor. Since Yang had not been seen particularly close to Deng but had performed well in China’s war over Xu Shiyu probably disarmed many of Deng’s critics. Most important of all, however, Deng has carried a big political stick and has not hesitated to use it when necessary. In the past three years or so, sweeping leadership changes have been made in the PLA hierarchy, from the center down to the provinces. For instance, 10 out of China’s 11 military regions have new commanders (the only Maoist-era holdover is Li Desheng of Mukden Military Region, in Manchuria), and the first political commissars in all eleven military regions are also new. In addition, new appointees command 22 out of China’s 28 province-level military districts.45 Through these reshuffles, Deng appears to have strengthened his control, although criticism of, and resistance to, the current party line have continued.

VII. A Big Push for Reforms and Against Hua

Since the Spring of 1980, opposition to Deng and his programs notwithstanding, the Deng forces have clearly dominated China’s political scene, preempted policy initiatives and shaped events largely according to their own script. On the policy front, the most


45. These statistics were culled by the author from Chinese national and provincial press reports, and the compilation is believed accurate through the fall of 1980.
important initiative of the Deng camp was to institute urgent political and institutional reforms.

For instance, Deng and his supporters convened an enlarged Politburo meeting during August 18-23, 1980, to deliberate on the reforms of Party and state leadership system. On August 18, Deng gave a keynote speech in which he called for (1) reforms, among others, against bureaucracy, life tenure of cadres, over-concentration of power, (2) steps to promote democracy, collective leadership and to strengthen socialist legal system, and most important of all, (3) a large-scale program to cultivate and promote cadres who are young, better educated and professionally more competent. 46 To make room for the younger cadres at the leadership councils, according to Deng's proposal, veteran Party leaders in the CC and Politburo would move to a central advisory committee (to be established upon the revision of the CCP constitution) which would play mainly advisory and supervisory functions. A similar advising body would also be created in the State Council for the aging governmental officials.

In addition, Deng also proposed the reform of the economic system. For example, changes are to be made on the economic structure and the excessive centralization of control over economic decisions in the government, and enterprises would be delegated greater power. Going hand in hand with a greater emphasis on experts are new management setup and greater participation by workers designed to improve efficiency and productivity as well as to strengthen accountability.

According to a CC circular, participants of the enlarged Politburo meeting "unanimously agreed with the contents and spirit of comrade Deng Xiaoping's speech," and submitted "many good supplementary and amendatory opinions." 47 Subsequently, on August 31, a revised text of Deng's speech was approved by the Politburo and on September 11 issued as a CC document (No. 66) for dissemination and discussion among party ranks. They were urged to convey their views and suggestions to the Party center by October 15, so that the CC, the NPC Standing Committee, and the State Council could incorporate their inputs in the course of enacting new laws or regulations. In the fall of 1980, China's mass media went on a blitz to

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publicize and promote Deng's reform proposals. Many Deng brain-trusters also went around various forums to explicate and campaign for his reform program.

While the Dengists were pushing for enactment of his reform proposals, they also set the stage to oust Hua from the CCP chairmanship. Soon after Hua stepped down as Premier in September 1980, they began to mount an attack on Hua's political and policy errors in the media, although he was not attacked by name then. There is no question that many of Deng's supporters resented the fact that Hua remained CCP Chairman, even if he was only in office and not really in power, for they saw him as the last vestige of Mao's legacy. A two-part article by a pro-Deng historian, Li Honglin in Renmin Ribao on September 18 and 19, 1980, openly questioned the legitimacy of Hua's succession to Chairman Mao in 1976. Hua's major justification for taking over Mao's mantle was that he had been handpicked by Mao. As evidence, he has cited Mao's purported statement that "with you in charge, I am at ease." The Renmin Ribao article, however, said that "the system of succession which puts the political destiny of a country in the hands of one man alone is extremely dangerous." "The power of a leader," it went on, "is bestowed by the people;" therefore, "he has no right to appoint the successor to his post, which does not belong to him." Furthermore, not only had portraits of Mao been removed from public places since mid-August, but some pictures of Hua had also been taken down. The most prominent one was that in Beijing's Central Railway Station, which showed Hua and Mao together and symbolically represented Mao's handing-over of the leadership to Hua.

As the late Chairman used to pontificate, a revolutionary leader is not appointed; he has to emerge from the struggle. Hua's problem has been that, despite his elevation to the Party Chairmanship under the political exigencies of 1976, he failed to prevail in the subsequent


49. See a speech by Feng Wenbin (Vice-President of the CC Party School), "On Questions of Socialist Democracy," Renmin Ribao, November 24, 1980 (a condensed version is also in Beijing Review, January 26, 1981, pp. 17-20, 28, under the heading "Reforming the Political Structure.") See also a speech by Liao Gailong (member of the office of Policy Research of the CC Secretariat) entitled "The Historical Experience and the Path of Our Development" addressed to a "Forum on CCP History" attended by theoretians from the party schools across the nation (section Four of his length speech is published in The Seventies, no. 134, March 1981, pp. 38-48).
struggles and thereby to prove that he deserved to be China's supreme leader. A number of factors account for Hua's difficulties. Because his training was limited and his leadership experience was confined largely to provincial politics prior to the 1970's, Hua had not been equal to the tasks thrust upon him. Indeed, his performance as Party Chairman and Premier during 1976–80 was highly undistinguished. Moreover, in a system like China's, where personal ties are the cement of political power, Hua simply lacks extensive networks of such links with China's powerholders in the party and the PLA. True, he did have the support of the "whatever" faction and of leaders like Ye Jianying and Li Xiannian, but such support had not been sufficient to enable him to meet Deng's challenge.

