

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (1949-1999)

Era of Opening and Reform, 1979- 1999

In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

—James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 51

Much of the first decade of this period, from 1978 to 1989 was spent in a comprehensive effort to heal the wounds (including ceremonial rehabilitations and reversing formal actions taken earlier, outlawing public display of portraits of leaders in order to discourage the cult of the individual, etc.) and rebuild the strength of the country after the disasters and dislocations of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. The work proceeded on a broad array of efforts such as:

- rehabilitating those who had been slandered and persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, and restoring them to positions of useful contribution;
- redirecting the essential thrust of economic policies to steady and rational production and distribution, both in industry and agriculture;
- developing better mechanisms for finance, commerce, and trade;
- opening Chinese markets to imported goods and export of Chinese goods to foreign markets;
- reopening and rebuilding the educational and training structure and process—especially in science and technology; and
- building international contacts between Chinese cultural and economic organizations and those in other countries.

In agriculture particularly but also in other areas, incentives (anathema in the Maoist era) were deliberately and carefully employed to encourage personal hope and responsibility, while at the same time, a steady drumbeat of propaganda requiring patriotism and loyalty to the Communist Party was used to keep the opportunities for personal ambition from becoming disintegrating competition for personal advantage. This is a delicate and none-too-sure balancing act, for material incentives are centrifugal forces (as Mao Zedong feared). Lucien Pye has noted:

*The fundamental dynamic of Chinese politics is a continuous tension between the imperative of consensus and conformity on the one hand, and the belief, on the other hand, that one can find security only in special, particularistic relationships, which by their very nature tend to threaten the principle of consensus.*¹

At the same time, traumatic disillusion with the wisdom of the Communist Party, resulting from the experiences of the 1958-1978 era, left Chinese people groping for guidance and confidence. A strong tradition in China is that the people must rely on the wisdom of the rulers and the rulers must be wise to rule. Chinese clearly and

¹ Pye, Lucian W., *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain Publishers, Inc., 1981. 306p. ISBN 0-89946-133-6 (pbk)

earnestly want responsible government, but that does not necessarily mean democratic government. The people do not really want the responsibility of ruling themselves, but they become angry when the rulers rule badly. Corruption, especially favoritism and bribery began to overwhelm Party discipline, which was only just beginning to be restored by the central leadership. Ideally, Party discipline should not only mean earnest support and execution of central policies and programs but also fair dealing with the public. The first is easily distorted into mindless obedience and the second is easily neglected. Dissatisfied intellectuals and the less-educated public alike chafed under what seemed to be developing into a widening gap between the rulers and the ruled. Protests against corruption were linked with more idealistic calls for increased democracy. Arguments even within the *Zhongyang* swung back and forth about what to do. On the one hand “democracy” meant to many—especially those persecuted and then rehabilitated such as Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Ye Jianying, Yang Shangkun—the worst anarchic excesses of the Cultural Revolution, rather than the more controlled, rational “checks and balances” offered by the American system. They also felt it essential to maintain ties of legitimacy to Marxian socialism and the focus of their own revolution into which they had put so much effort and by which they had succeeded so well. Others, such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, felt that unless the people became more involved in their own government more rapidly, and unless the Party cleansed itself of corruption, there would be little positive economic development and perhaps dangerous disillusion and disintegration. The Party needed the enthusiasm as well as the obedience of the people in order to rule. The death of Hu Yaobang in April 1989 provided the stimulus for an outpouring of student dissent, evoking the spirit not only of the demonstrations for Zhou Enlai in 1976, but also the more distant May 4th Movement of 1919. It is an understatement to say that the Party handled the matter badly, and the bloody confrontations of June 4th were the consequence.

In place of a partnership between Party and People, the ruling argument became political stability being essential to national economic development, and that stability must take precedence over democratic participation. At the same time, the Party center (according to many Chinese sources) “got the message” and began both an earnest effort at rooting out corruption (or at any rate making public show of punishing some of the more egregious cases), and at the same time diversifying and broadening the base of information and cooperation on which Party decision-making had to rely. In American terms this was more of a strategy of “co-option” than encouragement of dissent, but it seems to have been effective. A far more collective leadership also emerged after 1989 and after the retirement and death of Deng Xiaoping, allowing the Party to minimize the effect of power struggles in the upper leadership that had been its chief characteristic for devolving power for half a century from its inception in the 1920s through the 1970s.

