

## Chapter II Establishment of the New Leadership of the CPC

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# Chapter II

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### *Introduction*

The 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (15th Party Congress) elected the central leadership of the CPC to lead China into the 21st century. The achievements of the Party Congress are summarized in three points: (1) the clear reaffirmation of the continuation of “Deng Xiaoping Theory”, (2) the official recognition of diversification of the forms of ownership for promotion of reforms of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and (3) the progress made in changing the central leadership of the CPC.

This chapter will focus on an analysis of the central personnel decided on at the 15th Party Congress. First, it will briefly touch upon the features of the 15th Party Congress upon which this analysis of personnel is predicated, then will analyze the central personnel, primarily the central leadership, and finally will give an outlook on the future of the Jiang Zemin administration.

### *1. Features of 15th Party Congress*

#### **1-1. Full Support for Continuation of “Deng Xiaoping Theory”**

One of the main points watched in the Party Congress was if the Jiang administration would be able to come out with its own distinctive color, that is, new policies different from those of Deng Xiaoping, after the death of Deng in February 1997.

The Party Congress revised the Party Constitution to explicitly stipulate that the CPC would adopt as its guiding policies “Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory”. By getting the Party Constitution to write in “Deng Xiaoping Theory” as the guiding theory of the CPC, the Jiang administration reaffirmed China’s commitment to the continuation of his pragmatic approach.

In regard to the “distinctive color” of Jiang Zemin, it had been anticipated that he would take some bold, concrete steps to reform SOEs and the

political system. For the former, however, he only gave belated recognition to what was already a fact, that is, gave the official stamp of approval to the “joint-stock system” and the “joint-stock cooperative system” (system of employees owning shares) already being experimented with in different parts of the country. Regarding the latter, the improvement of the legal system and improvement of the system of democratic supervision through the improvement of the peoples congresses and direct elections at the grass root level lacked novelty and were far from the fundamental reforms needed<sup>1</sup>.

The Jiang administration adopted as its distinctive characteristics full support of the policy of continuing the existing direction of the country, that is, “Deng Xiaoping Theory”, rather than formulating new policies, with a view to maintaining stability and as a result of the decision not to make any of the anticipated political reforms.

#### **1-2. “Theoretical Breakthrough” in Ownership**

Along with the deterioration in operations of SOEs, China has been experiencing deepening social instability as exemplified by the rising, and now close to 4 percent, unemployment rate and the frequent strikes by workers. It had been hoped that in response new policies would be proposed regarding reforms of SOEs.

Jiang’s report floated the new idea that “the public sector includes not only the state- and collectively-owned sectors, but also the state- and collectively-owned elements in the sector of mixed ownership”. The intention behind this was to give the official nod to diversification of the public sector, that is, to the interpretation that even joint-stock enterprises could be considered part of the public sector if the state and collectives held dominant shares, and to thereby help introduce the joint-stock system needed for reforming state-owned enterprises.

The nod to diversification of the public sector, seen from the economic perspective, was merely

belated recognition to an existing fact. It is from the political perspective that it was important. That is, the successful reinterpretation of theory to allow a joint-stock system and other diversified ownership systems showed the Jiang administration had won the ideological struggle in the CPC over the issue of reforms in SOEs. In the introduction of a market economy as well, China remains a socialist country which acts on the basis of ideology – resulting in the forced grafting of the term “socialist” to “market economy” for example. Diehard forces remain which criticize the reform and opening-up policies of Deng Xiaoping. They are warning that the fall in the weight of the public sector due to the rise of privately owned enterprises, foreign investments, and joint ventures and operations is weakening the dominant position of the CPC and the authority of the central government. To them, the rising number of private capitalists and the rest of the bourgeoisie are becoming a threat to the current administration.

With the actual economy galloping on ahead, the confrontation between those in favor of pushing forward with the reforms and the more cautious was rather an ideological issue. Vice Premier Zhu Rongji assessed things in this way: “this new theoretical breakthrough will unquestionably lead to striking progress in several major areas of enterprise reforms”<sup>2</sup>. In this way, the official recognition of the diversification of the public sector settled the ideological debate for a while and removed a major hurdle to future reforms.