Besides, Hua has had a few skeletons in the closet, hence was politically vulnerable. For example, he is widely believed to have closely collaborated with the "gang of four" prior to Mao's death and, as Minister of Public Security in 1976, he played an important part in suppressing the Tienanmen Square demonstration of April 1976. Thus, the trial of the "gang of four," which began in Beijing on November 20, 1980, may have been used by the Deng camp as the coup de grace against Hua. Although Hua was not a defendant himself and was even instrumental in the arrest of the radical leaders, the trial constituted the prelude to his ouster as Party Chairman as it was bound to produce evidence that would ruin his political career. He made a deal and consented to step down.

In fact, between November 13 and December 5, 1980, the Politburo held several meetings to denounce Hua. The bill of particulars against Hua included: resistance to the reinstatement of Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun and other GPCR purge victims; accepting and fostering the personality cult around himself while continuing Mao's personality cult of the past through the promotion of the "two-whatever's" policy; impetuously seeking quick results in economic work and pushing certain leftist policies; and suppressing the discussion on the criterion of truth.50 Reportedly Hua was twice forced to make self-criticism, conceding his errors, and agreed to step down as CCP Chairman. In the end, the Politburo is said to have decided: (1) to immediately suspend Hua from the leadership work as Chairman of both the Party CC and Military Affairs Commission (MAC), and to recommend to the Sixth CC Plenum that Hua be removed from the Chairmanship of the Party CC and MAC, and be

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demoted to Party vice-chairman; and (2) to empower Hu Yaobang and Deng Xiaoping to henceforth take charge of the Party CC and MAC, respectively and to recommend to the Sixth CC Plenum that Hu and Deng be appointed Chairman of the Party CC and MAC, respectively.

VIII. Backlash and Compromise

Until the fall of 1980, Deng was able to call the shots and dominate the political scene. However, the opening of the trial of the "gang of four" and Lin Biao's followers (including four top PLA generals) marked a sudden change of political climate in China, as opposition to the Deng camp quickly coalesced. Emboldened, Hua shifted his tact and openly challenged Deng's plan to unseat him. He refused to attend a Central Work Conference in the second half of December, which was supposed to endorse his resignation and approve Hu Yaobang as his successor. Hua also boycotted the Party's New Year's Day reception at Peking's Great People's Hall in order to embarrass his detractors who had wanted to create an appearance of leadership harmony and orderly transfer of power.

Moreover, behind the scene Hua sought to mobilize the support of his allies and sympathizers in the leadership. One of Hua's powerful defenders has been Marshal Ye Jianying, Party Vice-Chairman, who collaborated with Hua to topple the radicals and put Hua at the top in October 1976. Ye not only boycotted the December Central Work Conference, but also stayed away from Beijing for almost half a year to disassociate himself with Deng's decision and display his opposition to Deng's power play. As can be expected, Hua also drew support from those officials who owed their positions to Hua or those who rose to political prominence during the GPCR, and from the diehard Maoists.

Even veteran Party officials, including those who were the victims of the GPCR, also resented the reforms pushed by the Deng forces and chose to block Hua's ouster. Many of these cadres have faulted individual leaders like Mao, Lin Biao and the "gang of four" (but not the communist system itself) for the GPCR and the difficulties faced by the regime today and sought to restore the pre-1966 system and policy. Peng Zhen is known to be a representative figure of this "restorationist" school of thought. He and his colleagues are said to oppose the "revisionist" reforms on the political

Moreover, not a few officers of the PLA who opposed Deng on various grounds also lined up behind Hua. They included those who were disaffected by the cuts in military expenditures; those who were resentful of Deng's repudiation of the GPCR and campaign for de-Maoization and "revisionist" economy policy; those veteran officers whose careers have been threatened by Deng's plan to retire the aged and promote the young; and a large group of PLA officers, including former associates of Lin Biao, who also felt the public trial of four generals had tarnished the image of the PLA and were angry at Deng and other party officials who had pushed for the trial.

Confronted with such strong combined opposition, Deng and his supporters beat a hasty retreat. Thus the sentencing of the "gang of four" and other culprits was delayed for more than three weeks as a result of bitter debate inside the Party leadership, and the plan to put their accomplice on trial has been postponed indefinitely, if not altogether abandoned. The Sixth Central Committee Plenum which was originally scheduled for late December 1980, and then February 1981, to formalize Hua's resignation and Hu's promotion had to be postponed again and again amid the deepening political crisis and other signs of uncertainty. Consequently, China's political pendulum began to swing to the left.

