

# Leadership Presses Party Unity in Time of Economic Stress

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Prominently publicized criticism sessions of the Party's supreme political and military decision-making bodies in January capped a six-month study campaign to enforce Party discipline at national and provincial levels behind the policies of the collective leadership around General Secretary Hu Jintao. The campaign was launched in September 2008 to re-study the "scientific development concept," which had been endorsed at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress as a key element in the Party's overarching ideological framework. As China's economic growth sagged under the impact of the world financial downturn, however, the campaign subsequently shifted focus to stress the priority of Party unity behind the Hu leadership, apparently in an effort to squelch intra-Party debate and splits as tensions in China's society sharpened from the economic crisis.

The outcome of the self-criticism session of the Party Politburo Standing Committee—described as a "democratic life meeting" of the body—was briefed to the full Politburo on 23 January, according to a report that day by the official Xinhua News Agency. A comparable "democratic life" criticism session of the Central Military Commission (CMC) was reported by Xinhua on 1 February, but it was actually held in two one-day meetings on 14 and 16 January.<sup>1</sup> The Xinhua accounts of both the Politburo Standing Committee and CMC sessions were published on the front pages of the Party newspaper *People's Daily* on 24 January and 2 February, respectively.

Such top-level "democratic life" criticism sessions by the Politburo Standing Committee and CMC are not unprecedented. They have been a standard part of comparable study campaigns to reinforce Party discipline and improve compliance with the policies of the national Party leadership over the past two decades.

## The Study Campaign

The current study campaign was mandated by the Party's 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress in October 2007, which formally ratified "scientific development concept" in the Party's constitution, on a par with Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping theory, and the "three represents" formulation pioneered by Hu Jintao's predecessor, Jiang Zemin. As defined in Hu Jintao's report on the work of the Central Committee to the congress, the "scientific development concept" entails "people-centered" governance, a focus on "all-round, coordinated, and sustainable" development, and "overall planning," and thus serves to redress the lopsided focus on all-out economic growth as the sole criterion of successful development that had predominated in the Jiang era. In laying out the Party's

agenda ahead, Hu's report called on "the whole Party to carry out activities for intensive study and practice of the scientific development concept" as "the latest achievement in adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions."

Preparations for the study campaign followed soon after the congress closed. Pilot trials for the campaign were conducted in 23 Party units, including in the PLA, between February and August 2008. On 5 September, according to Xinhua that day, the Politburo formally authorized a party-wide study campaign focused principally on Party leadership bodies at county level and above, but with participation by the Party's entire 72-million membership.

On 19 September, a five-day campaign mobilizational conference for central and province-level leaders convened in Beijing, presided over by Politburo Standing Committee member and Secretariat head Xi Jinping and attended by the entire Politburo and Secretariat membership. Hu Jintao gave a long keynote speech that laid out the campaign's goals, methods, and focus (Xinhua, 19 September 2008). Party Organization Department Director Li Yuanchao laid out arrangements for the first stage of the campaign in a speech, and Xi gave a closing address on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Also on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Xinhua released three groups of campaign study materials: *Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin Discussing Scientific Development; Extracts of Important Explications of the Scientific Development Concept; and Selected Documents for Leading Cadres in the Campaign to Study the Scientific Development Concept*. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, *People's Daily* marked the launch of the study campaign with an editorial, and over the following two weeks the paper carried a series of four authoritative Commentator Articles on the significance of Hu's speech. Finally, on 21 September, the campaign's Central Leading Small Group issued a circular calling on the Party to focus on the three groups of study materials and on the Central Committee document "Opinions on Conducting Activities to Study and Practice the Scientific Development Concept in the Whole Party," which had presumably been approved by the Politburo on 5 September. (Xinhua, 21 September 2008)

According to a member of the campaign Central Leading Small Group in an interview with the Party journal *Seeking Truth*, the campaign will unfold among three groups over 18 months (*Qiushi*, 2009 No.20). The first group—Party and Party branches in government institutions at the central and provincial level—would conduct the campaign over the September 2008–February 2009 period. The campaign in the second group—which includes Party and Party branches in government institutions at the municipal and county level, universities and colleges, and state-owned enterprises falling under central, provincial, or municipal authority—will proceed over the March–August 2009 period. The campaign in the final group—Party branches in work units at the township and village levels—will run from September 2009 through February 2010. Each group, according to the campaign official, will work through three phases:

- *Study and investigation*—which should prepare the way for "emancipating thought" with regard to the scientific development concept;

- *Analysis and inspection*—which should involve convening of “specially themed democratic life meetings” of leadership groups focused on the results of the investigation level, compilation of the leadership groups’ summary reports on the inspection, and meetings with “the masses” to assess the reports; and
- *Rectification, improvement, and implementation*—which should result in efforts to “solve prominent problems” and to “perfect administrative structures and mechanisms.”