## 2. *Newcomers in the Leadership*

The Party Congress made significant decisions regarding the central leadership which will be at the helm of the country in the coming five years, that is, the General Secretary, the members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, the members and alternates of the Political Bureau. The features of these decisions will be examined below (Table 1).

### **2-1. General Secretary and Members of the Standing Committee of Political Bureau**

Jiang Zemin was reelected to the position of General Secretary – the top post in the CPC. This

confirmed him as the preeminent leader in the CPC for the next five years. Regarding the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, the highest decision-making organization in the CPC, there had been speculation before the Party Congress that its ranks would be swelled to nine, but in the end only seven were elected, similar to the previous Party Congress. Five were reelected from the previous term – General Secretary Jiang Zemin, Li Peng (Premier), Zhu Rongji (Vice Premier), Li Ruihuan (Chairman of People's Political Consultative Conference), and Hu Jintao (Secretary of Secretariat). Two were newly elected, that is, Wei Jianxing (Secretary of Central Commission for Discipline Inspection) and Li Lanqing (Vice Premier).

Three features stood out from the appointment of these top seven men. The first was that Zhu Rongji jumped in party rank from the previous fifth place to third place. This showed that Zhu Rongji was a shoe-in for the next Premier. The current Premier, Li Peng, will depart from that post at the National People's Congress of March 1998 due to the prohibition against a third term. Who was to succeed to the post was a subject of considerable interest inside and outside China. The mass media portrayed Vice Premier Li Lanqing as a leading candidate for this in 1996. Zhu Rongji, on the other hand, had mostly been given little chance due to the strong backlash from local governments and enterprises over the stern hand he has exercised over the economy since July 1994. By the end of 1996, however, having succeeded in managing a “soft landing” for the economy, that is, achieving simultaneously both a high rate of economic growth and low inflation, Zhu Rongji's skills in macroeconomic management began to be more highly appreciated. Much began to be hoped from him in microeconomic management, that is, in the reform of state-owned enterprises. In 1997, therefore, Zhu Rongji rose to become the leading candidate for the position of the next Premier. The recent rise in his standing in the CPC gives substance to this.

The second feature was the departure of the man said to be Jiang Zemin's main rival, Qiao Shi (Chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress). Qiao Shi failed to be elected to the Central Committee and consequently de facto retired from CPC affairs. Before the Party Congress, majority opinion had been that Qiao Shi would be allowed to remain in the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau as a means of stabilizing the Jiang

Zemin administration. There were, however, signs of what would actually occur. For example, Qiao Shi failed to make an appearance at Jiang Zemin's speech before the Party Central School on May 29, 1997. The speech that day was an extremely important one in revealing to the CPC leadership the outline of Jiang Zemin's coming report before the 15th Party Congress, so was attended by all of the

other members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, not counting Li Ruihuan and Zhu Rongji who were out of the country. Further, there were almost no reports in the *People's Daily* of Qiao Shi speaking of the "Party leadership with Comrade Jiang Zemin at the core" – a phrase guaranteed to pop up in the speeches at conferences and during local trips of other leaders up to then.

