

Recent Developments

The 12th Congress of the Communist Party of China*

Lowell Dittmer

On 1 September 1982, 1,545 delegates and 145 alternates convened the 12th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. The meeting was announced in advance (at the seventh plenum of the 11th Central Committee, held in Beijing 4–10 August) and proceeded with well-rehearsed smoothness to its scheduled adjournment 15 days later. The meeting agenda conformed closely to established protocol, consisting of speeches and work reports, discussion and adoption of a new Party constitution, culminating in the election of new members to the Central Committee and other “standing” (i.e. permanently tenured) positions and convention of the first plenary meetings of these organs. The meeting began on 1 September with a relatively brief opening speech by Deng Xiaoping, the presiding chairman (though in a typical gesture to collective leadership there were no less than nine other presiding chairmen), and was followed by Hu Yaobang’s comprehensive report and by speeches or reports by Ye Jianying, Chen Yun, Li Xiannian and others. These documents were all published as part of a general effort at greater publicity that included prior announcement of the dates of convention and adjournment, invitation of more than 70 responsible persons from democratic parties, non-Party patriots and other well-known personages from various circles to attend as observers (as had been done previously during the Eighth Congress), fairly detailed reporting of the election of deputies, their assembly and daily activities, arrangements and so forth, and even a sort of press conference that Zhu Muzhi, spokesman of the conference, held for Chinese and foreign reporters – although no foreign Communist Party members or foreign journalists were permitted to attend the Congress itself.¹

The Congress was convened amid high expectations of structural reform (which were, however, only partially met), and its spokesmen attributed to it an historical watershed role comparable to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Deng deemed it the most important since the Seventh Congress in 1945. The 12th Congress was clearly marked off from its immediate predecessors by its ideological stance: the Ninth and Tenth Congresses, both held during the Cultural Revolution decade, were “erroneous ideologically, politically, and organizationally.”² Although the 11th Congress officially

* I wish to thank the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, for financial support, and Saulun Yeung for research assistance.

1. Xinhua, Beijing, 6 September 1982, as translated in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*, I:173 (7 September 1982), pp. K11–12.

2. Tian Fu and Wang Zhixin, “A brief review of the CCP National Congresses,” *Renmin ribao*, 30 August 1982, pp. 4–5.

terminated the Cultural Revolution and purged followers of the “gang of four” from its ranks, it mistakenly endorsed the general line which had provided an ideological rationale for the Cultural Revolution, thereby inhibiting modification of the radical policy agenda. Even the heretofore vaunted Eighth Congress, which, *inter alia*, elevated Deng Xiaoping to the central leadership, was by implication flawed, for although its line was correct, that line was not subsequently adhered to “because the Party was not adequately prepared ideologically for all-round socialist construction at that time.”³ The Seventh Congress, on the other hand, was in Deng’s view “the most important one in the period of democratic revolution since the founding of our Party.” And the 12th Congress was comparable to the Seventh in that just as the former had followed a period of prolonged crisis (*viz.* the War of National Resistance and the Second Civil War), the latter followed a protracted period of ideological extremism:

Just as the 20-odd years of tortuous development of our democratic revolution before the Seventh Congress taught the whole Party how to grasp the laws governing that revolution in China, so the 20-odd years of tortuous development of our socialist revolution and construction after the Eighth Congress taught the whole Party profound lessons.⁴

In another historical analogy, the current juncture was compared to the 1927 debacle following the Northern Expedition or the 1934–35 Long March, two ordeals in which the Party’s very survival was at stake:

Historical transitions such as this happened twice during the period of new democratic revolution led by the CPC. The first took place when the northern expeditionary war failed and the war of agrarian revolution started. The other happened when the fifth “encirclement and suppression” failed and the war of resistance against Japanese aggression started. In the course of those two historic transitions, when the revolution was seriously frustrated and the Party and the people suffered disastrous losses of strength it was not only the enemy who thought we were doomed to defeat, but the people within the Party also became pessimistic and vacillated and even rebelled. But our Party was not overcome by these enormous difficulties. Rather, led by many outstanding personalities represented by Comrade Mao Zedong, our Party carried out strenuous struggle with revolutionary courage and resourcefulness, revolutionary tenacity and correct strategy and tactics, and reversed the situation of defeat and initiated a new situation which the revolutionary cause victoriously developed.⁵

Not until the third plenum of the 11th Central Committee had the Party “restored its correct policies in the economic, political, cultural and other fields of work and adopted a series of new and correct policies after studying the new situation and new experience.”⁶ These correct policies had been reaffirmed at the fifth and sixth plenums of the 11th Congress, which eliminated the influence of those “whateverists” who had sought

3. “Deng Xiaoping’s address.” Xinhua, Beijing, 1 September 1982, in *FBIS*, I:170 (1 September 1982), pp. K1–4.

4. *Ibid.*

5. “Historic transition, historic meeting,” *Renmin ribao*, editorial, 31 August 1982.

6. *Ibid.*

to maintain greater continuity with Maoist policies, and were now being consolidated at the 12th Congress. These policies comprised the "foundation" on which Chinese stability and growth would be based until the end of this century, Hu Yaobang estimated: "I am not 100 per cent sure of it, but at least 90 per cent." His confidence is based on his assumption that "we have drawn the necessary lessons of history," along with the Party's return to principles of "democratic centralism and a system of collegial management," allegedly neglected by Hua Guofeng as well as by Mao.⁷

The measures to which such crucial importance is being attached and in which such devout faith is expressed may for the sake of exposition be grouped into three categories. The first consists of structural changes in central political organs, as outlined in the new Party constitution. The second consists of a new policy agenda. The third consists of personnel changes, as reflected in elections and appointments to central policy-making organs.

