

Beijing Blunts Intraparty Dissent in Preparing for 16th Party Congress

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In anticipation of the party's 16th National Congress this fall, Beijing has since the beginning of the year waged a massive campaign to overcome resistance to new political reforms intended to broaden the base of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). At the congress, the central leadership seeks to lay the ideological foundations for the reforms by incorporating party General Secretary Jiang Zemin's theme of the "three represents" into the party constitution. Judging by the scale of Beijing's campaign in recent months, intraparty resistance to these changes must be pervasive.

The "Three Represents"

Jiang Zemin enunciated what has come to be called the "three represents" during an inspection tour of Guangdong and Shanghai in February 2000. Jiang's decision to set forth a key theme during this tour of the south deliberately replicated Deng Xiaoping's celebrated tour of the same provinces 10 years earlier, in January-February 1992. During that tour, Deng enunciated then-controversial ideas regarding the place of market economics in a socialist system, ideas that he sought to have endorsed at the 14th Party Congress later that year. Deng succeeded in that campaign, leading to the judgment at the congress that China was developing a socialist market economy.

Jiang's three represents call on the Chinese Communist Party to "represent the development demands of China's advanced forces of production, the progressive orientation of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of China's people." In practical effect, the three represents call upon the party to enlist new members from among the new elites emerging in Chinese society as a consequence of two decades of economic reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. These include not only capitalist entrepreneurs in China's growing private economic sector, as widely noted in the Western press, but also other social and economic elites. The latter include scientists and technicians working outside the traditional state-owned sector, managers and administrators in foreign-funded enterprises, and freelance professional people such as lawyers.

Jiang's call to transform the CCP according to the three represents quickly received endorsement by the top party leadership. It was affirmed in authoritative commentary in the party newspaper *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)* almost immediately--signifying that it had been endorsed as the party's line. Beginning in the spring and through the summer of 2000, all Politburo members repeated the call in public statements, also reflecting top leadership endorsement. Jiang's July 1, 2001, speech on the 80th anniversary of the party's founding--a leadership consensus document that reflected more than a recitation of Jiang's personal

views--elaborated on the significance of the three represents theme for the party's future. Subsequently, Jiang's party anniversary speech was made the object of a nationwide study campaign.

In September 2001, the party Central Committee "unanimously" endorsed the speech and the three represents theme at its Sixth Plenum. Since the plenum, which also formally scheduled the 16th Party Congress for this year, Jiang's party anniversary speech has been advertised as laying out the ideological platform for the congress. Throughout the period since the party anniversary last year, no leader at the Politburo level has conveyed any inkling of disagreement with the three represents theme in public statements.

Dispelling Doubts and Blunting Resistance

The scale of the campaign since the beginning of this year to explain the necessity of the three represents suggests the depth of reservations about them and presumably the seriousness of resistance to them. The campaign was launched at the annual national conference of party propaganda department chiefs in Beijing on January 13. The conference was addressed by Politburo Standing Committee member and presumed Jiang successor Hu Jintao and by party Propaganda Department Director and Politburo member Ding Guanggen. It was also attended by Politburo member and Central Military Commission (CMC) Vice Chairman Zhang Wannian and party Secretariat member and Jiang Zemin lieutenant Zeng Qinghong. Both Hu and Ding identified the task of "unifying thinking" on the three represents as the key propaganda priority in preparing for the 16th Party Congress.¹

Thereafter, the major party media--*People's Daily*, the party journal *Seeking Truth (Qiu shi)*, and the army newspaper *Liberation Army Daily (Jiefangjun bao)*--published a stream of authoritative editorial commentary and an ocean of lower level comment under various bylines on the importance of the three represents to the future of the party. The drumbeat of authoritative editorial commentary suggests a closely orchestrated effort:

- *People's Daily* published a series of three "commentator articles"--the lowest level of authoritative commentary in the party paper--on the major tasks of the party in 2002, the first of which identified the three represents as the "focus and target of uniting thinking" in the party.² In addition, on March 20, *People's Daily* published the last in a series of seven commentator articles that began in November 2001 devoted to study of the three represents in rural areas.³ On April 18, the party paper published a further commentator article renewing a theme it had sounded the previous fall--the connection between the three represents and ideological liberation. The commentator article was occasioned by remarks by Jiang Zemin to *People's Liberation Army (PLA)* delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC) session on March 12 calling for new efforts to "emancipate thought, seek truth from facts, unify thinking, and unite to forge ahead."⁴ Those words were the title given to remarks made by Deng Xiaoping on December 13, 1978, to the central work

conference preceding the watershed Third Plenum, a speech often taken as the beginning of the CCP's ideological transformation, which made possible the sweeping economic reforms that followed.

