

China After Deng

PROF. RANDOLF S. DAVID (UP Third World Studies Center): The Third World Studies Center begins a new lecture series entitled *The Changing Socialist World*. The purpose of this series is to catalyze serious discussions on the meaning and implications of events that are taking place in the socialist world. We refer in particular to the often perplexing but certainly refreshing initiatives being undertaken by Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union under the banner of perestroika and glasnost. We refer also to the emergence of Solidarnosc, the workers movement in Poland which recently defeated the official candidates of the Polish Communist Party in all the seats they contested in the most recent elections in that country. We refer to the economic reforms begun in China as early as 1978 through its open-door economic policy and four modernization campaigns. We refer to the clamor in China for more democracy, particularly for public accountability among those who wield bureaucratic power; a clamor dramatically articulated by China's students and young workers and later brutally suppressed by the government. We also refer to the initiatives taken by Vietnam towards both the eventual withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea and its integration into the Southeast Asian community of nations. We refer to the rumblings now being felt in the Eastern European nations -- in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, etc.

We ask: why are these events taking place? What do they signify? What are the roots of these phenomena? Which way are the Socialist countries headed for?

Most certainly, no presentation of these events would be complete without a careful review and assessment of the nature of the political and economic structures now obtaining in these countries. They are not capitalist. But are they socialist in the first instance? What do we mean by socialism? Is socialism a dying ideology as some people contend? Is it being overtaken by events occurring at a dizzying pace in the international political and economic environment? Is it being rendered obsolete by a new sensibility never anticipated by those who first defined its contours? Most people outside the socialist world, notably in countries like the Philippines and the United States, desperately attempt to find confirmation of their own unexamined biases and inherited nightmares by seizing these events as indubitable demonstrations of the "failure of the socialist experiment". Contraposing democracy to socialism in their own minds, for example, they point to the brutality of the Chinese leaders as an incontrovertible proof of "socialism's anti-democratic character".

Others, on the other hand, welcome the changes as evidence of a desire to reinvent socialism altogether in order to attune it to the changing circumstances of the global community. A few others see new policies like glasnost and perestroika as serious attempts to return the historical social formations of socialism (as these had been distorted by the difficult and hostile environment in which socialism was first born) to the original concept imagined by Marx and Lenin, its founding fathers. Which is it then? Are the tremors now shaking the foundations of the socialist world originating from an anti-socialist impulse; a confirmation, therefore, of the "superiority of the capitalist system"? Or are these manifestations of a new confidence in the long-term viability of the socialist alternative -- in short, do they pre-figure a return to the original socialist democratic sensibility for which the working people all over the world have fought and died? We must keep these questions in mind as we sit back and reflect on the tragic events that culminated in the massacre of the thousands of students, workers and ordinary Chinese citizens in that historic Tiananmen Square.

PROF. MARIO MICLAT (UP Asian Center): Peace has at last descended on Beijing. Tiananmen Square, the world's biggest plaza, is back to its ancient glory. Gone are the youth in their millions who once gathered there, clamoring tumultuously for democracy.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), led by Deng Xiaoping, could now reflect on its past achievements and add more glorious historical pages to its record. It could say with pride, as it has said in its appraisal of its history in 1981 that:

[The] years since the founding of the People's Republic of China are years in which the CCP, guided by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, has very successfully led the whole people in carrying out socialist revolution and socialist construction...[It has] established and consolidated the...dictatorship of the proletariat. [It has] achieved and consolidated nationwide unification of the country, with the exception of Taiwan and other islands, and have thus put an end to the state of disunity characteristic of old China...[It has] defeated aggression, sabotage and armed provocations by the imperialists and hegemonists, safeguarded [the] country's security and independence and fought successfully in defense of [China's] borders...[It has] scored signal successes in industrial construction and...gradually set up an independent and fairly comprehensive industrial base and economic system...The conditions prevailing in [agriculture] have experienced a remarkable change, giving rise to big increases in production... There has been a substantial growth in urban and rural commerce and in foreign trade...Considerable progress has been made in education, science, culture, public health and physical culture...The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has grown in strength and in quality...Internationally, [China has] steadfastly pursued an independent socialist foreign policy...entered into diplomatic relations with 124 countries and promoted trade and economic and cultural exchanges with still more countries and regions. [*Resolutions on CPC History, 1949- 1981* (Beijing Foreign Language Press, 1981) pp. 12-16]

These achievements cannot be disputed.

Now that the one-party leadership seems to be in control of the situation, it could try to pull itself together and chart a future it has chosen for itself, and, it hopes, for all the Chinese people. What lies ahead for China?

I am not Chinese. You are not Chinese. We cannot pretend to show them the way. But we are "intellectuals" (bourgeois, petty or otherwise) who can, on the basis of known facts, available data and observations, speculate about the future of China. Let us then indulge in this intellectual exercise.

Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949 at Tiananmen Square. Five years later, on September 1954, he convened the First National People's Congress which then enacted the Constitution of the People's Republic.

Under Mao's leadership, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the party in power, concentrated its efforts on post-war rehabilitation until 1952, and on socialist transformation until 1956. Schools, media, theaters, and scientific institutions were made to promote the new socialist culture. Land reform was instituted in the countryside by confiscating large feudal landholdings and redistributing them to the poor and lower-middle peasants. Farmers who benefitted from the land reform were encouraged to form mutual-aid teams. In due time, they merged their lands into socialist-like cooperatives.

Bureaucrat capitalist enterprises, i.e., companies owned by the old regime, were confiscated and transformed into state-owned enterprises. But under this transitional form of state capitalism, private industry and commerce were allowed. This was in line with the party's policy of maintaining a united front with the national bourgeoisie.