Most Chinese recognize this and are thankful for it. China is modernizing and people are generally better off than they have been at any time in the past three hundred years. There are still tensions and faults in the system that could shake the fragile foundations, but most Chinese are hoping for the success of a sort of benevolent neo-authoritarianism that is in the Confucian model grafted onto a strangely “revisionist” socialism “with Chinese Characteristics”.

Era of Opening and Reform, 1979-1999

—Transition phase, 1979-1989

1979

January

01 National People's Congress (NPC) standing committee issues message to people on Taiwan urging peaceful reunification and holding out promise of orderly increase in cross-strait relations, communications, travel, cultural exchanges, and trade. National Committee of the CPPCC follows suit, and Deng Xiaoping caps the approach with his own speech placing reunification squarely on the CPC/PRC agenda for the future.²

11 *Zhongyang* initiates rational reform of agricultural production, including establishment of “responsibility system” whereby farmers contract production targets; decides to remove discrimination against children of landlords, rich peasants, et al who had proven to be law-abiding and useful citizens

28 Deng Xiaoping flies to Washington, and later visits Johnson Space Center in Houston

also in January

Deng Xiaoping, finding the “democracy wall” movement not only no longer useful for his purposes of criticizing the Maoist remnants but also finding it a threat to his own (in his view) moderate-temperate development of modernizing China, cracks down on the movement

February 17-March 16

Chinese and Vietnamese border war; Chinese “surgical strike” incursion intended to “teach Vietnam a lesson” is tactically bungled and PLA units withdraw by March 16

March

30 Deng Xiaoping notes the existence of two erroneous schools of thought: those who continue to cling to the leftist mistakes of the Cultural Revolution period and attack the pragmatic line taken at the 11th *Zhongyang* 3rd plenum on the one hand, and others in the Party and the public who tended to “break away from Party leadership and into skepticism” (i.e., those like Wei Jingsheng); countering both, he affirms the “Four Cardinal Principles”: the socialist road; the people's democratic dictatorship (dictatorship of the proletariat); leadership by the Communist Party of China; and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought as essential elements of CPC and PRC philosophy of governance, and as the correct way to achieve the “Four Modernizations” (in agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology—put forth by Zhou Enlai in 1964 at the 3rd National People's Congress, 1st session).

September

25-28 11th *Zhongyang* 4th plenum; elects Peng Zhen and Zhao Ziyang to Politburo

November

02 at meeting of senior Party, government, and military officials, Deng Xiaoping calls for senior cadres to revive Party traditions and set good examples of hard work, plain living, close ties with the masses, and to refrain from seeking personal privileges, to select successors carefully,

² This position has been maintained steadily through the years since, and there has been a slow but significant increase in cross-strait contacts and dialogue. However, the PRC has always reserved as a sovereign right the possibility of the use of force to achieve unification, yet it has studiously avoided any indication of what circumstances might call for it.

and to pay attention to the well-being of the people (failure to heed this created problems that fueled the resentments that led to the Tian'anmen Square demonstrations of 1989)

12 *Zhongyang* reclassifies large numbers of small traders, peddlers, handicraftsmen as “laborers”, and disassociates them from larger industrial enterprises which were beginning to be transformed in some cases into joint public-private enterprises

1980

January

16 at a large meeting of cadres, Deng Xiaoping declares that the “four modernizations” and a sound economy can only be achieved by: (1) a firm and consistent political line instead of the quarrelsome contention of the past; (2) political stability; (3) a hard-working and pioneering spirit; (4) a contingent of cadres persistent in socialist orientation and with professional knowledge and competence, and attaining those four things requires upholding and improving Party leadership; and in this he was calling for reform as much as control

February

.23-29 11th *Zhongyang*, 5th plenum; concentrated on improving Party leadership; allowed Wang Dongxing and other remnants of the Maoist-cult to resign; elected Hu Yaobang (also appointed head of a newly-re-established Secretariat) and Zhang Ziyang (among others) to the standing committee of the Politburo, and rehabilitated the status of the deceased Liu Shaoqi, for whom a memorial ceremony was held

March

14-15 *Zhongyang* Secretariat forum on Tibet concentrates on Tibetan economic development

May

16 *Zhongyang* and State Council decide to set up “special economic zones” in Guangdong (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shantou) and Fujian (Xiamen)

August

18-23 Politburo enlarged meeting calls for seeping reforms designed to decrease concentration of practical decision-making power at the center and to involve wider participation from the grass-roots to the top [though still entirely within the framework of the Party and state socialism—for example factory managers to be responsible to local management committees for the production under their jurisdiction; work towards abolition of the job tenure for life assumption; bring in new, younger, and better educated cadres; etc.]