According to the interview, the campaign would be guided by a Central Leading Small Group, which reports “to the Central Committee,” that is, to the Politburo and its Standing Committee. According to subsequent Xinhua dispatches, the head of the leading group is Xi Jinping, and Li Yuanchao is serving as Xi’s deputy. Corresponding campaign leading groups have been set up at successive levels among Party units at the central and provincial levels.

Since the campaign’s launch in September down through February, PRC media carried a steady stream of reports on the progress of both central and provincial units working through the three phases of the campaign. Xi Jinping and Li Yuanchao were frequently reported by Xinhua inspecting the campaign’s progress in several provinces and central units. On several occasions, Xinhua reported Xi convening groups of central units or of seven to eight provinces to assess the campaign’s course (Xinhua, 4, 7 and 12 December 2008, and 19 January 2009). In addition, a campaign Central Leading Small Group circular revealed that all nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee had each personally inspecting the campaign’s progress in the provinces and conveyed leaders’ remarks that merited study by all Party units engaged in the campaign (Xinhua, 28 November 2008). Beginning on 10 October down through the end of March, *People’s Daily* published a total of 21 authoritative Commentator Articles commenting on themes and developments in the campaign.

### *The Campaign in the Military*

Several military units had participated in the pilot phase of the study campaign in the early months of 2008. Following Hu Jintao’s speech at the 19 September campaign mobilization meeting, the PLA’s General Political Department—the headquarters office that manages the PLA’s political commissars and directs the activities of the Party branches in the military on behalf of the Party CMC—issued a circular mandating study of Hu’s speech as basic guidance in the study campaign in the military. “All units,” the circular stated, “should persist in taking General Secretary Hu’s speech as the basic guide and, in line with the unified arrangements of the central authorities and the CMC, conscientiously map out plans, meticulously organize activities, and strengthen leadership to ensure concrete results” in the campaign. (Xinhua, 20 September 2008)

On 24 September, Hu addressed the themes of the study campaign at an army-wide forum on Party-building in the military, at which most of the CMC’s members were present. “We should do a good job in arming the officers and soldiers with the Party’s innovative theories,” Hu urged, “conscientiously conducting the deep study of the

scientific development concept, earnestly laying a solid ideological and political basis for holding high the banner, obeying the Party's command, and performing the mission." (Xinhua, 24 September 2008)

On 10 November, the CMC itself held a "collective study session" on the campaign attended by most of its members but not Hu himself. The session "unanimously" affirmed the importance of the campaign and "insisted on taking the scientific development concept as an important guiding principle for the building of national defense and the armed forces." It stressed the need to "keep liberating thought in step with the requirements of the scientific development concept and to conscientiously change thinking and concepts that do not suit or are not in line with it."

## Shift in Campaign Focus

The object of the study campaign from the start was to build on the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress's high authoritative endorsement of the scientific development concept to enforce Party discipline behind and overcome resistance to this approach to development pressed by the Hu Jintao leadership since 2003. The "scientific development" approach has sought to redress lopsided emphasis on sustaining high-speed economic growth as the sole criterion of policy success in favor of policies that also take account of the broader social and environmental consequences of economic growth. As encapsulated in the standard formulation ratified in Hu Jintao's report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in October 2007, the scientific development concept "takes development as its essence, puts people first as its core, takes comprehensive, balanced, and sustainable development as its basic requirement, and takes overall consideration as its fundamental approach."

