

Four: Villain Holding Sway

5: The “Core Leader”



After fixing the Yang brothers and Chen Xitong, Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong often schemed together as to how they could strengthen their position. Two things they identified were to win over more officials through bribery, and to place their trusted men in key posts. Jiang Zemin, in the process, discovered another useful trick of corruption: to get rid of those who don't swear allegiance, through the “anti-corruption campaign”.



As long as Deng Xiaoping alive, however, Jiang Zemin would never have real peace of mind. In Dec. of 1996, Deng Xiaoping, having been plagued by Parkinson disease for years, was hospitalized for his worsening medical condition. Jiang could hardly wait for Deng to die. The waiting was excruciating.

Two months later, Deng was pronounced dead, on the evening of Feb. 19, 1997.



During the ceremony to pay the last respect to Deng's body, Jiang Zemin feigned a sad voice for his eulogy, wishing to conceal his true feelings. He even managed to shed a few tears for the public. To this day, the photo that captured Jiang wiping his tears at the event, is an object of ridicule.



Then, Jiang Zemin prioritized his target for removal: Qiao Shi. Qiao Shi joined the CCP at the age of 16, and was in charge of the CCP's underground branch in Shanghai.

After the CCP came to power, he began from the bottom, all the way, to members of the CCP's Politburo.

He commanded such experiences rivaled not even by Yang Shangkun and Bo Yibo.



After Jiang Zemin became the General Secretary, he doctored his resume to cover up his traitor background, and beefed up his credentials, claiming that he took part in the student movement led by the underground CCP in Shanghai since 1943, and joined the Party in April 1946, which made Qiao Shi, who knew the historical facts of Shanghai better than anybody else, look down at Jiang Zemin with even more disgust and indignation.



Jiang Zemin knew that he was in an inferior position comparing to Qiao Shi, and were full of envy towards Qiao Shi's reputation and image. With Deng Xiaoping gone, Jiang Zemin believed that he was now the highest in rank, and thus others should rally around him, and that he should be the center.

But Qiao Shi, who seemed disregard Jiang, would still speak out as usual, whenever he saw things that need to be readdressed. This was a vexing matter for Jiang, giving him something of constant churning feeling in his stomach.



He Mu Du Culture Museum is a historical heritage site.

In 1992, Jiang Zemin visited there.

When he saw the logo was Qiao Shi's handwriting, his face turned dark and long. The museum's management was alarmed, and quickly substituted the logo with Jiang Zemin's handwriting.



On April 26, 1997, the person Jiang believed to be Qiao Shi's major political backer, Peng Zhen, died. Jiang felt tremendous relief. In 1998, a group of senior officials led by Qiao Shi submitted to Jiang Zemin an investigation report on Falun Gong, which stated that the practice and its followers were, in every sense, benefits to the nation and its people.



Jiang Zemin again struck a deal with Bo Yibo, demanded him to pressure Qiao Shi to retire according to a new age limit at 70. Qiao Shi would be left with no choice but to retire. Jiang Zemin, however, would stay on as the core of the leadership, though he was 71 years old. After that Bo Yibo's son, Bo Xilai was looked after by Jiang Zemin with special attention. And Bo Xilai, in turn, became Jiang Zemin's die hard lieutenant in his persecution of Falun Gong.



Qiao Shi agreed to retire and step down from all posts with conditions that Wei Jian Xing would stay as the Secretary of the Disciplinary Commission, and Tian Jiyun remained Vice Chairman of the People's Congress. Qiao's retirement paved the way for Jiang's personnel arrangements at the CCP's 15th Congress. At the session, new appointments came to comprise 56% of the total CCP Central Committee. All had been checked and approved by General Secretary Jiang Zemin and his associates.



Qiao Shi, Li Ruihuan, and Wan Li mentioned at different locations that Deng Xiaoping and the Standing Committee had agreed that Hu Jintao would be the core of the fourth generation leadership. They made it known that the decision was approved by the Politburo, therefore, legitimate. If Jiang Zemin attempted to de-post Hu Jintao, it would thus mean he had betrayed Deng Xiaoping.



And Jiang didn't dare to go against the will of Deng Xiaoping. So, in essence, Qiao Shi, Li Ruihuan and Wan Li used Deng's wishes almost as a time bomb to force Jiang to step down when his time was due. The action Qiao Shi took before his retirement forced Jiang Zemin to carry on amidst what had been set in motion by Deng Xiaoping. While Jiang Zemin had forced Qiao Shi to retire via the 70 years age limit, Qiao Shi, in turn, proposed a set of rules regarding retiring at 70. That would require Jiang to hand over power to Hu Jintao after serving one more term.



Five years later, it was Jiang Zemin's turn to face the pressure of such rules. The very same trap, that a power-hungry Jiang Zemin had set for Qiao Shi, now had ensnared the General Secretary himself.



Bo Yibo gave Jiang Zemin one more suggestion: the Party commands the gun. The Standing Committee of the Politburo should exclude any military man. Since the CCP's 15th Congress, all military officials were barred from entering the Standing Committee.

No more Deng Xiaoping looking over his shoulder, no more Qiao Shi sticking around as his eyesore, Jiang Zemin, at last, felt like a core leader, really worthy of the name.