Structure

A great deal of care was devoted to the formulation and revision of the Constitution, resulting in a document about twice the length of the one it replaces (the Constitution of the 11th Party Congress consisted of five chapters and 19 articles, that of the 12th of 10 chapters and 50 articles). According to the *People's Daily* editorial that accompanied its publication, "The new Party constitution is the best Party constitution since the founding of our Party."⁸ The drafting process was correspondingly lengthy and elaborate. The Central Committee appointed a committee in the winter of 1979 from the Organization Department, the Central Party School, and the Research Office of the General Office of the Central Committee, and this revision committee began formal preparations in January 1980 at the instigation of Deng Xiaoping. The first draft was presented the following month for discussion at the fifth plenum. After revising the draft to accord with suggestions offered, the newly established Secretariat distributed it throughout the Party for further discussions. Based on suggestions submitted at this reading, the revision group prepared a second draft in May 1982. The following month, the Secretariat distributed this draft to the Party committees of various provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions and various military departments; and to all the delegates to the 11th National Congress. In July the revision group made their third revision based on the suggestions submitted on this draft. The third revised draft was read and approved by the seventh plenum and then finally submitted to the 12th Congress. After incorporating final

7. Hu Yaobang interview with AFP delegation, in British Broadcasting Corporation, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, Pt. III: *The Far East*, FE 7113/C/1, 25 August 1982 (hereafter AFP interview).

8. "Build the Party into a strong core for leading the cause of socialist modernization," *Renmin ribao*, editorial, 10 September 1982.

revisions offered during discussions, the 12th Congress “ unanimously approved ” the final revised draft on 6 September.⁹

The leadership has been aware for some time of the existence of such organizational flaws as “ over-concentration of power, proliferation of concurrent and deputy posts, organizational overlapping, lack of clear-cut job responsibility, overstaffing and failure to separate Party work from government work,”¹⁰ and in a major reform proposal introduced in August 1980 Deng Xiaoping himself advanced a number of audacious new ideas for the reform of central governmental and Party organs. Those governmental reform proposals that survived the process of legislative revision were incorporated into the March 1982 Draft State Constitution, and surviving Party reform proposals appear in the constitution of the 12th Party Congress. The general thrust of the reform proposals for both Party and state is towards the “ institutionalization and legalization of socialist democracy ” (*shehui zhuyi minzhu zhiduhua faluhua*).¹¹ The spectre haunting the reformers is a recurrence of the Cultural Revolution: they are operating on the premise that this misfortune was caused by an excessive concentration of power in the hands of the “ gang of four ” (or, implicitly, Mao Zedong), and that the concomitant solution involves dispersion of power among institutions designed to check and balance one another. The reorganization of the state structure also involved a sweeping retrenchment of staff personnel, but this was less evident in the Party reform package described here. The two aspects of the reform thrust that were clearly in evidence were movements towards a separation of powers, and towards greater intra-Party democracy.

The movement towards greater separation of powers was manifest in the attempt at functional separation of Party and state, at the elimination of the chairman system, and in the division of the Central Committee into three concurrent organs: the Central Committee, the Commission for the Inspection of Discipline (*jilu jiancha weiyuanhui*), and the Central Advisory Committee (*guwen weiyuanhui*). The logic of the functional separation of powers between state and Party is conceptually somewhat similar to the separation of powers between executive and legislative branches in a parliamentary system, in so far as the Party (like the legislature) is to be concerned with the formulation of policy while the government (like the executive) functions to execute the laws. Except in special circumstances, the Party branch should play only

9. “ Hu Qiaomu on the significance of the new Constitution,” Xinhua, Beijing, 13 September 1982, in *FBIS*, 14 September 1982, pp. K3-12.

10. “ Hu Yaobang’s report to the 12th Party Congress,” Xinhua, Beijing, 7 September 1982, in *FBIS*, I:174 (8 September 1982), pp. K1-30.

11. Liao Gailong, “ The reform plans of the Chinese Communists in 1980,” *Qishi niandai (The Seventies)*, No. 3 (March 1981), pp. 38-48. For a translation of the original address, see Deng Xiaoping, “ A speech at the enlarged meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee (delivered on 18 August, passed after discussion by the Politburo of the Central Committee on 31 August),” in *Issues and Studies*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (March 1981), pp. 81-103. For a perceptive analysis, see Shen Si, “ Restoration, not reform: on the PRC’s Geng Shen reform,” *Zhong Bao Monthly* (Hong Kong), No. 18 (July 1981), pp. 19-22.

a “ guarantory and supervisory role ” vis-à-vis the functional unit. In the words of Hu Yaobang:

The Party is not an organ of power which issues orders to the people, nor is it an administrative or production organization. The Party should, of course, exercise leadership over production, construction and work in all other fields. . . . But Party leadership is mainly political and ideological leadership in matters of principle and policy and in the selection, allocation, assessment and supervision of cadres. It should not be equated with administrative work and the direction of production by government organs and enterprises.¹²

Whether this theoretical division of labour functions in practice of course remains to be seen (even in parliamentary systems it is now honoured more in the breach than in the observance). Hu notes that “ some members of our Party committees think that there will be nothing for them to do if they don’t handle concrete administrative work,” and indeed, it will prove to be a delicate balancing act to stay closely in touch with the production process and to supply leadership and manage personnel questions without actually running things.