Indeed, since the winter months of 1980-1981, Chinese authorities have once again clamped down on the democracy activists as well as on intellectuals who have enjoyed relative freedom in recent years in Deng's garden of "hundred flowers." Apparently trying to appease his critics inside the Party and undoubtedly worried by the nation's sagging economy, high inflation and huge deficit, anti-government protests, civil disobedience, and other signs of social and political unrest (including attempts by workers to organize the Polish-style independent labor unions), Deng gave the first signal of a crackdown in a harsh speech at the December 1980 Central Work Conference. Following Deng's speech, the Party issued a new set of guidelines in February 1981, known as the No. 7 Central Document, that imposed strict restrictions on the intellectual freedom of writers and artists, and prescribed that their writings and artistic creations

must conform to the four basic principles of "party leadership, socialism, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, and proletarian dictatorship." A subsequent Party directive, the No. 9 Central Document, instructed the authorities to stamp out underground publications and unofficial organizations. In April 1981, the crackdown was well under way as a number of dissidents including Xu Wenli, the editor of a prominent underground journal, *April 5 Forum*, which had already ceased publication in 1980, and Wang Xize, one of the authors of the "Li Ize" essay in 1974, were placed under arrest.

In addition, Deng has been forced to postpone or call off important reforms which he and his supporters were actively promoting as recent as the summer and fall of 1980. For example, the highly publicized plan to reform the leadership system — to do away with the life-long tenure of cadres and to fix the length of time the leading cadres can serve — has to be shelved. Also the program to promote to leadership posts younger cadres and experts provoked considerable opposition from those affected, especially the PLA cadres; consequently it has not been implemented in earnest. Moreover, since early 1981, the publicity on the reform of economic system in the media has been turned off and the policy to decentralize decision-making power from the central authorities has been under heavy criticism; and in some cases where decision-making powers were given to enterprises have been rescinded.

The publication of a highly pro-Mao article in the *Liberation Army Daily* on April 10 (and in other major Chinese papers the following day) by General Huang Kecheng, formerly a PLA Chief of Staff (purged in 1959) and currently the Executive Secretary of the Party's Central Commission for Inspecting Discipline, also represents a setback on the efforts at de-Maoization. It is true that the article did criticize Mao for his mistakes in launching the Great Leap in the late 1950s and the GPCR during 1966-76; however, the criticisms were quite mild and the article actually tried to minimize Mao's onus by placing the blame of these two major policy disasters either on the entire leadership or on the "gang of four." Most important of all, the

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article adopted an overall pro-Mao tone — it fervently defended the memory of the late Chairman and strongly reaffirmed his leadership and ideological authority. Placed in context, General Huang's pro-Mao tilt was out of step with such Dengists as Hu Yaobang who have campaigned since 1978 to repudiate the Maoist cult and critically assess Mao's legacy as a necessary step for freeing China from the shackles of Maoist influence, charting the nation's new course and for fashioning pragmatic political and economic reforms.55

Thus the publication of Huang's article (which provided a limited rebuke of Mao) can be construed as a retreat by the Deng forces. Such a retreat, in retrospect, seems to be a necessary concession to pave the way to a new leadership consensus among China's disparate elites. As a matter of fact, Huang's article did set the tone for the party Resolution approved by the Sixth CC Plenum which passed judgment on Mao's place in the annals of China's Revolution. The Resolution, as pointed out before, leveled severe criticisms against the late Chairman, but to many Chinese and Dengists, the critique has not gone far enough. Not a few were particularly upset that the Resolution states that Mao's "contributions to the Chinese revolution far outweigh his mistakes" and that it upholds Mao Zedong thought as the Party's "founding principle."

On the other hand, one can also argue that the compromise Deng and his allies made was shrewd politics, for their concession removed political deadlock that had blocked top leadership changes that they sought after. After considerable hard bargaining among the factions at a 10-day "preparatory meeting" prior to the plenary session, the Sixth CC Plenum which met for three days in the last week of June, approved Chairman Hua's demotion and Hu's elevation to Party Chairmanship. This was, without question, a major victory for Deng and Hu. However, it was only a limited victory, because they failed to effect other personnel and political changes and had to settle for much less than what they had wanted. For example, the plan to set up a Party central advisory committee and to transfer (or kick upstairs) Ye Jianying and other "old guards" to this largely honorific body has not materialized. Likewise, the Plenum has postponed

55. Hu's inconoclastic assessment of Mao was reported in an interview in Tanjug (Belgrade), June 21, 1980; see also recent articles expounding views of the Deng camp: Special Commentator, "Rectifying the Guiding Thought on Economic Work — A Discourse on the Leftist Errors in Economic Construction," Renmin Ribao, April 9, 1981; "Correctly Recognize the situation and policy, persist in Four Basic Principles," Hongqi, March 1, 1981.
decision, if not rejected altogether, a proposal to make Deng China's head of state and nominate him to serve as Chairman of the Republic (which would necessitate a revision of the present state Constitution). A number of major Dengist supporters, such as Wan Li, Yao Yilin and Xi Zhongxun, also failed to win expected promotion to the Politburo; although the Plenum elected Xi a Secretary of the CC Secretariat, it did not make him the General Secretary as the Deng camp had intended. There are other signs that the Plenum was only a temporary and uneasy truce among the rival political forces, and soon after the Party gathering they have renewed their conflict. Hence further leadership and policy changes will occur at the 12th CCP Congress scheduled for next year, if not before.

