

## China Watch by Gregory F. Buhyoff

### Interim gains for Deng

*The scope of the newly ratified reorganization, and the sources of potential opposition to its consolidation.*

**D**eng Xiaoping's move to purge political opponents and consolidate his faction's power entered a new stage in late April at the 23rd Session of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC). The Deng faction finally succeeded in getting the Standing Committee's imprimatur on a host of measures to "streamline" and restructure the government, and a long-sought draft of a new constitution, which will be presented to the rubberstamp National People's Congress expected to meet later this year.

The restructuring approved by the Standing Committee included a shake-up of the State Council and a sweeping reorganization of the administrative institutions under its jurisdiction. Deng allies Wan Li and Yao Yilin were the only two of 13 vice-premiers to retain their posts. Nine of the 11 former vice-premiers, including several opponents of Deng's policies of slashing heavy industry, were relegated to a newly created "advisory council" whose function is ambiguous.

Two vice-premiers, Zhang Aiping and Yang Jingren, were dropped altogether. The 52 commissions and ministries of the State Council were reduced to 41 while approval was given to the sacking of approximately one-third of the 200,000-member central bureaucracy. Expected to be hit hardest are those in institutions dealing with capital construction, machine

building, agriculture, and energy, sectors that have suffered most under Deng's policies.

Wan and Yao, who along with Premier Zhao Ziyang and Chen Yun were architects of the current economic policies, had been purged during the Cultural Revolution but Deng brought them back when he officially returned to power at the fall 1978 Plenum.

The controversial new constitution, the PRC's fourth in 32 years, will enhance the power of the government vis-à-vis the Chinese Communist Party. It calls for the restoration of the State Chairmanship, a post abolished by Mao at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution because rival Liu Shaoqi was perceived by Mao as using the position to usurp his authority. Dengists Chen Yun, Xi Zhongxun, and Song Renqiong are reportedly possibilities for the State Chairman.

Perhaps even more controversial is the provision which for the first time takes authority over the armed forces out of the hands of the Communist Party and places it under government control.

The retirement of NPC Chairman and titular head of state Ye Jianying, hinted at during Deng's speech at the Standing Committee meeting, will clear the way for the new State Chairman to assume ceremonial leadership of the country. But the opposition from pro-heavy-industry bureaucrats, military leaders, and moderate Maoists—for

which the aging Ye provided a rallying point, along with CCP vice-chairmen Li Xiannian and Hua Guofeng—will not dissipate with the bowing out of Ye. Moreover, Ye's retirement no doubt exacted certain compromises from Deng which will ensure that he will no longer warm the hearts of China Card advocates in the United States, especially on foreign policy questions.

The respect the Dengists have for the opposition was demonstrated on April 30 when the Chinese news media went to great lengths to prepare the population for Hua Guofeng's absence at the next day's May Day celebration. Hua, who was in the hospital for a minor ailment, was given television time in order to squelch the potentially explosive rumors of his ouster that would have arisen among the protocol-conscious Chinese from his absence at the May Day lineup of Communist Party officials.

Deng's successes thus far were expected. Deng has been careful to carry out the debates in limited forums such as the NPC Standing Committee, where his faction faces less opposition than in the CCP Politburo.

The real test will come in the months ahead. It is doubtful that the entire party leadership will sit by as Deng disarms the party of its authority and ability to resist the purge. Moreover, it is one thing to approve something in the Standing Committee and another to carry it out throughout the ranks. Deng may be riding high for now, but the prospects of a worsening economic situation and resistance to the escalating purge portend much difficulty for Deng and his faction and instability for China.