

## Firing of intellectuals shows China's dilemma

by Linda de Hoyos

The calls in China for "spiritual civilization" and political reform have now been replaced in the Chinese daily press with exhortations to the reading public and Communist Party bureaucracy to uphold the "Four Cardinal Principles." These principles assert the primacy of the Communist Party as China's ruling institution, and socialism as its goal. Democracy cannot be taken, the government has stated categorically, but only given by the party itself.

The swing in propaganda is the result and implied justification for the government crackdown on December's student "democracy movement." The crackdown has so far resulted in the firing and expulsion from the party of three leading intellectuals, the removal of party propaganda chief Zhu Houze, and the ouster of Hu Yao Bang as party general secretary (although Hu has retained his seats on the Politburo and its standing committee).

Western diplomats and commentators say the attack on the intellectuals and Hu Yao Bang constitutes a resurgence of the "conservatives" in Politburo, led by Deng Xiao Ping's elderly opponent Chen Yun. However, Chinese leaders, including Deng himself, reassured foreign visitors that China would continue the policy of economic reforms and opening to the West.

China's problem, Deng told visiting Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, is that it has not opened its doors to the West enough. In Tokyo, Vice Premier Tian Jiyun, considered a leading contender to replace new party general secretary Zhao Ziyang as prime minister, assured Japan's ministers that China's policies would not change, despite the most recent upheaval, and that economic reforms are on course. (The government did announce that it would delay price reform—that is, an end to food subsidies in the cities—in obvious concern that the student unrest came close to sparking off a generalized revolt among the urban labor force over the slated price rises.)

### Lessons of the Meiji Reform

Despite the crackdown, the policy of Deng Xiao Ping, whose strength in the government still appears unshaken, is to use the openings to the West for the purpose of acquiring

the means to catapult China into superpower status by the 21st century. On this goal, China's "democracy movement," Deng's centrist faction, and the conservatives around Chen Yun—who joined with Deng to put an end to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution—are in agreement. The policy was summed up in a startlingly frank article appearing in the *People's Daily* Oct. 6, 1986, entitled "Lessons Derived from Japan's Meiji Reform," referring to Japan's opening to Western ideas and revitalization in the 19th century. The article is noteworthy not only for its unabashed statement of China's objectives, but also for its use of Japan—rather than the Soviet Union—as a model for successful use of Western ideas to the advantage of the Asian nation.

Written by Lu Wanhe, the article poses the problem:

"In the mid-19th century, Japan faced a severe national crisis as China did. However, only 15 years after the 'founding of the state,' the Meiji Reform was carried out in Japan, which succeeded in helping Japan rapidly overcome the national crisis, and in enabling it to contend for supremacy with other big powers. What enlightenment have they gained from it?

"1. Talking about 'repelling the barbarians' alone was not enough; 'reform' should be carried out to make the country prosperous and powerful. . . .

"Persons of ideals and integrity in Japan gradually realized the truth through their practical struggle. What was commendable was that they were quick at understanding things, bringing about changes, and taking action. If the reform was delayed for 20 to 30 years, the fate of Japan would have been worse than China.

"2. The dissemination of the Western learning was the ideological foundation of the 'reform.' . . .

"The Meiji Reform was led by a group of junior warriors who were enthusiastic in learning from the West. The forming of such a leading group was closely connected with the dissemination of the Western learning (modern European science). Such historical conditions did not occur in other Asian countries. . . .

"The gathering of the groups of advanced intellectuals was a prelude to the reform. It was in direct proportion to the speed of reform. Without the grouping of intellectuals, it was impossible to promote the reform. . . .

"While making a comment on the Meiji reform, Mr. Sun Yat-sen said: 'When the Japanese found that it was impossible to expel the foreigners, they turned to learn from their strong points. This was the key to the success of their reform.' These remarks were identical with 'learning from the strong points of foreigners in order to deal with them.' They were the aspirations of the patriots.

"P.S. The Meiji Reform had a dual character. Its success and defects were based on sacrifice made by the Japanese people. This article focuses only on the role of the new intellectuals, leaders, and Western learning. It is not an overall assessment. However, history makes people clever."

The dilemma for China is that in order to use the ideas of the West to "repel barbarians," it has called into play its own intellectuals. But, as a Chinese commentator, Peng Zhao, noted in the *Times of India* Jan. 15, the intellectuals now entrusted with forging the scientific and technological tools to take China into the 21st century, were crushed during the Cultural Revolution. Mao's campaign of nihilism against knowledge and the intelligentsia was borne of his own fear of the intellectuals' May 18th movement of 1919, which launched China's revolution. The attempt to remobilize the intellectuals under Deng, this commentator pointed out, has reconstituted the intelligentsia as a social class which demands its share of power—a notion Mao abhorred.

But so far, China's intellectuals, as those in the U.S.S.R., occupy an uneasy position. As in any empire, the intelligentsia must be circumscribed in its power and actions, if the rulers are to secure their own power against the general population. But particularly in China, where the "scholar-official" constituted the ruling class of the empires for centuries, the intelligentsia is knocking at the gates of the Communist Party bureaucracy.

"Why should intellectuals be treated as 'hair' which must adhere to a certain piece of 'skin'?" challenged the now-ousted vice-president of the elite University of Science and Technology, Fang Li Zhi. In a Nov. 24, 1986 article pub-

lished in Shanghai, Dr. Fang, an astrophysicist, demanded that intellectuals be "recognized as a leading force for social progress. In the present-day society, knowledge and information represent the most advanced productive forces. Since these forces are mastered by intellectuals, it is natural that intellectuals are the leading force of the society.

"We should rely on outside forces to promote social progress in China, and to change concepts in the society in particular, in order that we will be able to enhance spiritual civilization. This means we should rely on the policy of opening up."

Fang Li Zhi's demands for power for the intelligentsia and democratic reform have been repulsed. The question now is: How can China simultaneously suppress its own intellectuals and hold to the course of economic development and openings to the West for that purpose?

If China is to avoid a social and economic breakdown collapse, if China is to have a future, the current crackdown on the nation's intelligentsia will per force be temporary. Or, as Fang Li Zhi himself indicates, "Chinese intellectuals should place their hope on the young intellectuals who are growing up during the 1980s. . . . Intellectuals of the younger generation have their own independent mentality, and have begun to show their strong desire for mastering their own fate. All this is exactly what the present era needs."

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