**Table 1. CPC Central Leadership Decided on at 15th Party Congress**

Title		14th Party Congress		15th Party Congress			
		Name	Age	Name	Age	Concurrent post	
General Secretary		Jiang Zemin	66	Jiang Zemin	71	President and Minister of Central Military Commission	
Political Bureau	Standing Committee	Jiang Zemin	66	Jiang Zemin	71		
		Li Peng	64	Li Peng	68	Premier	
		Qiao Shi	67	Zhu Rongji	68	Vice Premier	
		Li Ruihuan	58	Li Ruihuan	63	Chairman of China People's Political Consultative Conference	
		Zhu Rongji	64	Hu Jintao	54	Secretary of Central Secretariat	
		Liu Huaqing	66	Wei Jianxing	66	Secretary of Central Commission for Discipline Inspection	
		Hu Jintao	49	Li Lanqing	65	Vice Premier	
	Members	Ding Guanggen	63	Ding Guanggen	68	Secretary of Central Secretariat and Head of Propaganda Department	
		Tian Jiyun	63	Tian Jiyun	68	Vice Chairman of Standing Committee of National Peoples Congress	
		Li Lanqing	60	Li Changchun	53	Party Committee Secretary of Hunan Province	
		Li Tieying	56	Li Tieying	61	Minister of State Commission for Restructuring Economy	
		Yang Baibing	72	Wu Bangguo	56	Vice Premier	
		Wu Bangguo	51	Wu Guanzheng	58	Party Committee Secretary of Shandong Province	
		Zou Jiahua	66	Chi Haotian	68	Vice Minister of Central Military Commission and Minister of National Defense	
		Chen Xitong	62	Zhang Wannian	69	Vice Minister of Central Military Commission	
		Jiang Chunyun	62	Luo Gan	62	Secretary General of State Council	
		Qian Qichen	64	Jiang Chunyun	67	Vice Premier	
		Huang Ju	56	Jia Qinglin	57	Party Committee Secretary and Mayor of Beijing	
		Wei Jianxing	61	Qian Qichen	69	Vice Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs	
		Xie Fei	59	Huang Ju	59	Party Committee Secretary of Shanghai	
		Tan Shaowen	63	Wen Jiabao	55	Secretary of Central Secretariat	
				Xie Fei	64	Party Committee Secretary of Guangdong Province	
		Alternate members	Wen Jiabao	50	Zeng Qinghong	58	Director of Central General Office and Secretary of Central Secretariat
			Wang Hanbin	67	Wu Yi	58	Minister of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade

Source: Prepared by author. Ages were those at time of Party Congress (14th Congress was held in October 1992).

There was a sign of, if not a power struggle, some mutual rivalry between Jiang Zemin and Qiao Shi. In selecting the members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, Jiang Zemin perhaps choose to push out Qiao Shi in order to stabilize his own base of power rather than including Qiao Shi in order to stabilize the administration.

The third feature was the departure of Liu Huaqing (Vice Minister of the Central Military Commission), viewed once as a powerful backer of Jiang Zemin. Liu Huaqing was reportedly propelled into the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau at the 14th Party Congress at the wish of Deng Xiaoping and represented the faction in the PLA supporting Jiang Zemin. Therefore, there was tremendous significance in the lack of any military representative to have been elected. It indicated that (1) Jiang Zemin no longer needed support from the PLA at the highest decision-making level and (2) the PLA judged that Jiang Zemin was sufficient to represent its own interests. In other words, Jiang Zemin and the PLA trust each other, it is difficult to judge, however, if this means that Jiang Zemin already has a firm grip over the PLA or if the PLA already has a firm grip over Jiang.

Let us now touch upon the two newly elected members. The promotion of Wei Jianxing, said to be a confidant of Qiao Shi, was in one sense a tit-for-tat for the retirement of Qiao Shi. It was also intended to display, inside China and to the outside world, the tougher stance taken toward growing official corruption. The Seventh Plenary Session of the 14th CPC held just before the Party Congress decided to strip Chen Xitong, dismissed from his position as member of the Central Political Bureau in July 1995, of his party membership and to pursue criminal prosecution. The issue of Chen Xitong was first rumored to have been based on corruption, but should be viewed in terms of the relationship between the central and local governments<sup>3</sup>. The decision to pursue criminal prosecution of Chen Xitong before the 15th Party Congress, however, shows the much tougher stance taken against corruption by the Jiang administration. Wei Jianxing, the Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection – at the center of the fight against corruption, initiated in August 1993, – was elected to the Standing Committee for this purpose.

Li Lanqing was once a leading contender for the position of next Premier, but was promoted to the position of first Vice Premier, the position for-

merly held by Zhu Rongji, in March 1998. The reasons for his election to the Standing Committee were said to have been his ties with Jiang Zemin in study in the Soviet Union, the First Auto Works, and the State Export and Import Commission and his stint as Minister of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade and consequent broad knowledge of foreign trade, but no one really knows. Conversely, he may have been promoted to maintain a balance in the Standing Committee due to his nonalliance with any particular faction and his unassuming personality.

## 2-2. Members of the Political Bureau

Among the 15 members of the Political Bureau, eight, that is, Ding Guanggen, Tian Jiyun, Li Tieying, Wu Bangguo, Jiang Chunyun, Qian Qichen, Huang Ju, and Xie Fei, were reelected for another term, while seven others, that is, Li Changchun, Wu Guanzheng, Chi Haotian, Zhang Wannian, Luo Gan, Jia Qinglin, and Wen Jiabao, were newly elected.