August 30-

September 10 5th National People's Congress, 3rd session; long-term program for economic development; endorsed *Zhongyang* proposal that Hua Guofeng (then Party Chairman) should not serve concurrently as premier of the State Council, and Zhao Ziyang was elected to that post.

November 10-

December 05 Politburo decides Hua Guofeng made too many leftist mistakes and he offers his resignation, which is accepted and to be formally ratified at the next plenum; Hu Yaobang proposed as *Zhongyang* Chairman, Deng Xiaoping as Chairman of Military Commission

1981

January

- 25 Special Court condemns Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqian to death, with two-year reprieves; sentences the following to prison: Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan, Chen Boda, Huang Yongsheng, Wu Faxian, Li Zuopeng, Qiu Huizuo, and Jiang Tengjiao
- 29 *Zhongyang* decision on media clearly establishes it as vehicle of Party propaganda, scores media for not promoting the Four Cardinal Principles effectively

February

- 28 Campaign to promote “civility” (emphasize: behavior, civility, hygiene, discipline, morals; beautify thoughts, words, deeds, environment). PLA at same time undertook campaign to emphasize ideals, socialist ethics, general knowledge, and professional competence, soldierly appearance and bearing, civility, and discipline, and to endure hardship and sacrifice)

May

- 11-21 4th Congress of Academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences meets and revives and reforms the Academy. Other such professional organizations were also being revived and formed (e.g. the Chinese Archives Society in November 1981).
- 29 Song Qingling (widow of Sun Zhongshan) passes

June

- 27-29 11th *Zhongyang* 6th plenum; sets the Party line on modern Chinese history; replaces Hua Guofeng with Hu Yaobang

August

- 26 In talking with Fu Chaoshu (“well-known in Hong Kong and Taiwan), Deng Xiaoping raises idea of “one country, two systems”

September

- 12 People’s Daily reports initial experiments with well-controlled direct elections at the county level begun in 1980
- 30 Ye Jianying gives Xinhua News Agency briefing on nine principles for peaceful unification of Taiwan with the motherland [See separate handout.]

November 30-

- December 13* 5th National People’s Congress, 4th session endorses ten principles for future economic transformation and development; adopts economic contract law, an income tax law for foreign enterprises, and a civil procedure law

1982

January

- 01 *Zhongyang* reports that the “responsibility system” of contracted production for agricultural workers (initiated in early 1979) had been put into place in over 90 percent of the production teams throughout the country [a production team was the basic level of organization in the commune system, below the production brigade]
- 11 *Zhongyang* recognizes the problem of corruption and smuggling, particularly in the southern provinces from Yunnan in the west to Fujian in the east, and demands the Party work to solve

the problem [This continues to plague Chinese civil society and government.]

- 11-13 Deng Xiaoping calls for streamlining over-staffed Party agencies; at the same time the *Zhongyang* calls for improvement in judicial and public security work; significant progress in this was reported before the end of the year, along with a new plan to retire older cadres to make room for new blood

March-April

Society of American Archivists study tour of Chinese archives at invitation of Chinese Archives Society

August

- 06 11th *Zhongyang* 7th plenum decides on agenda for 12th National Party Congress

September

- 01-11 12th National Party Congress consists largely of “pep-talks” by Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang on the modernization effort; but the congress also revised the Party constitution to remove the left-bias remaining in the 1978 revision from the Cultural Revolution era constitution of 1969

- 12-13 12th *Zhongyang* 1st plenum elects new leadership

- 13 Meetings of Party Advisory Commission, headed by Deng Xiaoping and Party Discipline Commission, headed by Chen Yun, set tone and agenda for their work

October

- 16 Chinese navy launches submarine-based missile

November 26-

- December 10* 5th National People’s Congress 5th session considers and adopts sixth five-year plan and revision of PRC constitution