The government also monopolized the purchase and marketing of goods processed or manufactured by private entrepreneurs. At the same time, private shops were asked to sell products of state-owned enterprises. When the entrepreneurs and shop owners started to find this situation difficult, the state entered into joint ownerships with them.

Such was the planned and centralized transition from "new democracy" to socialism. According to Mao Zedong, the contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and between the socialist road and the capitalist road were the principal internal contradictions in China during the transition period.

The "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China" adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP on 27 June 1981 described the event as follows:

From the summer of 1955 onwards, we were over-hasty in pressing on with agricultural co-operation and the transformation of private handicraft and commercial establishments;...the changes were too fast, and we did our work in a somewhat summary, stereotyped manner, leaving open a number of questions for a long time. [1982/83 China Official Annual Report (Hongkong: Kingsway International Publications Ltd., 1982) p.187]

It was in 1981, during the period of economic restructuring, that Deng Xiaoping made the above appraisal of CCP's work in the 1950s. One may say that Deng wanted to win the support of all sectors of Chinese society, especially the peasants, former industrialists and businessmen whose interests were adversely affected by the fast transformation of the 1950s.

But the above resolution had to conclude also that "it was definitely a historic victory for [the party] to have effected, and to have effected fairly smoothly, so difficult, complex and profound a social change in so vast a country with its several hundred million people."

The resolution was of course referring only to economic changes. But I would want to point out the phrase "leaving open a number of questions for a long time". Why emphasize the phrase? In any society, but most especially in a rigidly structured one such as that which has developed in China without much interruption for the past two thousand years, intellectuals are the most articulate. They are, therefore, the ones who ask a "number of questions".

In January 1956, the Central Committee of the CCP deliberated on the question of intellectuals. The policy of the "double one hundreds" was promulgated. Using the traditional description of the intellectual ferment characteristic of the Spring and Autumn Period between 770 - 476 BC when different "isms" contended (Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, Legalism, etc.), the party advanced the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend".

With their long historical background, the Chinese, especially their leaders, always try to refer to the past to guide their every move. It has been proven time and again that present responses to contemporary problems find precedent in the annals so meticulously preserved through the millenia.

The Party chairman, together with his central committee, as in the imperial court of old, is presumed to lead the nation to stability and progress through a system he deems most fit. The people are expected to follow the policies he formulates. Traditionally, the palace court gives advice to the emperor on how to rule the people, while the emperor remained the final policy maker. The people did not need to be consulted.

After the basic completion of the socialist transformation of China in 1956, the central committee of the CCP decided that "the principal contradiction within the country was no longer the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie but between the demand of the people for rapid economic and cultural development and the existing state of the economy which fell short of the needs of the people". [Resolution, p. 23]

Many intellectuals used the occasion to speak out and air their views "in a big way", to use the Chinese expression. Deluged by views which did not necessarily reflect direct support for party policies, Mao Zedong felt that the nascent socialist system which he laid down for China was in danger. Supported by the central committee, he called for a "resolute counter-attack". Many intellectuals, patriotic people, and Party cadres were labelled "rightists", and were either imprisoned or sent to internal exile. One must not discount the fact that among those who were labelled "rightists" were actually rightists, even anti-Communists, who wanted to return to the old system. But the scope of the counter-attack became so extensive that it included patriots, veteran revolutionaries, and prominent writers like Ding Ling, Mao Dun, Zeng Zuo, Niu Jan, Mu Dan, and many more.

Having rendered the opposition ineffective, Mao Zedong launched the Great Leap Forward in 1958. This campaign was designed to build China into a powerful modern socialist state "within not too long a period of history". [Stuart Schram ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People* (New York:

Pantheon Books, 1974) p. 231.] Mao Zedong thought that by "smashing conventions" China would develop faster than the Soviet Union. In an earlier essay, I commented on this development, to wit:

Impatient for quick results and overestimating the role of man's will and efforts over objective realities...[he] initiated in the countryside the movement for [people's communes]...[Communalized lands were usually as big as a Philippine municipality.] Communes [took] charge of all aspects of rural life. Public kitchens, dormitories, and nurseries were put up to facilitate communal living. To increase harvest, planting virtually without spaces in between crops was initiated. [Mario Miclat, "Mao Zedong Thought: Seeking Truth from Facts," *Diliman Review*, (Vol. 35, No. 4) p. 331]

To boost industrialization, backyard furnaces were built to make iron. Asked to produce big irons ever, in the absence of iron ore, peasants started melting pots, woks, pans, and, it was said, even railway tracks, and temple gods. Sympathetically, Sidney Shapiro in his book, *An American in China*. (Beijing: New World Press, 1979, p.175), described the furnaces as having thick earthen walls using little or no firebrick. Majority of the blowers were hand-operated by leather belts with the cow hair still on them. Wood fuels were used, depleting China's forest resources. They were "miracles in ingenuity", alright, but never, to use a current expression, cost-effective. The result was disastrous.

Those who voiced out their opinion about the matter, like Marshall Peng Dehuai and others, were branded by Mao Zedong as "rightists" and removed from their posts. The central committee passed a resolution condemning Peng Dehuai as leading an anti-party clique.

The official CCP history says that: "It was mainly due to the errors of the Great Leap Forward and of the struggle against "Right opportunism", together with a succession of natural calamities and the perfidious scrapping of contracts by the Soviet Government, that [China's] economy encountered serious difficulties between 1959 and 1961, and this caused serious losses to [the] country and people." [*Resolution*, p. 29]

With the purges in the party and the banishment of people labelled as "rightists", not only intellectuals were intimidated, but the whole society. Left with no channel for expressing contrary views, the people were, as in the days of old, denied their democratic right to be consulted. Kept ignorant of the political processes, they acquiesced in all the decisions made by Chairman Mao.

