

## **Hu Jintao's U.S. Visit: A Start of Post-Jiang Era?**

Think of the simple fact: every new host in Zhongnanhai as the Secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party (more accurately, the Chairman of CCP Central Military Committee) will make the new record to rule the largest population ever in the human being history. And Hu Jintao is very likely to become the host in half year at the 16<sup>th</sup> CCP Central Committee Conference this autumn.

Hu is little known outside and inside China. Washington wants to know this new man, and he brought Washington the only issue which he will, and has to handle with the U.S. after/if he succeeds Jiang: the Taiwan question. In a speech on May 1st to a pro-business group, Hu called the Taiwan question "the most important and sensitive issue at the heart of U.S.-Chinese relations," and said "properly handling" it was the key to good relations. "If any trouble occurs on the Taiwan question, it would be difficult for China-U.S. relations to move forward, and a retrogression may even occur," he said. He specifically warned that "selling sophisticated weaponry to Taiwan or upgrading U.S.-Taiwan relations" would be inconsistent with U.S. commitments and serve "neither peace and stability for the Taiwan Strait, nor China-U.S. relationship and the common interests of the two countries."

We can recall that Li Peng was never considered to take over Zhao Ziyang's job simply because Li would not be accepted by the West; Liu Huaqiu was defeated by Tang Jiaxuan to take over Qian Qichen's Foreign Minister position because Washington was not fond of Liu during his Vice Minister term charging for American affairs while Tang was pro-Tokyo during his Vice Minister term charging for Japan affairs. The regime in Beijing becomes more dependent on Washington, and the Zhongnanhai leadership has to maintain a "friendship" with Washington. Hu's U.S. visit is not meaningless. He succeeded in defending himself during his visit. It seems this is a start of the "post-Jiang" era, and Jiang is expected to come to the U.S. too this autumn to conclude his term. The thousand local Chinese guests gathering at the San Francisco party on May 2<sup>nd</sup> to welcome Hu hope they would not be betrayed again by the CCP politics. The "general commander" organizing the welcome party, who took holidays from his company work to accompany with Hu during Hu's stay in San Francisco, told me: "If Hu falls down again, who will believe the government again?" (\*)

Recalling the misfortunes of Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, Hua Guofeng, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, the transition of power to Hu Jintao (if no accident) will be the first peaceful normal one in the CCP history. People have reason to believe that the 13 years of PRC under Jiang Zemin (1989-2002) are actually an unexpected accident, a transitional period, and Mr. Hu will be challenged with a new China toward economic prosperity as well as political democracy.

Although it is said that his only characteristic is "no characteristic," Hu nonetheless did show his orientation during his last France visit. Hu met Ms. Lin Xiling. This is a subtle signal that Hu Jintao is allying himself with his mentor Hu Yaobang. It is believed that Hu Yaobang and Lin admired each other.

Hundreds of thousands Chinese were labeled as reactionary "rightists" in the late 1950s and were persecuted for decades, but the government under Deng Xiaoping admitted that the CCP made some mistakes and "generously" restored almost all "rightists" their normal life. Only a few "rightists" refused the CCP "generosity," instead, they requested justice, and Lin was one of them. This annoyed Deng. For Deng, this becomes a proof that the party line of anti-rightists

movement was basically right: there really existed some rightists against the party/government/state/country. The poor Lin had to leave China. She is the only living “rightist” today still challenging the party line.

I met her in 1989 at the founding conference of Chinese Democratic Front in Paris. She invited me to join the editorial board to publish a magazine, Openness. I wrote two essays and sent her a small amount of Japanese yen. The magazine soon stopped publishing without financial aid, and later we both kept distance from the mainstream Chinese overseas democratic movement because the movement was greatly under influence/control of foreign and Taiwan’s governments. When Wei Jingsheng came to the U.S. and some overseas Chinese media claimed Wei “Father of Chinese Democracy,” Lin asked: “Why nobody mentions Grandmother of Chinese Democracy?” She should be comforted, however, if she knew more about modern Chinese history. For example, Zheng Chaolin, who was Deng Xiaoping’s mentor in France (Zheng recalled that Deng didn’t study) but later became a life-long Trotskyist, spent a half-century life prisoner in the Jiang Jieshi (Nationalist), the Japanese and the CCP jails.

Unlike Zhu Rongji and other officials, Hu tries to avoid to be referred to his Tsinghua background. However, it is not bad if he can do some good for his alumni. I just want to mention two alumni: Wan Runnan, who had a same chance to take a same career as Hu, still cannot return to China after the Tiananmen Incident; Zhang Lin (who studied at the same department with me) was sent to labor camp when he “illegally” returned to China from the U.S.

If I should have some personal wishes to Hu, I wish Hu could welcome Lin in Zhongnanhai and allow her to spend her last years in China peacefully; I wish Wan, Zhang and any Chinese citizen can be “restored” the right to serve the Chinese people without the fear of persecution.

[Note]

\* However, Lester Lee, a local Chinese community leader commented after shaking hands with Hu: “I think the biggest misconception the outside world has on China is the hope that the new leadership would introduce changes in Zhongnanhai. It seems to me Hu would most likely follow the path of the past administration. After all, the current ruler has had more than a decade to watch and cultivate him making sure Hu is trustworthy. If Hu’s mission is to pave the road for Jiang’s visit this fall, he should take a more tougher stand against USA in order to get Washington to pay more respect to Jiang.”

Jing Zhao

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US-Japan-China Comparative Policy Research Institute, San Jose, USA

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