December

- 30 *Zhongyang* steps up effort to remove and prevent the appointment of “three types of people” from management positions: followers of the Jiang Qing and Lin Biao line; those who were seriously factionalist in their thinking; and those who had indulged in beating, smashing, and looting

1983

February

- 10 Yang Shangkun reports to *People’s Daily* steps in the dual process of wedding the PLA closer to the Party and at the same time modernizing and improving the PLA’s military technology and strength [countering and in reaction to the line of Lin Biao which tried to use the PLA to control the Party and emphasized sheer manpower over modern technology and organization]

- 14 *Zhongyang* launches work to suppress “unhealthy tendencies” in the Party, such as “liberalism in politics, extreme individualism in ideology, sectarianism in organization, and bureaucracy in style of work’ [reminiscent of the early “3-anti” campaign, but carefully and narrowly focused on the Party instead of the people at large—see chronology for January 1952; indicates rifts in the Party itself that rupture in 1989].

March

- 13 *Zhongyang* marks centenary of death of Marx
21 national conference stresses shift from profit share deliveries to taxation as means of contribution to the state from industry and transportation enterprises

June

- 06-21 6th National People's Congress, 1st session. Li Xiannian elected President of the PRC, Peng Zhen elected chairman of the NPC standing committee; Zhao Ziyang appointed premier of the State Council, elected Deng Xiaoping as chairman of the Military Commission of the PRC [note: this marks shift in form if not in fact of the military commission from the party to the state]³

October

- 11-12 12th *Zhongyang* 2nd plenum focuses on rectification of Party organization and work—to unify thinking, rectify work style, tighten discipline, and purify organization; Deng Xiaoping warns against “spiritual pollution”, saying that most theorists, writers, and artists are “good or relatively good” and only a few are guilty of spreading spiritual pollution, and their mistakes have not been severely criticized and steps have not been taken to stop them, and this could be so damaging as to bring disaster upon the country and the people [see earlier warnings about “unhealthy tendencies”, February 14]
12 *Zhongyang* and State Council separate commune management from township government
21-26 *Zhongyang* tells carefully-invited non-Party members that Party rectification applies only to solving problems within the Party, but invites their comments [a subtler and more controlled form of “hundred flowers” of the 1950s]

December

- 22 *Zhongyang* reports progress in “readjusting” (staff-reduction) of leading bodies at the provincial and prefectural levels
26 activities marking the 90th birthday of Mao Zedong underscore the disassociation of Mao the revolutionary leader and architect of the CPC and PRC from Mao the megalomaniac of the Cultural Revolution

1984

[Note: Many of the same themes from 1983 occupied the central government in 1984-1988, with additional meetings and reports, instructions, circulars, etc., restructuring the Party, government, economic enterprises, and educational institutions, and diffusing responsibility, all aimed at more rational development.]

April

Border skirmishes between PLA and Vietnamese forces in Yunnan

May

- 15-31 6th National People's Congress, 2nd session: restructuring the economy and opening to the outside; establishes Hainan Administrative Region (separating Hainan Island from Guangdong Province); passed laws on regional national autonomy and military service

³ There is a curious back-and-forth in the status of some agencies; for example, the Central Archives, long under the General Office of the *Zhongyang*, has transferred to the General Office of the State Council and then back again to the Party between 1978 and 2002.

September

- 26 PRC and UK jointly announce plans for restoration of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty as of 1 July 1997; declaration embodies concept of “one country, two systems”; Zhao Ziyang and Margaret Thatcher sign the joint declaration in Beijing

October

- 20 12th *Zhongyang* 3rd plenum. Decision on reform of the economic structure to integrate basic tenets of Marxism with actual conditions in China [“socialism with Chinese characteristics”]; identifies a “commodity economy” as a stage on the way to a socialist economy (planned economy with public ownership)

1985

February

- 26 *Zhongyang* General Office issues report on “recruiting large numbers of outstanding intellectuals into the Party”

February 28-

March 06 Conference of *Zhongyang* Central Commission for Guiding Party Consolidation stresses checking “unhealthy tendencies” by Party and government departments and cadres: abuse of power; engaging in commerce; running enterprises;⁴ engaging in speculation; profiteering and reselling of goods in short supply; arbitrary raising prices against policy; issuing excessive bonuses and allowances; willful raising of wages; lavish parties and gifts at public expense; extravagance and waste; deception and lip service to policies; addiction to formalistic practices; arbitrary issuing of lottery tickets; selling goods with rebates; post and rank escalation; circulation of unhealthy broadsheets; etc. [This list marks practices that are still endemic today but practiced more discreetly and subtly so as not to call excessive attention to them, and very often co-opting the inspectors and auditors in the activities so they can’t report and complain.]