But this could not go on forever. The economy was floundering. People's enthusiasm for the revolutionary cause was plummeting. Re-adjustments had to be made. Pragmatic policies on rational management of industries had to be instituted. Communes were subdivided into the more manageable production teams and brigades (as big as Philippine sitios and barrios, respectively). Peasants were again allowed to till their own vegetable plots. In the political field, many of the "Rightist" labels were removed and the victims rehabilitated. These economic and political measures taken by Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping and others helped the economy to recover until 1966.

We would not know now how Zhou Enlai convinced Mao to relent or temporarily retreat from his positions. The Chinese communist leadership, like the Han feudal rule of old, has remained very secretive. But it could be that Lenin's advice to the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1922 was heeded. And I quote from Lenin's *Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*:

Science demands...that account be taken of all the forces, groups, parties, classes and masses operating in the given country and that policy should not be determined only by the desires and views, by the degree of class consciousness, and the readiness for battle of only one group or party. (Chapter IX, paragraph 6)

If Mao took a step backward, it was not to say that he was ready to give up his nearly absolute power. He was preparing to take two steps forward. In fact, his line, in the field of the economy, politics, ideology, and culture, remained virtually unchanged.

The media had to play up Mao's ideas as the one and only correct interpretation of Marxism-Leninism as applied to the specific conditions of China. For instance, Mao believed in the widening and absolutization of class struggle in all aspects of life. Deviations from this belief were considered

manifestations of the class struggle. Only his proletarian standpoint was supposed to be the correct one. Propaganda teams, for instance, were sent to the grassroots level between 1963 and 1965 to expose so-called "class enemies". They then reported back to Mao.

In 1966, at Tiananmen Square, Mao launched the Great Proletarian Revolution, arguing at that time that, in all levels of society, there were "Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road". In line with this "proletarian campaign", Mao called on the broad masses -- exposed only to his ideas and the personality cult built around him by a heavily-controlled media -- to wage a great political revolution in which one class would overthrow another. This "continued evolution" was to be waged time and again, "ten, twenty, thirty times". [Han Suying, *Wind in the Tower* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976) p. 378]

It appears from the foregoing that Mao believed that a class struggle continues even in a socialist society. But the opening paragraphs of Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* forewarns thus, and I quote:

Opressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open, fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. [Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (New York: International Publisher, 1980) p. 36]

If Mao Zedong had hoped for a revolutionary reconstitution of Chinese socialist society at large and its development into a higher form, then the waging of the cultural revolution was a mistake. The Great Leap Forward proved to be a disaster in so far as the development of the Chinese socialist society was concerned. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) was a catastrophe that led Chinese society into the brink of ruin.

In the turmoil that ensued from the launching of the GPCR, the views of the masses were never actually sought; they were just expected to follow some higher-ups. Through the *dazibao*, a big character poster, party officials or factions of the ruling circle hurled accusations against each other. But other than this form of intra-party bickering, no intelligent debate ever occurred.

"The Cultural Revolution, which lasted from May 1966 to October 1976, was responsible for the most severe setback and heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People's Republic. It was initiated and led by Comrade Mao Zedong." [Resolution, p. 32] This was the assessment made by Deng Xiaoping in 1981 when he was already the new leader of the new central committee. As in the days of old, the new central committee merely adopted such an assessment. (We know that Deng Xiaoping was one of the prime victims of the Cultural Revolution. Shouldn't we then take such an assessment with a grain of salt?)

There are stories that tell of the thousands upon thousands of deaths, salvagings, disappearances, ruined families, destroyed friendships, shattered faiths, and lost hopes. We cannot ignore them even though these stories were kept from our knowledge through media manipulation and a personality cult centered on Mao.

Luckily, we heard about these stories after the Cultural Revolution when a small, nay free, section of Chinese society began to question the status quo. In the spring of 1976, these people began to ask how one leader, great as he may be, could launch arbitrary social experiments and play with the destiny of a billion people. They asked how a group of men, select as they may be, could speak on behalf of the people when they themselves could not say what they really want to say for fear of being cast away from the ivory tower. They wrote on the walls, asking how a gerontocracy, composed of men who rarely come out of their palaces, take special wines and longevity foods, and have young concubines, could claim to represent the interest of the whole of society. All these questions, shouted out through crude bullhorns of galvanized iron, demanded answers.

This brave section of Chinese society was composed of no other than students. They came out to brave the cold in that spring of 1976 while the masses of workers, peasants, professionals and soldiers stood by watching, waiting for orders or contradictory "official" stories of palace coups

and counter-coups. Meanwhile, control of the army shifted from Lin Biao to the Gang of Four, from Hua Guofeng to Deng Xiaoping.

Deng Xiaoping, riding on this clamor for change, seized power and initiated his own version of socialist economic reform through the so-called "four modernizations" -- the modernization of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense -- which were supposed to propel China into the ranks of the most advanced countries by the end of the century.

A young student, though, by the name of Wei Jingsheng, called for a fifth modernization. Through the magazine, *Exploration*, which he edited, Wei Jingsheng argued that Deng Xiaoping's "four modernizations" were insufficient, that China needed a fifth political modernization based on democracy and human rights.