Elimination of the chairmanship system, comprising the position of chairman of the Party and a variable number of vice-chairmen, was justified partly in terms of eliminating functional duplication.¹³ The elimination of the chairman leaves the general secretary as *de facto* leader of the Party, thereby bringing the CCP leadership into greater structural similarity with Soviet and East European models. Formally, the general secretary chairs only the Secretariat, however, and has only the power to “ convene ” meetings of the Party Political Bureau and its Standing Committee, and thus, it is argued, his relative power (and the concomitant possibility of a renaissance of the “ personality cult ” problem) is reduced. This new arrangement should also, however, facilitate a more clearcut functional division between the Party and state leadership. As Hu told a visiting delegation of French journalists, Zhao Ziyang will concentrate on economic problems while he handles Party and political affairs. If this division of labour functions as designed, it should relegate the Political Bureau (which early rumours had consigned to oblivion) to a role as a “ board of directors ” – in fact, in this same interview Hu revived the old distinction between a “ front line ” (viz. the Secretariat, which will be presided over “ by myself and by comrade Zhao Ziyang,” according to Hu) and a “ second line ” (viz. the Political Bureau, which will henceforth deal only with those matters requiring a

12. “ Hu Yaobang’s report.”

13. As Hu Qiaomu notes in his explication, “ The role of a convener is obviously different from that of a chairman. Thus, it will be difficult for the phenomenon in which power is overconcentrated and arbitrary decisions are adopted by an individual to occur . . . where there are both a chairman and a general secretary, one of them would usually be nominal.” “ Hu Qiaomu on the significance of the new Constitution,” Xinhua, Beijing, 11 September 1982. The second reason is specious, for during the period from 1945 to 1956 the CCP had both a chairman and a secretary, and both had real power. The real concern seems to have been to foreclose the possibility of a revival of the personality cult. It is also interesting to note that the elimination of a Party chairman coincides with restoration of a chairman of the state, underlining the separation of Party and state and a disinclination to allow Party domination of the state.

“ high level decision ”).¹⁴ The “ natural membership ” of the Political Bureau Standing Committee will thus comprise four positions: the general secretary of the Central Committee, the chairman of the Central Military Committee, the chairman of the Central Advisory Committee, and the first secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (all of whom are required to have concurrent seats on the Standing Committee).

Of all aspects of the attempt to disperse and separate powers, the most sweeping in conception is the attempt to divide the Central Committee into three distinct bodies. In the original reform proposal these were to have been functionally distinct (hence sometimes rechristened as the Central Executive Committee, Disciplinary Inspectional Committee and Oversight Committee) but politically co-equal, but this idea was abandoned (probably wisely, in view of the confusion that would have resulted) and the Discipline Inspection and Advisory Committees are both subordinate to the the Central Committee. The Discipline Inspection Committee has of course already been functioning for some time, so speculation has tended to focus on the functions and power of the Central Advisory Committee. According to the Constitution this organ, which will soon have an entire hierarchy of provincial and local advisory committees under its purview, should put forward policy recommendations, give “ advice upon request ” and help the Central Committee look into “ certain important questions.” Although it has been in existence for only a marginally longer period, the similar committee of “ state councillors ” established in the spring of 1982 has not yet been assigned significant substantive duties, and the most plausible speculation at time of writing is that these will be strictly transitional organs to facilitate the retirement of ageing or politically redundant cadres.

In terms of the promotion of greater socialist democracy (deemed “ incomparably superior ” to “ bourgeois ” democracy), the emphasis at the 12th Congress was on the establishment of a set of correct procedures for the accurate registration of preferences within a selected elite rather than any attempt to broaden the political base of the regime. The concept of democratic centralism has thus been spelled out more explicitly and elaborately than ever before, including instructions on what to do if there is a split between a large majority and small minority (the minority should comply, but may register protest through proper channels) or between a small majority and large minority (postpone the decision until after tempers have cooled). When making decisions on important issues affecting the interests of lower organizations, higher organizations should solicit the latter’s opinions and serious consideration should be given to the views of a minority. The nominating process preceding elections is spelled out quite clearly: either there should be a “ preliminary election ” to draw up a list of candidates for the formal election, or, in those cases in which a preliminary election is

14. AFP interview.

omitted, the number of candidates on the list should be greater than the number of persons to be elected. For example, in the election of the 12th Central Committee, a preliminary election was held on 8 September to draw up a name list; apparently this forum allowed ambit to register objection to and perhaps even veto specific candidates, for the regulations stipulated that “ no inaccurate information such as ‘ it is heard that ’ and ‘ it seems that ’ should be taken into consideration. The delegates should only raise things which they personally know of or which they have had direct contact with.” Following this preliminary election, the Presidium of the Party Congress prepared a formal list; however, 1,545 Congress delegates still had the opportunity to reject specific candidates and propose “ write-in ” alternatives in the election itself:

The names of 210 candidates for membership to the Central Committee were printed on a pink card, and the names of 172 candidates to the Central Advisory Commission were printed on a green card. If they had no objection, the delegates could put the cards in the ballot boxes without making any marks. However, if they disagreed with the nomination of a certain person, they could draw a line in the empty box on the right hand side of the name of that candidate with the “ election pencil ” provided. If they wanted to nominate another person, they could do so by writing down the name of the proposed candidate in the column of “ other nominations ” at the end of the form. This was a democratic right given to all the delegates by the Party constitution.¹⁵

