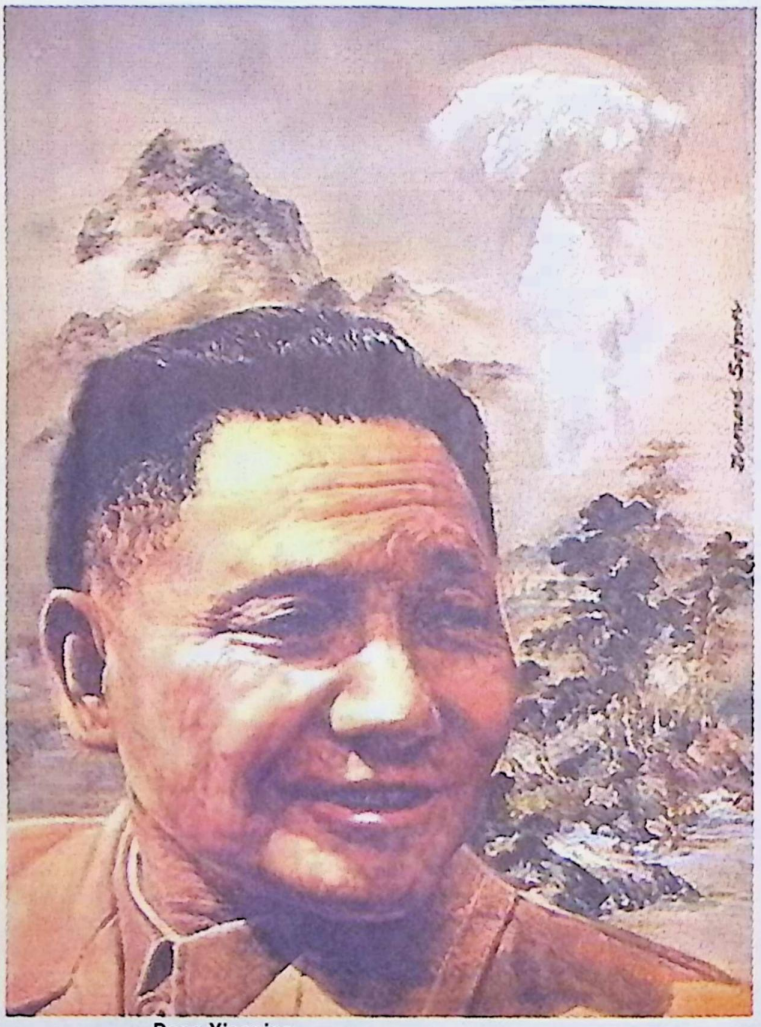
Deng and Now

NADER RAHMAN



Deng Xiaoping

BORN	: Aug. 22, 1904, in Sichuan province, China
1924	: Joins the Chinese Communist Party while studying in France, later goes to the Soviet Union
1927	: Becomes a party organizer in southwest China
1934-35	: Joins the Long March
1957	: Persecutes intellectuals under Mao's orders
1966	: Purged as a "capitalist roader" in Cultural Revolution
1973	: Rehabilitated and becomes vice premier
1976	: Purged by the Maoist Gang of Four
1977	: Rehabilitated and launches bid for supreme power
1981	: Initiates "responsibility system" for farmers
1984	: Concludes deal for the return of Hong Kong in 1997
1989	: Oversees Tiananmen crackdown
1992	: Spurs economic reform on a tour of southern China
1997	: Dies in Beijing on Feb. 19

THE 19th of February marks 10 years since the death of Deng Xiaoping, and only now in hindsight can his impact on the world be truly seen. He led a chequered life, having been purged twice by the communist party and eventually came back as China's paramount leader. But before one rehashes his success as the leader of China, it is important to know how he got there. For him getting there was half the battle, while learning from others' mistakes was the other half.

Born in the Sichuan province in 1904, Deng grew to manhood in the midst of chaos and became a revolutionary after spending five years in France on a work-study programme. There he toiled in filthy factories that paid subsistence wages to the Chinese. The harsh realities of capitalism never sat well with him, yet he needed to be challenged intellectually for him to truly embrace a different system. That came under the tutelage of Zhou Enlai, with whom he formed a close personal bond. After spending sufficient time in Europe he returned to China in the mid 1920's. He was instrumental in raising the cause of the communists in China after their 6000-mile retreat in 1934 known as the long march. During this time he also managed to be purged once. The 1937 invasion by Japan was seen by Deng and the Communists as an opportunity to defend the nation. It was the period of their greatest exploits as they competed with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists for the affection of the masses. During eight years of war, Communist forces grew from 50,000 to 900,000 in strength and party membership swelled from 40,000 members to 1.2 million. Suffice to say, they had popular support with them.

By the time Mao had firm control over the country, Deng