[A note on the Chinese word for "democracy". In traditional Chinese, there are two words for people: *ren*, which referred to the gentlemen, the nobility; and *min*, which referred to the common people, the ordinary folks. *Renmin*, the combination of the two words is used in modern Chinese to refer to the people as a political entity. Thus, *Renmin Gongheguo* means the People's Republic and *Filipin Renmin* means the Filipino people. In translating into Chinese the concept of democracy, the word *min*, the common people, not *ren*, is used. Now, *di* is land, *zhu* is lord, master, owner. *Dizhu* is, therefore, landlord. *Minzhu* is democracy, i.e., the common people as lord or master.]

Wei Jingsheng was arrested in 29 March 1979 and, in October of that same year, sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment as a "counter-revolutionary". [Geremie Barme and John Minford eds., *Seeds of Fire, Chinese Voices of Conscience* (Hongkong: Far Eastern Economic Review Ltd., 1986).] According to Deng Xiaoping, Wei Jingsheng's imprisonment was set as an example to others. This did not, however, silence the intellectuals who became emboldened by the students' activism.

Used as he was to the traditional way of running a government, Deng Xiaoping, like Mao Zedong, ordered a clamp down on the student movement within the first year of his rule. He was no social reformer, after all. At best, he was an economic experimentalist who brought a certain degree of prosperity to his own people.

The March 1986 issue of *Social Science in China* carried an opinion about China's political system, and I quote:

In the Chinese political structure established in 1949, the influence of the rigid Soviet model can be found. There were both internal and external causes for the formation of the Soviet model, including, possibly, some traditions of tsarist autocracy. (p.13)

Though carefully worded, this statement was a bold one.

According to Li Kejing, then director of the General Editorial Department of Social Sciences in China:

Present Chinese political science theories fall short of the reality in many respects. For example: 1) more emphasis is laid on the mandatory nature of the state while little attention is paid to the consciousness of the people; 2) in judicial practice, more emphasis is laid on class nature and less on the objectivity of the law; 3) theorizing on political power still uses outdated concepts such as the formulation that "everything follows from political power" (while this was appropriate before the seizure of power, it detracts attention from such new concepts as the currently more appropriate view that leadership is service); 4) as to the concept of freedom, more emphasis is laid on the unification of freedom and discipline, but little on the unity of the freedom and consciousness [a note on the Chinese word "freedom": in Chinese, there is no difference between the words "free" and "liberal", and "freedom" and "liberalism". They are both rendered into Chinese as *ziyou*. In the Chinese concept, therefore, limited as they are in words to express such Western concepts, "bourgeois liberalization", a crime in the eyes of Deng Xiaoping and his like, is no other than "freedom" labelled as "bourgeois". In his remarks to the 6th plenum of the CCP's 12th Central Committee on 28 September 1986, Deng said: "Liberalization (i.e., freedom) itself is bourgeois in nature -- there is no such thing as proletarian or socialist liberalization"]; 5) in terms of the theory of democracy, the centralization of power is stressed to the detriment of the division and balance of power; and 6) in terms of scientific methodology, people are accustomed to unified methodology, i.e., class analysis, at a time when the methodologies of modern political science are moving towards pluralistic approaches.

And listen to his conclusion: "All these inadequacies in terms of the needs of the development of theoretical research in political science can be solved through *free* (emphasis mine) academic discussion."

That was in 1986, the year when Chinese students again started to demonstrate. Such sporadic demonstrations were banned in 1988, and met with tanks, cannons, and machinegun fire in 1989.

We are witnessing at present tactics of repression, summary executions, media manipulation, and the cultivation of a personality cult around Deng Xiaoping. The most recent news revealed that all Chinese ambassadors are being recalled. We seem to be having a *deja vu* – a repetition of the ways of the "cultural revolution" by a leadership which detests the very term.

If this develops, then we will have once again, a hermitic China. If the gerontocratic forces of traditionalism, conservatism and reaction shall triumph, the Chinese people shall again be victims of great social experimentations causing damage to life, property and to the cause of progress for the ordinary Chinese. To dissipate the pent-up emotions of the people, such reactionary leadership shall, every now and then, create causes of upheavals within and outside the country. A hermitic China, therefore, would be a dangerous China.

All factors point to the fact, however, that China's current leadership is still opening up. The Chinese government has not gone to the extent of cutting its relations with those foreign governments that expressed their concern over the events at Tiananmen.

At the same time, one can be sure that many more student activists in China would be able to resist arrest, although they may not be able to flee the country. They would not forget their ideals but it would be very difficult for them to launch a successful underground movement aimed at overthrowing the existing government. If they should prove able to build such an underground movement, what policies would they adopt? Given a country as large and populous as China, would they themselves, who called for democracy, be able to sustain a form of government that shall run on some mechanism of checks and balances? Their success in this aspect may be considered a triumph not only for the Chinese people but also for the whole of humanity. A new form of socialism would emerge in the world, bringing us nearer to the goal of making the state wither away.

Seeing the widespread support enjoyed by the student democrats from all sectors of society, it may be more likely that, after some more killings and executions to intimidate the most active elements among the students, the Deng leadership itself will gradually institute political reforms designed to accommodate many of the demands presented at Tiananmen in 1987. Those who were forced to hide would then re-emerge, especially when Deng shall have joined Marx in the underground. It would, therefore, be a New China.

When that day comes, China would still be under an authoritarian state. Some form of democratic expression shall be allowed but the leadership will ensure that its political and ideological hegemony will remain unchallenged. There would, therefore, be a happy balance of *yin* and *yang*.

The following question may be answered only by applying some lessons from China: where should a society such as ours, where the forms, if not the essence, of democracy have already been instituted, be heading for? If it is towards socialism, should such a social system always start as an authoritarian or totalitarian state?

