

# Will Jiang Zemin's purge backfire?

by Linda de Hoyos

On Aug. 21, in a speech recently released to the public, Chinese Communist Party General Secretary head Jiang Zemin called upon the leaders of the CCP to carry out a relentless purge of the 48 million-member party. Under the banner of eradicating "bourgeois liberalization," targeted will be all those who have expressed or demonstrated their sympathy for the democracy movement that shook Beijing and other major cities in May.

"We should not fail to see the seriousness of the problems presently existing within our party," Jiang told the assembled heads of the party's organizational departments Aug. 21. "It is necessary to grasp the present opportune moment to conscientiously grasp the work of screening and purging in order to maintain the purity of our party contingent. . . . We must avoid doing it superficially. We must never leave hidden trouble untouched." To underline the point, Jiang—who is deemed a moderate by the Western press—called for the revival of "criticism and self-criticism" within the party. "It is necessary to carry out inner-party ideological struggle," a term Jiang admitted had not been used heretofore—that is, not since the end of Mao Zedong's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Accordingly, along with the issuance of new identity cards for all mainland Chinese, the party leadership has ordered the recall of all party membership cards, forcing the 48 million cadre to re-register. The Hong Kong paper *Ching Pao* said on Oct. 10 that party members are now being screened with the following questions: 1) Did they support the policy of armed suppression to the rebellion? 2) Is it right and necessary to enforce the martial law order? 3) Do they believe that the nature of the current rebellion and bourgeois liberalization conflict with the four cardinal principles (establishing the primacy of the Communist Party and communist thought)? 4) Were turmoil and rebellion inevitable or caused by the mistakes of some party leaders? The activities and statements of all party members during the rebellion will likewise be examined.

In addition, as indicated by Prime Minister Li Peng at a reception in Beijing Oct. 13, political criteria will come first in the employment of professionals. "Department chiefs must not only be well conversant with professional work, but must, still more, be revolutionaries and politicians."

One 2,000-word fulmination in this genre, however, gives an idea of the difficulty of the task confronting China's repressive leadership. The article, first published in the theoretical journal *Quishi* and reprinted in the *People's Daily*, calls upon the Chinese people to once again exhibit the "spirit of plain living and hard work."

meaning, that is, a spirit of making advances and utter devotion that is characterized by fearing no difficulties, fearing no sacrifices, and fighting indomitably for the common interests and common ideal of the state, the nation, the people, and for the development of the socialist cause."

## Easier said than done

Such calls to rouse China's population to revolutionary fervor only serve to demonstrate that the Maoist revolution is over; there is simply no "revolutionary spirit" in China today. The mainland Chinese cannot be mobilized into a frenzied replay of the Cultural Revolution to roust out the "dregs" of "bourgeois liberalization." The atmosphere is one of cynical disillusionment at the bankruptcy of the Communist regime.

Such disillusionment extends to the top of the party itself, and permeates the party institutions, even into the national security apparatus. On Sept. 8, Minister of Public Security Wang Fang delivered a speech calling for the revitalization of the nation's police force, which he said was rife with corruption and demoralization, with a demonstrated incapacity to utilize new methods or equipment. Strengthening the police force is a "question of profound strategic importance to our country," Wang said. "Our struggle" against rebellion "is far from over. . . . Our enemies have not in the least resigned themselves to defeat."

Wang followed with a stern warning to the CCP leadership: It must act fast to retrieve the mandate of heaven, or face revolution. "We are still inevitably confronted with a lot of complicated political, economic, and social problems, including corruption, deterioration of social order, inflation, unfair distribution, unemployment, nationality issues, religious problems. . . . Should these problems fail to be solved, social turmoil and all types of social problems will certainly break out, which will in turn be made use of by antagonistic forces abroad and at home."

Such "antagonistic forces" definitely exist within the P.R.C. today. Estimates from the P.R.C. press are that upwards of 500,000 Communist Party members demonstrated during the democracy movement. As Jiang Zemin stated in his Aug. 21 purge speech, "That a lot of our party members took to the streets to take part in the demonstrations, is indeed a serious problem." The repressive leaders in power in Beijing have to seriously assess whether—given the lack of support in the general population—they can afford to launch an attack on the party and dismantle the institutions of policymaking that tended to back the democracy movement.