In an interview on the eve of the Party congress, Central Party School Vice Presidents Wang Weiguang and Li Junru explicated the practical implications of the scientific development concept that motivated its formulation by the Hu leadership and its pending endorsement by the Party congress. Many cadres, they noted, misunderstand the scientific development concept and place it in opposition to economic reform. Local officials ignore the social and environmental costs of intemperate focus on economic growth, believing that cadre performance evaluations focus solely on GDP growth and "the gap between rich and poor, environmental protection, education, medical care, and other soft targets that are arduous but fruitless and so of no obvious help with regard to their promotions." (*Nanfang dushu bao*, 27 September 2007)

These concerns about cadre acceptance of and compliance with the policy directions of the scientific development concept were underscored when the study campaign was launched in September 2008. In his keynote speech at the 19 September mobilization meeting in Beijing, Hu Jintao complained that "at present, the Party's ability to govern does not completely suit or comply with the needs of new situations and new tasks, nor do the ideas and views as well as abilities and quality of some Party members and cadres completely suit or comply with the requirements of the Party's advanced nature." He went on to say, "The management methods and capacity to innovate among

some grassroots Party organizations do not suit nor comply with the tasks of economic and social development, and Party organizations, leading bodies, and leading cadres in some localities still have issues with respect to Party character, style, and discipline.” Consequently, Hu stated, “major incidents in production and food safety in some localities have brought major losses to the masses in life and property.” Such events indicate that “some cadres” “turn a deaf ear to the voice of the masses and their hardships and are insensitive to major issues that touch the lives and safety of the masses.” Such incidents and their consequences, Hu concluded, require efforts to resolve such “prominent issues among Party members and cadres” to ensure that they adhere to the emphases of the scientific development concept.

As the leadership began to take stock of the looming impact on China’s economy of the world financial crisis in October, however, the focus of the study campaign shifted in step. On 26 October, a circular issued by the campaign’s leading small group called on all units engaged in the campaign to “take the scientific development concept as guidance and proceed from the international and economic situations in analyzing the new problems, new challenges, and new tasks in their localities and units and in unifying the thinking of cadres and members of the whole Party, and particularly leading cadres at various levels, with the spirit of the Central Committee.” Party units must “regard the various challenges and impact of the international economic recession as part of campaign investigation and study effort.” In particular, the circular added, “central Party and state organs should pay attention to resolving conspicuous problems in macroeconomic policy caused by the international financial turbulence and the global recession” while “local departments and units should exert efforts to resolve problems regarding the personal interests of grassroots people, particularly new problems related to production and people’s livelihood.” (Xinhua, 26 October 2008)

On 28 November, a Politburo meeting presided over by Hu Jintao reviewed trends in China’s economy on the eve of the annual national conference on economic work. According to Xinhua’s report that day, the Politburo concluded that that the impact of the accelerating global economic crisis of China’s economy would “become more evident” and that “some contradictions in China’s economic and social development will become more glaring.” “We should increase our sense of alarm and map out plans that take the overall domestic and international situations into account.” The next day, the Politburo’s follow-on collective study session strongly reaffirmed the relevance of the scientific development concept to these new concerns. Taking note of the ongoing study campaign, Hu Jintao stressed the need to “enhance the ability of leading cadres at various levels to push scientific development and social harmony” and “to see to it that the actions of Party organizations and leading cadres at all levels truly embody the scientific development concept.” (Xinhua, 29 November 2008)

Thereafter, in meetings with central and provincial Party units engaged in the study campaign, Central Campaign Leading Small Group leaders Xi Jinping and Li Yuanchao repeatedly emphasized the linkage between the campaign and the emerging economic distress. Xi told a meeting in Guangzhou of campaign cadres from eight provinces in early December, “All localities, departments, and units must closely

combine the campaign to study and practice the scientific development concept with efforts to deal with international financial crisis and push forward sound and fast economic development, guide the broad masses of Party members and cadres to increase their confidence and capacity to tackle tough missions and resolve outstanding contradictions and problems, do a good job in current economic work under the guidance of the scientific development concept, and push forward the central authorities' policies and measures to expand domestic demand and promote economic growth by carrying out the campaign in a down-to-earth way" (Xinhua, 4 December 2008). Similarly, Li Yuanchao urged a group of campaign cadres among central units to "strive to turn the pressures brought by the international financial crisis into a driving force for pushing scientific development." "The more difficult times are," he said, "the more we must pay attention to the people's livelihood, to poverty-stricken people, and to the maintenance of social stability." (Xinhua, 7 December 2008)