We have tried, just now, to look at China's history. Now, let us be forewarned by what Marx said in his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. "The task of history," he said, "is to establish the truth of this world."

May the experience of China, a very close neighbor of ours, help us see the truth.

MR. JAIME-FLOR CRUZ (TIME Magazine): Given China's geographic expanse and population diversity, one can only expect the problems within its leadership and among its people to be complex and volatile. One cannot exaggerate the immensity and boldness of China's reforms and

the potential risks it is taking. By way of an analogy, consider the Philippines a Beetle that you can easily maneuver towards the left or right and which you can bring to a halt just as easily. Then liken China to a big truck with a trailer behind it carrying three dozens of people and running at 50 to 60 kilometers per hour. One shall find it impossible to casually turn this truck towards any direction or to apply the breaks without creating a violent reaction. This is exactly what happened in China this June.

We must also remember that China, at least the China of ancient history, only knew three ways with which to deal with the outside world: to ignore it, to subjugate it, or to be subjugated by it. Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy is somehow a break from this legacy in that, under this policy, China now deals with outsiders on an equal footing. Through its open door economic policy, China allowed the entry of foreign technology, money and culture. The question then is: Is the current crisis the price China is now paying for inviting the world in? Can China open itself so much and at the same time avoid the consequent instabilities of such a policy? A few years ago Deng Xiaoping said that they should not worry about the flies and mosquitoes that come in through the open door. Apparently, however, the leadership is now worried for it has closed China to the world, at least temporarily.

Another conundrum confronting Beijing is this: can its economic reforms succeed and flourish without any political reforms complimenting the former? By political reforms, the Chinese demonstrators, I believe, refer not to Western democracy but to some form of democracy in which the people can take part effectively in the decision-making processes; in which there is more openness and transparency (similar to Gorbachev's glasnost) on the part of the bureaucracy; and in which the press is free. This implies that the demonstrators are not influenced solely by the Western concept of democracy. These protestors are influenced more by the struggles in Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines, and by the political reforms taking place in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Soviet Union. And just as it is incorrect to say that the demonstrators are inspired purely by Western democracy, it is utterly ridiculous to claim that their protest is a CIA plot. I witnessed the demonstrations from the ring side and I can say that from a small but spontaneous intellectual movement -- a sincere gesture among the students to honor Hu Yaobang -- it snowballed into a mass protest movement. It cannot be a CIA plot. Even we journalists working in Beijing did not expect the Sunday Massacre. It was completely unexpected.

DR. JOSE V. ABUEVA (President, University of the Philippines): First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to Prof. David and the Third World Studies Center for organizing this forum. I believe that discussions like this enhance the formal education we get in the classrooms.

Right after the slaughter at Tiananmen Square, I went to Honolulu to attend a conference of university presidents. During that meeting, I proposed in my speech that our group of university presidents make a statement. I drafted the statement but after talking to 11 colleagues, I discovered that they did not want their views written. I found this surprising considering that President Aquino made a statement, although a gentle and compassionate one. Anyway, the decision reached in that conference was that no joint statement shall be issued but that each one of us may do as he pleases. Upon my return, I decided to address a letter to the Charge d' Affaires of the Chinese Embassy (the ambassador was not around at that time). And I now wish to read to you the contents of this letter:

The Honorable Guan deng Ming
Charge d'Affaires,
Embassy of the People's Republic of China,
Dasmarinas Village, Makati

Dear Honorable Guan:

Leaders, scholars, and students all over the world affirm such universal values and concerns as peace, freedom, self-determination, democracy, justice, human rights, women's rights, health and economic well-being, ecological balance and non-violent social change. As we know, most of these have been the subject of declarations and world conferences sponsored by the United Nations to which member states are signatories or in which they have been participants.

In various conferences, heads of universities and scholars have sought practical ways by which they can promote these values in their own countries and around the world. In this regard, my colleagues and our students in UP have been thinking about the students in the universities, and the leaders and people of your great nation. Through you, I would like them to know that we mourn the death of innocent people at Tiananmen Square and other places in your country. I wish to express my solidarity with the peaceful endeavour in your country for the realization of the goals and aspirations for freedom, democracy and non-violent modes of change; ideals that I believe are reflected in the constitution of the People's Republic of China. I reach out to Chinese students and scholars as an academic and a fellow Asian, and to them, as well as to the people and the leaders of China, as a human being bound to them by our common humanity. I do this humbly and in good faith, conscious of my country's good relations with yours. I am also mindful of the senseless violence here in my own country which must be dealt with more effectively and with justice and compassion. It has taken much longer than I wanted to send you my letter because of a trip abroad and pressing duties upon my return.

With assurances of my highest regard and respect.

Yours in the spirit of human solidarity,
Dr. Jose V. Abueva (sgd)

MS. AILEEN BAVIERA (Freelance Researcher): One must recognize the important contributions made by the government and the CCP towards the improvement of the Chinese economy, particularly of the living standards of the peasantry. But what started out as agricultural reforms encountered problems in the area of implementation. These reforms were undertaken in a manner that was too reckless that inflation, unemployment, and vast income disparities soon resulted. And then came the protests.

As China watchers, we are faced today with these two questions: First, what was the protest movement all about? Was it patriotic or was it counter-revolutionary? And second, what factors influenced the reaction of the Chinese government towards the movement?

I suppose most of us here are convinced that the protest movement in China was patriotic – that it was a sincere attempt on the part of the intellectuals and workers to institute very modest changes in the political system. In fact, the protestors themselves insisted that the government recognize their movement as legitimate and patriotic.

