

Big-character Poster: Wei Jingsheng's 'Fifth Modernization'

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'THE FIFTH MODERNIZATION

by Wei Jingsheng

At the present, the media no longer play up the themes of dictatorship of the proletariat and class struggle. One reason is that this line of propaganda was used as sort of a magical potion by the Gang of Four, who have now been overthrown. Another reason, which is even more important, is that the people have had enough of all that and can no longer be deceived.

According to the laws of history, the new will not come about until the old is gone. Now that the old is gone, the people are rubbing their eyes in eager anticipation. Finally, with God's blessing, there is a new promise - the Four Modernizations. Chairman Hua, the wise leader, and Vice-Chairman Deng (who the people consider even wiser and greater) have defeated the Gang of Four. Now democracy and prosperity, so earnestly sought by those who shed their blood at Tian-an-men, seem soon to be realized.

After the arrest of the Gang of Four, people eagerly hoped that Vice-Chairman Deng, the so-called "restorer of capitalism," would once again appear as a great towering banner. Finally, Vice-Chairman Deng did return to his post on the Central Committee. The people were indeed excited, inspired, and [...] [sic]. However, to the people's regret, the hated old political system has not changed, and even any talk about the much hoped for democracy and freedom is forbidden. People's living conditions remain the same and the "increased wages" are far behind the soaring commodity prices.

There has been some talk about the restoration of "capitalism" and the bonus system. After some investigation it was confirmed that the "invisible whip" for "the maximum exploitation of workers," which had been cursed by the Marxist ancestors, could not be used to fool the people anymore. Although without the leadership of the Great Helmsman, people can still be led by the "wise leader" to catch up with and surpass England, the United States, Japan, and Yugoslavia (?) or the advanced world level. Taking part in revolution is no longer "in vogue." Since entering a university will greatly enhance a person's prestige, people no longer need to hear the deafening noise of "class struggle" slogans. The Four Modernizations stand for everything that is good. Of course, it is still necessary to act according to the spirit of the Central Committee, as

relayed to us by the April Fifth Academy. The beautiful vision can materialize only under unified leadership and guidance.

In ancient China, there were such maxims as "A cake in the picture can appease hunger" and "Watching the plums can quench the thirst." These witty and ironic remarks were quite popular in ancient times, but today, after a long and continuous development of history, people should never take such stupid remarks seriously. Yet some people not only believe in them but also carry them out in practice.

For several decades, Chinese people have closely followed the Great Helmsman. Communist ideology has provided "the cake in the picture," and the Great Leap Forward and Three Red Banners have served as "plums for quenching thirst." People tightening their belts and bravely forged ahead. Thirty years soon passed and they have learned a lesson from experience. For thirty years people were like "monkeys reaching out for the moon and feeling only emptiness." Therefore, when Vice-Chairman Deng put forward the slogan, "Be practical," people's enthusiasm was like surging waves. Time and again he was helped by the people to come to power. The people expected him to review the past and lead them to a realistic future with a "seeking truth from facts" approach.

However, some people have warned us: Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought is the foundations of all foundations; Chairman Mao was the Great Savior of the people; "Without the Communist Party, there would be no new China"; "Without Chairman Mao there would be no new China"; and anyone disagreeing with these will come to no good end. "Some people" even warned us: Chinese people need dictatorship. His superiority over feudal emperors precisely shows his greatness. Chinese people need no democracy unless it is "democracy under collective leadership" without which democracy is not worth a dime. It is up to you to believe or to doubt it, but the prisons (from which so many have recently been released) were convincing "proof."

However, someone has now given you a way out. Take the Four Modernizations as the key link and follow the principle of stability and unity and be brave (?) to serve the revolution (?) as an old ox does. Then you will find your way to paradise, namely the prosperity of communism and the Four Modernizations. Some well-intentioned people have given us this advice. "When you cannot think straight, try hard to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought!" The reason why you cannot think straight is your lack of understanding which reflects on the level of your ideological accomplishment. You should be obedient, otherwise the leadership of your unit cannot forgive you! And on and on.

I advise everyone not to believe such political swindlers anymore. Knowing that we are being deceived, we should implicitly believe in ourselves. We have been tempered in the Cultural Revolution and cannot be that ignorant now. Let us find out for ourselves what should be done.

Why Democracy?

This question has been discussed by many people for centuries. Others have conducted careful analyses and indicated on the Democracy Wall how much better is democracy than autocracy.