We should also take note of an ominous development — it is Deng, and not the new Party Chairman Hu Yaobang, who has taken over the Chairmanship of the Military Affairs Committee, a post used to be held concurrently by the Party Chairman (as was in the cases of Mao and Hua previously). Many PLA leaders are known to be strongly antagonistic toward Hu, and some have even questioned his credentials to be their commander. Thus the unusual arrangement can be seen at once as a conciliatory gesture to avoid further aggravating the relations between Hu and the PLA, and a forceful show of Deng's political support for his protege.

How long will Deng, at age 77 now, be around to support and protect Hu, then? Can Chairman Hu survive politically after his 56. Amid the reports circulating inside China on the resumed leadership clashes on August 18, 1981 editors of Renmin Ribao, the organ of the Party CC, published a self-criticism confessing errors for not criticizing Bai Hua and other writers in good time. Bai, a Party member who works in the Culture Department of Wuhan Military Region, is a playwright; his movie script, "Bitter Love," which depicts a painter who returned to China from America in the early 1950's to work for the motherland, but was persecuted to death during the GPCR, angered many cadres and touched off quite a controversy. On April 17, 1981, for instance, the army paper Jiefangjun Bao took the lead and published a stinging editorial, denouncing Bai, among other sins, for unglifying socialist motherhood, blackening the image of the Party and the country, and defaming people's army. On April 18, and 20, the army paper published more articles to attack Bai. On the other hand, many students in Peking and Shanghai rose to defend Bai and criticize the military authorities' attempt to clamp down on intellectuals. Reportedly, Hu Yaobang also defended Bai and urged a more tolerant attitude toward the writers and artists, lest the regime risked further alienating the intellectuals. To disassociate with the army's stance and to allay intellectuals' fear of a new crackdown, the party leadership (through the All-China Writers' Association) even cited a poem of Bai Hua in 1979 for an award. Against such a background, the self-criticism by Renmin Ribao would indicate that the party leadership has submitted to the military pressure and leadership conflict has intensified.
mentor is gone? How will he perform as Party Chairman? Can he in
time develop his own political strength and convincingly demonstrate
his stewardship, thereby proving to his allies and critics that he
deserves to be China's supreme leader? These are crucial questions
that will have bearing on Chinese politics. If Hu fails to perform, he,
too, may suffer Hua Guofeng's fate.

IX. The Reconstituted Leadership

Since his political comeback in the summer of 1977, Deng has
steadily restructured China's leadership. Several salient characteristics
of the reconstituted leadership are clearly discernible.

First, the "old guards" predominate in the leadership bodies at
all levels. These veteran officials were victims of the GPCR purges
and have been rehabilitated only in recent years. Deng's restoration
to power has seemingly legitimated their raison d'être, and their
political resuscitation symbolizes a stinging repudiation of Mao's
rule. As a group, they are quite old, largely in the 70s and late 60s. In
the Politburo, for example, the average age of the members is over 70
(see Table 3). While the average age of the Secretariat members is
slightly younger, it is still above the mid-60s. The picture is
much the same for the leaders in the provincial party apparatus and
in the PLA hierarchy. 57

Ironically, the flood of rehabilitations has pushed out many
younger cadres who were promoted during the GPCR. To be sure,
there is a policy of persuading old cadres to step back into the
so-called "second or third line," and of promoting middle-aged and
young cadres to leadership responsibilities at all levels, and some
beginnings have been made in this regard. 58 However, progress is

57. According to Chinese sources, the average age of PLA cadres at the army level
is over 60, at the division level is over 55, at the regiment level is over 50, and at the
battalion level is over 35. Moreover, the average age of leadership cadres in the
Military Affairs Commission and the major military organs is between 65 and 75. See
Wu Liping, "A Major Reform in the Cadre System," and Special Commentator, "Be a

58. See Hua Guofeng's speech to the September 1980 session of the National
People's Congress, Beijing Review, Sept. 22, 1980, pp. 26-27. It is interesting to note
that such senior military region commanders as Xu Shiyou (Canton), Yang Deshi
(Kunming), Han Xianchu (Lanzhou), and Wang Pizheng (Wuhan) have been replaced
by young PLA officers. Except for Qin Jiwei (Beijing), Yang Chengwu (Fuzhou), and
Wu Kenhua (Canton), who are in their late 60s, the other eight commanders (six of
them appointed in 1980) are in their mid-60s or younger. In addition, these 11 military
region commanders and many other newly appointed military district officials are
Korean War veterans.
slow, for resistance among veteran cadres is quite strong. It is obvious that political stability and effectiveness of the Peking (or any) regime depends ultimately on the promotion of young, worthy "revolutionary successors," hence the failure of the Chinese Communists to systematically infuse new blood into the top ruling bodies will have long-term adverse effects.

Second, supporters (real or imagined) of the "gang of four" and Lin Biao — including those labeled the "wind faction," the "slippery faction," and the "quakers," as well as those diehard Maoists who opposed the current pragmatic policy line — have been ousted from the leadership bodies at all levels. Their removals solve some problems for Deng and his colleagues but create others. Among these newly purged officials are many relatively young cadres who were promoted during the GPCR decade, and their treatment runs counter to the policy of opening up leadership positions for the middle-aged and the young. Most serious of all, half of China's 38 million party members joined the Party after 1966, and a large number of them, strongly imbued with Maoist values, have been alienated by the wholesale dismissals of GPCR "upstarts," which they see as an assault on their belief system and a total negation of their political interests.