The first feature evident from a comparison with the 14th Party Congress was the appearance of younger personnel. A breakdown of the members by age shows that nine were in their 60s and six in their 50s. In the Political Bureau elected at the 14th Party Congress, one member was in his 70s, nine in their 60s, and four in their 50s, so the current Political Bureau can be said to have been somewhat rejuvenated<sup>4</sup>.

The second feature was the election of regional leaders. The secretaries of the Party Committees of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong – either directly run municipalities or a key coastal area growing fast economically – were all elected. While the Party Committee Secretary of Tianjin was not elected, the Party Committee Secretary of Hunan province was. The election to the Political Bureau of the Party Committee Secretary of Hunan, a province located in an inland area, may have indicated a stress on the inland region by the CPC at a time when the growing economic disparity between the coastal and inland regions is becoming a problem. If indeed the inland regions were being stressed, however, it would have been more natural for the Party Committee Secretary of Chongqing city, which was elevated to the fourth directly run municipality after Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai in June 1997, to

have been selected. This did not happen at the recent Party Congress.

Therefore, the election of the Hunan Party Committee Secretary to the Political Bureau should probably be viewed as having been due less to a tilt to the inland regions and more a tilt to Li Changchun the individual. Li was propelled to the position of Governor of Liaoning province at the young age of 42 and later served as the Governor of Henan province and the Party Committee Secretary of Henan so is experienced in local affairs. Further, when mayor of Shenyang city in Liaoning, he orchestrated China's first "successful" bankruptcy of an enterprise and, when governor of Liaoning, successfully experimented with enterprise leasing and bankruptcy laws and instituted a system of labor contracts. He therefore has a considerable record which will be valuable in future reforms of SOEs<sup>5</sup>. Li Changchun may in the future take over key posts such as the Party Committee Secretary of Guangdong in place of Xie Fei, who is already 64 years old, the Party Committee Secretary of Tianjin, in place of the Secretary who failed to be elected to the Political Bureau just recently, and Vice Premier in place of Zou Jiahua, who is scheduled to retire in March 1998.

Further, regarding the Party Committee Secretary of Shandong Province, while Wu Guanzheng was elected to the Political Bureau after the previous term of Jiang Chunyun, considering the fact that Jiang Chunyun resigned from the post as Shandong Party Committee Secretary two years later in 1994 and was then chosen as Secretary of the Central Secretariat and Vice Premier, the choice appears to have been less due to the importance of the region than due to individual ability, i.e., broad knowledge about agricultural issues. Therefore, it is likely that Wu Guanzheng was selected for his personal abilities. The position of Shandong Party Committee Secretary may be one step up to a successful party cadre. Jia Qinglin was perhaps an automatic choice due to his post as all important Beijing Party Committee Secretary. He also has abundant experience in foreign relations from his days as Governor and Party Committee Secretary of Fujian province, in particular in economic interaction with Taiwan<sup>6</sup>.

The third feature was the election of Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian from the PLA. The number of PLA members in by one due to the reduced number of slots in the afore-mentioned Standing Committee of the Political Bureau. In view of the

numbers of the PLA seats none in the Standing Committee and two in the Political Bureau, the PLA's relative position was restored to the period following the 13th Party Congress (1987). The number of Vice Chairmen of the Central Military Commission was reduced from the previous four to the current two. Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian filled the posts which were vacated by the retirement of Liu Huaqing and Zhang Yun.

### 3. *Features of Central Committee Members<sup>7</sup> and Alternate Members*

#### **3-1. General Trends**

One hundred and ninety three representatives were elected to the Central Committee (Table 2). The average age of the members was 55.9 years or just a reduction of a little under one year from the previous session. Namely elected representatives, 108 of them, represent 56.5 percent of the total. Among 151 alternate members (Table 3), 105 or 69.5 percent were new faces. As a result, 62.2 percent of the members and alternate members of the Central Committee were new comers. This represents a considerable influx of new cadres compared with the 46.7 percent of the previous session. Further, 92 percent of the members were either high school or university graduates. This shows a higher degree of learning and specialization compared with the 83.7 percent of the previous session<sup>8</sup>.