Two factors may be identified to have influenced the initial restraint displayed by the government vis-a-vis the protestors. One factor was the international exposure of the event. Another factor was the factional struggle within the Chinese Communist Party.

We must remember that while the students were on a hunger strike at Tiananmen Square, a Sino-Soviet Summit was going on between Deng Xiaoping and Mikhail Gorbachev. This summit could have been a moment of glory for the Chinese government given that, going back to the history of Sino-Soviet relations, Chinese communists were always made to feel "less tall" than their Soviet counterparts. The demonstrators at the square, however, stole the show from Deng and the CCP. With international media attention focused on the square, the Chinese government exercised restraint in dealing with the students and workers. And the latter, knowing that international sympathy was in their favor, were further encouraged in their struggle and in negotiating with the government from a position of strength.

While the presence of the international media lent strength to the protestors, this broke the facade of internal unity maintained for years by the party. Zhao Ziyang, for instance, was covered by the media, talking to the students. He was seen, at that time, as one who does not tow the party line. Intra-party struggles, therefore, may have prevented the government from coming out with a unanimous and hardline position on the protest movement.

MR. RIZAL YUYITUNG (China Commercial News): I beg to disagree with the overall assessment of Prof. Miclat. It seems too negative to be true.

China in 1949 was called the sick man of Asia. Today it is a near superpower, having some degree of nuclear capability. In the field of research, Europeans and Americans acknowledge as sophisticated China's contributions to physics, chemistry and the other sciences. This implies that socialism or communism, whichever, has contributed to the building of the country.

Earlier on, Prof. David posed the question of whether the changes being experienced by the socialist world signal the failure of the socialist experiment. I believe this is so. Marx thought that the first socialist country will be an industrial country. But socialism was first experimented on in the backward economies of China, Russia and other Eastern European countries. These countries did not have the best material condition for socialism when they first embarked on the experiment. I would not be surprised, therefore, if they fail in their socialist project.

Socialism in China has failed to raise the people's understanding of Marxist and Leninist theories. This is its greatest failure – this is the root of its problems today. When I visited the country in 1975, I expected to find a people who are all well-versed in dialectical materialism. I was disappointed, for only a few were that knowledgeable. In fact, I met some people who could memorize quotations from Mao's writings without understanding them. China's school system then, as now, was run under an old method that may be characterized as "forced-feeding". In fact, Confucianism is today staging a comeback. This is a sad development. China is sliding backward.

The demand for democracy in China is nothing new. The fusion of modernization and democracy was already the object of demonstrations held as early as 4 May 1919. Today's demonstrations are directed against graft and corruption in all levels of government. The protestors believe that democracy is the most effective means for fighting anomalies. Through a free press, for instance, the corrupt practices of Chinese officials will be exposed. An informed public opinion will then be created, putting pressure on these officials to quit their office. This happened to Nixon, Nakasone, and to several government officials in the Philippines.

Martial law, however, was declared on 19 May this year. Following this declaration, the government imposed both censorship and silence. I believe that under this condition it would be much better to print rumors; at least, the people will have something to go by.

What lies ahead for China? The new government set up by Deng will continue with its open-door economic policy but without instituting any political opening. More suppression, I hope, will hasten the fall of the government. But if Deng will continue to prevail, this will mean the end of socialism in China.

My vision of a socialist China is one where there is more democracy and more planned economy. The first side of reform is more crucial. The second may coexist with an open-door economic policy.

Today I learned that some 300 Chinese scholars in the United States resigned en masse from the Chinese Communist Party. These students accused Deng and other government leaders of being criminals in the name of the party. I believe that these students, these non-party members, are the true communists.

PROF. LILY ROSE TOPE (UP Department of English): It is true that I participated in the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square but my contacts with the demonstrators were limited to the intellectuals and students. My discussion will, therefore, focus on the intellectual movement itself. I will also make a brief comparison between the Tiananmen and EDSA uprisings.

The intellectuals and students, with the support of the workers and peasants, compose the vanguard of the protest movement in China today. The following review of some of the demands of the demonstrators will prove this contention:

The first demand was for the re-evaluation of the historical role of Hu Yaobang, now deceased. This man was a party leader who was stripped of his position and power for having supported the 1986 student demonstrations.

The second demand was for the re-assessment of the campaigns against "spiritual pollution" and "bourgeois liberalization" and the full rehabilitation of those citizens who suffered injustice during these campaigns in 1983 and 1987. The history of the current protest movement in China may, therefore, be traced to the early 1980s and even to 1976 when the Gang of Four fell from power. Remember that during the Great Cultural Revolution, science was sacrificed and the intellectuals lost their social position. Today this sector has grown restive.

The third demand was for the full and public disclosure of the private wealth of all state leaders and the conduct of public inquiries into cases of graft and corruption. Although now in China there is very little gap between the rich and the poor, party officials enjoy privileges that enable them to ride around town in their Mercedes Benzes and to send their children abroad for their education. These privileges are often the source of inequality. Thus, the demand for public accountability drew the support of the masses and moved them to participate in the demonstrations.

The other demands were for a higher education budget, better treatment of intellectuals, a free press, the right to demonstrate, and the recognition of the legitimacy of the protest movement. These and the second demand may all be considered as intellectual demands. The first may be considered as historical and the third as political. From the foregoing, it is clear that the intellectuals and students are leading the protest movement.

But why the intellectuals as the vanguard? There are two reasons:

First, this sector does not enjoy a favorable position in Chinese society. A professor, for instance, receives each month only 150 yuan or 500 to 600 pesos. Although his housing and other needs are subsidized, inflation has caught up with him. Three years ago, his five yuan can buy him three dozens of eggs. Today, his five yuan can only buy him a dozen eggs. Intellectuals like him, therefore, are the hardest hit by inflation.