A “ model JX-2 computerized instant vote-handling system ” developed by the Chengdu Computer Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was used to count the votes in the election. The election results (i.e. the relative number of votes received by the respective candidates) were then announced to the Congress (though not to the public) and simultaneously shown on television monitors. These vote totals were of some immediate practical significance in establishing a pecking order, and inasmuch as alternate members were listed in the same order, it was also stipulated (in Chap. III, Art. 20 of the Constitution) that vacancies to the Central Committee would be filled by alternates in order of the number of votes by which they were elected.¹⁶

In at least two respects, however, the Party Congress has adopted a more conservative posture towards democratic reform than had the drafting committee responsible for the 1982 draft State Constitution. Whereas the system of permanent tenure for delegates has been provisionally accepted for the National People’s Congress, a reform intended to make the NPC a permanently functioning forum for legislative review, this system was rejected for the National Party Congress, on grounds that “ it is not only unnecessary but also impossible for the National Party Congress to hold meetings every year.” And whereas the draft State Constitution stipulated limits to the

15. Hu Sisheng and Chen Min, “ Elections – Eye-catching moment,” *Renmin ribao*, Beijing, 11 September 1982, p. 4.

16. Gan Wei, “ Many special features in list of alternate Central Committee members,” *Da gong bao* (Hong Kong), 15 September 1982, p. 2.

tenure of office for certain government leaders, the Party rejects any such limits, on grounds that rejection of the principle of lifelong tenure and adoption of generous retirement provisions and opportunity to be “promoted” to Advisory Committees should be adequate to cope with the problem of protracted incumbency. Implicit in this decision is a deep veneration for age and for the seniority principle that sometimes clashes with the desire to promote new blood:

The task of the Party in exercising leadership is very heavy and complicated. Therefore, at the core of the Party's central leading bodies, there must be a number of veteran cadres who have rich experience, deep insight and a wide range of knowledge . . . guaranteeing the long-term stability of the country.¹⁷

Both Ye Jianying and Chen Yun were to play skilfully on this ambivalence in their speeches, in which they rationalized their refusal to accept transfers to the Central Advisory Committee in terms of the need for some veterans to stay on to tutor younger leaders and bridge the generation gap. “I have time and again asked to retire from my leading position,” declared the venerable Ye (who was propped up by two white-coated attendants as he shuffled slowly down the aisle to the Central Committee Plenum). “However, until the Central Committee decides to grant this, I will do the best I can and devote my all to the Party.”¹⁸

There were of course other exceptions to the rule of functional division of labour and democratic centralism that can most efficiently be explained in terms of power-political realities. It had previously been expected that leadership of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would be transferred to the Central Military Council of the State, as prescribed in the draft revised State Constitution. However, the Central Military Commission, under the continuing chairmanship of Deng Xiaoping, survived any arguments to abrogate it on the logical grounds of a clear division of labour, and as a result there are now two organs to oversee the military which are functional duplicates and may even contain identical memberships. Moreover, the Constitution now stipulates that the General Political Department of the PLA is “a political work organ of the Central Military Commission and is in charge of the Party's political work in the army. The Party's organizational system and setups in the army must be decided by the Military Commission of the CPC Central Committee,” thereby consolidating Party (and in the current circumstances, Deng Xiaoping's) control of the army.

Policy

The 12th National Congress also attempted to outline a new policy agenda for the 1980s. Deng Xiaoping suggested a priority order for such an agenda in his opening speech: “Economic construction is at the core of these tasks as it is the basis for solution of China's external and

17. “Hu Qiaomu on significance.”

18. “Ye Jianying's speech,” *Xinhua*, Beijing, 6 September 1982, in *FBIS*, I:173 (7 September 1982), pp. K11–12; see also “Chen Yun's Speech,” in *ibid.* pp. K18–19.

domestic problems.”¹⁹ Second and third in the priority rank order (in my assessment) are ideological rectification of the Party and foreign policy issues, above all the question of “ national reunification.”

By “ economic construction ” the new leadership refers to policies designed to promote rapid economic growth, clearly relegating distributive or redistributive issues to subsidiary consideration – except in so far as the policy “ First feed the people, second build up the country ” dictates a greater relative focus on consumers’ goods than previously, and a somewhat lower rate of capital accumulation. The concomitant de-emphasis of progress towards a communist utopia is quite explicit:

Historical experiences show that egalitarianism will emerge in our country once it has a chance and disguise itself as something communist to confuse people. Therefore, we must continue to combat the egalitarian tendency and never allow it to wreak havoc again.²⁰

Noting that there has been too much dispersal of investment funds by local authorities, Hu Yaobang prescribed the concentration of funds on “ key projects,” where the greatest immediate impact could be felt. Central planning should take precedence over market forces, but handicrafts and services, local building, transport and commercial activities should be looked after at the local level, and the formation of urban co-operatives to absorb unemployed youth will still be encouraged. Planning will also take different forms under different circumstances, in order to minimize its rigidity: plans of a “ mandatory nature ” will still be enforced in regard to the production and distribution of capital goods and consumer goods in the state sector, and where necessary in the collective sector (as in the assignment of fixed quotas for the purchase of grain and other important agricultural and sideline products by the state), but “ guidance plans,” whose implementation is mainly ensured by means of economic levers, will be introduced in regard to many products and enterprises.