- In January, the party journal *Seeking Truth* inaugurated a new column under the byline "Seeking Truth" ("Qiu Shi") that would be devoted to "special themes and key subjects" in studying the three represents and would be written by the journal's editorial board itself, together with "experts and scholars" in the party.⁵ Subsequent issues of the journal highlighted columns by "Seeking Truth," which dealt with a broad array of controversies surrounding the three represents theme and its implications for the party.
- Beginning in early April, the army newspaper *Liberation Army Daily*, published by the PLA's General Political Department (GPD), carried a series of seven commentator articles on promoting "unity of thinking" around the three represents theme.⁶ On April 30, the army paper published a GPD circular calling on the PLA and the People's Armed Police to regularize study of the three represents so as to "set an example" and "create a good political environment" for convening the 16th Party Congress. On May 8, CMC Vice Chairman Zhang Wannian presided over a ceremony to honor a deceased Nanjing Military Region officer as a model of practicing the three represents, an event marked by another commentator article in the army paper.⁷

The major themes of the campaign to justify the party's adoption of the three represents derive from Jiang Zemin's 80th party anniversary speech last year and stress the party's future:

1. The party must adjust to changes in the working class. Jiang's party anniversary speech had argued that the process of economic reform since the late 1970s had transformed the characteristics of the "working class" as well as China's "social strata" in general. The working class has become better educated and more skilled, and the contexts in which it is employed have evolved. China's social strata now include entrepreneurs, technicians in nonstate enterprises, and professional people. The party must therefore adjust to the changes in China's working class in particular and its social structure in general.

Subsequent commentary has elaborated these points. On December 17, *People's Daily* publicized a new Chinese Academy of Social Sciences study enumerating 10 distinct "strata" that have emerged as a consequence of the reforms. "In general," *People's Daily* concluded, "China's social structure is no longer composed simply of workers, peasants, and intellectual. The original strata are disintegrating, and new classes are taking shape and becoming stronger."⁸ On January 21, a Xinhua News Agency commentary stressed the necessity of steps to "carry out the experimental work of recruiting party members from the

new social strata” and at the same time to “dispel doubts and clear up perplexities” about this.⁹

On February 8 and 9, a “joint decision” by the party’s Central Organization and Propaganda Departments and the Leading Group for Implementing “Three Represents” Education Work in Rural Areas, together with a *People’s Daily* commentator article, saluted the example of a millionaire village party secretary in Henan Province.¹⁰ On March 18, *Outlook (Liaowang)*, a current affairs magazine published by the Xinhua News Agency, spotlighted the involvement of delegates from among the new social strata participating in the March National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Congress sessions.¹¹

People’s Daily’s annual May Day editorial emphasized that the social changes the reforms have brought to the working class have not altered its vanguard political role, a point also registered by a May Day commentator article in *Seeking Truth*.¹² On May 20, Xinhua reported the participation of delegates from private enterprises in Guangdong’s Ninth Provincial Party Congress--the first instance in any provincial party congress.¹³ Finally, on May 29, a Xinhua commentary defensively rebutted the “wrong view” that “the change taking place in the class nature of the party indicates that the party is no longer the vanguard of the working class.”¹⁴

2. The party must “keep up with the times” or perish. Typical of arguments on this theme was a long article by the director of the party journal *Seeking Truth*, Gao Mingguang, in its May 16 issue. Titled “Being Thoroughgoing Dialectical Materialists--Reflections of Advancing Marxist Theory in Step with the Times and Continuing Innovation,” the article rebutted arguments by “some comrades who have misgivings or are confused” about Jiang’s party anniversary speech. Gao asserted that each of the pioneering contributors to Marxism, from Marx and Engels to Deng Xiaoping, made original contributions to the overall theory by theoretical innovations reflecting their adaptation of Marxism’s universal principles to their times. “Some people,” Gao added, “may have read a lot of Marxist-Leninist books and joined the Communist Party, but they are by no means thoroughgoing dialectical materialists” for several reasons. First, they may believe they have Marxist theory, but they are divorced from contemporary reality. Second, they fail to recognize the necessity of “developing” Marxism. As the example of the Soviet Communist Party demonstrates, “If a ruling party does not advance and instead sticks to old ways, if its guiding ideology does not progress with the times, then it will be hard for the ruling party to ensure its advanced nature and Marxism may lose its guiding position.” Finally, some regard innovation in theory as “political disloyalty” and “betraying our political teachers,” a view that is clearly “erroneous.”¹⁵

