

---

## PEKING'S 12TH PARTY CONGRESS

---

# Deng Xiaoping likely to ensure succession: but how long will his dynasty last?

by Gregory F. Buhyoff

China will know a very stable political situation until the end of the century. I am not 100 percent sure of it, but at least 90 percent sure. . . .

—CCP Chairman Hu Yaobang to Agence  
France Presse, Aug. 25, 1982

Sooner than the turn of the century, observers of Chinese affairs may be recalling these words in the same light as the ill-fated predictions of Marshal Ye Jianying when he blessed the ascension of Chairman Mao's chosen successor, Hua Guofeng, to the post of party chairman at the 1977 Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Hua was eventually to be ousted, along with many other opponents of the then emerging faction of CCP Vice-Chairman Deng Xiaoping, which has since attained preeminence in the party and government apparatus.

Sept. 1 saw the opening of the long-delayed 12th Party Congress, where Deng Xiaoping hopes to cap a five-year campaign to consolidate his faction's hold on power. The congress could be one of the most important in the history of the Chinese Party. It could very well be the last Congress for many of the most revered leaders of the generation that founded the PRC in 1949. The congress will feature the most extensive purge of the party membership in history, and effect sweeping organizational and constitutional changes—all designed by Deng to try to ensure that his policies succeed him.

The prospects of Deng finally finishing off the opposition is titillating news for China Card advocates in the United States and elsewhere, who have long looked forward to a "stable China" under Dengist policies. Deng, true to the mantle he inherited from Chou En-lai, has sought strategic cooperation with the United States in exchange for Washington's imprimatur on Peking's imperial designs for Asia. "Open Door" economic policies favoring intimate ties with

the overseas Chinese community have opened the country to exploitation of cheap labor and resource extraction. At the same time, Deng's assault on heavy industry, and his depopulation program, have ensured that China under Deng will not make use of its natural resources to urbanize and industrialize.

The Dengists' ambitions have not gone unchallenged. Stiff resistance to Deng's de-Maoization, economic policies, and U.S. links have exacted concessions which will hamper Deng. The very fact that the congress was delayed for so long, and announced on such short notice, shows that many deals were delayed by party infighting until the last moment. The U.S. State Department, conscious of the need to shore up Deng's position, bowed to Peking on the "Shanghai Communiqué" just in time for the preparatory 7th Party plenum mid-August. Deng used the uproar created by Japanese textbook revisions concerning World War II as a "windfall" to rally the country on the theme of unity.

Deng has thus far carried out his purge with consummate skill. However, the degree to which success has relied on his own prestige and political savvy, and not on those he has chosen to succeed him, hints at the potential for Deng's house of cards to crumble when the 78-year old leader expires.

### Eliminating resistance

The agenda of the congress has been set up by Deng to put his people in undisputed control over the Central Committee, the administrative and policy-making bodies of the party, and the armed forces. The role of the Politburo, a bastion of conservative resistance to Deng, will effectively be eliminated when its responsibilities are transferred to the party secretariat, a body staffed entirely by Deng appointees. Though Deng protégé Hu Yaobang will lose the post of chairman when that post is abolished, along with vice-chairmanships, Hu's concurrent post as head of the secretariat will

allow him to retain the top post in the party. This process will deprive two of Deng's staunchest opponents, vice-chairmen Li Xiannian and Ye Jianying from their only official posts in the party. Li especially has been one of the strongest critics of Dengist foreign policy, and both have been under Dengist pressure to "retire" for some time. Ye and Li will be relegated to an "advisory council," with some ostensible say in policy decisions. Deng and his economic guru Chen Yun however have had to concede to join the other two as "advisors," though Deng will remain the power behind the scenes.

The fate of vice-chairman Hua Guofeng, whom Deng has relieved of his most important posts, including the chairmanship, since 1980, remains in limbo. Whether or not Hua is kept on in at least a ceremonial post or is let go altogether will be a good indicator of Deng's strength.

