

UPHEAVAL IN CHINA; Chinese Hard-Liner Tightens Grip As Attacks on His Rival Multiply

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES MAY 27, 1989

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With Prime Minister Li Peng apparently winning China's power struggle, documents criticizing his rival, Zhao Ziyang, have been circulated among senior officials, evidently in preparation for a formal decision to dismiss Mr. Zhao as Communist Party leader.

The criticisms were unusually harsh, and many Chinese said they feared that they heralded a campaign of repression against those like Mr. Zhao who favor more rapid political and economic liberalization and more conciliation with pro-democracy demonstrators.

A speech to the Politburo by former President Li Xiannian particularly worried some party officials because it borrowed from the long unused vocabulary of the Cultural Revolution by calling this a "struggle between two headquarters."

Protesters' Numbers Are Down

By day, about 20,000 student demonstrators continue to occupy Tiananmen Square, in the heart of Beijing, but the numbers are diminishing and many of the students are from other parts of the country. Somewhat fewer spend the night at the square.

The declining numbers seem to reflect mostly weariness after almost six weeks

of nearly continuous protest, and disgust at the increasing filth on the square, rather than intimidation by the Government polemics.

But fear was in the air in Beijing today, as many intellectuals and party officials worried that a wave of arrests or a brutal military crackdown were imminent. The alarm was compounded by a wave of rumors, circulated among ordinary people as well as among diplomats and party officials and carried by foreign news agencies, that suggested that Mr. Zhao and as many as hundreds of others had been arrested, and that rival military units were about to start shooting at each other. Rumors

Full of Holes

The atmosphere is such that many of these reports were immediately believed. In fact, the reports are mostly impossible to prove, and some were clearly false.

"They haven't been arrested," a somewhat surprised Fang Ke, the son of the dissidents Fang Lizhi and Li Shuxian, said today of his parents. There had been persistent reports that Mr. Fang and Miss Li had been seized for counterrevolutionary activities.

Other prominent intellectuals or officials - including Ren Wanding, a leader of the Democracy Wall movement of a decade ago; Yan Jiaqi, a political scientist, and Yan Mingfu, a party official - were also known not to have been arrested, despite rumors to the contrary.

There were contradictory reports about whether Mr. Zhao, his aide Bao Tong and others had been arrested, but a senior official who works in the Communist Party headquarters said they had not been. A Call for More Marxism

Though the purge rumors seemed overblown, there were other indications of Mr. Li's ascendancy. A commission of retired party leaders declared on national television tonight that the real problem was lack of attention to Marxism.

"The comrades present at the meeting point out that the unrest is not at all a fluke," the television announcer said, referring to the Central Advisory Commission's meeting today. "One of the major causes is that for a long time we have failed to pay enough attention to Marxist ideological education."

The meeting, led by a retired Politburo member, Chen Yun, also appeared to criticize Mr. Zhao, saying: "At such a critical time, we old comrades must stand up and, along with the whole party, firmly expose the conspiracy of the very, very small number of people who want to create chaos, and firmly and unequivocally fight against them without making any concessions."

The suggestion for more ideological education could be read as the first call for

a new campaign for ideological purity, like the campaigns against "bourgeois liberalization" in 1987 and "spiritual pollution" in 1983 and 1984. Those meant a clampdown on intellectual freedom and minor purges of officials who did not toe the official line. Zhao's Official Status Still Murky

It has been 10 days since Mr. Zhao, at a Politburo Standing Committee meeting, challenged Deng Xiaoping, China's senior leader, and was subsequently stripped of his powers, party officials say.

There are contradictory reports about whether Mr. Zhao has formally been suspended from his post, and so far there have been no official indications of where he stands.

National newspapers and news broadcasts have not acknowledged his existence since Saturday, although the Foreign Ministry indicated Thursday that he was still General Secretary of the Communist Party.

There remain a plethora of confusing and conflicting reports about Mr. Deng's intentions, but party officials and diplomats suggest that Mr. Deng and Prime Minister Li are now trying to build a solid case against Mr. Zhao to present to the Central Committee. The situation has been complicated because Mr. Zhao refuses to resign, as his predecessor Hu Yaobang agreed to do under pressure two years ago.