Finally, the annual conference on national economic work, convened in Beijing on 8–10 December, called for renewed efforts to "strengthen and improve the Party's leadership over economic work" and "pay attention to implementation of policies" in addition to sound macroeconomic planning in dealing with the economic downturn. In particular, it stressed the need to "unify our thinking and actions around the requirements of the scientific development concept, around the analysis and judgment of the central authorities on the international and domestic economic situations, and around the central authorities' policy decisions and plans so as to guarantee a high degree of coordination in action and a high degree of unanimity in ideological understanding." (Xinhua, 10 December 2008)

## Campaign Precedents

The organization, format, and process of the current campaign to study the scientific development concept draw on the precedents of other party-wide study campaigns over the past two decades. The 1999–2000 campaign to study then Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin's "three stresses"—extended in 2001 to study Jiang's "three represents" concept—unfolded in a context of a concern over the impact on social stability of the 1997 Asian financial flu and used the same format and procedures. The campaign was authorized by the 1997 15<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, mapped out in Central Committee Document No.11 of 1998 and in a set of Central Committee "Opinions" on the campaign publicized in PRC media in November 1998, and deployed the same sequence of pilot campaign trials followed by a party-wide kickoff. That study campaign also used the same three-phase approach—including the convocation of "democratic life" criticism sessions—used in the current campaign on the scientific development concept. Jiang Zemin and other top leaders also did campaign investigation at local contact points in the provinces, while then Secretariat head Hu Jintao and Organization Department Director Zeng Qinghong guided the overall campaign. No publicized accounts of "democratic life" meetings of the Politburo Standing Committee or of the Central Military Commission appeared during that campaign, but PRC media did not ordinarily report meetings of either body in that period, as they have in the Hu period since 2002.

More recently, the CCP's campaign to study the Party's "advanced nature" in 2005–2006 followed the same pattern, which closely foreshadowed the process and format of the current study campaign on the scientific development concept. That campaign had been authorized at the 2002 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. A set of Central Committee "Opinions" published in PRC media in January 2005 laid out the campaign's methods and focus as it unfolded using the same three groups and the same six-month stages (investigation and study; analysis and appraisal; and rectification and improvement) as employed in the current study campaign. The 2005–2006 campaign was directed by a leading small group headed by Organization Department Director He Guoqiang (not by Secretariat head Zeng Qinghong, though Zeng played a prominent role in guiding the campaign). Hu Jintao and other Politburo Standing Committee members convened several forums in February 2005 on the campaign in central and provincial units, and in March the CMC convened a "collective study session" on the campaign. In April 2005, Xinhua publicized first a briefing to the full Politburo on the results on a Politburo Standing Committee "democratic life" session on the campaign and then a CMC "democratic life" session on the progress of the campaign in the PLA. (Xinhua, 15 and 21 April 2005.)

#### *"Democratic Life" Sessions*

The convening of "democratic life sessions" for purposes of critical self-evaluation has been a standard element of study campaigns in the Jiang and Hu eras, but such sessions have a longer history in the internal processes of "democratic centralism" in the CCP. They may trace their origins to the years before the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution (and even to the revolutionary era before 1949), but they are not mentioned among the provisions for "inner-Party democracy" in the 1945 or 1946 CCP Constitutions. They were included in the Party disciplinary code adopted at the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee's Fifth Plenum in February 1980 (the "Several Principles of Political Life in the Party," section 11), though they were not formally incorporated in the CCP's 1982 Constitution or its revision in 1987.

"Democratic life" meetings appear to have become an institutionalized element of Party self-supervision in 1990, as part of efforts to improve Party discipline in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen crisis. Provisions for "democratic life" meetings were stipulated (section 6, paragraph 3) in the decision on improving Party ties with China's people adopted by the 13<sup>th</sup> Central Committee's Sixth Plenum in April 1990. Thereafter, on 25 May 1990, a set of Central Committee "regulations on Democratic Life Meetings of Leading Cadres with Party Membership in Party and State Organs at and above the County Level" was issued that prescribed the frequency, procedures, and reporting requirements for "democratic life" meetings in the Party. At the CCP's 14<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1992, Article 8 of the 1982 CCP Constitution was amended to include them. The 1990 Central Committee "Regulations" were revised in February 1997 and revised again in April 2000.<sup>2</sup>