The Chinese workers and peasants, on the other hand, are not as badly affected. This is because they are given large subsidies and their salaries are automatically adjusted with the changes in the rate of inflation. Fixed-income earners like the intellectuals do not receive similar adjustments in their salaries.

And second, the intellectuals are the worst affected by the limitations on the free exchange of ideas. The conservative faction of the Chinese government, being ascendant, have kept political reforms in the country long in coming. This has made the intellectuals increasingly restive.

The Chinese students, too, form part of the vanguard of the protest movement. They were at the forefront of the demonstrations at Tiananmen while their professors acted as their advisers.

These students are not the students of the Great Cultural Revolution; they are instead the product of China's open-door policy. This means that, through the foreign media, they have been exposed to liberal ideas. And given their liberal orientation, they share their professors' impatience with the constraints on free thought imposed by the government. In one poster at the Beijing University, the students expressed their view that China, notwithstanding its economic reforms, has remained feudal, hence backward.

Also influential on the students are such political reforms being undertaken as glasnost in the Soviet Union, a multi-party system in Hungary, and the legitimization of the Solidarnosc in Poland. The students find all these socialist projects inspiring.

In spreading ideas of liberal reform, the students of China used the universities and streets as their venues. In Beijing University, for instance, the students conducted "unofficial discussions" or what they call the democracy salons. These salons were held outside the classrooms but within the university campus -- in the parks and under the trees. In street corners, informal student-people dialogues were held to keep the flow of ideas and news constant. When the Chinese government blocked reports on the demonstrations at Tiananmen, the students devised an alternative news system which served the two purposes of informing Beijing residents about the developments in the Square and of challenging the government's version of the news. The students created democracy walls on which couriers posted fresh news about the demonstrations. They used a public address system to expose the government's disinformation campaign.

From their methods, it is apparent that the protestors believed in non-violent struggle, in maintaining their moral superiority. They staged a hunger strike, for instance, to compel the government to dialogue with them. During one of their more desperate moments, some 12 to 15 students threatened to burn themselves should the government continue to ignore their appeal for a dialogue. One correspondent for *TIME* magazine, in interpreting this threat of self-immolation as a method of struggle, alluded to an ancient practice of suicide among Chinese scholars whenever they fail in their role of making the emperor aware of the social problems of his kingdom. Similarly, the protestors, in demanding an audience with the government, sought to make their leaders aware of their needs. In no way were they calling for the overthrow of socialism nor of the government. This cannot be stressed strongly enough.

The atmosphere at Tiananmen during the uprising was as festive as the one at EDSA in 1986. All of Beijing were at the Square, I felt. The streets were filled with people of every description. Almost everyone carried a poster. Those in their bicycles wrote protest messages on their shirts. It was EDSA all over again, on the surface.

The Chinese were at their best at Tiananmen as the Filipinos were at EDSA. On our way to the demonstration, my friends and I took a taxi expecting to get cheated on the fare. But the driver, to our surprise, did not make us pay. When we reached the Square, we expected to get pushed and shoved perhaps a million times as there were a million people. We did not get pushed nor shoved, not even once. Finally in the Square, we saw the Chinese at their most unenterprising: food vendors were feeding the demonstrators and for free.

The crowd at Tiananmen, as the one at EDSA, was predominantly unorganized. Representation, if any, was by work or school unit. They had no KMU, KMP nor LFS. There were as many workers' groups as there were factories represented and as many students' groups as there were schools that participated.

This lack of organizational cohesion cost the demonstrators the uprising. The students' and workers' unions at Tiananmen had no visible organizational link with those unions also occupying the streets of Shanghai and of the other key cities of the country. There could have been several Tiananmen Squares spread throughout vast China. Had this been the case, the fall of one Tiananmen could not have ended the uprising.

Aggravating this situation was the near "anonymity" of the leadership of the movement in the sense that there was a constant change of personalities. Not one student or worker emerged as a unifying figure from whom the people can get guidance. One student who could have assumed this role was prematurely booted out of the leadership for attempting, on his own, as my source claimed, to solicit support from the foreign embassies at the diplomatic district.

Political naivete further reduced the demonstrators' chances of success. Their unsuspecting attitude towards their government led them to believe that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) will not shoot at them or that the authorities will not be too hard on them if a crackdown is launched. Perhaps we at EDSA are to blame for showing the world that the military can be made to side with the people during an uprising.

Inexperience, too, was their undoing. The students did not know how to use mass size to their advantage. At EDSA, whenever the crowd showed signs of thinning, we immediately called for reinforcement. This technique was not employed at Tiananmen. The students had a million supporters but they did not know what to do with the people.

Their inability to maximize their mobilizing power may also be explained by their lack of access to the media. We at EDSA had Radyo Bandido. They at Tiananmen had none. This proved to be paralyzing as the Left did not know what the Right was doing: the demonstrators did not know what tricks the government had up its sleeves. Further, those living outside Tiananmen and the university districts received only bits and pieces, not of information, but of rumors. Tiananmen was virtually cut off from the rest of Beijing, especially when the government enforced a news blackout. Reports from the foreign media, specifically from the BBC and the Voice of America, reached only those Chinese who knew English.

What then is the fate of the student movement after Deng? I foresee a continuing flow into China of liberal ideas, bourgeois or otherwise, unless the government abandons its open-door economic policy. I also foresee a brain drain. Discontented intellectuals are now leaving the country through scholarships in foreign schools, some of which are of dubious reputation. This will lead to a crisis in China's education system. The universities will lose their brighter researchers and instructors not only to schools abroad but also to some business establishments at home. There shall exist, therefore, enough basis for the continuation of the student movement.