March 27-

April 10 6th National People’s Congress, 3rd session; adopts “Law of Succession of the PRC”, decides to set up drafting committee for a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Basic Law, entrusts State Council with authority to work out provisional rules and regulations on reform of the economic structure and opening to the outside world

May

- 27 *Zhongyang* issues decision on reform of the educational structure with emphasis on local responsibility and promotion of vocational and technical education and placement of college graduates

May 23-

June 06 Military Commission, enlarged meeting, plans to reduce PLA by one million men

September

- 16 12th *Zhongyang*, 4th plenum; plans for national party conference (below)
18-23 CPC National Conference promotes *Zhongyang* proposals for the seventh five-year plan
24 12th *Zhongyang*, 5th plenum; elects and ratifies new leadership changes

⁴ Note case of the archival preservation materials factory in the basement of the Tianjin Municipal Archives Bureau.

November

26 General offices of *Zhongyang* and State Council warn against unhealthy practices such as vying with each other to buy impressive foreign cars and aimlessly sending personnel abroad

1986

March 25-

April 12 6th National People's Congress, 4th session approves seventh five-year plan, principles of civil law, compulsory education law (9 years), and a law on foreign enterprises

June

15-18 national conference of provincial governors discusses reform of the labor system, reform of leadership in state enterprises, reviews economic progress in first half of 1986 and plans for second half

September

28 12th *Zhongyang* 6th plenum; adopts "Resolution on Guiding Principles for Building a Socialist Society with an Advanced Culture and Ideology"

Basic principle: socialist culture and ideology are capable of pushing modernization, modernization, and opening to the outside world;

Fundamental task: train socialist citizens with lofty ideals and moral integrity and encourage them to become better educated and cultivate a strong sense of discipline;

Other tasks: mobilize and unite people of all of China's nationalities with common aspirations; cultivate and enrich socialist ethics; intensify education in socialist democracy, legality, and discipline; universalize education, disseminating general and scientific knowledge; emphasizing guiding role of Marxism; defining duties of Party organizations and members

November

09 Deng Xiaoping in talking with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone notes necessity for reform of the political structure but that no plan has yet been developed—but it should have three elements: ensure continued vitality of the Party and the state; eliminate bureaucracy and increase efficiency; encourage initiative of grass-roots units and the people

December

Student demonstrations and protests against manipulated elections at universities and localities erupt in Hefei, Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing, and other cities, despite warnings; calls for more democracy [see also 1987, January]

30 in conversation with Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang and others, Deng Xiaoping in reference to the student democracy protests insists on holding firm to the Four Cardinal Principles, otherwise "bourgeois liberalization will spread unchecked . . . IN developing our democracy we cannot simply copy bourgeois democracy or introduce the system of balance of three powers . . . Bourgeois liberalization means rejection of the Party's leadership; there would be nothing to unite our one billion people, and the Party itself would lose all power to fight."

1987

January

Students from Beijing universities hold rally in Tian'anmen Square to protest for greater democracy; Hu Yaobang, a strong critic of Maoist excesses and promoter of reform, resigns his post as general secretary of the *Zhongyang* under criticism from his fellow leaders; Zhao Ziyang is appointed to replace him; leading promoters of the democracy idea were expelled from the Party: Wang Ruowang of the Shanghai Writer's Association, Fang Lizhi, president of China Science and technology University, Liu Binyan, reporter of the *People's Daily* and vice-chairman of the Chinese Writers' Association

28 *Zhongyang* issues circular on combating bourgeois liberalization

March

08-15 at State Education Commission working conference, Li Peng (State Council minister for education) instructs all to focus on two tasks in 1987: combat bourgeois liberalization and continue reforms in education

26 China and Portugal issue joint declaration for return of Macao as of 20 December 1999.

October

20 12th *Zhongyang* 7th plenum accepts Hu Yaobang's resignation; sets date for 13th Party Congress; proposes revisions to Party constitution; approves general plan for political reform

October 25-

November 01 13th National Party Congress, endorses "socialism with Chinese characteristics, and rapid pace of economic reform; and maintains that though China is indubitably and must remain a socialist society, it is still in first stage of socialism; calls for further separating functions of government and Party, delegating more power to lower levels, and other restructuring and reforms; and for the first time in its history there were more candidates on the ballot than positions on the *Zhongyang* to be filled, and 175 members and 110 alternate members were elected to the 13th *Zhongyang*. This is the first Party Congress at which Western reporters were invited to be observers.

