

Why Beijing fears the Berlin upheaval

by Mary McCourt Burdman

On Oct. 24, Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng finally broke the weeks of dead silence from Beijing on the extraordinary events in Eastern Europe. The *People's Daily* reported that he told a visiting delegation from Yugoslavia that "we are naturally concerned about developments in some East European countries." Li added that China believed reform meant "perfecting the socialist system." Since then, while making every effort to keep the news about the open East German borders out of China—including jamming the BBC Mandarin-language broadcasts as well as the Voice of America broadcasts—the Beijing government has repeatedly expressed its concern. Li Peng, speaking in the city of Rawalpindi on a visit to Pakistan Nov. 16, reiterated that no matter what is happening in Eastern Europe, China would not change its socialist system. China wants to "improve" the socialist system, he said.

Beijing has good reason for concern. The East Berlin-Beijing axis, with a third leg in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, which was consolidated around East German support for the June 4 Tiananmen Square massacre, is in trouble. The Beijing-Pyongyang axis is still strong, as North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's secret visit to Beijing the week of Nov. 6 attests; but it is a far weaker front than provided by close ties to East Germany.

It was only six weeks ago that Egon Krenz—before his promotion to head of East Germany's Socialist Unity Party (SED) and East Germany's State Council—was in Beijing for a week of meetings with the Chinese leadership, at the time of the 40th anniversary of the Communist takeover in China. That event, and the 40th anniversary of SED rule on Oct. 6, were the reason for many exchanges of "solidarity" and support for the Tiananmen massacre policy. But already on Oct. 1, the exodus of thousands of people from East Germany was in full swing. By Oct. 9, Krenz had backed down from ordering a bloody crackdown to avoid a general strike, and one month later, the floodgates were opened.

"The leaders of China are very worried about what is happening in Eastern Europe and East Germany," a West German journalist who just returned from a visit to the mainland told *EIR* Nov. 10. "Their concern is shown by the visit of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung to Beijing, and what Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng said to visiting Bulgarian

and Yugoslav leaders. They thought they at least had East Germany behind them, and now look what is going on there!

"The leadership crisis was *not* solved by Deng's resignation yesterday. The feeling of the young and educated is that they must get out." Paramount Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping officially retired from his last position in the Communist Party, head of its Military Commission.

Deng's newly appointed replacement, Jiang Zemin, proclaimed Nov. 9 that the changes in the Soviet Union and East bloc are only "temporary in the long stream of events," the BBC reported. Jiang might well soon find himself a temporary event. An Asian source pointed out that Jiang is in the same nominally powerful position Hua Goufeng was, when the latter was appointed to succeed Mao Zedong after his death. Hua was out of power in a brief time.

An official Chinese account of the East German refugees claimed that "when they first arrived . . . their general feeling is that society in West Germany is full of chaos, and there is no guarantee of life and property. . . . Quite a number of people have returned home."

More upheaval in China?

The Chinese are concerned for one reason: The tide of revolution against 40 years of Communist disaster, could well turn again, back to China. Since June, China's leaders have given one dire warning of harsh austerity after another, including a communiqué from the party plenum earlier this month, which said that the austerity program adopted 14 months ago would be maintained for at least two more years. The party is determined to force inflation down to 10% and to curb growth to 5-6%. Already, the official news agency Xinhua announced, China will shut down 1 million rural enterprises as part of the austerity program. The source of the "blind wave" of 100 million homeless unemployed last year—this means rural unemployment—could double or triple in the coming months, especially after the Chinese New Year in February.

In spite of the harsh crackdown, many leaders of the democracy movement of May and June either escaped China or were able to evade arrest for months by going underground among the people, indicating the depth of support for the demonstrators in China. Two leaders—Wang Jungtao, the former editor of the *Economic Studies Weekly*, and Chen Ziming, former head of the Beijing Social and Economic Studies Research Institute—were finally arrested in southern Guangdong province on Nov. 10, Agence France Presse reported. The pair had been at the top of a Public Security Ministry list of China's seven "most wanted" intellectuals, yet were able to avoid apprehension for a full four months. On Nov. 12, Public Security Minister Wang Fang warned that "domestic and foreign hostile forces have not stopped their conspiratorial activities in an endeavor to overthrow the Communist Party leadership. . . . [There] are still many factors that might cause instability in society," Xinhua reported. Xinhua, this time at least, is correct.