

September 25-28, 1979

Fourth Plenum of the Eleventh Party Central Committee. Criticism of the Gang of Four remains prevailing theme. Zhao Ziyang and Peng Zhen elevated to Central Committee Politburo.

Feb. 23-28, 1980

Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh Party Central Committee. Main business entailed elevation and dismissal of certain officials and discussion of the upcoming Twelfth Party Congress. Party Secretariat reestablished and filled with Deng supporters.

General Secretary: Hu Yaobang

Those appointed to Secretariat included: Hu Yaobang, Wan Li, Hu Qiaomu, Yao Yilin, Peng Chong, Yang Dezhi, Fang Yi, Gu Mu, Song Renqiong, Yu Qiuli, Wang Renzhong.

Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang appointed to Standing Committee of the Politburo.

“Whateverist” faction of Chen Xilian, Wu De, Wang Dongzong, and Ji Dengkui removed from their posts. Liu Shaoqi posthumously rehabilitated.

Plenum decided to propose to the National People’s Congress that the right to “speak out freely, air their

views fully, hold great debates, and write big character posters,” as stipulated in Article 45 of the Constitution, be deleted.

Aug. 30-Sept. 10, 1980

Third Session of the Fifth National People’s Congress. Resignations, appointments, and reshuffling highlighted this session of Congress.

Resigned:

Premier Hua Guofeng, replaced by Zhao Ziyang
Vice-Premiers Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, Chen Yun, Wang Zhen, Wang Renzhong, Xu Xiangqian, Chen Yonggui.

Elected:

Premier: Zhao Ziyang
Vice-Premiers: Yang Jingren, Zhang Aiping, Huang Hua

Vice-Chairmen of the NPC Standing Committee: Peng Chong, Zi Zhongxun, Su Yu, Yang Shangkun, Bainqen Erdini Qoigy Gyaincain

Deng and his associates resigned from their posts as vice-premiers but retained their high-level party posts. This was done to make room for younger Deng supporters.

The leader reassessed

The Deng group’s campaign to reassess Mao and place the blame for Mao’s misdeeds on the Gang of Four and the Lin Piao group has been carried out with increasing intensity in all the organs of the Chinese media. One important example is a two-part article entitled “The Leader and the People,” published on September 18-19, 1980, in the party organ People’s Daily. The author, Li Honglin, has been previously identified as the author of significant “theoretical” articles transmitting the line of the Deng group; the name may be a pseudonym for a person or persons associated with the Academy of Social Sciences. Excerpts follow.

During those “unprecedented” 10 years [referring to Cultural Revolution—D.S.], feudal morality was openly advocated. . . . Practice has proven that the principle “The people should be loyal to the leader” has seriously impeded the development of our society and should therefore be jettisoned and replaced by the principle “The leader should be loyal to the people.” . . .

But in those 10 years, practicing the personality cult was the sign of utmost revolutionary spirit. To clean up this garbage today, a considerable amount of work has to be done. We must particularly guard against some people’s attempts to highlight the “pol-

itics” of personality cult under new historical conditions. When others want to reduce publicity on individuals, they accuse them of “belittling the leader” because people “with deep proletarian sentiments” like them cannot stand it. . . . They are just bent on finding fault because they disagree with the principles laid down during the Third Plenary Session of the Central Committee.

Seeking truth from facts and recognizing that the leader grows up in practice and that he has made indelible historical contributions and also has unavoidable shortcomings and mistakes—this is the only way to really defend the leader’s image that will not dampen the masses’ faith in him. . . .

Since the leader’s own power is given to him by the people, of course he has no power to designate his “successor” because the position does not belong to him. [This is a clear reference to Mao’s designation of Chairman Hua Guofeng as his successor—D.S.] . . .

If the party’s principle of collective leadership is always upheld, then the departure or staying of individual leaders will not affect the stability of the group of leaders. In other words, it will not affect unity and stability. If we can uphold this principle in the political life of the party and the country, such heavy feudal legacies as “one leader,” the “lifetime tenure system,” and “the individual designating his successor” can all be put in the museum of history.