November

02 13th *Zhongyang* 1st plenum; election of politburo, politburo standing committee, and other offices; Zhao Ziyang confirmed as new general secretary

12-24 6th NPC standing committee accepts Zhao Ziyang's resignation as premier and appoints Li Peng acting premier [Note: This, apparently, is an agreed-upon transition rather than a forced resignation]

1988

March

15-19 13th *Zhongyang* 2nd plenum proposes lists of candidates to be leaders of government organs and candidates to be leaders of the CPPCC, for presentation to the forthcoming 7th NPC and 7th National Committee of the CPPCC

March 25-

April 13 7th National People's Congress, 1st session. Elects Yang Shangkun president of the PRC, with Wang Zhen as vice-president; Wan Li chairman of the standing committee of the NPC,

Deng Xiaoping chairman of the Military Commission of the CPC *Zhongyang*; approved state-owned enterprises law, Chinese-foreign cooperative enterprises law, a drafting committee for the basic law for a Macao special administrative region, established Hainan Province and Hainan Special Economic Zone.

*[Meetings for the rest of the year concentrated on economic and political reform; other major concerns at this time were inflation, low grain production, labor unrest (largely due to inflation), graft, unregulated population movements, rapid population growth, and illiteracy.]*⁵

1989

February

25-26 US President George Bush (Sr.) visits China; Deng Xiaoping stresses necessity of internal stability for development success; warns that without stability, what has already been achieved could be lost

March

05 Tibetan uprising; martial law imposed in Lhasa; rebellion is quashed

March 20-

April 04 7th National People's Congress, second session; economic development and reform.

April

15 Hu Yaobang dies. 15-24 Student unrest, calling for elimination of corruption and promotion of democracy, focused on mourning for Hu Yaobang, who had been champion of rapid reform; Beijing Municipal Party Committee asks *Zhongyang* for help to solve the problem; *Zhongyang* urges Beijing to "arouse the masses to stabilize the situation"

25 Deng Xiaoping opines that it is "not merely student unrest but a political turmoil aimed at negating the Party's leadership and the socialist system"

26 People's Daily and large meetings of cadres call for a firm stand to stop the turmoil

May

04 Zhao Ziyang takes position that students don't really mean to oppose the fundamental system but to urge the government to get rid of maladies in its work; big-character posters and student demonstrations underscore Zhao Ziyang's interpretation, demand recognition of the Autonomous Union of University Students as a legal organization

13-19 Student demonstrations swell, include students from outside Beijing; hunger strike launched; explicit criticisms of Deng Xiaoping appear

15-18 USSR President Gorbachev visits Beijing

19 joint meeting of central government and Beijing cadres and leadership prompts decision to declare martial law in parts of Beijing and to call in troops from other localities to help public security and people's armed police

20 Martial law declared

⁵ See *History of the Chinese Communist Party*, pages 484-495, and Spence: *The Search for Modern China*, p. 735.