Third, there is a trend toward specialization of functions and separation of party and government (or military) work. This is particularly discernible at the provincial level. Now the party first secretaries in all of China's 29 province-level administrative units no longer hold the top government posts concurrently (as was invariably the case during the GPCR and until 1978). In the same vein, with the exception of Tibet, no PLA officers are concurrently top provincial party or government leaders. At the height of the GPCR, in contrast, PLA officers headed 21 out of the 29 province-level administrative units and constituted the backbone elements in all of them.

Fourth, in spite of the ascendancy of veteran officials and Deng's predominance, factionalism continues, and conflicting viewpoints on

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59. At the provincial level, quite a few officials who were guilty of graft, abuse of power, corruption, and other irregularities and misconduct have also been dismissed. Moreover, some officials who were in the "wrong" jobs and did not perform as expected have been moved to different localities or departments. An outstanding example is the transfer of Xi Zhongxun from the post of First Secretary of the Guangdong CCP Committee in November 1980. Lin Hujia, Party First Secretary and mayor of Peking was also replaced in early 1981, for he had conflicts with CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang and transferred to Minister of Agriculture (for hints of the friction between Lin and Hu, see Renmin Ribao, Nov. 19, 1980).
major policy issues persist. This factionalism exists in the Party, the
government, and the PLA hierarchy. In party policy councils,
different approaches to economic construction are represented by
Deng, Hu Yaobang, Chen Yun and Zhao Ziyang on the one hand, and
by Hua, Li Xiannian, and the "petroleum" faction on the other. Even
among the Dengists, differences also exist — with Chen stressing
readjustment of policy priorities, while Hu and Zhao placing heavy
emphasis on the reform of economic system and institutions. In the
government, the "petroleum" faction is strongly entrenched, as its
members control many of the economic and industrial ministries;
they have resisted the changes in economic priorities (tilt toward
agriculture and light industry) and economic cutback in recent years
and are strongly against structural reform. Until the Sixth CC
Plenum, China's elites have differed markedly on de-Maoization, on
the reform program of Deng and on the future of Hua. A compromise
was reached on some of these issues at the Plenum, but a deadlock on
others has persisted. In the PLA, opposition to Hu Yaobang as new
CCP Chairman is quite strong. Many PLA officers have blamed Hu's
support of liberalization and campaign on de-Maoization for having
generated the crises of belief, confidence and trust in China and
continue to apply strong pressure to force him to crack down on the
writers who ventured to criticize the regime. In addition, many
former associates of Lin Biao, now out of political favor, are severely
discontented.

Last, but not the least, has been the highly publicized Deng-Hu
policy of recruiting and promoting people of greater professional
competence into leadership positions in order to implement the
program of "four modernizations." Already such policy has been
manifested in the new government appointments in which experts,
scientists and cadres with strong professional background were
promoted to provincial vice-governors, vice-mayors, department
chiefs, and to vice-ministers and a few ministers at the central
government level. What has been done is unquestionably a step in
the right direction, but it is still too slow and too little. To modernize
China, the Chinese leadership needs a vast number of experts and
technocrats in major positions of responsibility in the government
and in the party councils. As pointed out before, many veteran cadres
who are more "red" than "expert" are reluctant to step down and
have fought against the Deng-Hu efforts to make changes in
personnel and policy.

It is probably not unique in China that those who have already
succeeded in ensconcing themselves in positions of power strive to
stay in power. However, certain historical, cultural and systemic factors may have rendered the elite circulation and upward political mobility even more difficult in China. There is no question that the veteran cadres today played major leadership roles during the Communist movement and made the revolution, hence they claim they are entitled to positions of responsibility in the post-revolutionary China. Top leadership posts also go to the veteran cadres because the Chinese Communists (with the exception of the radicals) still respect age and seniority, their criticism of Confucian ideas notwithstanding. It is well known in the PRC that those in the high positions enjoy many "perks," special privileges (e.g., education and job opportunities for children) and services (e.g., housing); naturally, they are reluctant to retire.

All of these factors have, furthermore, been reinforced by Chinese Communists' creed and organizational principles. The Party is the self-appointed "vanguard of the proletariat," it monopolizes political power and outlaws political opposition and is not subject to the pressures for change that operate in democratic societies. By the system of democratic centralism, those at the top are "centralizers" and they perpetuate themselves at the summit of power.