"People are the masters of history." Is this a fact or just empty talk? Well, it can be both. How can there be history without the people's strength and their participation in making it? No Great Helmsman or Wise leader can even exit, not to speak of creating history. From this, we can see that without new Chinese people, there would be no new China; but it is not true that "without Chairman Mao, there would be no new China." Vice-Chairman Deng is grateful to Chairman Mao for saving his life. This is understandable. But is it not reasonable too that he should be grateful to the "outcries" that pushed him to the seat of power? Would it be reasonable for him to respond to the outcries by saying, "You must not denigrate Chairman Mao, because he saved my life?" This makes "The people are the masters of history" an empty slogan. It is empty talk because people cannot master their own destiny according to the majority will; because their achievements have been credited to other people's accounts; and because their rights have been used to make somebody's royal crown. What kind of master is this? It may be more correct to call them slaves. In our history books the people are the masters who create everything, but in real life they are lackeys, always standing at attention and waiting to be "led" by leaders who swell like dough under the effect of yeast.

People should have democracy. When they ask for democracy, they are only demanding what is rightfully theirs. Anyone refusing to give it to them is a shameless bandit no better than a capitalist who robs workers of their money earned with their sweat and blood. Do the people have democracy now? No. Do they want to be masters of their own destiny? Definitely yes. This was the reason for the Communist Party's victory over Kuomintang. But what then happened to the promise of democracy? The slogan "people's democratic dictatorship" was replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat." Even the "democracy" enjoyed by the infinitesimal portion - one among tens of millions - was abolished and replaced by the autocracy of the "Great Leader." Thus, Peng Dehuai was overthrown because, instead of following the Great Leader's instruction, he had the audacity to show his temper in the Party. Then a new promise was held out: Because the leader is great, implicit faith in such a leaders, rather than democracy, will bring more happiness to the people. People have believed in this promise, half reluctantly and half willingly, until today. But are they any happier? Are they richer or more prosperous? Unconcealable facts show that they are poorer, more miserable, and more backward. Why? This is the first question to be considered. And what to do now? This is the second question.

There is no need now to determine the ratio of Mao Zedong's merits and shortcomings. He first spoke about this as a self-defense. People should now think for a while and see if, without Mao Zedong's autocracy, China could be in its present backward state. Are Chinese people stupid, or lazy, or unwilling to enjoy wealth? Are they expecting too much? Quite the opposite. Then why? The answer is quite obvious. Chinese people should not have taken this road. Then why did they take it? Only because they were led by that self-exalting autocrat. If they did not take this road, he would exercise dictatorship over them. The people could see no other road and therefore had no choice. Is this not deception? Can there be any merit in deception?

What road is this? It is called the "socialist road." According to the definition of the Marxist ancestors, socialism means that the people, or the proletariat, are their own masters. Let me ask the Chinese workers and peasants: With the meager wages you get every month, whose master and what kind of master can you be? Sad to relate, you are "mastered" by somebody else when in the matter of matrimony. Socialism guarantees the producers' rights to the surplus production from their labor over what is needed as a service to the society. But this service is limitless. So are you not getting only that miserable little wage "necessary for maintaining the

labor force for production?" Socialism guarantees many rights, such as the right of a citizen to receive educations, to use this ability to the best advantage, and so forth. But none of these rights can be seen in our daily life. What we can see is only "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and "a variation of Russian autocracy" - Chinese socialist autocracy. Is this kind of socialist road what people want? Can it be claimed that autocracy means the people's happiness. Is this the socialist road depicted by Marx and hoped for by the people? Obviously not. Then what is it? Funny as it may sound, it is like the feudal socialism mentioned in the "Manifesto," or a feudal monarchy disguised as socialism. We have heard that Soviet Russia has been promoted from social feudalism to social imperialism. Must Chinese people take the same road? Some people have proposed that we should change everything to fascist autocracy under feudal socialism. To this I entirely agree, because the question of merits or shortcomings does not exist here.

Let me say a word about the "National Socialism" the real name of the notorious German fascism. These fascists, also under an autocrat tyrant, called on the people to tighten their belts and deceived the people by telling them that they belonged to a great nation. Their main purpose was to suppress the most rudimentary form of democracy, because they clearly knew that democracy was the most formidable and irresistible enemy. On this basis, Stalin and Hitler shook hands and signed the German-Soviet Pact whereby a socialist state and a National Socialist State toasted the partition of Poland while the peoples of both countries suffered enslavement and poverty? If we do not want democracy as our only choice or, in other words, if we want modernized economics, science, military science, and so forth, then there must be modernization of the people and of the social system.

The Fifth Modernization - What Kind of Democracy?