June

- 03 troops move into city and take up positions
- 04 troops move to clear Tian'anmen Square; subsequent rioting, chiefly in the Xidan area west of Tiananmen Square results in great loss of life and property on both sides
- 05 *Zhongyang* and State Council declare victory; follow up with meetings and announcements to reconsolidate and reaffirm the “four cardinal principles: and CPC authority; begin steps to follow up and punish ringleaders of the demonstrations, some of whom manage to escape and flee to the West
- 23-24 13th *Zhongyang* 4th plenum; Zhao Ziyang’s mistakes in supporting “the turmoil” criticized (with Li Peng taking the point as the main speaker on behalf of the Politburo), and Zhao is dismissed from the *Zhongyang* and its Politburo and from his leadership posts; Jiang Zemin becomes general secretary; Song Ping and Li Ruihuan are elected to the Politburo standing committee; Li Ruihuan and Ding Guan’gen are added to the Secretariat. Hu Qili and Rui Xingwen, allies of Zhao, are removed from their positions. The prescription for correcting the situation was decided to be:
- ① stop turmoil, quell counter-revolutionary rebellion, distinguish between contradictions of two different types;⁶
 - ② continue policy of economic improvement, opening and reform, and sustained orderly development;
 - ③ enhance ideological work and education in socialism, national independence and self-reliance, plain living and hard work, and oppose bourgeois liberalism in real earnest;
 - ④ enhance building the Party, democracy, and the legal system, resolutely penalize corruption and accomplish some things of popular concern so as to live up to the people’s expectations of the Party.

WWM comment: *This packaged “club sandwich” of two “sticks” (points ① and ③) and two “carrots” (points ② and ④) is what the Party offers and insists on as the political fare for the Chinese people, which they must accept if they want both stability for their own interests as well as the nation’s and if they want both personal prosperity and national dignity. If the people eschew rebellion and devote themselves to the Party’s ideology, the Party will not only press forward with economic development and opening and reform, but will do some things to make the system (including the Party itself) more responsive, less corrupt, and more democratic within a predictable framework of law. Chinese I have talked to tell me this is not Party perfidy, seeking selfish power, but rather a reasonable trade-off of power and progress, and the best “meal” that China—not just the Party—can afford. But it is not a voluntary (bourgeois liberal) “social contract” between equals; it is take it and make the best of it, or reap the whirlwind.*

⁶ That is, contradictions among the people and contradictions between the enemy and ourselves—harking back to Mao Zedong’s essay on contradictions.

July

10 commenting on a State Education Commission paper on issues in the work of institutions of higher education, the *Zhongyang* and State Council noted that what sort of people ought to be trained has always been problematic—fundamentally so; and urges earnest attention to putting socialism foremost in learning and in school atmosphere and discipline, not to be subsumed under all the rest of the things that are taught.

WWM comment: *This, in a somewhat refined, modified form, is essentially the issue of the Yan'an forum on arts and literature in the 1940s, that whatever intellectual activity there is, even if it is not exclusively devoted to the proletarian cause (as Mao Zedong insisted), must nevertheless be subordinated to the Party line and the Party line must be sustained in all cases, and must never be allowed to be overwhelmed by creative scholastic and artistic endeavor. It is not far removed in difficulty from the insistence on the part of some religious institutions in the West that the principles of the religion (and the orthodox behavior they preach) should take precedence over whatever science and art may do and wherever they may lead. The analogy may be carried a step further: like preachers in the US, the Party seems to insist that propaganda can convince people to follow its lead, and the more earnest and insistent and true to core doctrine the teaching is the better.*

August

15 Supreme People's Court and Supreme People's Procuratorate issue a circular limiting the time that criminals (including grafters, bribe-takers, and speculators) may have to confess their crimes.

WWM comment: *In Chinese law, the obligation of the accused to admit to crimes and thereby join in restoring harmony to society is the main focus; and, sometimes a long time is used waiting for such a confession to come forth voluntarily, or under various degrees of persuasion—which, unfortunately in some cases goes to extremes of badgering, discomfort, and even torture. Fundamentally, Chinese believe this is better than “proving” a case against someone by evidence. This limiting of the time available for a voluntary confession before a case based on evidence is prosecuted (and with the implicit threat of increasing personal discomfort at further delay), is a kind of turning up the heat on those accused to be cooperative.⁷*

28 Politburo meeting stresses need for cadres at all levels to rectify their style of work to support the Party's basic line so that problems can be solved and new troubles are not left unsolved to become hidden dangers.

⁷ Austin Coates, son of the British composer, Eric Coates, served for some time as a magistrate for Chinese cases in Hong Kong. He has written: “If, instead of pursuing hard and fast legal judgments—good for one party, bad for the other—one aimed for generally unsatisfactory compromises based on this imprecise principle of benevolence, there was a fair likelihood of unexpectedly harmonious results.”

September

07 *Zhongyang* launches re-registration of Party members (selectively—“in some units”) as a rectification device to weed out political dangers and corrupt elements, thus maintaining “the purity of the Party as a vanguard”.