3. The three represents continue the spirit of innovation of Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory. This theme was emphasized strongly in the nationwide campaign to study Jiang Zemin’s 80th party anniversary speech, and the current campaign renews and extends it by suggesting that the 16th Party Congress will be a major

turning point in party history paralleling the 1945 Seventh Party Congress, the 1978 Third Plenum, and the 1992 14th Party Congress. For example, a long article in the March 14 *Liberation Army Daily* by CCP History Research Center Deputy Director Shi Zhongquan argued at length that the “third generation” leadership around Jiang Zemin has produced two major innovations in Marxist theory that continue the innovative spirit of the “first generation” leadership around Mao Zedong and the “second” around Deng Xiaoping. Those innovations are, first, the elaboration of Deng’s principle, spelled out during his 1992 tour of Guangdong and Shanghai, that markets are a characteristic of both capitalism and socialism and, second, the three represents.¹⁶ Jiang Zemin made a similar point on March 29 while visiting Yanan, the wartime CCP central base area. Just as the CCP laid the political and ideological foundations for its eventual victory in establishing national power at the Seventh Party Congress in Yanan, Jiang declared, the upcoming 16th Party Congress will take a comparable step forward in implementing the three represents. “It is the living soul of Marxism to emancipate thought, seek truth from facts, advance with times, and make innovations,” he said.¹⁷

Also in April, a “contributing commentator article” in *Seeking Truth* argued that “the important thinking of the three represents put forth by comrade Jiang Zemin is another theoretical monument in the history of Marxism’s development and is another grand creation in combining Marxism with the realities of modern China.” “Every major breakthrough in Marxist theory and every historical leap forward in socialist practice are the result of making theoretical innovations by integrating the basic tenets with specific realities and are the vivid embodiment of the Marxist theoretical quality of keeping up with the times,” it asserted. “Marx, Engels, Lenin, and comrades Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin are all shining examples of correctly dealing with Marxism and persisting in keeping up with the times,” it added. Only by studying the history of Marxism in this regard “can we free ourselves from outdated notions, practices, and systems, from erroneous and dogmatic interpretations of Marxism, and from the shackles of subjectivism and metaphysics.”¹⁸

Prominence of the Central Party School

Faculty and researchers from the Central Party School, which Hu Jintao has presided over since 1992, have played a particularly prominent role in explicating and justifying the three represents, both in the study campaign following Jiang Zemin’s party anniversary speech in July 2001 and in the campaign since 2002. Central Party School Executive Vice President Zheng Bijian and Vice President Li Junru have published several articles defending the theoretical legitimacy of the three represents formulation.

The most prominent Central Party School commentator in the current campaign, however, has been Li Zhongji, a professor, member of the school’s party committee, and director of the school’s Science Research Department since 1999. In the wake of Jiang Zemin’s party anniversary speech in July 2001, Li wrote two long articles on theoretical innovation in *Seeking Truth* and a major article on the same topic in *People’s Daily*.¹⁹ In

December, Xinhua reported publication by *People's Daily* Press of a book bringing together 40 of the more than 100 essays by Li focusing on the three represents and Jiang's party anniversary speech.²⁰ In December, Li began publishing a stream of long articles on the three represents and other themes pertinent to the upcoming 16th Party Congress in the weekly current affairs magazine *Outlook*. By early July, the magazine had published at least 13 of Li's articles, including a long serialized analysis on "how to study the current international situation" and what its implications for China's domestic economic and political evolution are.²¹

Jiang's May 31 Central Party School Speech

On May 31, Jiang Zemin delivered the keynote speech to graduation ceremonies at the Central Party School, an occasion at which he had spoken in 1992 and 1997, foreshadowing some of the theoretical emphases of the political reports he delivered to the subsequent party congresses in those years. As in the past, only excerpts of Jiang's May 31 speech were publicized in People's Republic of China (PRC) media.