I would like to ask everyone: What do we want modernization for? After all, some men feel that the age of The Dream of the Red Chamber must have been perfectly all right, because men were free to read, write poetry, and fool around with women. One needed only to open his mouth and food would be provided, only raise an arm to be dressed. Well, today's privileged class get to see foreign movies and live like gods. Such a life-style is quite inaccessible to ordinary folk. What the people want are the happy days which they can truly enjoy and which are not worse than those enjoyed by foreigners. All want prosperity, the kind of prosperity which is universal and which can only result from increased social productive forces. This is obvious to everyone. However, there is still something overlooked by somebody. Can people enjoy good living when social productive forces have been increased? Now the questions of authority, of domination, of distribution, and of exploitation arise.

People have tightened their belts for decades since liberation. They have worked as hard as they could and actually produced much wealth. But where has all the wealth gone? Some say that it has gone to fatten some comparatively small autocratic regimes like Vietnam. Others say it has fattened those "new bourgeois elements" like Lin Biao and Jiang Qing. There are all correct. Anyway, it can never get into the hands of the laboring people. If the wealth was not directly squandered by the big and small "political swindlers" who held power, it was bestowed on them to those scoundrels like Vietnam and Albania who cherished the same ideal and followed the same path. Shortly before his death, Mao Zedong had trouble with his wife when she asked him for nine thousand yuan, but has anyone ever witnessed any qualm on his part when he simply threw away tens of billions of yuan earned with the people's sweat and blood?

Yet, while people are building socialism by tightening their belts and begging in the streets, there are still some people going to Democracy Wall to flatter Mao Zedong. Since they have eyes, why can't they see all this misery? Have they deliberately closed their eyes? If they really could not see, I would ask them to go to Beijing Station, to Yongdingmen, or just into the streets instead of writing posters. There they can observe the foreign visitors and ask them if in foreign lands the desire for food is considered something rare. I think those who desire to have food are not, as a rule, willing to give away their snow-white rice to aid the "friends" in the Third World! But these people's opinion does not count. The sad thing is that in our People's Republic there are still some people who, after eating a full meal, have nothing to do except read books or write poems. They live like gods and hold dominant power. In such case, are not the people justified in seizing power from these overlords?

What is democracy? True democracy means the holding of power by the laboring masses. Are laborers unqualified to hold power? Yugoslavia has taken this road and proved to us that even without dictatorial rulers, big or small, the people can work even better.

What is true democracy? It means the right of the people to choose their own representatives to work according to their will and in their interests. Only this can be called democracy. Furthermore, the people must also have the power to replace their representatives anytime so that these representatives cannot go on deceiving theirs in the name of the people. This is the kind of democracy enjoyed by people in European and American countries. In accordance with their will, they could run such people as Nixon, de Gaulle, and Tanaka out of office. They can reinstate them if they want, and nobody can interfere with their democratic rights. In China, however, if a person even comments on the already dead Great Helmsman Mao Zedong or the Great Man without peers in history, jail will be ready for him with open door and various unpredictable calamities may befall him. What a vast different will it be if we compare the socialist system of centralized democracy with the system of capitalist "exploiting class!"

Will there be great disorder across the land and defiance of laws human and divine once people enjoy democracy? Do not recent periodicals show that just because of the absence of democracy, dictators big and small were defying laws human and divine? How to maintain democratic order is a domestic problem requiring solution by the people themselves, and there is no need for the privileged overlords to worry about it. However, what they are worrying about is not the people's democracy but the difficulty of finding an excuse for destroying the people's democratic rights. Domestic problems cannot be solved all at once. Their solution takes time, during which mistakes and defects will be unavoidable. However, all these consequences, which concern us alone, should be far better than oppressions from the overlords which leave us no way to appeal for justice. Those who worry about the defiance of human and divine laws as a result of democracy are like those who had the same worry when the emperor was dethroned in the 1911 revolution. They are reconciled to this line of reasoning: Be at ease and submit to oppression. Without oppression, the roof of your house will fly sky high!

Let me respectfully remind these gentlemen: We want to be masters of our own destiny. We need no gods or emperors. We do not believe in the existence of any savior. We want to be masters of the world and not instruments used by autocrats to carry out their wild ambitions. We want a modern lifestyle and democracy for the people. Freedom and happiness are our sole objectives in accomplishing modernization. Without this fifth modernization all others are merely another promise.

Let me call on our comrades: Rally under the banner of democracy and do not trust the autocrats' talk about "stability and unity." Fascist totalitarianism can only bring us disaster. I have no more illusion. Democracy is our only hope. Abandon our democratic rights and we will be shackled once again. Let us believe in our own strength! Human history was created by us. Let all self-styled leaders and teachers go. They have for decades cheated the people of their most valuable possession. I firmly believe that production will be faster under the people's own management. Because the laborers will produce for their own benefit, their living conditions will be better. Society will thus be more rational, because under democracy all social authority is exercised by the people with a view to improving their livelihood.