Like Mao, the "old guards" who are running China were master strategists and organizers of revolution. Whereas they excelled in the battlefield and were experts at creating organizations, conducting political campaigns, and manipulating human relations, their record and writings betray little genuine understanding of the requirements for China's industrialization and modernization. These revolutionary leaders were probably indispensable at the initial stages of post-revolutionary consolidation of power, but they have been awfully inadequate and deficient in providing leadership for China's modernization drive since then. With industrialization and its concomitants of higher educational attainment and increasing differentiation and specialization of function in the economy and the state administration, it would have been necessary to bring into the party leadership more and more of the new functional specialists. So far, this has not happened. In addition to the aforementioned reasons which hamper the upward political mobility of the junior members in the elite circles, the emphasis on redness over expertise and the anti-intellectual biases of Mao and many of the Veterans have operated against the recruitment of elite from the society at large. The failure of the power elite to co-opt the talented members of the better educated and technical intelligentsia into its ranks is likely to retard China's modernization efforts.
X. Looking Ahead

In some respects, the struggle for power in the Chinese political system in the post-Mao years has become less violent and more "routinized," now that the Chinese leaders try to establish and follow the "rules of the game." Hua's "resignation" provides a good illustration of this point, as well as an important precedent for the future. For the first time in more than three decades of Communist control, the Party Chairman has been toppled in accordance with some procedures, and his exit is accorded "courtesy," as Hua was allowed to "resign" and stay in the Politburo. In fact, already for a number of years now, it has been a fairly common practice not to totally disgrace the defeated political rivals — high officials ousted from positions of power have been allowed to keep the Politburo or Central Committee membership, or reassigned to less powerful or important posts.

Whether or not they still wield any real power would probably vary from one case to another. The point here is that they, unlike those "capitalist roaders" during the GPCR and the "gang of four" since October 1976, are not in jail or under house arrest. The effect of this would tend to create a growing body of "counter-elite" who can wait in the wings and plot their political comeback. Take the case of Hua who, at 60, is among the youngest in the Politburo today and still vigorous. In the years to come, he would still be seen as a Maoist standard bearer, the logical leader of the Maoists and the beneficiaries of the GPCR (most are "outs" or in eclipse) and, as such, will represent a political alternative to Hu Yaobang or whoever is in power. The existence of counterelite not only will place greater restraints on the incumbent but also will make it more difficult for him to consolidate his power.

Furthermore, partly because the consequences of defeat in a power struggle will not be death as was in Stalin's Russia, nor even a terrible sanction as was under Mao, personal and factional conflict in the post-Mao leadership has intensified. Factions and cliques existed in the CCP leadership in the course of the Communist movement. During the 1950s, the impact of personal historical associations and of factional conflict on policy was less salient, as the leadership was able to maintain a high degree of discipline and coherence. However, Mao's drive to recapture leadership control since the 1960s and his use of the tactics of "divide and rule, check and balance," while permitting him to maximize control, have fostered and intensified the factional cleavage. Such leadership division and
rivalry encouraged by Mao's manipulative approach appears to have outlived Mao and is likely to plague his successors for years to come.

One major debilitating development in China's political system in the past decade has been the fragmentation of leadership power. The trend was already evident in the final years of Mao's life but has deteriorated further in recent years. It is quite obvious that today Deng, not to mention Hu, lacks the authority of Mao to generate personal power, or the power of Mao to create personal authority. Mao was both the ruler and the high priest (chief ideologist) of Communist China — performing several important leadership roles (policy initiation, policy legitimization, conflict resolution and political integration) and the paramount function of a "law giver." In contrast, neither Deng nor Hu is an established ideologist, and no one in China today can combine all of Mao's roles. Unquestionably, there is a discernible decline in power and leadership status of Mao's successors. However prominent Deng may appear since 1978, he has been only first among the equals and has had to share his leadership roles with, and in turn constrained by, such leaders as Ye Jianying, Chen Yun, Li Xiannian and, to a lesser extent, Peng Zhen and Hua Guofeng, at one time or another. Hu wields even less power under Deng's shadow and, making virtue out of necessity, has preached collective leadership on many occasions. The fact that Chairman Hu no longer holds the position of Chairman of MAC seems to attest to increasing differentiation of leadership roles and fragmentation of power among Chinese elites.

Fragmentation of power can lead to many adverse consequences. It tends to breed leadership disunity and limits its capacity to map out and implement forcefully strong reform measures needed for many of China's deep-seated problems. The need to accommodate all factions and to compromise on divisive issues on personnel and policy has forced the Chinese leaders to "muddle through" without really taking unnecessary measures to solve problems. This in turn has adversely affected the ability of the regime to perform services and deliver goods to the society, thereby generating greater popular discontent. Chinese people are experiencing a severe crisis of belief, a crisis of confidence and a crisis of trust; these in turn contribute to a crisis of authority in Chinese leadership. The deepening of China's authority crisis has paradoxically compelled the regime to invoke the authority of Mao, even though that authority has already been tarnished and has been dysfunctional for a society striving for modernization. Moreover, the authority crisis diminishes the ability of the regime to elicit policy support and compliance through
persuasion, and may (and did) force the regime to turn to coercive means of control and pay special attention to the PLA to insure its loyalty to the party leadership.

Many indicators of a praetorian regime are apparent in the Chinese political system today.60 One such indicator is the propensity for the military to intervene in political arena. In response to the GPCR, the PLA was deeply and extensively involved in Chinese politics. In October 1976, the PLA thrust itself into the political arena again as it took part in the coup that ousted the radicals and threw its support behind Hua making him Mao's successor. The propensity for the PLA leaders to get involved in leadership conflict resolution or to intervene in political affairs is also evident in the publication of Huang Kecheng's article and several other editorials and commentaries in the Liberation Army Daily in recent months which attacked the Party's liberalization policy.