The Central Committee members and alternate members are broken down into three categories (1) local<sup>9</sup> party and government officials (provincial party committee secretaries, vice secretaries, and standing committee members, provincial governors and vice governors, etc.), (2) central party and government officials (ministers and vice ministers), and (3) the PLA. For the Central Committee alternate members, the fourth category, representatives from economic sectors, may be added. The characteristics of each category are examined below.

#### **3-2. Local Party and Government Officials**

One hundred and sixty-three local officials

**Table 2. Breakdown of 193 Central Committee Members**

	No.	Share (%)
Local party and government officials	78	40.4
Central party and government officials	62	32.1
PLA officers	42	21.8
Others	11	5.7

Source: Prepared by author.

were elected as members and alternate members of the Central Committee. Almost all of the provincial party committee secretaries and provincial governors were elected. Only the chairman of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region (Wu Liji), the chairman of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region (Cheng Kejie), the Hainan party committee secretary/governor (Ruan Chongwu), the Yunnan provincial governor (He Zhiqiang), and the chairman of the Tibet autonomous region (Gyaincain Norbu) were not elected. These officials are probably scheduled to be replaced in the near future.

Further, 88 party committee secretaries, vice secretaries, and vice governors were elected. Of these, there were 39 of less than age 53, the age of graduation from university during the Cultural Revolution, and 10 in their 40s. Further, young local officials serving as party committee members, party committee secretaries and mayors of main local cities, were also elected. They will probably rise to higher local positions and to the central party and government in the future.

### 3-3. Central Party and Government Officials

Sixty-two central party and government officials were elected as members and alternate members of the Central Committee. The main ministers who failed to be reelected were those of the State Planning Commission (Chen Jinhua), the State Education Commission (Zhu Kaixuan), the Ministry of Labor (Li Baiyong), the Ministry of Construction (Hou Jie), the Ministry of Electric Power (Shi Dazhen), the Ministry of Coal Industry (Wang Shen-hao), the Ministry of Electronics Industry (Hu Qili),

**Table 3. Breakdown of 151 Central Committee Alternate Members**

	No.	Share (%)
Local party and government officials	85	56.3
Central party and government officials	17	11.3
PLA officers	23	15.2
Economic and enterprises	14	9.3
Others	12	7.9

Source: Prepared by author.

the Ministry of Public Health (Chen Minzhang). These will probably be replaced soon. On the other hand, younger members were already being promoted or were leading contenders for the vacated posts. They include Chen Zhili (54), the Vice Mayor of Shanghai, for the Party Group Secretary and Vice Minister of the State Education Commission, Yu Zhengsheng (52), the son of Zhang Aiping, the former Minister of National Defense, for the Vice Minister of Construction, and Gao Yan (54), who is well versed in the electric power sector and has served on many local posts, for Vice Minister of Electric Power Industry.

### 3-4. PLA, Economic Experts and Others

As for the PLA, 41 members of the PLA were elected as members of the Central Committee and 22 as alternate members or 18.3 percent of the two. This is 3.6 points down from the previous session and shows a decline in the position of the PLA. Of the PLA members, 29 were also new – showing the infusion of new personnel<sup>10</sup>.

There were four representatives elected from five banks, the President of the People's Bank of China (Dai Xianglong) as a full member and the Chairman and President of the Bank of China (Wang Xuebing), the Chairman and President of the Construction Bank of China (Wang Qishan<sup>11</sup>, also serving as Chairman of the China Investment Bank), and the President of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Liu Tinghuan) as alternate members. Three representatives were elected from enterprises, that is, the Chairman and President of the Chunlan Group (Tao Jianxing), the Chairman and President of the Changjiang Electronic Group (Ni

Runfeng), and the Chairman of the Beijing Yanshan Petrochemical Group (Liu Haiyan). In the 14th Party Congress, there were three representatives from banks and none from enterprises. The increase in representatives from the financial and business sectors gives one hope that China will further reform the system of SOEs and the financial system in the future.

Among the many "model workers" much talked about in the strengthening of the "construction of a socialist spiritual culture" from early 1996, three were elected as alternate members (Li Guoan, Wang Qimin, and Wu Jinyin). This has symbolic meaning in view of the drop in morale among party members and the public at the cost of deeper reforms and opening up.