October

30 PLA sentries at crossroads and overpasses are withdrawn; People’s Armed Police replace PLA in guarding Tian’anmen Square

November

06-09 13th *Zhongyang* 5th plenum meets after 4-day preparatory meeting by the Politburo, endorses general program of economic development, rectification, and reform. Deng Xiaoping asks (in a letter of September 4) to step down as chairman of the Military Commission, and his resignation is approved. Jiang Zeming is chosen (on Deng Xiaoping’s recommendation) to replace him.

December

.30 *Zhongyang* issues a statement asserting that the Chinese multi-party system (minority parties cooperative and participatory under the leadership of the CPC—like minority nationalities participating in the work of the state under the leadership of the NPC and State Council) is different (and by inference better) than the Western models of multiple contending parties or one-party states.

WWM comment: *This is part of what the Chinese mean by their system having distinctive “Chinese characteristics”. It is also obviously aimed to counter “bourgeois liberal” tendencies in China.*

Era of Opening and Reform, 1979- . . .

—Consolidation phase, 1990- . . .

1990

January

- 05-10 *Zhongyang* Propaganda Department and Ministry of Culture combine call for promoting Chinese national culture and the arts with a call to campaign against pornography.
- 11 martial law is lifted from Beijing and other cities
- 18 Ministry of Public Security announces release of 573 lawbreakers who confessed their roles in “the turmoil” and who had “shown willingness to mend their ways.”

February

- .13-17 drafting committee agrees on text of “Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Basic Law”, which Deng Xiaoping calls “a creative masterpiece . . . of historic significance”.
- .16-19 Jiang Zemin, at a national meeting of heads of organization departments of provincial Party committees, declares: “We have realized from the turmoil and the counter-revolutionary rebellion which happened last year that the leadership of the Party and government organizations at all levels should be placed firmly in the hands of people loyal to Marxism.”
[Note: This does not necessarily mean only Party members; independents and minority party people are appointed to government positions if they are considered “loyal to Marxism”.]

March

- .09-12 13th *Zhongyang*, 6th plenum adopts seven points to “strengthen the Party’s contact with the masses”:
- ① Stick to the principle of “from the masses to the masses”; establish and perfect democratic and scientific policies and the policy-making process, and guarantee policies and their implementation to suit the people’s interest;
 - ② Stick to the practice that leaders at all levels should often go to the grass roots and to the masses to do work there in a down-to-earth manner and to carry out earnestly the Party’s line, principles, and policies;
 - ③ Strengthen the socialist democracy and legal system while deepening the reform in the political structure and actively open up and widen the contact channels between the Party and the people;
 - ④ Continue unswervingly to strengthen the practice of an honest and clean government and improve the Party’s work style, carry forward the spirit of plain living and hard struggle, and overcome corruption and other negative factors;
 - ⑤ Set up and perfect the supervision over leading organs and leaders at all levels;
 - ⑥ Give full play to the role of the Party organizations at the grass-roots level as fighting bastions and the role of the Party members as advanced models, unite with and organize the masses and lead them to advance together;
 - ⑦ Carry out education in Marxist mass viewpoint in the Party, enhance the consciousness in carrying out the Party’s mass line.

WWM comment: This indicates an intent more to broaden the base of support and keep the Party realistic in its policies than to invite contentious participation.

March 20-

April 04 7th National People's Congress, 3rd session adopts Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Basic Law; accepted resignation of Deng Xiaoping from chairmanship of the Military Commission and elected Jiang Zemin to the post, with Liu Huaqing as vice-chairman.

April

07 Chinese "Long March" rocket orbits an American "Asiasat" communications satellite

30 Li Peng orders martial law lifted in Lhasa

May

25 *Zhongyang* issues regulations and encourages "criticism and self-criticism" among Party leaders as a regular way of maintaining Party strength and discipline.

September 22-

October 07 Twenty-first Asian Games held in Beijing

October

22-26 national anti-pornography conference

December

06-12 National working conference on Taiwan calls for increased contacts

25-30 13th *Zhongyang* 7th plenum considers the "ten-year program- and eighth five-year plan for national economic and social development

WWM Note: My principal source for many of the foregoing details, *History of the Chinese Communist Party: A Chronology of Events 1919-1990* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991) ends at this point, and so does this chronology.