Three weeks before the speech, on May 9, the Hong Kong communist newspaper *Wen wei po* stated that the political report to be delivered at the 16th Party Congress would be based on the themes of Jiang's party anniversary speech on July 1, 2001. The speech's significance, therefore, lies in its firm reaffirmation of three represents themes, not in its revelation of new ideological points of departure.

Specifically, the speech reaffirmed several of the party anniversary speech's themes that have appeared to generate controversy and dissent within the party:

- It reaffirmed the proposition that the CCP is not only "the vanguard of the working class" in China but also the "vanguard of the Chinese people and Chinese nation."
- It reiterated that the three represents theory is a continuation of Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory.
- It insisted on the necessity of "pressing forward with the times" and of "developing Marxism" beyond what the founders had achieved.

Publication of the speech occasioned a nationwide campaign to study it, renewing the themes that had dominated the media since January.

Leadership Implications

The progress of the campaign to justify the party's adoption of the three represents suggests several points about leadership politics on the way to the 16th Party Congress:

- First, the scale of the campaign testifies to the existence of broad resistance within the party rank and file to the three represents and their implications for the party's future. The attention that the campaign has received consistently in the *Liberation Army Daily* attests that resistance is deep-seated in the PLA.

- Second, the top leadership appears, in public statements at least, united in the effort to incorporate the three represents into the party constitution at the upcoming party congress this fall. Leaders undoubtedly disagree among themselves on this issue, but there is no perceptible indication in PRC media of such dissent, nor anything that would mar the public image of a united collective leadership. Every member of the Politburo has endorsed the three represents formulation in public statements over the past two years and continues to do so. The formulation also conveyed leadership endorsement in the speech Jiang Zemin delivered on the party anniversary in July 2001, as well as full Central Committee endorsement--"unanimously"--at the Sixth Plenum in September 2001. This public facade of unity has been a hallmark of the leadership through most of the Jiang years, despite the repeated policy controversies it has faced over that period.
- Although some foreign media outlets have suggested that attention to the three represents formula in recent months reflects a building cult of personality around Jiang Zemin, this does not appear to be the case. Much of the commentary on the three represents does not mention Jiang as the originator of the formulation, referring simply to the "important thinking of the three represents," not to "comrade Jiang Zemin's important thinking of the three represents."
- It is true that Jiang is frequently given credit, in formulating the three represents, for having solved the problem of "what kind of party to build and how to build it," praise that recalls the role Deng Xiaoping's 1992 southern tour played in solving the problem of "what socialism is and how to build it." But the point appears to be that the party has arrived in 2002 on the eve of the 16th Party Congress at a comparable historic turning point in its evolution to the one it encountered in 1992 on the eve of the 14th Party Congress, and that the three represents are a direct continuation of "Deng Xiaoping Theory," which was incorporated into the party constitution at the 15th Party Congress in 1997. In that regard, authoritative media commentary and leadership statements have routinely emphasized since Jiang's party anniversary speech in July 2001 the need to study and implement "Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thinking of the three represents."
- The campaign and the presumed incorporation of the three represents into the party constitution at the upcoming congress enhance the authority of Jiang Zemin, placing him in the Chinese communist pantheon next to Deng Xiaoping as the inheritor and interpreter of Deng's ideas. Practically, Jiang gains politically from this exaltation, giving him authority that would serve him well as the paramount elder in retirement.
- The attention the three represents theme has received in the media in recent months may also seem to lend plausibility to rumors reported in foreign and independent Hong Kong media outlets in June that Jiang is attempting to retain one or more of

his current leadership positions--including his post as party general secretary.²² But several aspects of the campaign undercut this interpretation. First, the campaign does not particularly emphasize the key role of Jiang's personal leadership. (It is worth recalling here what a true personality cult is like in China: the adulation of Mao Zedong during the Cultural Revolution years.) Instead, the three represents theme has been depicted authoritatively since Jiang's 80th party anniversary speech as the ideological platform of a united collective leadership, not as an effort to emphasize the necessity of Jiang's continuing leadership. In addition, the comprehensive scale and thorough orchestration of the campaign in the media convey broad leadership assent, not a narrower effort by Jiang partisans to alter leadership arrangements. Finally, the central role played by Central Party School figures in the campaign underscores the active complicity of Hu Jintao.