Although Deng has been remarkably successful in recent years in pushing the PLA "back to the barrack" and in keeping the PLA opposition in check, his success seems to be due more to personal factors (e.g., personal ties) and may thus be difficult to duplicate by others. Many precedents have been established for PLA intervention in a political struggle; moreover, the Chinese Communists have been unable or unwilling to maintain strict civil-military institutional boundaries. Thus, if the Chinese leadership fails to arrest and remove the trend toward praetorian politics, China's PLA leaders can be expected to intervene more forcefully in future leadership conflict. Like the 1976 coup, some of the PLA leaders could again play the role of "kingmakers," or some may even aspire to become kings themselves.

60. Some of the indicators are: political participation is "not moderated and channeled toward common goals by the reliable functioning of political institutions;" political institutions are "weak, lacking in the moral authority to work out binding, allocative decisions that will be regarded as legitimate by the society as a whole;" and there is "a tendency for the military to intervene in the political arena." See Claude E. Welch, Jr. and Arthur K. Smith, Military Role and Rule (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1974), p. 54. See also Samuel Huntingdon, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 196–197, for a similar definition.
THE NEW LEADERSHIP AFTER THE
12TH PARTY CONGRESS

When the Chinese Communists seized power in China in 1949, the new regime was then headed by a relatively young leadership nucleus which consisted of approximately 800 leaders.1 Mao Zedong was then in his mid-fifties, Premier Zhou Enlai was just over fifty, and Deng Xiaoping was still in his mid-forties. The passage of time and constant political conflict over the past three decades have taken a heavy toll of this elite group, and only about half of these 800 revolutionary leaders have survived. Nonetheless these veterans still retain firm control over China’s ship of state today.

Despite the vigorous campaign in recent years by Deng Xiaoping and his followers to remove the “old guard” from the levers of power and promote younger cadres of greater professional competence into leadership positions, their efforts have only been partially successful. True, at the Party Congress in September 1982, 172 veteran officials (both Deng’s supporters and his opponents) had willy-nilly stepped down from the Politburo, the Central Committee, and other front line positions of leadership and taken a back seat in the newly established Central Advisory Committee, which will have only advisory functions. However, numerous other leaders have stayed on in the Party’s top policy-making councils, defying Deng’s wish.

For example, out of the 25 Politburo members, 18 are holdovers, and out of these 18, six are in their 80’s and five more are in their late 70’s. The seven newly elected members are not much younger, with six of them over 70 years old and one at 67 (see Table ). All of the six members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the Party’s topmost decision-making body, are also “re-elected,” despite Deng’s earlier maneuver to kick upstairs Marshall Ye Jianying (86) and Li Xiannian (78) who have opposed Deng’s policies.

On the other hand, Deng and his supporters did achieve much of what they wanted at the Party Congress. They succeeded in removing from the Politburo ex-Party Chairman Hua Guofeng and several other leaders who were antagonistic to Deng’s reforms. Although unable to force the Party elders to retire from the Politburo, Deng elevated seven staunch supporters to the Politburo, thereby di-

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(37)
luting the strength of the opposition and ensuring the control of his backers and allies over this key policy-making body. 2

Furthermore, the Dengists have greatly strengthened their control over the central Secretariat, the strategic day-to-day decision-making organ, as a result of the recent reshuffle. 3 The Secretariat is headed by Deng's confidant and protege, General Secretary Hu Yaobang, officially the Party's ranking leader. Although Hu replaced Hua as Party Chairman in June 1981, that post, which Mao created and assumed in 1945, was abolished at the 12th Party Congress, thus symbolizing the close of Mao's era in the CCP history.

Likewise, the Dengists now dominate the new Central Committee (CC), which consists of 210 members and 138 alternates. Several salient characteristics of the new CC deserve attention. First, a total of 210 members, 96 full and 114 alternate members, or slightly more than 60 percent of the 12th CC, are newly elected. The large number of the new recruits, especially among the alternate CC members, are relatively young and followers of Deng. Hu has also elevated many of his cohorts to the CC. Secondly, 75 (50 full and 25 alternate) members or about 21 percent of the CC are from the PLA; in comparison with the make-up of the 11th CC, military representation has declined. This seems to underscore Deng's apparent desire to curtail the influence of the army which has become a center for opposition to his reforms in recent years. Thirdly, aside from the transfer of 64 former CC members to the Central Advisory Council, an additional 53 members and 80 alternate members of the 11th CC have been dropped.

In spite of the dominance of the Dengist forces in the new leadership, opposition persists. It should be emphasized that at the present stage there is no individual leader or political group on China's political horizon that could present a serious alternative to the present leadership. So far, the opposition consists of diverse elements,

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2. The seven additions are Wan Li, Xi Zhongxun, Yang Shangkun, Yang Dezhi, Hu Qiaomu, Song Renquiong and Liao Chengzhi; those dropped from the Politburo are Hua Guofeng, Keng Biao, Peng Chong, Xu Shiyou, Chen Yonggui and Liu Bocheng who is over 85 and asked to be relieved. Furthermore, Yao Yilin who is one of the two vice-premiers in the State Council and heads the State Planning Commission and Qin Jiwei, Commander of the Peking Military Region, are elected alternate Politburo members.