Because Mr. Zhao refuses to step down, Mr. Li is trying to mount as harsh a campaign as possible against the party leader, both to justify the extreme step of dismissal and to intimidate those Central Committee officials who might be tempted to support him, these accounts say. At Least 5 Specific Charges

The charges they have drawn against Mr. Zhao are said to include these: he led an "anti-party clique"; he incited the student demonstrations and the resulting turmoil for his own political ends; he is the No. 1 corrupt official in the nation; he fostered splits in the military, and he released national secrets by disclosing that the Central Committee had voted to consult Mr. Deng on important matters.

A speech by President Yang Shangkun attacking Mr. Zhao was circulated among ministers and other top officials on Thursday, and among department heads today, say officials familiar with the speech.

The speech also criticizes Hu Qili, a member of the Politburo standing committee who supported Mr. Zhao in proposing conciliation with the student demonstrators, as well as a few others like Mr. Zhao's aide Bao Tong.

The distribution of the materials criticizing Mr. Zhao was delayed because an

enlarged meeting of the Politburo, scheduled to be completed Wednesday, could not be ended on time after some officials refused to go along with the criticism of Mr. Zhao, a party official said. He said that despite the opposition, the original charges against Mr. Zhao were retained. Rank and File Reaction Unclear

It is not clear how the broader party membership will react to the charges against Mr. Zhao. The corruption charge against him is regarded as a shrewd move, because corruption has been one of the student demonstrators' foremost concerns. On the other hand, many party members seem upset with the return to power struggles and to the harsh language of the Cultural Revolution.

Earlier this week a speech by Li Ximing, the Beijing party chief, was distributed to middle-level party officials so that they could study it and then pass it down to local units. But knowledgeable Chinese say that some of the officials rebelled at being told they should pass on the speech, which criticized student demonstrations and implicitly criticized Mr. Zhao, although not by name.

As a result, distribution of Mr. Li's speech has been held up in some "work units," and in others it has been read to large groups rather than studied in individual cells.

Mr. Zhao has some friends on the Central Committee, and some Chinese say there remains a faint chance that the Central Committee would refuse to go along with ousting him. But most say that by the time party members have reached the Central Committee level, they are so used to democratic centralism that they will follow the instructions of the leadership.

A young party member with a relative who is a friend and protege of Mr. Zhao was asked what the relative would do if asked to endorse criticisms of Mr. Zhao in such a meeting. "He would go along with it, but in his heart he would protest," the party member said. Capital Appears Calmer

In some ways life in the capital is returning to normal. Most buses are running again, and traffic is no longer as congested as it was. Army troops are still surrounding the capital, but citizens no longer turn out every night to put up roadblocks to keep the troops from advancing on the city center.

There have been widespread reports of military units with competing loyalties confronting each other. But the reports cannot be confirmed, and the source of the tension may have been resolved with an agreement by the commanders of the Beijing Military Region to support Prime Minister Li and his order for martial law.

People's Daily today carried a letter from the Beijing Military Region Party

Committee expressing support for martial law, and a party official said the tensions appeared to have been reduced. He said one reason why so many troops have been brought to the capital was that they had to deal not only with the student demonstrators but also with the risk of confrontation with Beijing Military Region troops, many of whom are considered loyal to Mr. Zhao. Defense Minister Under a Cloud

In another sign of military support for the Government, all of the nation's major military commanders attended the expanded meeting of the Politburo this week in the capital, a Western diplomat said. He said the only possible exception was Defense Minister Qin Jiwei, who is said to be facing political difficulties because of his ties to Mr. Zhao and because of suspicions that he contributed to the hesitance of the Beijing Military Region to respond to the call for a military crackdown.

The diplomat said that there appeared to have been a deal worked out with Mr. Li and Mr. Deng, such that the military would support them and obey orders, and in return the army would not be ordered to engage in violent confrontations with students or ordinary citizens.

There are vastly different estimates for the number of troops called to Beijing in recent weeks, with some Chinese saying the numbers go as high as 900,000 and involve depletion of forces along the Chinese-Soviet border. Most diplomatic estimates are far lower, ranging from 50,000 to 200,000 troops summoned to the area.

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