I can never believe that the people can have anything from a savior without their own efforts. I also refuse to believe that China will abandon its goal because of difficulties. As long as people can clearly identify their goal and the obstacles on the way, they can surely trample on that mantis which bars the way.

March Toward Modernization - Practice Democracy

To accomplish modernization, Chinese people could first practice democracy and modernize China's social system. Democracy is by no means the result of social development as claimed by Lenin. Aside from being the inevitable outcome of the development of productive forces and the relations of production up to a certain stage, it is also the conditions for the existence of productive forces and the relations of production, not only up to that certain stage but also at much higher stages of development. Without this condition, the society will become stagnant and economic growth will encounter insurmountable obstacles. Therefore, judging from past history, a democratic social system is the major premise or the prerequisite for all developments - or modernizations. Without this major premise or prerequisite, it would be impossible not only to continue further development but also to preserve the fruits of the present stage of development. The experiences of our great motherland over the past thirty years have provided the best evidence.

Why must human history take the road toward prosperity and modernization? The reason is that people need prosperity so that real goods are available, and so that there is a full opportunity to pursue their first goal of happiness, namely freedom. Democracy means the maximum attainable freedom so far known by human beings. It is quite obvious that democracy has become the goal in contemporary human struggles.

Why are all reactionaries in contemporary history united under a common banner against democracy? the answer is that democracy provides everything for their enemy - the masses of people - but nothing for them - the oppressors - to oppose the people with. The biggest reactionary is always the biggest opponent of democracy. As clearly shown in the history of German, the Soviet Union and "New China" the strongest opponent of democracy has been the biggest and most dangerous enemy of social peace and prosperity. From the history of these countries, we can also clearly see that the spearheads of all struggles by people for happiness and by societies for prosperity were directed against the enemies of democracy - the autocratic fascists. From the history of the same countries again, we can see that victory for democracy has always brought along with it the most favorable conditions and the greatest

speed for social development. On this point, American history has supplied the most forceful evidence.

All struggles involving the people's pursuit of happiness and prosperity are based on the quest for democracy. Therefore, the result of all struggles involving the people's resistance to oppression and exploitation are determined by their success or failure in obtaining democracy. So let us dedicate all our strength to the struggle for democracy! People can get all they want only through democratic channels. They cannot get anything by undemocratic or illusory means, because all forms of autocracy and autocratic totalitarianism are the most open and dangerous enemies of the people.

Would the enemies be willing to let us practice democracy? Certainly not. They will stop at nothing to hinder the progress of democracy, to deceive and hoodwink the people. The most effective method they, like all autocratic fascists, can count on is to tell the people that their present conditions are practically the best in the world. Has democracy really reached the stage it naturally should? Not at all! Any minor victory for democracy has been paid for at a high price, and democracy can be truly learned at the cost of bloodshed and other sacrifices. The enemies of democracy have always deceived the people by saying that democracy, even though achieved, will inevitably perish; so why should any energy be expended in striving for it?

However, let us look at the real history and not the history written by the hired scholars of the "socialist government." Every minute portion of democracy of real value was stained with the blood of martyrs and tyrants, and every step forward was met with strong attacks from the reactionary forces. Democracy has been able to surmount all these obstacles because it is highly valued and eagerly sought by the people. Therefore, this torrent is irresistible. Chinese people have never feared anything. As long as the people have a clear orientation, the forces of tyranny are no longer undefeatable.

Is the struggle for democracy what the Chinese people really want? The Cultural Revolution was the first occasion for them to demonstrate their strength, and all reactionary forces trembled before them. Because the people had then no clear orientation and the democratic forces did not play the main role in the struggle, the majority of them were brought over by the autocratic tyrant, led astray, divided, slandered, and finally violently suppressed. Thus these forces came to an end. The people then had a blind faith in their leaders who were autocrats and careerists; therefore, they became a tool and a sacrificial lamb for the tyrants or potential tyrants.

Today, twelve years later, the people have finally learned where their goal lies. They have a clear orientation, and they have a real leader. This leader is the democratic banner, which is now taken on a new significance. Xidan Democracy Wall has become the first battlefield in the people's fight against reactionaries. The struggle will certainly be victorious, though there will still be bloodshed and suffering. Liberation (about which there has been so much talk) will surely be attained. However much we may be covertly plotted against, the democratic banner cannot be obscured by the miasmal mists. Let us unite under this great and real banner and march toward modernization for the sake of the people's peace, happiness, rights and freedom!'

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DESCRIPTION