But whether in mandatory planning or in guidance planning, we must strive to make it conform to the objective reality, constantly study changes in market supply and demand, consciously make use of the law of value and such economic levers as pricing, taxation and credits to guide the enterprises in fulfilling state plans, and giving them varying degrees of powers to make decisions as they see fit.²¹

To the same Congress that decreed the demotion of Hua Guofeng to a face-saving position in the Central Committee, in part because of the excessively ambitious economic targets he once introduced, the regime has proposed new growth targets that are also quite ambitious and may yet provide *points d'appui* for future political recrimination. China’s farms and factories are to quadruple their output by the year 2000,

19. “ Deng Xiaoping’s address.”

20. “ Strive to create a new situation in all fields of socialist modernization,” *Renmin ribao*, editorial, 14 September 1982.

21. “ Hu Yaobang’s report.”

according to Hu Yaobang, increasing the combined value of output of industry and agriculture from some 710 billion *yuan* to 2,800 billion *yuan*, thereby raising the personal income of the average Chinese from about \$260 per year to about \$1,000. This would presuppose an average growth rate of more than 7·2 per cent annually. Although, as Hu points out, the national gross value of industrial and agricultural production increased at an average of 8·1 per cent annually from 1953 to 1981 (according to Chinese figures), this was achieved on a much smaller base. “The output value generated from 1 per cent of increase today is much larger than it was before, and therefore, the growth rate will inevitably be lower.”²² And the projected future growth rate is appreciably higher than those reached in recent years, as Hu frankly acknowledged in his recent interview: China is “behind schedule.”²³ Although agricultural production has improved in the past several years, China’s national economic growth rate has not reached 7 per cent since 1979 and is likely to achieve 4 per cent this year (at a time of international economic recession); the budget appears likely to be in deficit for the fourth consecutive year.²⁴ Hu implicitly takes the current difficulties into account when he defines two phases of growth: “Laying down solid bases” until 1990, and then in an “acceleration of growth during the following decade.” There will be no drastic change of course during the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1981–85) (FYP), which will be devoted to “streamlining and reorganizing,” but during the Seventh FYP he foresees the “technical transformation of enterprises on a large scale.” Economic and technological exchanges with foreign countries should be expanded for the foreseeable future “in accordance with the principles of equality and mutual benefit” to create more markets for Chinese exports and to bring in advanced technology “suited to China’s national conditions.”²⁵

Taking a close second in the relative priority ranking of the new policy agenda is the issue of ideological rectitude and its apparent recent decline. Evidence of this decline is seen everywhere and viewed with considerable alarm. As Chen Yun noted in his report on behalf of the Commission for Discipline Inspection, “The issue of the ruling Party’s work-style is an issue which concerns the Party’s survival or demise. . . . The Party’s work-style has not been fundamentally improved; and unhealthy tendencies and violations of the law and discipline are still quite serious.”²⁶ This sense of ideological and moral dissolution is seen in terms of growing corruption, crime and ideological deviation or simply apathy. “For a considerable period of time, communist faith has been

22. Fang Gongwen and Zheng Xinli, “The grand, scientific strategic objective: studying the second party of comrade Hu Yaobang’s report to the 12th Party Congress,” *Guangming ribao* (Beijing), 11 September 1982, p. 3.

23. AFP interview.

24. Quarterly Economic Review of China, North Korea, *The Economist Intelligence Unit* (Hong Kong), Third Quarter, 1982.

25. AFP interview; “Hu Yaobang’s report.”

26. Chen Yun, “Discipline inspection commission’s report,” *Xinhua*, Beijing, 11 September 1982, in *FBIS*, I:177 (13 September 1982), pp. K9–12.

gradually getting faint in the minds of a substantial number of people,” notes an article in *People’s Daily*.²⁷

Condemnations of ideological/moral dissolution are often accompanied by an attempt, sometimes implicit, to account for it. One of the most popular explanations is in terms of indiscipline, implying a need for a more repressive and authoritative response – thus the insertion into the constitution of stricter requirements for Party members and Party cadres than those stipulated in any previous Party constitutions. This indiscipline is in turn attributed to a number of factors. One is strictly “political,” consisting of the remnant influence of the “gang of four’s” doctrine of “continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat,” as transmitted into the present through Hua Guofeng’s reluctance to repudiate this ideological legacy. Hu Yaobang alluded to this explanation in his report,²⁸ and it is spelled out more explicitly in a contemporaneous *People’s Daily* article:

The comrades inside and outside the Party more and more strongly demand that the errors of the “Great Cultural Revolution” be rectified. However, it was not easy to eliminate in a short time the political and ideological confusion caused by the decade-long “Great Cultural Revolution,” and Comrade Hua Guofeng, who had served as Chairman of the CPC Central Committee since October 1976, continued to commit the leftist errors of the guiding ideology. This seriously hindered the work of rectifying the errors of the “Great Cultural Revolution.”²⁹

A second explanation attributes moral decline to unfettered materialism, sometimes seeming to entail an “either/or” conception of the relationship between theory and practice. In the words of Hu Yaobang:

If the great task of building a socialist spiritual civilization guided by communist ideology is overlooked, people will fall into a one-sided understanding of socialism and direct their attention exclusively to the building of material civilization or even only to the pursuit of material gains. In that case, we will not be able to safeguard the socialist orientation of China’s modernization, and our socialist society will lose its ideals and objectives, its spiritual motivation and fighting will, . . . and even develop distortedly and degenerate.³⁰