According to the 1990 regulations, “democratic life” meetings were to be held by all Party units down to county level every six months—in January and July—as a matter of routine and may be held on an ad hoc basis to address special themes or topics. The purpose of such meetings is “to review, sum up, establish a consensus on, and conduct criticism and self-criticism” on “implementing the Party’s line, principles, and policies,” on “strengthening leading groups and implementing democratic centralism,” on assessing leading cadres’ adherence to Party discipline and spirit of “plain living and hard struggle,” and on their “maintaining close ties with the masses.” The regulations stipulated that the date and agenda of such meetings must be reported to the Party organization at the next level, which may send observers who have the right to speak and join criticism. Prior to the session, leading cadres are expected to have “heart-to-heart talks” among themselves and to exchange views on issues. The regulations charged the foremost leader of each Party unit with presiding over the meeting and also with “taking the lead in making criticism and self-criticism and with encouraging the participants to speak freely” during the session. The regulations required reporting of the results of a Party body’s “democratic life” sessions to the discipline inspection commission and organization bureau at the next level and provided for disciplinary steps if necessary. The 2000 revision of the regulations stipulated that routine “democratic life” meetings be held only once a year.

PRC media have occasionally in the past reported on “democratic life” sessions at various levels of the Party. In February 2008, for example, *Chongqing Daily* reported a two-day “democratic life” session of the Chongqing Party Committee presided over by newly appointed Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai. (*Chongqing Ribao*, 22 February 2008).

Though not reported in PRC media, “democratic life” sessions have also been opportunities for criticism of the Party’s top leader in the past. Several accounts of the fall of Hu Yaobang as Party general secretary in January 1987 state that his formal removal was preceded by a “democratic life” session of Party elders and Politburo Standing Committee members. Also, the Hong Kong China-watching magazine *Contending* carried an account of a nine-point self criticism by then General Secretary Jiang Zemin in March 2002. (*Chengming*, No.294, 1 April 2002)

## Politburo and CMC Criticism Sessions

In the context of current leadership concerns about the impact of the economic downturn on social and political stability, and in light of the precedents of past top-driven ideological study campaigns, the Politburo and CMC “democratic life” sessions appear intended to provide authoritative examples of constructive self-critical evaluation of leadership decision-making on the basis of the scientific development concept for the benefit of lower-level Party units engaged in the study campaign. They do not appear to signal emergent factional splits in the top leadership or criticism of Hu Jintao and other top leaders for policy mismanagement in the context of the current economic downturn.

In the case of the Politburo session on 23 January, the full Politburo not only affirmed the results of the Politburo Standing Committee's review of its work since the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2002 (when Hu Jintao took the top Party post) in light of the scientific development concept, but also praised it for "facing problems squarely, looking for weak points, and clarifying further guidelines" for future work. The full Politburo also affirmed the linkage between the study campaign and "the priority task of maintaining a stable and fairly fast economic growth" and "coping with the impact of the international financial crisis."<sup>3</sup>

Judging by the 1 February Xinhua account of the 14 and 16 January CMC meeting, the focus of the session was on ensuring compliance of the PLA with the policies of the Politburo and CMC. According to Xinhua, the assembled members had "heart-to-heart talks and treated each other with open-hearted sincerity centering on the theme of scientific development in national defense and army building." The members "conscientiously summed up experiences and devoted great efforts to locating problems" in the CMC's work since 2004, when Hu Jintao assumed the chairmanship of the body. The session concluded that in spite of "the new and complex changes in both the international and domestic situations" that have made "urgent new demands for expediting the pace of military transformation with Chinese characteristics," the CMC had successfully applied the scientific development concept in "drawing up a series of major guiding principles (重大方针) and made a series of important policy arrangements."

At the same time, as had the Xinhua account of the CMC's "democratic life" session during the study campaign on the Party's "advanced nature" in April 2005, the CMC session enjoined vigilant attention to "the problems and deficiencies that currently exist in its work." In particular, this time it called for efforts to "step up the intensity of applying the principle of administering the army strictly" in light of the failure to do so "among some troops in varying degrees." In that regard, the session continued, it is essential to "ensure that the troops resolutely obey the commands of the Party Central Committee and the CMC at all times and in all circumstances" and to "maintain security and stability, as well as a high degree of concentrated unity, among the troops." Xinhua's brief English-language dispatch on the session emphasized this aspect of the meeting, giving it the headline "CPC Central Military Commissions Calls for Armed Forces' Obedience, Unity." Xinhua's Chinese-language accounts of the session, as published on the front pages of *People's Daily* and *Liberation Army Daily*, did not emphasize this aspect of the session.