But today the student movement in China appears to be experiencing a lull. The activists who are disappearing, however, will soon be replaced. And if a resurgence occurs, it will be one involving students who are wiser, better organized nationwide (perhaps in the underground), well prepared for any form of reprisal, and more confident of the support of the people.

The Tiananmen incident was a tragedy. But it was a tragedy replete with lessons not only for China but for the rest of the world.

DISCUSSION

QUESTION: In traditional Marxist theory, the state is defined as the repressive instrument of the ruling class. In China, the state was used to repress the workers who were calling for a more pure form of socialism. Who then wields state power? If those in power now are not representative of the workers, what mechanisms are the protestors suggesting that would truly empower the people? How do they propose to build socialist democracy?

PROF. MARIO MICLAT: The Chinese Communist Party, headed by Deng Xiaoping, is in control of the state. But does this party truly represent the interest of the working class? There is no simple answer to this question. In my presentation, I quoted Lenin as saying that socialism is an imposition from the outside because it is an ideology which does not necessarily have to develop from among the ranks of the workers. A communist party may develop earlier than and separately from the workers' movement. It may have its own ideology according to which it shall attempt to build an ideal society. This party ideology, although it may have evolved outside the workers' movement, is one that is based on an analysis of society that considers the workers as the most advanced class in history. Given all these considerations, a communist party can only remain truly representative of the working class if it keeps its relationship with the latter intact. In Beijing, this did not happen.

MR. JAIME FLOR-CRUZ: I can identify three mechanisms of socialist democracy that the students are proposing to institute. One is the rule of law. In China today, law is the word of a man or a small group of men. This is at the root of government excesses, past and present. Another mechanism is a system of recall whereby the people may cause the dismissal of erring government officials. This is not unlike glasnost. The last mechanism is press freedom. A free press will serve as an effective channel through which the people may intervene into the making of policies and programs. This is the essence of participatory democracy.

PROF. RANDOLF DAVID: Prof. Lily Rose-Tope expressed the view that the students were not questioning the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China. They were questioning instead those individual leaders who were making decisions in the name of the CCP. Mr Yuyitung revealed earlier that 300 scholars studying outside China resigned from the party, claiming that the current party leadership no longer represents the party.

QUESTION: I am curious as to why the reaction of the government was slow but severe. I am not satisfied with the easy conclusions drawn by many people. They say that the Chinese government feared foreign intervention. The "massive propaganda" of the Western press against China painted an image of a paranoid government. These are not credible explanations.

MR. JAIME FLOR-CRUZ: The reaction of the government came slow because Gorbachev was in China, the international media kept constant watch of its moves, and because it was temporarily paralyzed by the factional struggle within the leadership.

As to why the reaction was so severe, I can offer three explanations. First, the conservative faction of the leadership wanted to reduce the retaliatory capability, both real and imagined, of the Zhao faction. Second, Deng Xiaoping and the other leaders took the attack so personally that they responded with unexpected harshness. And third, in displaying the power of the state, the ruling faction delivered to the people the message that democracy can only go so far, that the idea of the people holding mass protests is not pleasant.

QUESTION: How does the open-door economic policy provide opportunities for graft and corruption and what are the patterns thereof?

MS. AILEEN BAVIERA: The corrupt practices of the higher and middle-level officials of the party are widespread but they are done not exactly at the expense of the workers and peasants. Their mechanisms of corruption, however, are the same mechanisms of reform that allow other people to get rich. In the coastal areas, for instance, the state, under the system of central planning, used to determine where business enterprises may get their supplies and how they may distribute them. Today, under a new system, these enterprises may tap their own sources of supplies and market their products. Some officials, however, "volunteer" to provide the supplies but at a padded cost. Others still help out in the marketing of the products by arranging things for the seller.

MR. JAIME FLOR-CRUZ: Another source of corruption in China is the two-track price system. Under this system, some 20 commodities like fertilizer can be had either at the lower subsidized price fixed by the state or at the higher flea market price determined by the forces of supply and demand. Party officials and their relatives profit from this scheme by acting as middlemen. They buy subsidized goods from the state sector and resell them in the flea market at a considerably higher price.

This hanky-panky has been going on for years but it has recently become more widespread and grander in scale. Thus, the protests. And in explaining corruption, the conservatives point to the reforms as the cause. The reformists, on the other hand, blame corruption on the fact that the reforms are unfinished. They believe, for instance, that corruption may be ended by replacing the double-track price system with the flea market system exclusively.

PROF. MARIO MICLAT: The country's two-currency system is still another source of corruption. One currency is the foreign exchange certificate issued to foreigners and which can be used to purchase items, some of which cannot be bought with the local currency. The other currency is the *rinmendi* or the local money. Party officials make a profit out of selling the foreign exchange certificate at a padded price.

QUESTION: Is it correct to say that had more Beijing residents been knowledgeable of the English language used by the international media, the uprising could have succeeded?



PROF. LILY ROSE-TOPE: English proficiency could not have won for the demonstrators the uprising. It may have prevented the massacre though. Had there been more Beijing residents mobilized to support Tiananmen, the soldiers could have been stopped from shooting at the people. These Beijing residents could have been easily mobilized had they been well informed of the situation at Tiananmen. They could have been made aware of the developments in the square had they been more proficient in English. BBC and the Voice of America, the only remaining sources of news, also broadcasted in Mandarin but the government jammed these services. The people were left with only the English services.