Although this explanation perhaps betrays a certain ambivalence about the material incentives that the post-Mao leadership has encouraged, there is also a tendency to “split” this ambivalence into well-motivated prosperity (good) and capitalist self-seeking (bad, and often attributed to western influence). Thus Hu warns that “We must guard against, and

27. Wu Min, “Communist faith and theoretical cultivation,” *Renmin ribao*, 3 September 1982, p. 5. *Guangming Daily* reported recently that fewer than 16% of the Party members had continued education beyond high school and that even fewer possessed modern technical skills. These statistics suggest that educated youth may be bypassing the Party, giving rise to a two-track system of social mobility. Of China’s 1,280,000 university students, only 3.8% are Party members. Nearly two-thirds of the population is less than 30 years old, but of the 1,600 delegates at the Congress, only 40% were described as “young or middle-aged.” *New York Times*, 6 September 1982, p. 6.

28. “The decade of domestic turmoil confounded the criteria of right and wrong, good and evil, and beauty and ugliness,” he said “It is much more difficult to undo its grave spiritual consequences than its material ones.” “Hu Yaobang’s report.”

29. Tian Fu and Wang Zhixin, “A brief review.”

30. “Hu’s report.”

firmly resist, the corrosion of capitalist ideas and we must combat any worship of things foreign or fawning on foreigners.”

The third explanation is similar to the second in that it manifests a lingering suspicion of material aggrandizement and nostalgic memories of an earlier era of austerity and rectitude. “In the years of the revolutionary wars and those immediately following the founding of the People’s Republic, our material life was much harder than it is today, but all Party members and the people as a whole were full of vigour,” reminisces Hu Yaobang. Now that the Party has captured hegemony, it has become the fount of all privilege, and people join for opportunistic and self-serving reasons:

Since the founding of the People’s Republic our Party has been a Party in power and many Party members have become leading cadres of varying ranks. This change in their positions is a severe test for Party members. Some comrades whose Party spirit has not been adequately tempered often gradually become muddled in their understanding and forget that the Party’s basic aim is to serve the people wholeheartedly. These comrades no longer serve the people wholeheartedly. On the contrary, they serve the people with only half their heart, with the other half being used to plan for their own interests.³¹

The response of the 12th Congress to this sense of ideological and moral lapse has been two-faceted: on the one hand, there has been some movement on the theoretical level towards a redefinition of the role of the ideological superstructure in its relationship to the material base of society; and on a political level, a rectification campaign has been proclaimed. To be sure, the central theoretical thrust of the Deng Xiaoping regime remains pragmatic, making culture/ideology a function of economics. As Hu Yaobang puts it:

In the process of transforming the objective world, people also transform their subjective world, and the production of spiritual values and the spiritual life of society also develop. . . . Material civilization provides an indispensable foundation for socialist spiritual civilization which, in its turn, gives a tremendous impetus to the former and ensures its correct orientation. Each is the condition and the objective of the other.³²

But as in Hu’s last sentence, in which he lapses from transitivity to reciprocal causation, there is an incipient “Maoist” tendency to conceive of an autonomous moral realm that should be kept pure irrespective or even in defiance of socio-economic vicissitudes.³³ “We are determined gradually to set up cultural development so that it will no longer lag behind economic growth,” as Hu puts it.

The heralded rectification campaign is intended to cultivate the faintly

31. Shen Qinli, “On the Party spirit of Communist Party members,” *Renmin ribao*, 10 September 1982, p. 5.

32. “Hu’s report.”

33. This is ironically counteracted by the general (though implicit) anti-Mao orientation of this Congress. Mao’s portrait was not hung as usual in the Great Hall of the People, and no commemorative activities were held on 9 September, the sixth anniversary of Mao’s death. Although Mao’s Thought continues to receive lip-service (e.g. the Constitution states that the Party “takes Marxism–Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought as a guide for its action”), Mao must now share authorship with a collective including colleagues he had politically renounced.

monastic values of “ socialist spiritual civilization ” on an immediate political level. Invoking the spirit and works of the martyred Liu Shaoqi, Party members are adjured to “ be cautious even when one is alone,” to develop the spirit of self criticism, and to study the constitution and other Party regulations.³⁴ Party leaders take great pains to assure observers that this rectification campaign will in no way resemble the Cultural Revolution, whose excesses may now (according to a generous Lu Dingyi) be traced not to the Chairman but to early Soviet influence:

In the Party’s history, there have been two different methods or ways of conducting criticism and self-criticism. One was copied from the Soviet Union, which is characterized by the slogan of “ relentless struggle and merciless blows.” . . . The other method of conducting criticism and self-criticism was developed by Mao Zedong during the rectification campaign in Yanan in 1942. . . . Among its important features are patient persuasion, opposition to incrimination and permission to reply to charges. . . . Following the forthcoming rectification campaign through proper criticism and self-criticism, we can expect the Party to achieve an unprecedented unity.³⁵

This rectification will last three years beginning in the latter half of 1983, and will be characterized by “ very careful attention and preparation and should be carried out step by step in a planned way.” In the final stage there will be a re-registration of all Party members leaving the leadership the option to decline – in effect, a purge (though the term is vehemently eschewed).³⁶ The targets of the purge have already been earmarked as those who were active “ rebels ” during the Cultural Revolution and benefited politically from their activism. There is a *Radikalenerlass* stigmatizing the “ three types of persons ”:

. . . people who rose to prominence during the “ Cultural Revolution ” by following Lin Biao, Jiang Qing and their like in “ rebellion ”; people who are seriously factionalist in their ideas; and people who indulged in beating, smashing and looting. Any of them who have already been promoted must be resolutely removed from the leading bodies.³⁷

It is as yet unclear whether the forthcoming campaign will be limited to the Party or involve non-Party masses as well, for the latter option might still be exercised under the aegis of continuing “ class struggle.” The revolution is apparently not “ continuing ” and class struggle is no longer the “ principal contradiction ” in Chinese society (that is the contradiction between “ the people’s growing material and cultural needs and the backward level of our social production ”), but class struggle “ still exists ” in China, and “ within certain limits, class struggle will continue to exist for a long time and may even sharpen under certain conditions.” Inasmuch as the means of production have

34. Zhang Yun, “ Strengthen the concept of discipline, consciously abide by discipline,” *Renmin ribao*, 15 September 1982, p. 3.

35. Quoted in “ What the new Party campaign means,” *China Daily* (Beijing), 1 September 1982, p. 4.

36. Cf. “ G.Z.’s ” vigorous rebuttal, “ Sometimes foreign press can be wrong,” in “ It seems to me ” column, *China Daily*, 10 September 1982, p. 4.

37. “ Chen Yun’s speech.”

long since been socialized, class is now broadly defined in terms of behavioural compliance; the “remnants” of bourgeois influence may crop up anywhere in the form of “hostile elements . . . who are still attempting to undermine or overthrow our socialist system in the economic, political, ideological, cultural and other social spheres.”³⁸

Chinese foreign policy concerns, as reflected in the Congress documents, continue to drift towards a pragmatic conception of national interest. China’s commitment to “internationalism” consists of an awareness that “China’s national interest cannot be fully realized in separation from the overall interests of mankind.” The Chinese remain convinced that communism will ultimately prevail throughout the world, but disavow any grand strategy for the achievement of this consummation, observing that “revolution cannot be exported but can occur only by the choice of the people of the country concerned.” All communist parties are equal, and “being situated in different circumstances, all parties cannot be expected to hold completely identical views”; thus these differences of opinion “can only be resolved gradually through friendly consultation and patiently giving each other time.” Relations among fraternal communist parties do not seem to be intrinsically different from relations between different bourgeois nation-states, and in fact Hu Yaobang announces that China’s “principles of peaceful co-existence” are henceforth applicable to China’s relations with all nations, “including socialist ones.” It is appropriate to this more conventional notion of national interest that China no longer seems to view herself as an ideological beacon to the world or even as a major strategic actor, but rather as a constituent of the Third World (whose emergence after the Second World War was “a primary event of our time”). Her foreign policy priorities are accordingly irredentist rather than international. Hu Yaobang mentioned “the unification of the motherland” no less than six times in his report, and Deng Xiaoping ranked it second only to economic development (and ahead of “hegemonism”) as one of the “three major tasks of our people in the 1980s.” Hegemonism is still decried (along with “imperialism” and “colonialism”), but the two super powers are denounced in increasingly even-handed terms, suggesting a Chinese determination to preserve her autonomy perhaps as much as any flirtation with the Soviet Union. “No foreign country can expect China to be its vassal, nor can it expect China to swallow any bitter fruit detrimental to Chinese interests.”³⁹

Personnel

A preliminary analysis of personnel shifts suggests a compromise between continuing respect for the seniority principle (gradual promotion through the ranks, pending death at the top) and the desire for a revitalization of central policy organs. In the Central Committee

38. “Hu’s report.”

39. “Deng Xiaoping’s address.”

211 of the 348 members and alternate members (about 60 per cent of the total) were elected for the first time. Of these new members, more than 140 (about 66 per cent) are less than 60 years of age. Only 16 of the 210 full members are more than 70 years of age, according to Congress spokesman Zhu Muzhi (though all of these are in the Political Bureau). The number of "specialized personnel" has increased from 9 to 59 (or from 2.7 per cent to 17 per cent) since the 11th Central Committee. There are 31 members of minority nationalities represented in the Central Committee (8.9 per cent of the total) and 24 women (6.9 per cent).⁴⁰

Most of the new and younger members are, however, alternate rather than full members, in accordance with the seniority principle. Of the 210 full members, 98 (or about 47 per cent) are re-elected incumbents and 15 (about 7 per cent) former alternate members. In contrast, no less than 115 of the 138 alternates (83 per cent) were elected for the first time (18 are former alternates, five former full members of the 11th Central Committee), comprising not only a higher percentage but a higher absolute number of newcomers than the full membership. The percentage of minority nationalities and women (12 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively) among alternates is also higher than among the full membership.⁴¹ Yet these percentages among *newly elected* full members alone (14 and 11 per cent, respectively) are still higher, indicating a deliberate attempt to recruit among these hitherto under-represented groups.