## Broader Trends

The central leadership's use of an ideological study campaign, initially launched to enforce Party discipline behind its policies and to enhance unity behind the Party's top leadership and its policies among the broader membership of the CCP, is a natural response to concerns over rising economic distress and its potential social and political consequences. It complements other steps the Hu leadership has taken to deal with the

economic downturn, including reinforced controls on the media, suppression of intra-Party debate, and beefed up preparation for police control of public agitation.

What seems particularly striking, however, is the degree to which the current economic downturn and the potential problems it presents has apparently not fractured cohesion among the Party's top leadership. One of the main challenges of the ground rules of oligarchic collective leadership that have informed political dynamics in the Hu era is the necessity of inhibiting opportunistic efforts by political factions and constituencies represented in the leadership from seizing the issues of the moment to upset the balance of power among the members of the leadership on behalf of interests in the broader political order they represent. The impact of the ongoing global economic crisis on China's economy presents perhaps the gravest test of the collective leadership dynamic that has consolidated under Hu Jintao's tenure as general secretary. But broader trends in leadership politics so far provide little evidence that the crisis has triggered fissures in the leadership group. Thus, statements on policy issues by the Politburo leadership to various delegations attending the National People's Congress in March showed little discernible indications of differences at the top of the leadership. The apparent unanimity of the Party's top leaders in pressing the still ongoing campaign to study the scientific development concept reinforces this conclusion.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Xinhua's 1 February report stated only that the CMC criticism session had been held "recently." A Xinhua report of 3 February on the progress of the study campaign throughout the PLA specified that the CMC's "democratic life" session had been on 14 and 16 January. "全军深入学习实践科学发展观活动分析检查阶段综述" [Summary of the Analysis and Investigation Stage of the All-Army Activities in the Campaign to Deeply Study and Practice the Scientific Development Concept], Xinhua, 3 February 2003, at <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/GB/117101/8742627.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the May 1990 "Regulations" (关于县以上党和国家机关党员领导干部民主生活会的若干规定) is available at <http://cpc.people.cn/GB/64162/71380/71387/71589/4855202.html>. A translation of the "Regulations" and of the Central Committee "Notice" conveying them may be found in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Daily Report-China* FBIS-CHI-90-138 (18 July 1990), 16-18 and FBIS-CHI-90-128 (3 July 1990), 22, respectively. The 1997 revision, entitled "Opinions on Elevating the Quality of Democratic Life Meetings of Leading Cadres in Party and State Organs at and above the County Level" (关于提高县以上党和国家机关党员领导干部民主生活会质量的意见) and issued on 14 January 1997 by the Central Discipline and Inspection Commission (CDIC) and Central Committee Organization Department, is available at <http://cpc.people.cn/GB/64162/71380/71382/71383/4844520.html>. For an FBIS translation, see FTS19970204001522. The 2000 revision, entitled "Some Opinions on Improving Democratic Life Meetings of Leading Cadres in Party and State Organs at and above the County Level" (关于改进县以上党和国家机关党员领导干部民主生活会的若干意见) and issued on 12 April 2000 by the CDIC and Party Organization Department, is available at <http://cpc.people.cn/GB/64162/71380/71382/71383/4844798.html>.

<sup>3</sup> The Hong Kong China-watching magazine *Contending* reported that all nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee made self-criticisms at its "democratic life" session on 23 January, and carried brief summaries of self-criticisms made by Hu Jintao, National People's Congress Chairman Wu Bangguo, and Premier Wen Jiabao at the session. According to this account, whose veracity cannot be established from available sources, Hu criticized himself for failing to address mistakes and violations of discipline in the domestic arena quickly and decisively, allowing them to enflame debate, affect unity, and hurt stability in the Party and for failing to deal with unspecified foreign policy problems adequately. Mu Muying, 穆木英, 政

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政治局常委生活会内情 (The Inside Story of the Politburo Standing Committee's [Democratic] Life Meeting),  
*Chengming* 争鸣, March 2009, 10–11.