The fact that a majority of the CCP's 39 million members entered the party during the Cultural Revolution has been a problem. Unable to control the selection of delegates to the congress, and therefore the election of a new Central Committee, Deng has bypassed the usual selecting of delegates by provincial party congresses and carried this out instead by "secret ballot" under Dengist scrutiny. The 1,600 delegates to the 12th Party Congress chosen this way are sure to elect a central committee loyal to Deng and his faction.

The legitimacy of such a process and ultimately the congress itself will likely be questioned by the millions of party members disenfranchised by Deng's tactics. Deng plans to deal with such malcontents by carrying out a purge following the congress that could dwarf, in sheer number terms, any purge in the history of the CCP. Deng will do this by mandating a new registration for party members following the congress and simply denying new cards to undesirable elements.

The core of the new Central Committee and the "streamlined" party is to come from the 4.6 million "young professional" cadres who entered the party under Deng's tutelage over the past four years. These are the people with education and culture, as are many of those who entered in the pre-Cultural Revolution period. However, more than half of the party members entered during the Cultural Revolution—many of whom built their reputation as solid "reds" by turning in blank answerbooks during school exams.

### **Capturing the army**

Deng also hopes to use the congress to switch the institutional control of the Army from the Communist Party to the Chinese state. This is a task of the utmost importance, since the Army remains a hotbed of opposition to Deng. In fact, it is believed that the decision to purchase Mirage jets from France may be Deng's attempt to placate sections of the armed forces he had alienated by his earlier budget cuts. As part of this transfer, Deng arranged for himself to be named chairman of the Military Commission under the State Council.

Even this move, however, indicates Deng's remaining inability to simply run roughshod over opponents. Normally

the Chairman of the Communist Party is concurrently Chairman of the Military Commission. However, Deng's choice as party chairman, Hu Yaobang, did not have the clout to be accepted by the army leaders. Therefore, Deng himself had to take the post. It remains to be seen what happens to the post when Deng dies.

Preliminary reports indicate that Deng's opening speech to the Congress reflected concessions on foreign policy as well. In recent months Peking as a whole, including the Deng faction, has switched from outright alignment with the United States to a "Third Worldist" orientation which condemns both the United States and the Soviet Union as hegemonist. Deng has had to be very careful to avoid the charge that he was selling out China's interests, including those in regard to Taiwan, for the sake of his ties to the Americans. Washington's just-announced agreement to gradually end arms shipments to Taiwan has helped Deng defuse such charges.

### **'Self-reliance'**

Nonetheless, Deng was careful to assure the delegates that China would steer an independent course. "Independence and self-reliance have always been and will forever be our basic stand," Deng declared. "We will unswervingly follow a policy of opening to the outside world and actively increase exchanges with foreign countries. . . . While we value our friendship with other countries and peoples, we value even more our hard-won independence and sovereign rights. No foreign country can expect China to be its vassal."

Deng told the congress that China's priorities were: 1) intensifying the pace of "modernization"; 2) striving for "reunification" with Taiwan; and 3) safeguarding peace and defeating "hegemonism," a term which used to be reserved for the Soviet Union but which now encompasses the United States as well. Indeed, just prior to the opening of the congress, Foreign Minister Huang Hua had told visiting United Nations General Secretary Perez de Cuellar that China would oppose "hegemonism" "no matter what direction it comes from." He added that China would never play the "American card" against Moscow nor the "Soviet card" against Washington.

Deng has skillfully used the policy concessions he couldn't avoid in order to get the organizational clout he really wanted. How long this victory lasts, however, remains to be seen.

One keen observer of Chinese affairs has already noted that the deified Chairman Mao Tse-tung was able to choose "from the grave" the virtual unknown Hua Guofeng to be his successor as Chairman of the Community Party of China. At the 1977 Party Congress which installed Hua, venerable Marshal Ye Jianying predicted Hua "would certainly continue to carry forward China's proletarian revolutionary cause triumphantly into the 21st century." In fact, Hua's real power lasted not more than a year.

---

*EIR will present a full report on the conference following its conclusion.*