### Conclusion

The only one to give two consecutive reports before the Party Congresses since the death of Mao Zedong was Jiang Zemin. Even the successors to Deng Xiaoping, that is, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, each gave only one. This fact would suggest that the stability of the Jiang administration is by no means low. Also, the 15th Party Congress successfully laid the foundation for the next five years. This does not mean however that the next five years are going to be mild and without incident. In this sense, the current personnel lineup reflects the current stance of trying to tackle the problems head on. The rise of Zhu Rongji to the number three position, aimed at reform of SOEs, the biggest problem on hand, and the election of Wei Jingxing to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, suggest political will of Jiang Zemin to tackle the deepening problem of corruption.

Until now, Jiang's report and the personnel lineup reveal his orientation toward stability as a means of surviving the next five years of his term as General Secretary. The members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau and the regular members are to be responsible for heavy tasks which they have to grapple with on their own.

Finally, let us touch briefly on the specific lineup of personnel in the future. The reshuffling of the personnel of local party and government organizations had been completed before the Party Congress. The only holdovers were the top leaders of some of the autonomous regions<sup>12</sup>. Of interest

in the future was the replacement of the Party Committee Secretary of Guangdong Province. Also, the ministers of the central party and government organizations were expected to be changed before the next session of the National People's Congress scheduled to be held in March 1998. They were expected to be selected from among the Central Committee members and alternate members elected at the recent Party Congress.

Of most interest was who would succeed Li Peng as Premier. In relation to this, it is necessary to watch the posts under the new Premier such as the Vice Premiers, Secretary General of the State Council General Office, etc. and posts such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the State Planning Commission. The new personnel lineup is important to get a better view of the direction which the Jiang Zemin administration will take in the coming five years.

### Notes:

1. NORIHIRO SASAKI, "Sekai teki ni chumoku sareru noson de no chokusetsu senkyo" (Globally Watched Direct Rural Elections), *IDE World Trends*, August 1997.
2. *People's Daily*, September 23, 1997.
3. For background on the Chen Xitong incident, see NORIHIRO SASAKI, "Chuo no keni kakuritsu o moso suru kotakumin seiken" (Jiang Zemin Administration Seeking Central Authority), *IDE World Trends*, December 1995 and January 1996 joint issue.
4. For Huang Ju, the age was that at the time of election to the Fourth Plenary Session of the 14th CPMCC in September 1994.
5. *Chungkung Yanchiu* (Taiwan), vol. 30, no. 3 (March 1996), pp. 92 to 98.
6. *Chungkung Yanchiu* (Taiwan), vol. 30, no. 2 (February 1996), pp. 103 to 108.
7. The members and alternate members of the Central Committee are based on information in the *Junkan chugoku naigai doko*, 1997, vol. 21, no. 25 and no. 26, Radiopress Inc., revised in parts by the author.
8. For the question of the "rejuvenation" of the members of the Central Committee elected at the 15th Party Congress and the personnel at central and local party and government organizations, see NORIHIRO SASAKI, "Chugoku no keizaihatten o sasaeru jinzai haichi no genjo to tenbo" (Current State and Outlook on Personnel for Supporting the Economic Growth of China), *Toa*, December 1997, Kazankai.
9. The "local" spoken of here means provinces, autonomous regions, and directly run municipalities



– referred to overall as “provinces”.

10. For a detailed analysis of the PLA, see SHIGEO HIRAMATSU, “Kakujitsu ni seidoka ga susumu chugokugun shido taisei” (Steady Institutionalization of the Leadership System of Chinese Army), *Sekai shuho*, December 16, 1997, Jiji Press.
11. Wan Qishan was elected to the post of Vice Governor at the Guangdong Peoples Congress held in January 1998. This was due to the central government's need to tighten control over Guangdong as part of its reforms of the fiscal system and to deal with the Asian financial crisis, which has caused stock prices in Hong Kong to tumble, starting in the second half of 1997. Wang is highly regarded for his financial expertise in Guangdong.
12. Four provincial governors have been replaced since the 15th Party Congress (as of January 25, 1998), that is, Bai Lichen by Ma Qizhi as chairman of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region (acting, December 3, 1997), Cheng Kejie by Li Zhaozhuo as chairman of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region (January 17, 1998), Wu Liji by Yun Bulong as chairman of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region (same day), and He Zhiqiang by Li Jiating as Governor of Yunnan province (January 18, 1998).