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Notes

¹ Xinhua News Agency, January 11, 2002, in World News Connection (WNC), January 14, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0111; Xinhua News Agency, January 13, 2002, in WNC, January 15, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0113. For the apparent text of Ding's speech, see Ding Guanggen, "Unifying Thinking and Consolidating Strength to Create a Good Atmosphere for the Sixteenth Party Congress," *Qiu shi*, 2002, no. 4.

² *Renmin ribao* commentator articles, January 7, 9, and 14, 2002.

³ "Conscientiously Do Well in Paying Return Calls and Re-Examination," *Renmin ribao* (commentator article), March 20, 2002, in WNC, March 22, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0321. The six preceding commentator articles on the three represents study campaign in rural areas appeared on November 14 and December 5 and 17, 2001, and on January 5, 11, and 23, 2002.

⁴ "Further on Unifying Thinking in the Course of Emancipating Thought," *Renmin ribao* (commentator article), April 18, 2002, in WNC, April 22, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0419. For Jiang's remarks to PLA delegates at the National People's Congress, see Xinhua News Agency, March 12, 2002, in WNC, March 13, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0312. The *People's Daily* commentator article on which the April 18 commentator article expanded appeared on November 22, 2001.

⁵ "Qiu Shi," "Greet the New Upsurge in Emancipating Thought," and accompanying editor's note, *Qiu shi*, 2002, no.2.

⁶ *Jiefangjun bao* commentator articles, April 4, 2002, in WNC, April 5, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0404; April 6, 2002; April 8, 2002, in WNC, April 10, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0409; April 15, 2002, in WNC, April 19, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0418; and May 30, 2002, in WNC, June 3, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0530.

⁷ *Jiefangjun bao*, May 8, 2002, in WNC, May 9, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0508, and *Jiefangjun bao*, May 9, 2002, in WNC, May 10, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0509.

⁸ *Renmin ribao*, December 17, 2001, in WNC, December 19, 2001, FBIS CHI-2001-1218.

⁹ Xinhua News Agency, January 21, 2002, in WNC, January 22, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0121.

¹⁰ Xinhua News Agency, February 8, 2002, in WNC, February 11, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0208, and *Renmin ribao*, February 9, 2002, in WNC, February 12, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0211.

¹¹ *Liaowang*, 2002, no. 12 (March 18), in WNC, April 15, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0409.

¹² *Renmin ribao*, May 1, 2002, in WNC, May 2, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0430, and *Qiu shi*, 2002, no. 9 (May 1).

¹³ Xinhua News Agency, May 20, 2002, in WNC, May 21, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0520.

¹⁴ Xinhua News Agency, May 29, 2002, in WNC, May 31, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0529.

¹⁵ *Qiu shi*, 2002, no. 10 (May 16).

¹⁶ Shi Zhongquan, "Great Innovations of the CPC Third Generation Leadership Collective in Marxist Theory," *Jiefangjun bao*, March 14, 2002, in WNC, March 22, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0318.

¹⁷ Xinhua News Agency, April 2, 2002, in WNC, April 5, 2002, FBIS CHI-2002-0402.

¹⁸ *Qiu shi*, 2002, no. 8 (April 16).

¹⁹ Li Zhongjie, "Vigorously Push Forward the Work of Theoretically Arming the People with the Three Represents," *Qiu shi*, 2001, no. 14 (July 16); "Historical Contributions of the Central Leadership Collective of the Third Generation in Persisting with and Developing Deng Xiaoping Theory," *Qiu shi*, 2001, no. 17 (September 1); and *Renmin ribao*, November 20, 2001, in WNC, November 30, 2001, FBIS CHI-2001-1120.

²⁰ Xinhua News Agency, December 17, 2001, in WNC, December 26, 2001, FBIS CHI-2001-1217.

²¹ Li's serialized analysis of the international situation began in *Liaowang*, 2002, no. 21 (May 20), and has six parts through the issue of July 8 (2002, no. 28).

²² Charles Hutzler, "A Twist in China's Succession Script," *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2002.