In terms of functional responsibility, a high proportion of the Central Committee membership consists of concurrent central government officials, including the premier and vice-premiers, 10 state councillors, and the great majority of responsible members of the ministries and commissions of the State Council. Of the first secretaries of the 29 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, 21 were elected to the Central Committee. Due to the "promotion" of 50 regional military officers from their seats on the 11th Central Committee (where they probably supported Hua Guofeng) to the Central Advisory Commission, military representation has been reduced to about 20 per cent of the full membership. These shifts affect some of the Military District commands (e.g. Wu Kehua, commander of the Guangzhou PLA units, and Zhang Caiqian, commander of the Wuhan PLA units, were both elected to the Central Advisory Commission) as well as the leadership of certain provincial, municipal and regional Party committees, suggesting that further personnel changes are imminent.⁴²

Membership in the Political Bureau has been expanded from 22 to 28 full or alternate members, higher than the customary total, perhaps to allow for the anticipated demise of several aged and infirm members. Five previous Political Bureau members were apparently removed: Hua

40. Xinhua, Beijing, 11 September 1982, in *FBIS*, I:176 (10 September 1982), p. K15.

41. Gan Wei, "Many special features."

42. Gan Wei, "Analysis of the new Central Committee and advisory commission," *Dagong bao* (Hong Kong), 11 September 1982, p. 2.

Guofeng and Peng Chong were both demoted to the Central Committee, and Geng Biao and Xu Shiyou were transferred to the Central Advisory Commission; the ailing Liu Bochong retired. The purge of Peng Chong and Geng Biao, heretofore upward mobile, caught most observers by surprise; the best guess at this stage is that they were too closely linked with Hua Guofeng. The seven new full Political Bureau members include Deputy-premier Wan Li, PLA Chief of Staff Yang Dezhi, academician Hu Qiaomu, Liao Chengzhi, who oversees China's relations with overseas Chinese; Xi Zhongxun and Yang Shangkun, who hold leading posts in the parliament, and Song Renqiong, who heads the Party's organization department.⁴³ The average age of the Political Bureau membership is 72.4, and the average age of the newcomers is about the same; the average age of the alternates is, however, somewhat lower (66), again following the seniority principle. Of the 28 full and alternate members, 18 are more than 70 and all but three over 65. The average age on the six-man Political Bureau Standing Committee (consisting of Hu Yaobang, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, Ye Jianying, Zhao Ziyang and Chen Yun) is even higher (about 75). The membership of the Central Military Commission, which will remain in command of the PLA, is not known beyond its leadership, which is also venerable: Chairman Deng Xiaoping (78) and Vice-chairmen Ye Jianying (85), Xu Xiangqian (80), Nie Rongzhen (83) and Yang Shangkun (77).

If the Political Bureau and its Standing Committee lapse into a less active role, however, which Hu Yaobang, as their "convener," may permit them to do, the age and makeup of the General Secretariat will take on greater relevance. Six members were removed from the Secretariat (viz. Fang Yi, Peng Chong, Wang Renzhong, Hu Qiaomu, Song Renqiong and Yang Dezhi), all but two of whom (viz. Peng Chong and Wang Renzhong) were, however, elevated to the Political Bureau.⁴⁴ Four new members (Deng Liqun, vice-chairman of the Chinese Academy of Social Science; Chen Pixian, first secretary of Hubei province; Hu Qili, chairman of the China Youth League; and Yang Yong, deputy chief of the PLA general staff) and two new alternates (Qiao Shi, head of the Party's international liaison department; and Hao Jianxiu, chairman of the Women's Federation) were recruited. Their average age is appreciably lower (about 64 years of age), and again the alternates are younger than the full members (an average 52 years of age). The technical competence of the Secretariat membership, it is asserted, is also much higher.

Deng Xiaoping vacated his Party vice-chairmanship with considerable *éclat* to accept chairmanship of the Central Advisory Commission, no doubt hoping to set a trend. Although his retention of not only the Standing Committee seat that this chairmanship vouchsafes him but the chairmanship of the Central Military Commission as well

43. Of the nine newly-elected members or alternate members of the Political Bureau, six are erstwhile members of the Secretariat.

44. Qi Xing, "Personnel mobility in the 12th Congress," *Qishi niandai*, No. 153 (October 1982), pp. 16-19.

tends to throw some doubt on the sincerity of his "retirement," Deng has since last February met with foreign dignitaries less frequently and generally adopted a somewhat lower profile.⁴⁵ Deng's four deputy-chairmen are Xu Shiyou, an old army commander who also stepped down from the Political Bureau; Bo Yibo and Tan Zhenlin, former vice-premiers; and 85-year-old Li Weihan. The 149 members include both distinguished veterans and political undesirables, including Wu De, former mayor of Beijing, and Chen Xilian, former commander of the Beijing Military Region (both of whom were purged earlier because of their role in suppressing the Tiananmen demonstrations), Zhou Yang, and many regional military leaders (e.g. Xu Shiyou, Wang Xinting, Kong Shichuan, and Gan Weihan).⁴⁶ It was of course quite unexpected after repeated predictions that they would do so that such veterans as Ye Jianying, Chen Yun, Xu Xiangqian, Peng Zhen and Nie Rongzhen declined to retire to the advisory commission, and the most widespread speculation is that they simply refused to relinquish their seats and that Deng could or would not force them. This is quite possible, but it is also conceivable that a compromise of sorts was struck to leave these worthies in place while shifting the locus of day-to-day responsibility to the Secretariat.

45. David Bonavia, "Stalemate in Peking," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong), Vol. 117, No. 38 (September 1982), p. 16.

46. Mu Fu, "A pragmatic congress of continuing de-Maoization," *Qishi niandai*, *ibid.* pp. 14–16.