3. Six members of the Secretariat have been dropped—they are Xi Zhongxun, Yang Dezhi, Hu Qiaomu, and Fang Yi (all of them won seats at the Politburo); and Peng Chong and Wang Renzhong who have suffered political eclipse. Added to the Secretory are four secretaries, Yang Yung, Deng Liqun, Chen Pixian and Hu Qili, and two alternate secretaries, Qiao Shi and Hao Jianxiu.
and they have not coalesced. They have criticized, blocked, delayed or otherwise constrained Deng’s reform efforts, and for some years to come they may continue to do so.

It is probably true that Chinese politics has become more institutionalized in recent years as a result of the emphasis placed by the current leadership on rules and regulations. Even so, the system is still greatly dependent for its orderly operation on a few top leaders; and as its linchpin, Deng is precariously holding the pieces together.

An important question remains: after Deng dies, can Hu, Zhao Ziyang, Wan Li and other “second generation” leaders work together as a cohesive team? There are some signs from the reshuffled leadership personnel at the Party Congress that Hu has promoted his cohorts over other party officials and that Zhao’s friends have not fared that well. Will there be a power rivalry between Hu and Zhao in the future? Furthermore, can the present leadership perform and deliver, now that people’s expectations have been raised?

Indeed, the Chinese people expect many improvements in their lot, but they will not wait forever. Before too long, Deng and his associates must be able to deliver enough goods and services to enough people. They have to speed up economic growth, create new jobs, reduce unemployment, and raise living standards of substantial segments of Chinese society. Currently, more than 20 million educated youth are unemployed or hold only menial jobs, and a double-digit inflation in recent years has wiped out modest gains in urban and rural incomes. Indeed, the legitimacy and the staying power of the present leadership will hinge on its performance.

Almost two years have elapsed since Hu assumed the top party post in June 1981. Thus far he has operated very much in the shadow of his mentor, and his own leadership qualities have remained largely untested and unproven. As the ouster of ex-Party Chairman Hua has shown, the leader cannot be appointed from above, he has to prove his own leadership abilities and emerge from struggle. Although Hu enjoys Deng’s confidence and support, much as Hua received Mao’s imprimatur, Deng cannot be around forever to protect Hu.

Thus it is highly pertinent whether or not Hu can in time demonstrate his own stewardship and convince the nation that he deserves to be the leader. The next few years will be crucial for Hu to show whether he can deliver. If he fails to perform, he too could suffer Hua’s fate.
Table: China's Leadership Lineup


1. **Politburo**
   - **Chairman**: Hu Yaobang 66
   - **Vice-Chairman**: Ye Jianying 84, Deng Xiaoping 77, Zhao Ziyang 62, Chen Yun 76, Li Xiannian 76, Hua Guofeng 60
   - **Members**: Keng Biao 72, Wei Guoqing 75, Yu Qiuli 67, Peng Chong 66, Fang Yi 65, Ulanhu 78, Xu Xiangqian 79, Nie Rongzhen 82, Liu Bocheng 84, Deng Yingchao 78, Wang Chen 73, Peng Zhen 79, Xu Shiyou 75, Li Desheng mid-60s, Zhang Tingfa mid-60s, Ni Zhifu mid-50s, Chen Yonggui 63, Ni Zhifu mid-50s, Chen Muhua late 50s, Seypidin 65

2. **Secretariat**
   - **General Secretary**: Hu Yaobang 66, Yu Qiuli 67, Peng Chong 66, Fang Yi 65, Yang Dezhi 71, Yao Yilin 64, Wan Li 65, Gu Mu 67, Hu Qiaomu 69, Song Renqiong 72, Wang Renzhong 64, Xi Zhongxun 68
3. **State Council**

Premier
- Zhao Ziyang 62
- Wan Li 65
- Keng Piao 72
- Yu Qiuli 67
- Fang Yi 65
- Chen Muhua late 50s
- Yao Yilin 64
- Ji Pengfei 71
- Zhang Aiping 71
- Bo Yibo 74
- Kang Shien 65
- Ku Mu 67
- Huang Hua 66
- Yang Qingjen 76
II. **RESHUFFLED LEADERSHIP LINEUP AT 12TH PARTY CONGRESS**  
(S EPTEMBER 1982)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (as of 1983)</th>
<th>Concurrent Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Politburo (25 members and 3 alternate members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Politburo Standing Committee Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Yaobang 68</td>
<td>Chairman, Central Advisory Commission, Military Affair Commission (MAC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ye Jianying 86</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deng Xiaoping 79</td>
<td>Premier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zhao Ziyang 64</td>
<td>1st Secretary, Central Commission for Discipline Inspection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Li Xiannian 78</td>
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<td>Chen Yun 78</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Members (listed in the order of the number of strokes in their surnames)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wan Li 67</td>
<td>Vice-Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xi Zhongxun 70</td>
<td>Vice-chmn, National People's Congress (NPC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wang Chen 75</td>
<td>President, Higher Party School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wei Guoqing 77</td>
<td>Vice-chmn, NPC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulanhu 80</td>
<td>Vice-chmn, NPC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fang Yi 67</td>
<td>Counsellor of the State Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deng Yingchao (f) 80</td>
<td>Vice-chmn, NPC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age (as of 1983)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Li Desheng</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yang Shangkun</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yang Dezhi</td>
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